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THE LIFE EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD WHO CONTINUE TO BE BULLIED

by

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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ABSTRACT

Bullying continues to be a complex international problem that has the potential to debilitate some individuals more than others, leaving those who are bullied with unpleasant memories, feelings of frustration and anger, and diminished self-esteem. There are several meta analyses of bullying interventions that indicate minimal or no change (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008). The question thus arises, “What are the life experiences of children in middle childhood, who continue to be bullied?” This research study was conducted to more thoroughly investigate bullying in middle childhood and to determine more effective prevention efforts. A phenomenological design with a bioecological and social constructionist perspective was used to guide this research study. This qualitative approach was employed to investigate the significant life experiences of three middle childhood children who have been bullied consistently since early childhood. The data were collected through creative expressive arts, in-depth interviews with the participants and their parents, observations and conversations with the relevant teachers and peers. This study was conducted over four phases. In the first phase, planning and preparation took place, including the development and acceptance of the research proposal and a critical review of the literature. Phase 2 and 3 occurred simultaneously because as the data were collected the analysis of the data commenced. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was employed to interpret the data. Four themes emerged from the data analysis: the experiences of maternal stress; the experiences of trauma; the experiences of innocent versus wicked\(^1\); and the experiences of supportive relationships. The findings indicated that the experiences of maternal stress commenced \textit{in utero}, also when the participants all first experienced trauma. All the participants found bullying to be traumatic, and insight into their various experiences of being bullied emerged. Lastly, the experiences of supportive relationships, including positive and negative experiences are discussed. In order to extend this study's findings to practical application, the fourth phase of this study highlight two important missing theoretical links, namely, the element of trauma is one of the criteria for the definition of bullying, and the importance of the mother's womb for human development is lacking in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. The fourth phase

\(^1\) These terms were gleamed from the research study
of this study consisted of the development of a board game for children who are bullied, emanating from the findings of this research.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH PROBLEM AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a worldwide phenomenon that continually attracts international attention. Even when it does not make the headlines it is guaranteed to be happening in many different parts of the world, simultaneously affecting both the young and the old, whether at home, in school, at work (offline) or in cyberspace (online). Because it occurs in many different forms it has the potential to affect anyone’s personal space, at any time, catching individuals off guard. It may cause those affected shame or diminished self esteem. The question thus arises, “What are the life experiences of children in middle childhood, who continue to be bullied?” This research study hopes to answer this question and so help alleviate bullying.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The focus of this research is on the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, in order to understand what life experiences contribute to the problem of bullying in schools. This is important, because in the last 20 years much research has been conducted into prevention and intervention programmes (Polanin, Espelage, & Pigot, 2012) in an attempt to reduce school bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). However, it has been found that although bullying is not a new phenomenon it has become a serious social one (Rigby, 2004). Various meta-analyses of studies on interventions to reduce bullying have achieved disheartening results, substantially below the 50 per cent reduction mark (Polanin et al., 2012; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2010). Overall, anti-bullying programmes were effective in reducing bullying by 20-23 per cent and
victimisation by 17-20 per cent (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). The most successful intervention to date was Olweus’s Bullying Prevention programme in Bergen, Norway, which indicated reductions of 50 per cent in bullying, however, this same programme produced near-zero results in Stavanger (Rigby, 2004), with reductions of only 21-38 per cent in a 1997-1998 study involving 30 schools in Norway, and decreased effectiveness in the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK) and Germany (Olweus, 2003). In addition, Merrell, Gueldner, Ross and Isava (2008) ascertained from their meta-analytic school bullying intervention research between 1980 and 2004 that the majority of findings evidenced no meaningful change, either positively or negatively. According to Rigby and Smith (2011), some researchers have found a slight decrease in bullying, though others, such as the Australian Minister of Education, Julia Gillard, and the director for children’s rights in England, have reported steep increases.

As an educational psychologist with an interest in the phenomenon of bullying, I am concerned that the interventions that have been implemented at the school in which I work have had little positive impact on the reduction of bullying, as evidenced in a recent survey. In my experience, there are erroneous perceptions that bullying is a normal behaviour and nothing will change this, or that nothing is done by the school to combat it. I am motivated to discover how I can come to better understand this for wellbeing to occur, because “…human beings are greater than the sum of their parts, and therefore cannot be reduced to parts without losing something in the process” (Chinn & Kramer, 2008, p. 56). People are complex synergetic products of interactions with others and their environment.

Bullying has been defined in different ways (O’Moore & Minton, 2004; Rigby, 2006), but usually with the following necessary key criteria: a desire to hurt (Tattum & Tattum, 1992); repeated aggressive actions which cause distress, fear, harm or hurt (Barton, 2004; McGrath & Stanley, 2006; O’Moore & Minton, 2004); and an imbalance of power (Barton, 2004; McGrath & Stanley, 2006; O’Moore & Minton, 2004; Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan, 2004). Underlying all these criteria is a consensus, implicit or explicit, that it is also unjustifiable (McGrath & Stanley, 2006; Rigby, 2007). Rigby (2014a) also claims that the act of bullying is enjoyed

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2 Figures reflecting these statistics are presented in Chapter 3.
by the aggressor, but leaves the person being bullied feeling oppressed. Some authors also include intentionality in their definitions (Aalsma & Brown, 2008; Barton, 2004; McGrath & Stanley, 2006; O’Moore & Minton, 2004; Rigby, 2014a; Slee, 2006; Slee & Mohyla, 2007; Smith, 2010). Moreover, bullying is also known to present in different forms,\(^3\) such as physical (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch, & Swart, 2000), verbal (Krige et al., 2000), relational (Swart & Bredekamp, 2009), racial (Whitted & Dupper, 2005), coercive (Cheng, Chen, Ho, & Cheng, 2011), proprietary (Cheng et al., 2011), behavioural (Cheng et al., 2011), sexual (Whitted & Dupper, 2005) and cyber-related (Slonje & Smith, 2008). Physical bullying includes acts of hitting and pushing, (Krige et al., 2000; McGrath & Stanley, 2006; Sullivan et al., 2004); verbal of teasing and threatening (Barton, 2004; Krige et al., 2000; Sullivan et al., 2004); relational of harming relationships in a manipulative and covert way, such as isolating an individual from a group, and thus harder to spot than physical bullying (Young, Nelson, Hottle, Warburton, & Young, 2011). Racial bullying includes “making racial slurs, writing graffiti, mocking the victim’s culture or making offensive gestures” (Whitted & Dupper, 2005, p. 168), whilst coercing involves buying and doing things for the person who is bullying (Cheng et al., 2011). Sexual bullying includes “passing unwanted notes, jokes, pictures, taunts or starting rumours of a sexual nature. It may also involve physically intrusive behaviours such as grabbing private parts or forcing someone to engage in sexual behaviours” (Whitted & Dupper, 2005, p. 168). Behavioural bullying involves playing tricks, splashing water, preventing a person from going to the bathroom, removing clothing, hiding things and locking up in the toilet (Cheng et al., 2011). Cyberbullying, the most recent type, involves displaying aggression through modern technological devices (Slonje & Smith, 2008), for example, “over the internet or cellular phones” (Barton, 2004, p. 4), and has been defined as “…an overt, intentional act of aggression towards another person online” (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004, p. 1308). Bullying can be direct or indirect (Sullivan et al., 2004), and Slonje and Smith (2008) point out that verbal and physical bullying usually employ direct, face-to-face types of aggression, with indirect aggression involving a third party and carried out to ruin friendships, such as spreading nasty stories or excluding an individual from play.

\(^3\) The different forms of bullying are elaborated upon in Chapter 3 and appear in Figure 3.1.
Mackay, Carey and Stevens (2011) state that bullying appears to occur more in primary schools than high schools and that younger children are more likely to be exposed to direct victimisation. I therefore chose to study children who continue to be bullied in the developmental period, middle childhood, which falls between six and 12 years. The experiences, interactions and environments to which a child is exposed during this period have a direct bearing on physical, cognitive, emotional and social development (Mah & Ford-Jones, 2012). Research by Wolke, Woods and Samara (2009) showed that children who were bullied at age six to nine years were twice as likely to be bullied two to four years later. Cassidy (2009) found that girls are more prone to being bullied than boys, whilst for Smith, Cowie, Olafsson and Liefooghe (2002) that girls experience more indirect bullying and boys more physical bullying. According to Shaffer and Kipp (2010), physical and verbal aggression declines over the course of middle childhood, whereas hostile aggression tends to increase.

Bullying is known to negatively affect the child who bullies, the child who is bullied, as well as the children who witness bullying (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Children who are bullied have been shown to have long-term emotional, behavioural, social and academic problems (Bacchini, Esposito, & Affuso, 2009; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). The emotional problems include lower self-esteem (Phillips & Cornell, 2012), depression, loneliness, anxiety and insecurity (Lataster, Drukker, Henquet, Feron, Gunther, & Myin-Germeys, 2006; Whitted & Dupper, 2005), whilst behavioural problems are linked to aggression (Camodeca, Goossens, Terwogt, & Schuengel, 2002; Lataster et al., 2006). Rigby (2003b) also reports that children who are bullied between the ages of seven and 10 years, as well as experiencing sleeping difficulties, tend to wet their beds. Nakamoto and Schwartz (2010) found that children who are bullied do not academically perform well. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011 study found that students who reported being bullied more frequently had much lower reading achievement than those who were not bullied (Howie, van Staden, Tshele, Dowse, & Zimmerman, 2012; Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2012). In addition, it has become apparent that such children are prone to concentration difficulties as a consequence of having recurring memories of being bullied (Rigby, 2003b).
Research on bullying in the South African context\(^4\) includes a study reported in an article “Three in 10 SA pupils bullied - study” (Tshabalala, 2012), conducted by the Youth Research Unit, of the Bureau of Market Research, in the College of Economic and Marketing sciences at the University of South Africa (UNISA), in July 2012, which found bullying to be on the increase among youth in the province, with almost three in ten learners having been bullied. A press release appearing on ENCA on 26 January 2013 reported a survey by Pondering Panda, a consumer insights company, which had found at least 57 percent of school children claimed to have been bullied at school (Sapa, 2013), which compared to Greeff and Grobler’s (2008) estimate in a 1990 study which put the figure at 37 percent. Reasons for this increase include the advent of electronic technology (Rigby & Smith, 2011).

Cyberbullying or electronic bullying is a relatively new form of bullying (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Snakenborg, van Acker & Gable, 2011), not restricted to the school but also having the capacity to threaten the safety of the child at home. Aggressive behaviour is directed through the Internet and mobile telephones, in such forms emails, text messages and profile sites (Bhat, 2008; Snakenborg et al., 2011). The above mentioned report by UNISA reported 67.7 percent of learners perceived an increase in bullying in general, with 40.3 percent perceiving an increase in cyberbullying over the previous two years. South African newspaper reports (Appendix 1) reflects the media’s coverage on bullying.

1.3 THE NEED TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

Despite the increase in literature on bullying worldwide and in South Africa there has been limited research on the life experiences of the children who are bullied. Barbara Creecy, the previous Gauteng Education Member of the Executive Council (MEC), stressed the need to work together to end bullying in her opening address at the Colloquium on Bullying, in August 2012, emphasising that the most worrying consequence of bullying was its cyclical perpetuation (Creecy, 2012). This statement echoed Maree’s (2005) claim that bullying was pervasive in South

\(^4\) Refer to Appendix 2 for research conducted on bullying in South Africa.
Africa, not limited to schools but extending to the wider community such as the family, tertiary institutions, workplace, and even in government.

For Neser (2004) and Maree (2005) there is a lack of support from teachers to children who are bullied. In addition, although the literature on bullying contains many different studies on the experiences of children who are bullied, it is silent on the life experiences of children who continue to be bullied. A literature search concerning research studies on the experiences of children who are bullied are disclosed in Appendix 3.

As the literature on the life experiences of children who continue to be bullied is scarce I explored this aspect in order to identify its contribution to the cycle. Such understanding may reposition and broaden our understanding of behaviour, which in turn may lead to better societal understanding of the phenomenon. This is imperative, because Smit (2007) sees bullying as underlying violence, and Maree (2005, p. 15) claims that it is “… embedded in the broader picture of spiralling violence in South Africa.” This is clearly reflected in a recent incident in which a bullied teenager shot and killed another the day after being bullied by him (Molosankwe, 2012, November 22).

As mentioned above, various meta-analyses of bullying prevention and intervention programmes have indicated subtle rather than profound differences. For instance, Rigby (2004) argues that this is so because no single programme offers a comprehensive approach to tackling the complex phenomenon of bullying. In a meta-analytic study over a 25-year period, Merrell et al. (2008) found that interventions tended to influence attitudes, self-perceptions and knowledge, rather than actual bullying behaviours. Likewise, Farrington, Baldry, Kyvsgaard & Ttofi (2008, p. 3) claim that “…many programmes focus on common sense ideas about what will reduce bullying rather than focusing on why children bully, or why they are bullied or why bullying acts occur.” Therefore, this research study aims to focus on what life experiences contribute towards children who are continually bullied. Greeff and Grobler (2008) state that more research on children who are bullied needs to be conducted in South Africa, and that the high prevalence rates may be attributed to the preventative measures not being as effective as hoped.
1.4 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

Kvarme, Helseth, Sæteren and Natvig (2010) indicate that there is a need for more qualitative research on how school children experience being bullied. As the literature on bullying appears silent on the life experiences of children who continue to be bullied, I explore this aspect in order to identify and understand how it may contribute towards children who are continually being bullied. Such understanding may reposition and broaden understanding of bullying behaviour, in turn leading to better societal understanding and hence improved management of the phenomenon. This is key because as pointed out earlier, bullying underlies violence (Smit, 2007) which is rampant in South Africa. This is clearly reflected in a recent case in which the MEC for the Western Lewis pressed charges against three leadership groups who were fuelling violence and affecting over 6,000 learners (Isaacs, 2014).

In addressing problems concerned with bullying there is a need to understand why some children continue to be bullied despite the current prevention and intervention strategies to which they are exposed in their schools. This is essential because repeated exposure to bullying has negative short- and long-term health and wellbeing consequences for those being bullied. As Rigby (2011) reports, there have been significant but small reductions in the number of children who are bullied since the implementation of anti-bullying programmes in schools worldwide, but I argue that this may not apply to children who are continually bullied. Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor and Chauhan (2004, p. 565) make a distinction between “…non-victims, escaped victims, new victims and continuing victims…” and indicate that the latter group is less well adjusted. These authors differentiate the aforementioned profiles by proclaiming that “continuing victims” continue to be bullied two years later, “escaped victims” no longer are bullied, “non-victims” have never been bullied and “new victims” are those who have recently been bullied (Smith et al., 2004).
1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Against this background the following research question served to guide and focus my study:

- What are the life experiences of children, in middle childhood, who continue to be bullied?

The following sub-questions also served to focus the study:

- What significant life experiences has a child encountered since conception until the present moment that could have in some way affected or influenced “him”?
- What cognitions, sensations, emotions and memories, are experienced by a child who continues to be bullied?
- How does the child who is being bullied experience this physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively?

1.6 THE RESEARCH AIM

The main aim of this research study was to investigate the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. It sought to identify and describe the significant life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, from conception to the present moment. I included this time frame because as explained in Appendix 5, my experience and knowledge as an educational psychologist drew my attention to a pattern of trauma (both in utero and following birth) in the life experiences of children who were continuously being bullied. This would require listening to the voices of middle childhood learners who had experienced being bullied, and would contribute to developing an intervention for children who continue to be bullied.
1.7 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The following key terms and concepts are clarified in terms of how they are used and understood in this study.

1.7.1 Bullying

Bullying may be regarded as having the following key characteristics or necessary criteria (Rigby, 2014a, para.11), which on their own are not sufficient to constitute bullying (Rigby, 2012):

- a desire to hurt
- hurtful action
- power imbalance
- (typically) repetition
- an unjust use of power
- evident enjoyment by the aggressor
- a sense of being oppressed on part of the victim

In addition, bullying takes on different forms, to be elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

1.7.2 Middle childhood

Middle childhood may be defined as the developmental period between six and 12 years and the experiences, interactions and environments to which a child is exposed during this period, with a direct bearing on physical, cognitive, emotional and social development (Mah & Ford-Jones, 2012). According to Mackay et al. (2011), bullying occurs more in primary than high schools, and younger children are more likely to be exposed to direct victimisation. Smith et al. (2002) found that girls experience more indirect bullying and boys more physical bullying, whilst Shaffer and Kipp (2010) reported physical and verbal aggression in decline over the course of middle childhood, whereas hostile aggression tends to increase.
1.8 PROBLEM STATEMENT

I have argued thus far, with some empirical and some theoretical evidence, that despite the multiplicity of researched interventions worldwide, bullying continues to be a problem. The effects of being bullied continuously have serious consequences for the mental health of any individual, such as suicidal ideation, fear and anxiety (Swearer et al., 2010). I therefore focused on the life experiences of a certain group of children, those in middle childhood, who continue to be bullied. I seek to identify how these life experiences may contribute to the vicious cycle of being bullied. This knowledge would direct attention to the implementation of different interventions which, together with existing ones, could result in the successful decline of bullying and being bullied.

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In an attempt to gain insight into the life experiences of children who continue to be bullied I made use of social constructionism as the theoretical framework. From this framework “experience” may be regarded as a construction of multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon. In Gergen’s words, “Together we construct our worlds” (Gergen, 2009, p. 2.). This was crucial in order to “…change the discourse and our social attitudes…” (Young, 2009, p. 52) towards children who continually are bullied. Gergen (2009) contends that the meaning one derives from the world is rooted in social relationships, whilst for Burr (2003), social constructionism focuses on the social interaction between individuals and language as a form of social action. Due to the emphasis on language I avoided making use of words that tend to label an individual, such as a ‘victim’ or ‘bully’. As Gergen (2009) also claims, labels become self-fulfilling prophesies and for transformation to occur it is necessary to generate new forms of language which challenge existing understanding and offer new possibilities for action. Furthermore, Gergen, Lightfoot and Sydow (2004) state that one may view a phenomenon, such as bullying, not as individual behaviour but rather as emerging from a relational process.
As bullying is a complex phenomenon, influenced by a variety of systems, such as the individual, family, school and/or wider socio-cultural environment (Hilton, Annge-Cole, & Wakita, 2010), I also made use of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, which makes use of the principle of interconnectedness. According to Bronfenbrenner, the principle of interconnectedness:

is seen as applying not only within settings but with equal force and consequence to linkages between settings, both those in which the developing person actually participates and those he or she may never enter but in which events occur that affect what happens in the persons immediate environment. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 54)

This model therefore enabled me to view the life experiences of children in middle childhood who continue to be bullied from five organised sub-systems, ranging from the microsystem to the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This will be elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study was approached within a social constructionist theoretical framework and used a qualitative phenomenological lens to explore the experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. It was conducted over four phases, as outlined in the diagram below (Figure 1.1). Knowledge was thus derived socially from the interaction between and among myself and my research participants, because in a world of multiple realities there can be no universal answers (Creswell, 2007). The goal of phenomenology is to investigate more deeply the participants’ internal world as it is experienced, in order to “…understand someone else’s world as if you were standing in her shoes…” (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010, p. 25). Furthermore, besides uncovering the shared life experiences of being bullied I also uncovered the unique and lived experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, a hallmark of phenomenological research (Spinelli, 2005).
Figure 1.1: Phases of research process

**PHASE 1 - Planning and preparation**
- Critical review of the literature; development and acceptance of research proposal; getting approval from the ethics committee of the university; getting authorisation from the school to do the research study; research journal (reflecting); purposeful sampling.

**PHASE 2 - Data collection**
- Field notes; observations; self-reflective diary; in-depth open interviews; expressive art therapy techniques; informal interviews.

**PHASE 3 - Data analysis**
- 6 STEPS OF Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): 
  1. Choosing one case and reading and rereading it 
  2. Initial noting 
  3. Developing emergent themes 
  4. Searching for connections across emergent themes 
  5. Moving to the next case 
  6. Looking for patterns across the cases

**PHASE 4 - Developing an intervention for children who continue to be bullied**
- Process will unfold
- PHASE 4 OUTPUT
  - Bullying intervention

**PHASE 1 OUTPUT**
- Focus

**PHASE 2 OUTPUT**
- IPA

**PHASE 3 OUTPUT**
- IPA
The first phase of the research process commenced with a critical review of the literature, as well as the development and acceptance of the research proposal. It also comprised getting approval from the ethics committee of the university and getting authorisation from the school at which the research study was taking place. During the second phase of the research process (Figure 1.1, below) I made use of multiple data collecting procedures,\(^5\) a hallmark of ‘good’ qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), in order to describe and understand the experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, then ultimately to develop a framework for intervention. As can be seen in Figure 4.2, in Chapter 4, qualitative research is a process that does not adhere to a linear or structured format, in that Phases 2 and 3 occur simultaneously. For example, whilst I continued to collect the data I also emerged in analysing the data.

The goal of phenomenology is to investigate more deeply the internal world as it is experienced, in order “…to understand someone else’s world as if you were standing in her shoes…” (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010, p. 25). The need for conducting phenomenological research arose from my intention to uncover not only the shared life experiences of being bullied but also the unique and lived experiences of middle childhood children being continuously bullied, a hallmark of phenomenological research (Spinelli, 2005). I made use of purposeful sampling to draw on three children in middle childhood from the school in which I was working and who had a history of being bullied. The samples were selected purposefully rather than randomly, so they could offer this research project insight into their life experiences, consistent with qualitative research in general, and with Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) orientation in particular (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases according to the purpose of the research, thus enabling one to study them in depth and gain insight and greater understanding. To this end, Patton (2001) describes purposeful sampling techniques for selecting information-rich cases, some of which I made use, namely extreme or deviant case sampling as I selected children who not only were bullied but also continued to be bullied (Smith et al., 2004).

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\(^5\) The data collecting procedures used with the various participants can be viewed in Chapter 4, Table 4.4.
According to Patton (2001, p. 232), “…the logic of extreme case sampling is that lessons may be learnt about unusual conditions or extreme outcomes that are relevant to improving more typical programs.”

More can be learnt from studying exemplary cases instead of a representative sample, such as including children who escape being bullied, because it is the extreme nature of such cases that make them so powerful. To meet the criteria for being selected for this research project it was central that the children had a history of being bullied over the years. Identification of these children was possible because bullying happens daily in the context of the school in which I was working. In addition, I also involved the children’s parents, relevant peers and teachers of the children who continue to be bullied, as I was interested in obtaining multiple perspectives of the children’s experiences.

1.10.1 Data collection

I used multiple data collecting procedures, a hallmark of ‘good’ qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), in order to describe and understand the experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. During the first phase of research, besides conducting a literature review, I began to reflect on the research process in my research journal, writing down what I saw, heard, experienced and thought (Groenewald, 2004). For Richardson (1994, p. 516), as cited by Ortlipp (2008), the research journal “…is a place for writing as a method of inquiry”, and helps to address the problem of bias in qualitative research, as pointed out by Denzin and Lincoln (2005). During the second phase of research, as well as continuing to engage with the literature, I also made use of my research diary\(^6\) to write down detailed description of observations of experiences exhibited by the children being bullied. I made use of naturalistic observation, which is unstructured as it takes place in the natural setting without manipulating the setting in any way (McKechnie, 2008). A major strength of naturalistic observation is that “…the data collected closely reflect the real, naturally occurring context and the actual actions

\(^6\) Refer to Appendix 12 and 13 to see excerpts from my research diary
of the participants in that context…” thus enhancing the trustworthiness of the data (McKechnie, 2008, p. 550).

I continued to use my research diary to facilitate methodological decision and bracketing skills during the research process (Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson & Poole, 2004), and conducted in-depth open interviews (Groenewald, 2004) with the parents, to gain access to the significant life experiences of their children. Utilising the in-depth open interview gave me access to the children’s life experiences, as did various forms of expressive art therapy techniques, such as drawings and collages (Synder, 1997). Deacon (2000) advocates the use of creative methods to collect qualitative data as she argues that such methods, besides enhancing trustworthiness, enable the researcher not only to hear but also to see the stories behind the participants’ perceptions and experiences. Rogers (1993, p. 28) points out that we can better understand the world of the participants when they express themselves through images because: “Colour, form, and symbols are languages that speak from the unconscious and have particular meaning for each individual.” Such methods relate to the research question and theoretical framework of social constructionism, however they are not to be confused with arts-based research (Barone, 2008), which will be elaborated upon in Chapter 4. I also made use of semi-structured interviews (Ayres, 2008) with the children when talking about their experiences of being bullied through sandplay (Synder, 1997), to be explained in Chapter 4. These interviews were videotaped or audiotaped and transcribed (Brinkmann, 2008) verbatim by me, with the assistance of Dragon Naturally Speaking software (McGinn, 2008).

In addition, I made use of an open ended informal interview (Fetterman, 2008) with one of the participants at the school. These resemble a casual conversation but used to discover how people conceptualise their culture (Fetterman, 2008). I audiotaped and transcribed this informal interview, which I put into the memo section of the qualitative computer software programme Atlas.ti 7.5 (Dowling, 2008). In addition to this interview, I also made use of informal interviewing with note taking, which is typical of naturalistic observation (McKechnie, 2008), when

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7 Refer to Appendix 5 to see my reflexive bracketing.
8 The interview process will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.
9 The questions used for the semi-structured interview are indicated in Chapter 4.
friends of the participants relayed relevant information to me. Formal, oral consent was requested from certain friends at such moments (Roulston, 2008). At other times, I made notes of what was said in my research journal soon after the conversation (Brodsky, 2008).

### 1.10.2 Data analysis

I used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), an important approach to phenomenological research in psychology (Smith, 2011), to analyse and interpret the qualitative data. IPA aims to offer an interpretive account of what it means for the participants in their particular context (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Analysis of the data moves from the descriptive to the interpretive (Smith, et al., 2009). The third phase of the research process overlapped with the second, because I engaged with data analysis whilst still collecting the data. I also made use of *Atlas.ti* in the management of the textual and graphical data (Dowling, 2008). In addition, I employed Johnny Saldaña’s Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers in coding my data (Saldaña, 2013). I followed Smith et al.’s (2009) guidelines, which consist of six steps, to interpret the data.\(^\text{10}\) Firstly, I chose the first participant’s experience and immersed myself in the data by reading and rereading the experience. Secondly, I wrote comprehensive notes about the data, then interpreted it by categorising the notes into emergent themes (Larkin et al., 2006). Next, I searched for connections across the emergent themes then moved to the next participant and repeated the process. Finally, I sought for patterns across the three participants’ life experiences. The analysis emanated from developed patterns of meaning which are reported thematically, and served as a bridge to the fourth phase of the research process which enabled me to develop a framework for intervention.

### 1.10.3 Trustworthiness of the data

Trustworthiness of the data was verified through the methodological norms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Babbie & Mouton, 2009;  

\(^{10}\) The process of interpreting the data is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.
Given & Saumure, 2008), and through staying in the field until it was saturated. This involved audiotaping, member checks, thick descriptions, a reflective diary and an audit trail. In addition, crystallization enabled me to tell the same tale from different perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), as will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Delving into the life experiences of children who continue to be bullied is a sensitive issue, potentially impacting on both child and parents, and therefore necessitates careful consideration of several pertinent issues. As Houghton, Casey, Shaw and Murphy (2010) point out, there are several ethical dilemmas with which qualitative researchers are confronted. These include issues of informed consent procedures, the relationship between researcher and participant, the ratio between risk and benefit, confidentiality and the dual role of researcher and, as in my case, psychologist. I made use of Hammick’s (1996) Research Ethics Wheel (REW), as cited by Whiting and Vickers (2010), to assist me in evaluating ethical dilemmas. However, before I could concern herself with the procedural aspects of ethics I needed to reflect on engaging children in exploring their life experiences, especially in light of their continuing to be bullied and how this research therefore had to be conducted to their advantage. I had to reflect on who I needed to include in the study, and sought approval through the Ethics Committee of the Faculty, submitting an ethics clearance application form (refer to page iii). Next, I approached the rector and principal at the school for consent to conduct this research. All participants were then asked to sign an informed assent/consent form. Parents were asked to read, inform and discuss with their children the nature and purpose of research. The participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the research process at any time during the study, without any recrimination. Houghton et al. (2010) point out that this is important, as the boundaries of the relationship can become blurred as the study

11 These ethical considerations are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.
12 Refer to Appendix 8.3
13 Refer to Appendix 8.2
14 Refer to Appendix 8.1
progresses, due to the nature of qualitative research. Moreover, the consent form also included an assurance of confidentiality when the information would be dispersed to third parties.

Member checking was employed as a method so that the participants could confirm that their views had been accurately recorded, and so avoid potential exposure and embarrassment (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001; Houghton et al., 2010). Since I also work as an educational psychologist at the school in which I conducted the research, the clarification of the purpose of the research was necessary, with my role as a researcher explained so that the participants had no false expectations\(^\text{15}\) (Houghton et al., 2010). I was able to contain any anxiety or emotional upset, but had it been necessary I would have referred participants to another psychologist. Researchers have to weigh the potential benefits with risks during research (Houghton et al., 2010).

1.12 PLAN OF STUDY

The thesis is organized into seven chapters, as follows.

**Chapter one** has acquainted the reader with the background and context of the research problem. In this chapter the problem statement as well as the rationale and motivation for conducting this study are introduced. In addition, the research question and goals of the study are stated, as well as the research design, ethical considerations and the underlying assumptions.

In **Chapter two** a review of literature which informs the positioning of the study within theoretical and conceptual frameworks. It informs the reader of the broad theoretical framework social constructionism, in particular Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model.

**Chapter three** reviews the conceptual literature on bullying and middle childhood which reflects the threads that are presented in the research question, namely the life experiences of children, in middle childhood, who continue to be bullied.

\(^{15}\) The dual role of researcher-psychologist is elaborated upon in Chapter 4.
The methodological options and motivation for choices of the methodologies are presented in **Chapter four**. It also covers methodological dilemmas which are presented by being a practicing educational psychologist researcher conducting research with vulnerable children. Details of the ethics and methodological rigour which ensure trustworthiness of the study are included in this chapter.

In **Chapter five** an interpretation of the final themes of the life experiences of children in middle childhood, who continue to be bullied, which emerged from the data analysis, elucidated by means of verbatim extracts will be disclosed. This will be followed by a discussion of the results linking the analysis to the extant literature.

**Chapter six** covers the development of a board game for therapeutic intervention for children who continue to be bullied.

**Chapter seven** draws the conclusions and makes recommendations.

### 1.13 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an overview of the study focusing on the background and motivation of the research, whilst outlying the purpose, aims, as well as the research design, methods and analysis. It also informed the reader of the ethical considerations and research assumptions\(^{16}\) in addition to clarifying the main concepts.

From a social constructionist position, it is vital to point out that this research study is a process, rather than a perfect blueprint. It is similar to a journey with an end goal in mind, but the route in between can and will change. However, I as researcher will communicate this to you as reader, because I as researcher am in social interaction with not just my research participants but with you as reader as well as many other researchers when I engage with their literature that also serves to inform and guide me. As Gergen (2009, p. 98) says, “…by virtue of collaborative action.”

\(^{16}\) Refer to Appendix 5 to view my research assumptions
In the next chapter, a literature review, on the theoretical framework social constructionism will be discussed as well as Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model.
CHAPTER 2

A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST AND BIOECOLOGICAL MODEL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical framework to the reader. Firstly, social constructionism and its underlying features relating to the experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied will be discussed. Next, central features of a social constructionist view of a middle childhood child will be highlighted, followed by Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model regarding middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. Finally, social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model will be integrated.

2.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

I argue that social constructionism is a valuable theoretical framework for seeking an integrated and non-distorted understanding of the phenomenon of bullying and the role it plays in the lives of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. This allows me as researcher to include not only psychological factors but also political, economic and institutional ones which therefore broaden my understanding of this complex phenomenon, whilst focussing on interrelations of events over extended periods of time rather than on minute segments of continuing processes (Gergen, 1973). This is important because, as Rigby (2014a) points out, social phenomena such as bullying vary considerably over time, and the criteria that determine how power and authority are exercised are constantly changing. What once may have been deemed as justified behaviour, such as slavery, caning by teachers and ‘fags’ at boarding schools, may presently be condemned or still condoned (Rigby, 2014a). Gergen (2009a, p. 2)

17 A fag is a slang word for a junior boy who acts like a servant
writes that this is so because: “What we take to be the world importantly depends on how we approach it, and how we approach it depends on the social relationships of which we are apart.” So, for example, in the matter of bullying, if one regards it as normal childhood behaviour (what one takes to be the world), it follows that one will turn a blind eye to it (the way one approaches it), as when colleagues or others with whom one interacts do the same. In addition, social constructionism lets me as researcher go beyond merely answering the old positivistic question why? and instead enables me to ask the ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions of experiences, thereby “…making visible important features of otherwise unknown experiences or social worlds” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p. 8). This latter is my primary aim and lies behind my research question.

As bullying is a social problem, involving interaction with at least one other person, it necessitates a social theory such as social constructionism, rather than a learning theory such as constructivism, to investigate this complex phenomenon. Even though both views enrich understanding of how children learn and grow (Ackermann, 2001), the former is distinguished by its focus on how knowledge and meaning is historically and culturally constructed through social processes and action whilst the latter stresses the role of the individual in the construction of knowledge (Young & Collin, 2004). According to Raskin and McNamee (2004, p. 4) “…from this perspective, our “private thoughts” or deep-rooted images and beliefs we hold can be described as internal conversations (relations) with others.” (Robbins, 2003) points out that although Vygotsky is labelled as a constructivist because of his own use of the term, there is a link between constructionism and his theory of social constructivism. According to Robbins (2003, para. 8), both perspectives “…place community prior to the individual; both look at individual rationality largely as a by-product of the social sphere; and both hold cooperative and dialogic processes as central to the process of education.” However, the fundamental difference between the two perspectives lies in Vygotsky’s emphasis on social interaction as a psychological process, whereas constructionism highlights interdependent interaction at the microsocial level and is concerned with issues such as “…negotiation, cooperation, conflict, rhetoric, ritual, roles, and social scenarios” (Gergen, 1995, p. 24-25 as quoted by Robbins, 2003, para. 9).

According to Blikstein (2013), Seymour Papert, a South African born
Mathematician, who worked under Piaget, contributed to the development of constructionism in educational contexts. Papert (1991) wrote:

> Constructionism shares constructivism's connotation of learning as 'building knowledge structures' irrespective of the circumstances of the learning. It then adds the idea that this happens especially felicitously in a context where the learner is consciously engaged in constructing a public entity, whether it's a sandcastle on the beach or a theory of the universe. (Cited by Ackermann, 2001, p. 3, & Blikstein, 2013, para. 4)

Ackermann argues that the difference between Vygotsky's social constructivism and social constructionism lies in three aspects:

A. In the role such external aids are meant to play at higher levels of a person's development, B. In the types of external aids, or media studied (Papert focuses on digital media and computer-based technologies), C. In the type of initiative the learner takes in the design of her own 'objects to think with.' (Ackermann, 2001, para. 13)

According to Burr (2003), social constructionism focuses on the social interaction between individuals and language as a form of social action, and language may be regarded as a social phenomenon or sign that occurs between people either actively or implicitly in multiple forms, such as text, the spoken word, pictures, photographs, body gestures or tone of voice. For Gergen (2009a), language is utilised to express experiences of the world, whilst from a social constructionist perspective, “Knowledge and understanding are not in the person but in the performance... it is not what is in the head, but what people are doing together that concerns us” (Raskin & McNamee, 2004, p. 3). This is neatly encapsulated in an article describing the nature of relational bullying among girls, which makes this “…invisible problem of bullying more visible…” (Swart & Bredekamp, 2009, p 405).

This study focuses on the life experiences of children in middle childhood who continue to be bullied, exploring different categorical forms of bullying, such as verbal, physical, relational and cyber (see Figure 3.1). Gergen, Lightfoot and Sydow (2004) view the phenomenon not as individual behaviour but rather as emerging from a relational process, conveyed through the concepts, 'enjoyment by the aggressor' and 'a feeling of oppression by the person being bullied'. In an attempt to gain insight into the life experiences of children who continue to be bullied, I therefore made use of social constructionism, as Gergen (2009a) contends that the meaning we derive about our world is rooted in our social
relationships. This also fits in well with one of South Africa’s core values ‘Ubuntu,’ which considers the self in relation to others (Waghid & Smeyers, 2012). As Burr (2003, p. 2) points out, “…social constructionism is a term that is used almost exclusively by psychologists,” as it may be regarded as a meta-theory applied to psychological inquiry in order to better understand human nature (Owen, 1995; Reichertz & Zielke, 2008).

In summary, social constructionism is a useful theory to utilise in order to gain a broader understanding of the complex phenomenon of bullying because it necessitates going beyond the individual and instead focuses on the social interaction between individuals and language as a social action. This is important because bullying is a social problem, as clearly reflected in the criteria, and requires a social theory to make visible the invisible life experiences of individuals. For example, in the literature pertaining to bullying multiple types of relationships (mother-child, child-teacher, friendship) were found to predict different patterns of peer bullying across elementary school (Reavis, Keane & Calkins, 2010). Furthermore, Yang and Salmivalli (2013) found that children who bullied and were bullied (bully-victims) resorted to different types of bullying compared to children who just bullied.

2.2.1 Features of social constructionism

Given that an important element of social constructionism involves a belief that there is no absolute truth there can be no single definition of it. Instead, certain key assumptions (Burr, 2003) are outlined in this section, as they relate to the research topic, namely the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied.

2.2.1.1 Anti-essentialism

As an educational psychologist it is also important that I treat my research participants as human beings and not pathologise them as mere objects as traditional psychologists have tended to do (Burr, 2003). According to Gergen and
Gergen (2003), the focus of constructionist inquiry is on language that potentially injures or oppresses human wellbeing, whilst for Mallon (2007b) constructionist anti-essentialists are interested in replacing categorised explanations of natural or biological human differences with relational or social differences. Acknowledging this emphasis on language, I avoided making use of words that tend to label an individual, such as a ‘victim’ or ‘bully,’ as these may become self-fulfilling, whereas for transformation to occur it is necessary to generate new forms of language that challenge existing understanding and offer new possibilities for action. Foucault (2006, p. 7) claimed that identities are not fixed but evolve through social interaction with others because concepts are, “…characterized by its system of belief.” According to Davies (2011), ‘labels’ serve to focus on the person who is being bullied rather than asking how society has played an active role in the behaviour. It is in this light that I utilised bullying as a verb to describe children who are bullied or who bully, rather than as a noun which serves to label.

2.2.1.2 Knowledge derived from different global perspectives

As social constructionism denies that knowledge is a direct perception of reality, there is no such thing as objective fact (Andrews, 2012; Burr, 2003), but rather knowledge is viewed as looking at the world from different perspectives and concerns (Burr, 2003). According to Gergen (1996, p. 120), “univocal agreements occlude possibilities for self-reflective appraisals [because they] suppress rather than open up a space for other voices” and “…in the name of universal truth the world has witnessed oppression, torture, murder, and genocide” (Gergen, 2009a, p. 11).

Social constructionism refutes the idea of any single truth as it claims that together we construct our realities (Burr, 2003). In the literature surrounding the definition of bullying, it becomes evident that some authors perceive bullying as violent, whereas others make a distinction between violence and bullying (Richter & de Wet, 2003).18 According to a World Health Organisation (WHO) (2002, p. 80) report, interpersonal violence is defined as “…the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person that results in or has a high

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18 See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion.
likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.” This definition equates bullying with violence, whilst for Gabarino, in the foreword to *Bullying in American Schools* (ed. Espelage & Swearer, 2004), it may be emotional as well as physical violence. In terms of logic, violence is often associated with crime but not all violence is criminal, conversely not all crime is violent. Burton and Leoschut (2013, p. 2) argue that “…bullying is often considered too inconsequential to constitute violence, with little recognition of the damage – psychological, emotional and/or physical – that can be caused.”

Georgaca (2013, p. 56) points out that from a social constructionist perspective, classification of mental distress should not be taken for granted, but rather “…treated as topics of investigation in their own right.” One should therefore avoid the pitfall of assigning a psychopathological category to a person or diagnosing an individual’s distress without first considering what the individual is experiencing. A diagnosis is not a pre-existing object lying inside the person in distress. From this perspective, it can therefore also be argued that the psychological distress experienced by individuals who are bullied needs to be taken into consideration and should not be underestimated or ignored (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010).

### 2.2.1.3 Historical and cultural specificity of knowledge

From a social constructionist perspective it is argued that understanding of the world and the concepts used to describe it are dependent upon both historical and cultural contexts (Burr, 2003; Danaher, Schirato, & Webb, 2000), historical, in the sense that concepts change over time, and cultural in the sense that understanding of them may be viewed as products or artefacts of a particular social and economic position in culture (Burr, 2003). Hence, the concept of bullying, besides changing over time, also has different connotations worldwide.

Historically, the concept ‘bullying’ can be traced back to Heinemann (1973), who according to Smith et al. (2002, p. 1119) and Olweus (2010, p. 9) was the first person to write about the phenomenon, using the term “mobbing” or “mobbing” to refer to group violence against a deviant individual. Olweus (2010) claims that Heinemann used the term ‘mobbing’ or ‘mobbing’ in the context of racial
discrimination, and borrowed it from Konrad Lorenz (1963, 1968), an ethologist, to refer to a collective attack by a group of animals on one from another species. Smith et al. (2002) point out how historically the concept of bullying has widened from its initial emphasis on physical and verbal forms to include indirect forms of bullying such as gossiping, social exclusion and spreading of rumours. The media for cyberbullying have also changed, from emails and texting to social networking and instant messaging.

The term ‘bullying’ is also culturally specific, with for example Smith et al. (2002) pointing to variations in Japan, where the term *ijime* is used to depict social manipulation, and in Italy, where *prepotenza* and *violenza* are used for more physical acts of aggression. Smith et al. (2002) draw attention to the importance of the various terms of bullying used in one language such as English, with the United States of America (USA) using terms ‘victimisation’ and ‘peer rejection.’ On the other hand, the term ‘harassment’ is used to depict adolescent or adult behaviours relating to sexual or racial acts, and the term ‘abuse’ is used in the context of the family to illustrate parent-child or spousal abuse.

In this study I use the term ‘bullying’\(^{19}\) to denote negative or aggressive, repetitive, acts of behaviour over time, involving *hurtful action* and an *imbalance of power* by *one or a group of persons towards another*, entailing an *unjust abuse of power* with a *desire to harm* the person being bullied, while the person who is bullying *gains enjoyment*. These aggressive acts manifest in various forms such as physical (hit, kick, push, shove around or lock in a room), verbal (saying mean and hurtful things, making fun of or calling the person mean and hurtful names), relational (completely ignore or exclude a person from a group of friends or leave the person out on purpose), or cyber bullying (aggression occurs through electronic means such as mobile phones and the internet), and which occurs either directly (offensive gesture, an insult or a blow), or indirectly (social manipulation, exclusion or tell lies or spread false rumours about the person or send mean notes and try to make other peers dislike the person). I refrain from using concepts such as bully and victim, because as Wolin (1988) and Foucault

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\(^{19}\) Refer to Chapter 3 for a comprehensive definition.
argue, such labels reduce the human being to an object, for the benefit of practices, such as schools.

2.2.1.4 Language a precondition for thought

From a social constructionist perspective, experience is socially constructed through language, thereby asserting that language is a precondition for thought, unlike traditional psychology which views language as an expression of thought as contended by Piaget (Burr, 2003). In other words, social constructionism asserts that language provides the structure and content of thought, what one says is what one thinks (Burr, 2003), rather than what one thinks is what one says. In the literature pertaining to bullying this is reflected in the way individuals define bullying. For example, Cheng, Chen Ho, and Cheng (2011, p. 239) found that it is important for educators to teach students the difference between jokes and bullying because “…what bullies claimed to be a joke was abusive behaviour for the victims.” Furthermore, constructionist therapies, such as Solution Focused Therapy and Narrative Therapy focus on change and resources rather than the causes of the problems (Prochaska & Norcross, 2013). For example, Solution Focused Therapy focuses on solutions to problems rather than rehashing them (Gergen, 2009a; Prochaska & Norcross, 2013), whilst Narrative Therapy externalises the problem to help the clients re-story their lives and not let the problem become their whole identity (Gergen, 2009a; Prochaska & Norcross, 2013).

According to Burr (2003, p 50), “The power of language to bring about change in our thinking is sometimes explicitly utilised by those seeking social change.” Gergen (1996) points out how reflexive dialogue is an important form of scholarship within the constructionist frame, in order to prevent taking for granted assumptions which have the potential to oppress. In terms of bullying, the concept ‘victim’ implicates the individual as a martyr, rendering helplessness, whereas writing the phrase ‘is bullied’ takes the sole responsibility away from the child being bullied and shares this responsibility among significant others, such as the peers, family, and school.
Social constructionism challenges the traditional psychology view that language is a passive vehicle for our thoughts and emotions and contends that it “…has practical consequences, restrictions and obligations for people that need to be recognized” (Burr, 2003, p. 8). From this point of view, language is viewed not just as a form of expression or description but rather as a function which culminates in social action. Gergen (2009a), for example, illustrates how identified disorders parallel the increased numbers of medical health practitioners, which in turn lead to the expansion of mental disorders as now reflected in the fifth Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Our view of reality depends on how we define it, and what we take for granted can be challenged: “We could construct a world in which there are three genders, the ‘mentally ill’ are ‘spiritual healers’, or where ‘the power’ in all organizations lies not within individual leaders but in the lowly worker” (Gergen, 2009a, p. 5).

Gergen implies we could view our world very differently. Firstly, one could view homosexuals and/or cross-dressers as a third or another type of gender, framed in a positive way, rather than perceive their behaviour as abnormal. This thought is now echoed in a news article which states that, as from November 2013, Germany became the first country to offer a “third gender” by allowing parents to leave the gender category blank so individuals can eventually decide for themselves (Scherker, 2013). Similarly, this thought is reaffirmed in the literature pertaining to bullying, in how anti-lesbian/gay/bisexual attitudes were reinforced by teachers, whose attitudes stem from stereotypes and images drawn from the media, cultural attitudes, belief systems and peer group attitudes (Rivers, 2010). Secondly, Mosotho, Louw and Calitz (2011) argue that culture has an impact on what is conceived as normal and abnormal behaviour. Cumes (2013, p. 58), for example, conveys that the sangoma or inyanga, a traditional African healer, has much to teach the West about the spirit world and ancestral roots when it comes to healing, using “…altered states of consciousness, spirit possession and sometimes out-of-body spirit flight to gain knowledge about any problem at hand.” Mosotho et al. (2011) warn that cultural variables, such as apparent depersonalisation in
schizophrenia, should not always be confused with psychopathological features, as certain symptoms may be regarded as normal in one culture but considered abnormal in another. With regard to bullying, Hilton et al. (2010, p. 413) highlight how “…mental health professionals need to be aware of cultural variations in bullying and work collaboratively with schools and families to develop effective treatment plans.” Thirdly, the latter part of Gergen’s quote implies that the power of organisations lies within leaders empowering their workers through encouragement and motivation, rather than abusing their power of leadership and mistreating the workers as ‘lowly’, to achieve their personal agendas. In the bullying literature, Whitted and Dupper (2005) point out how the most successful bullying interventions do not just focus on individuals, such as the bully or child who is being bullied, but rather seek to change the culture and climate of the school.

In their report, ‘The Role of Power in Effective Leadership’, the authors define power as “the potential to influence others” but explain that leaders should use it to achieve individual, team and organisational goals (Bal, Campbell, Steed, & Meddings, 2005). From the literature on bullying, Davies (2011) writes how anti-bullying programmes, based on the individualising definitions, can lead to complex processes of recognition of bullying behaviour. Individualising definitions complicates matters when teachers have to discern what is ‘normal conflict’ among individuals and groups and often ignore unacceptable behaviour such as bullying. Individualising definitions forces teachers to judge characters (who is bullying versus who is being bullied) based on an individual’s intentions, and she cites Foucault (1975), for whom psychiatrists and the law courts had difficulty doing so. Davies (2011, p. 282) therefore argues for ethical codes of conduct and values that involve “…ongoing reflective practices that begin, not with the individualised persons as entities, but with the productive and performative relational practices within which and through which subjects are emergent in ongoing acts of becoming.” Davies implies that rather than judging individuals as bullies, and rectifying their behaviour, one should work with such children to continually learn and acquire the skills of thinking, so that they can reflect on and discover their capacities to be different.
I shall refrain from using the word ‘victim’ because this concept infers that the research participant is the researcher’s prey and object of sacrifice and that I can experiment with my research participants rather than collaborate with them as human beings with a soul, body, and mind of their own. Furthermore, it renders helplessness on the individual level, thereby highlighting a need for intervention at this level only, which is not the focus of social constructionism. I shall therefore refer to the verb, “being bullied” instead.

2.2.1.6 A focus on interaction and social practices

Social constructionism relocates difficulties such as being bullied away from the person and instead considers the influence of social structures on bullying behaviour. It focuses on how interaction with social structures, such as the economy, or major institutions such as the school and family, give rise to such phenomena (Burr, 2003). For example, instead of pathologising a child who is being bullied the social constructionist would challenge this by looking at how the interactions between the child, its peers, teachers, the family, others and the school have contributed towards the behaviour. Social constructionism uses the term ‘the relational self’ to depict a person as a function of their relationships with others (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1996). According to Gergen (1996, p. 114) “…an individual's self-esteem can be shaped from moment to moment by others’ expressions of esteem for them.” A study by Ojala and Nesdale (2004) found that male students between the ages of 10 and 13 years understood that they needed to behave according to the group norms, even if this required them to bully, in order to be accepted and retained as a group member. In addition, Rodkin (2011) noted that peers play an important role in both promoting and preventing bullying, whilst Thornberg (2010) lists several social representations among children on causes of bullying. The most prevalent of these include regarding bullying as a reaction to deviance, as social positioning, as the work of a disturbed bully, a revengeful action, an amusing game, and a thoughtless happening (Thornberg, 2010). As social contamination, even though children can be kind to another on a one-to-one basis they begin to bully when they come together as a group. In the context of my research question, I therefore focus on interactions between the child who is being bullied and the school, family, teachers and peers.
2.2.1.7 A focus on processes rather than structures

Gergen (1985, p. 266) argues that social constructionist inquiry attempts to move beyond the dualism of empiricist and rational inquiry and “…place knowledge within the process of social interchange.” He claims that “…research findings have no meaning until they are interpreted and these interpretations are not demanded by the findings themselves, but instead result from a process of negotiated meaning within the community” (Gergen, 1996, p. 118). Meanwhile, for Burr (2003) traditional psychology explained phenomena from questions directed about the nature of people or society, in forms of traits, models and structures. Social constructionism on the other hand prefers explanations of phenomena in terms of the dynamics of social interaction (Burr, 2003; Mallon, 2007a), hence the social constructionist’s focus of social enquiry considers how phenomena such as bullying are achieved by people in interaction, rather than seeing what a person has or does not have, and my focus is on the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied.

To recapitulate, social constructionism is considered a respectful and optimistic theory to reveal the life experiences of children who continue to be bullied because of the following key assumptions. It abstains from pathologising individuals as “bullies” or “victims” and acknowledges the various individual’s perspectives. In addition, it places emphasis on the historical and cultural context of individuals rather than merely focusing on the individual, such as Kiilakoski and Oksanen (2011) do when they indicate the cultural and peer influences on homicidal violence in Finnish schools. Furthermore, it posits that language is a precondition for thought and thus experience is viewed as socially constructed, as reflected in difficulties in finding terms in different languages to correspond to the English word bullying (Smith et al., 2002). Because it regards language as a form of social action that has practical consequences it encourages the use of concepts that facilitate rather than limit development. Rigby (2008) thus is realistic in his approach to bullying, believing that it is more about reduction than eradication. Finally, social constructionism focuses on processes in preference to structures as for example mirrored in focusing on contextual interventions for preventing bullying rather than only focusing on individual interventions for reducing bullying (Cook,
Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). Social constructionism sees knowledge as something people do together and not something a person has or does not have. The development of middle childhood personality from a social constructionist perspective shall be examined next.

2.2.2 Central features of a social constructionist view of middle childhood

In general, Gergen (2009b) contends that viewing the self as an individual is dangerous and is at the root of interpersonal and international conflict, such as the phenomenon of bullying. Besides nurturing self-gratification rather than cooperation, individualism also encourages self-interest; a lack of trust and intimacy; solicits competition; places blame onto individuals rather than society; exploits people and nature; and fails to see how one’s interests are actually connected to other nations as well, rather than being in conflict with them (Burr, 2003).

In contrast to individualism, Gergen (2009b), Baker and McNulty (2013), Chen, Boucher and Kraus (2011) and Andersen and Chen (2002) view the self as a ‘relational self.’ From this perspective it is regarded as a complex product and function of relations with others, including all past and present relations. Gergen (2009b) contends that each new relationship shapes the self, whilst for Andersen and Chen (2002) this has implications for self-definition, self-evaluation, self-regulation and personality functioning. Gergen (2009a) claims that in order to manage conflict better we need to engage in conversations and reflect carefully on the way we use language, to encourage, hear and respect the multiplicity of voices, rather than distancing ourselves from each other by holding onto individual beliefs. Myths such as “getting bullied is a natural part of growing up” and “once a victim always a victim” (Graham, 2010, p. 67) need to be challenged from a social constructionist perspective.

2.2.2.1 View of the personality of a middle childhood child

Social constructionism sees personality as ways in which people think about themselves that are dependent upon the particular social and economic climates
prevailing in their culture at that time (Burr, 2003). According to Gergen (2009b, p. 174-175), “…secure realities are increasingly difficult to achieve, because technologies of communication, especially the internet and television expose us daily to a barrage of opinions, values and rationalities.” Following increased social connections, and that through repeated exposure to the various images, individuals have absorbed others into ourselves. Middle childhood children in a private school environment, are increasingly exposed to technology through the Internet, television, as well as computer and video games, but are too emotionally immature to understand it (Advisory Committee on Population Health and Health Security (ACPHHS), Child and Adolescent Development Task Group, 2004). This is clearly illustrated in how this happens when comparing the effect of playing video games to watching television.

Gentile and Anderson (2003) highlight six reasons how engaging with video games may have a greater effect than watching violent TV, especially among children. Firstly, by choosing which character to be in a video game enhances identification with an aggressor and increases the chances of imitating the aggressor’s behaviour. Secondly, active participation in video games increases learning compared to passive participation in watching television. Thirdly, video games are more successful at training whole behavioural sequences compared to television which only display a few steps. Fourthly, the violence in video games is continuous compared to television violence which is interrupted for advertising. Fifthly, video games are played repeatedly thus enhancing learning. Sixthly, the reward patterns in video games motivate players to persist in the game. Gentile and Anderson (2003) also list four effects of playing violent video games that have been demonstrated repeatedly among children and adults. Firstly, the “aggressor effect” indicates that people become meaner, more aggressive and violent (Gentile, 2003, p. 133). Secondly, the “victim effect” states that people see the world as a scarier place, become more scared and initiate more self-protected behaviours (Gentile, 2003, p. 134). Thirdly, the “bystander effect” states that people become more desensitised to violence in real life and in the media, and become less sympathetic to victims of violence. Fourthly, the “appetite effect” states that people’s appetite to watch violence, increases with how much violence they are viewing.
Burr (2003, p. 31) provides three positions of the social constructionist view of personality, on traits that are not stable over time or situation, namely that we behave think and feel differently depending on who we are with, what we are doing and why. For Hunter, Boyle and Warden (2007), the type of power imbalance experienced by children who were being bullied will influence their levels of depression. Burr (2003) contends that personality traits such as friendliness, caring behaviour, bad-temperedness and thoughtlessness would subside if one were alone on a deserted island, as social interaction is necessary for these traits to emerge.

Cultural differences influence personality, for example, divine guidance, invisible spirits and demons are ways in which personality is moulded. Beyers (2010) conveys in his article that from a Black perspective in South African culture, humans are part of the world in which spirits and gods reside, and there are cults of ancestors with the use of magic, charms and spiritual forms. For example, a report on Violence Against Children conveys that body parts are sold or used for activities related to witchcraft or other traditional practices and that most victims of muti murders are children (Department of Social Development (DSD), Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (DWCPD), & United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2012). According to this report one in four of the interviewees believed in traditional medicine, by which muti could heal illnesses, boost economic prosperity and hurt one’s enemies (DSD et al., 2012).

2.2.2.2 Emotional wellbeing

Social constructionism does not locate wellbeing within the individual but rather as being achievable through relationships. Gergen (2009a) points out that the concept of relationship pertains not merely to people but also to the environment of which they are part. Stearns (2007) illustrates through showing how human emotions respond either implicitly or explicitly to social standards, with an example of how the role of the social media promotes suicides. In Gergen’s (2009a, p. 106) words, “...emotions are not the private possessions of the individual mind, but the property of ongoing relationships.” He consequently uses the term ‘relational mind’ to depict emotional wellbeing within relationships and through social collaboration.
Expressions of feelings are communicated or performed to others through embodied symbolic language such as gestures, gazes and postures. Ortega et al. (2012) state that some types of cyberbullying, such as the use of images and videos, are more harmful than threats and insults. Burr (2003, p. 37) further argues that “…diagnosis is less of a physical issue and more of a moral one,” in the sense that emotional status is context-dependent and based on the values of dominant groups.

Graham (2010) sites six myths that cloud understanding of behaviours relating to bullying:

- once a victim, always a victim;
- being bullied is a natural part of growing up;
- bullies have low self-esteem and are rejected by their peers;
- boys are physical and girls are relational victims and bullies;
- zero-tolerance programmes reduce bullying;
- bullying involves only a perpetrator and a victim.

Gergen (2009a, p. 99) explains that such myths arise because, “…it’s not that we have emotions, a thought, or a memory so much as we do them.” He claims for example, that depression is not a mental disorder, but rather that “…an individual “does depression” as a culturally intelligible action within a context of relationship,” the same as bullying is done (Gergen, 2009a, p. 106).

From a social constructionist perspective, “…therapeutic attention shifts outward from the individual mind (“what is wrong with him?”) to the relational scenarios in which the person is engaged” (Gergen, 2009a, p. 106). For the constructionist, the question becomes “…in what degree can an experience be reconstructed so that its suffering is lessened or removed?” (Gergen, 2009a, p. 105). Gergen (2009a) points out that where the traditional medical model focused on cause and effect, social constructionism focuses on meaning. It is in this light that therapies such as solution focused therapy and narrative therapy have emerged. Narrative therapy, for example, focuses on helping the client ‘re-story’ their experiences and externalise their problems instead of internalising them (Gergen, 2009; Prochaska & Norcross, 2013). Casey, Little, MacNeil, March and Slaunwhite (2013) show how to apply this to bullying solutions and bullying prevention in their prezi
presentation. It is thus not surprising that Michael White, founder of narrative therapy, lived by a quote of Foucault’s, “We know what we do, we think we know what we think, but do we know what we do does” (Epston, 2009, p. 74). It is in this light that I have focused on social constructionism as a theory, so that my research question and aim can facilitate my research participants and their families to ‘re-story’ their experiences of being bullied and be freed from the power relations involved with being bullied.

Plaut, Markus, Treadway and Fu (2012) make a distinction between wellbeing in individualistic and collective contexts. According to these authors, wellbeing in individualistic contexts relates to self-esteem, positive effect and happiness, whereas in collective contexts it pertains to harmonious relations and how significant others evaluate the self. These authors also point out that emotions are viewed as internal properties in individualistic contexts, but are dependent on social situations and relationships in collective contexts. This was verified by (Matsunaga, 2010), who found that cultural values influence the way people who are bullied cope. In collectivist cultures people who are bullied keep silent about their bullying experiences because they do not want to disappoint or burden close friends or family, whereas in individualistic cultures individuals who are bullied refrain from telling others based on negative self-consequences.

Johnson (2007) points out that although strong views on social constructionism claim that there are no natural emotions as they are culturally constructed, studies have shown that basic emotions are rooted in animalistic instincts. However, Burr (2003) states that social constructionists should reconceptualise the relationship between individual and society and advocates turning attention to symbolic interactionism, which is the foundation of social constructionism, and acknowledge that both society and individuals arise from interaction and communication between people. It is from this perspective that it is necessary for this research to also include Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model.

From the above, it came to light that from a social constructionist perspective, people view the self as relational as it is the product and function of relations with others. The personality of a middle childhood child is thus seen as the way children think about themselves, as dependent upon the social and economic
climates prevailing at a given time. Furthermore, a child’s personality is not considered stable, as it is contended that a child will think, feel and behave depending on who they are with. As many middle childhood children have had increased exposure to the Internet, television, computers and video games it is through repeated exposure that they have absorbed others into their personalities. In addition, it is proclaimed that from a social constructionist perspective social interaction is necessary for certain personality traits to emerge and that cultural differences also influence personality. The emotional wellbeing of a middle childhood child is also seen as the property of ongoing relationships and hence termed the ‘relational mind’. From this perspective it is stated that people do not have emotions so much “...as we do emotions” (Gergen, 2009a, p. 99). Social constructionism focuses on the meaning of emotions rather than their cause and effect. However, because studies have shown that basic emotions are rooted in animalistic instincts (Ekman, 1992; Scherer and Wallbott, 1994; and Frijda, 2000 as cited by Johnson, 2007), it is necessary to include Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model to fill this gap.

2.3 BRONFENBRENNER’S BIOECOLOGICAL MODEL

I argue that because bullying is such a complex phenomenon it is necessary to utilise a theory that also encompasses a number of influences on human development to better understand how this negative behaviour is perpetuated. Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, like social constructionism, focuses on the relations between the active individual and his or her active and multilevel ecology (Lerner, 2005). Gendron et al. (2011) and Swearer et al. (2010) state that such a model is a useful way of understanding bullying as it focuses not only on the individual but also on the combined influences of the various different contexts. In other words, “...this model highlights that individuals, including children influence their social environments, and that the various contexts of the social environment influence each other as well as the individual” (DSD et al., 2012, p. 5). Bronfenbrenner (2005) argues that in order to understand human development it is important to study the entire individuals ecological system. This model also provides a framework for understanding the factors that increase or decrease a
child’s risk of being bullied (DSD et al., 2012), referred to as ‘risk or protective factors.’

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model in human development, across the lifespan, has evolved over time. His initial theoretical model, known as ‘ecological systems theory’ (1977) focused on the role of the context, with little attention paid to the person or human development (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). His last model (2005) (refer to Figure 2.1) explains that human development is a synergy of the person and his/her total characteristics, the different nested contexts (which he compares to the Russian nested doll) with which the person interacts, as well as the element of time (referred to as the chronosystem). In addition, from Figure 2.1 it can be seen how he places emphasis on the bidirectional influences between the person and his/her contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), unlike social constructionism which focuses on the social, but not the individual (Burr, 2003). The model of human development has specifically emerged from four interrelated elements (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Firstly, it includes the developmental process, which involves the fused and dynamic relation of the individual and the context, with people, objects and symbols, termed the proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

According to Tudge et al. (2009), this element is the single most important difference from Bronfenbrenner’s earlier writings. Bronfenbrenner (2005, p. 177) emphasises that “…it is important to clarify how such processes differ from the classic physiopsychological processes of perception, cognition, emotion and motivation.” Secondly, it contains the individual person with his/her biological, cognitive, emotional and behavioural features. Next, it involves the context of human development that incorporates various nested environmental systems extending from close to the person to distant contexts. Finally, it is comprised of multi dimensions of time, such as family time and historical time, referred to as the chronosystem.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) stipulates that the interaction of these four elements together comprise a process-person-context-time (or PPCT) model for understanding human development and for designing research to study and understand human development. In light of my research question, the PPCT
model will therefore be utilised to explore and understand what life experiences have contributed to middle childhood children who continue to be bullied.

2.3.1 Process

The first component of the model is the developmental process, which involves the dynamic and integrated relation of the individual and the context (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). According to Bronfenbrenner the process:

…encompasses particular forms of interaction between organism and environment called proximal processes that operate over time and are posited as the primary mechanisms producing human development. However, the power of such processes to influence development is presumed, and shown, to vary substantially as a function of the characteristics of the developing Person, of the immediate and more remote environmental Contexts, and the Time periods, in which the proximal processes take place. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. xv)

Bronfenbrenner (2005) points out that there are two general kinds of proximal development processes. The first includes “…social interaction between the developing person and one or more others, usually older, occasionally of the same age, and rarely younger.” The second, regarded as the “…principle engine of development, is engagement in progressively more complex activities and tasks” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 97). Regarding the former process, Walden and Beran (2010, p. 13) found that “…children who experience insecure attachment with their primary caregiver are likely to bully others and be bullied.”

2.3.2 Persons

The person for Bronfenbrenner (2005, p. xv) is “…with his or her individual repertoire of biological, cognitive, emotional and behavioural characteristics.” This is the aspect lacking in social constructionism. Although Bronfenbrenner acknowledges the genetic and biological aspects of the person, he focuses on the characteristics the person brings to the social situation (Tudge et al., 2009) and stresses that the characteristics of a person appear twice in the bioecological model: “In sum the characteristics of a person function both as an indirect producer and as a product of development” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 188). In other words Bronfenbrenner stipulates that the person is a partial active agent in
his or her own development, as development is a synthesis or integration between
the individual and his or her active context. He also identifies three types of person
characteristics as most influential in shaping the course of future development,
with characteristics “…incorporated into the definition of the microsystem as
characteristics of parents, relatives, close friends, teachers, mentors, co-workers,
spouses or others who participate in the life of the developing person”
(Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. xvi). I have utilised these three types of personal
characteristics to help categorise the personal risk characteristics associated with
children who are bullied. Table 2.1 outlines these three types of person
characteristics, namely, dispositions, bioecological resources and demand, in
conjunction with their related components. A discussion, of each type of person
characteristic related to bullying will follow clarification of these concepts.

Dispositions, are those characteristics that have to do with differences of
temperament, motivation and persistence (Tudge et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner
(2005) contends that the construct temperament is employed when researching
infants and young children, whereas the construct personality is used for older
children, adolescents and adults. He explains that two children may have similar
resource characteristics (ability, experience, knowledge, skill, social and material
resources), but their developmental path will depend on how they are motivated to
succeed in the face of difficulty, as it follows that motivation will effect persistence,
whereas a lack of motivation may culminate in abandonment (Tudge et al., 2009).
For example, in the literature pertaining to bullying, Hunter, Boyle and Warden
(2004) discovered that children who were bullied longer than four weeks used less
social support than those who had been bullied for fewer than four weeks.
However, it is possible that such children lacked social support before which
contributed to their being bullied because Koiv (2012) found that children who
were bullied, demonstrated higher levels of insecure attachment. Tim Field (1999)
argues that children who tend to be bullied do not just have negative
characteristics, but also have positive characteristics which attract children who
bully (Rigby, 2002).

The resource characteristics are not always immediately apparent and relate to
mental, emotional, social and material resources (Tudge et al., 2009), including
elements such as ability, past experience, knowledge, skill, intelligence, access to
good food, housing, educational opportunities and caring parents (Tudge et al., 2009). The demand characteristics are those that effect initial interaction because of the immediate expectations that are formed upon exposure to stimuli such as age, gender, skin colour, physical appearance and forms of mal-development (Tudge et al., 2009). It is these latter characteristics which have been identified as lacking in the research pertaining to bullying and have been encouraged to be examined over time (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

Table 2.1: Three types of personal characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispositions</th>
<th>Bioecological resources/albatrosses</th>
<th>Demand characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Temperament</td>
<td>• Ability</td>
<td>• Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Motivation</td>
<td>• Experience</td>
<td>• Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Persistence</td>
<td>• Knowledge</td>
<td>• Skin colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Skill</td>
<td>• Physical appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social and material resources</td>
<td>• Forms of organic injury or mal-development that threaten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Health</td>
<td>subsequent psychological growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.2.1 Personal dispositions found among children who are bullied

Dispositions have been defined as “frequent and voluntary habits of thinking and doing,” which are acquired, supported or weakened through interactions with significant others (Da Ros-Voseles & Fowler-Haughey, 2007, p. 1). They can be desirable or undesirable. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998, p. 810) differentiate between dispositions that are ‘developmentally generative’ and those that are ‘developmentally disruptive.’ According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), dispositions affect the direction and power of the proximal processes. In other words, with regards to bullying, individuals can invite or discourage certain reactions from their social environment that can either hinder or promote being bullied. For example, in the literature pertaining to bullying, it has been found that characteristics such as anxiety and insecurity tend to contribute towards being bullied (Olweus, 1997).
According to Espelage and Swearer (2003) and Rigby (2002), both positive and negative characteristics have been detected among children who are bullied as criteria for being bullied. Table 2.2 reflects these dispositions.

**Table 2.2: Personal dispositions associated with being bullied**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Being popular</td>
<td>• Having low self-worth and low self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having high moral standards</td>
<td>• Being insecure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being imaginative, creative, innovative</td>
<td>• Being psychologically introverted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being honest and having Integrity</td>
<td>• Being prone to anger, anxiety and depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Standing up for a peer who is being bullied</td>
<td>• Having negative cognitions about the self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being sensitive</td>
<td>• Being aggressive (reactive and proactive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Giving and selfless</td>
<td>• Being less stable than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having a strong forgiving streak</td>
<td>• Being lonely and isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being successful, tenacious, determined, courageous</td>
<td>• Being uncompetitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Being relatively uncooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Being non-assertive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lacking poise, being tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Having hyperactive disorder and conduct problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emotional and behavioural difficulties, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, conduct problems, depressive and anxiety disorders have been linked to bullying and being bullied (Dempsey & Storch, 2010; Jansen, Veenstra, Ormel, Verhulst, & Reijneveld, 2011). Jansen et al. (2011) also noticed that early risk factors such as behaviour and emotional difficulties were indicative of being bullied at a later stage. Research also indicates that children who are bullied tend to be seen as relatively weak and vulnerable (Rigby, 2002), and exhibit poor psychosocial functioning (Cook et al., 2010; Veenstra et al., 2005). Furthermore, personality traits such as being withdrawn, quiet, physically less powerful, anxious,
depressed, isolated, insecure or objects of group prejudice have been associated with being bullied (Rigby, 2002; Veenstra et al., 2005). Moreover, negative cognitions about the self, have also been found to be a predictor of being bullied, whereas negative attitudes or thoughts of others have been rated to be a predictor of bullying (Cook et al., 2010).

Veenstra et al. (2005) learnt that one of the strongest predictors for being bullied included aggressiveness, while Jansen et al. (2011) found that aggressive preschoolers were more likely to bully at the age of 10 to 11 years and be bullied at age 13 to 14 years, Barker et al. (2008) discovered that children who displayed physically aggressive behaviour early in development (17 months) were more likely to be bullied in preschool than nonaggressive peers. Camodeca, Goossens, Terwogt and Schuengel (2002) report that children who both bully and are bullied were both reactively and proactively aggressive, whereas children who are bullied but do not bully were only reactively aggressive.\(^{20}\)

Rigby (2002) cautions against the positive dispositions listed in Table 2.2, as identified by Tim Field (1999), because research indicates otherwise. Rigby (2002) argues that these positive characteristics have generally been found to be lacking in children who are bullied. For example, Rigby (2002, p. 139) asserts that most children who are bullied are not popular, but “…tend to be friendless, isolated and sometimes despised,” and that it is doubtful that children who continually are bullied can “…stand up for colleagues.” I agree with Rigby, from my experience as an educational psychologist, in that most children who are bullied tend to lack friends, however, I have come across children who are popular and who have been bullied because of jealousy. According to Tim Field, popularity stimulates jealousy in the less popular bully (Field, 2014). I have also come across children who have been continually bullied who are very keen to help other children when they are being bullied. I presumed that besides such children being sensitive they had “a constellation of values to be cherished including empathy, concern for others, respect, tolerance…” (Field, 2014, para.6), which also made them feel better about themselves in the realisation that they were not the only ones being bullied. In addition, from a bioecological and social constructionist perspective I

\(^{20}\) Refer to 3.4.1 for further explanations on aggressive behaviour.
contend that children who are bullied will undoubtedly have some positive dispositions which may not surface in the environment or the moment in which they are being bullied. Nevertheless, this does not imply that they are lacking in these qualities. It can also be argued that not all children who are bullied are friendless or that children who are not bullied are necessarily popular, however, as outlined in chapter 3, one cannot ignore the negative effect bullying has on various individuals, and therefore one needs to be aware of all possible characteristics that attract bullying.

2.3.2.2 Bioecological albatrosses\(^2\) found among children who are bullied

I have used the term ‘albatrosses’ in lieu of resources absent in the literature on being bullied. Instead, there are risk factors that have been identified among children who are bullied, which I have referred to as ‘albatrosses’, as a metaphor for psychological burden (South African pocket Oxford dictionary, 1994, p. 20). The various albatrosses that have been identified among children who are bullied are listed in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Bioecological albatrosses among children who are bullied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Learning and developmental disorders</td>
<td>• Achieve well academically</td>
<td>• Less motorically skilful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Autism spectrum disorders</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Do not participate in sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Speech and language difficulties</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Having poor social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning disorders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maltreatment by parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Negative peer status/ Have fewer friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Object of group prejudice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Isolation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dependent on teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\) Bioecological albatrosses are part of the personal characteristics of the individual outlined in Table 2.1 and individual context in Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model in Figure 2.1
Learning and developmental difficulties have also been associated with being bullied (Dempsey & Storch, 2010; Hong & Espelage, 2012), and evidence indicates that children with learning difficulties are at increased risk of being bullied (Rose, Espelage, & Monda-Amaya, 2009; Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2011). Norwich and Kelly (2004) observed that both boys and girls, from primary and secondary schools, who have learning difficulties, were bullied significantly more outside the school by their peers and neighbours. Lindsay, Dockrell and Mackie (2008) study indicates that 12-year old children who have speech and language difficulties were more prone more to being verbally bullied than physically bullied, compared to children who had no such difficulties. In addition, Chen and Schwartz (2012) pinpointed that children in elementary schools with Autism Spectrum Disorders reported a higher prevalence of being bullied than their typically developing peers.

Links between post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and bullying have also been suggested in previous research (Penning, Bhagwanjee, & Govender, 2010; Terranova, Boxer, & Sheffield Morris, 2009). Terranova et al. (2009) discovered that children who had PTSD following a severe hurricane in the USA reported increased experiences of relational and overt bullying. A South African study by Penning et al. (2010) perceived that children who experienced perpetual bullying exhibited symptoms of PTSD, such as depression, dissociation, anger and poor coping strategies (Cook-Cottone, 2004). The long-term implications of frequent and prolonged bullying, due to perceived or actual sexual orientation, has also been associated with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (Rivers, 2004). These examples clearly illustrate the role of trauma in being bullied, as the children in the study who experienced trauma (as a consequence of the hurricane) started to be bullied, whereas the other study indicates that being bullied also resulted in trauma.
Ma (2002) and Hixon (2009) also found that students who achieved well academically were more inclined to be bullied than students who performed poorly. On the other hand, Cook et al. (2010) draw attention to how poor academic performance is a predictor of children who bully, but not for children who are bullied.

Jansen et al. (2011) claim that motor ability is more important during the primary school years than the high school years, as there is more emphasis on play and physical activity at the primary school level than on cognition at the high school level. Jansen et al. (2011) found that motorically skilful pre-schoolers were more likely to bully at the age of 10 to 11 years, whereas less motorically skilful pre-schoolers were more likely to be bullied. A link between not participating in sports and being bullied also became apparent (Jankauskiene, Kardelis, Sukys, & Kardeliene, 2008; Macdonald, 2003). Jankauskiene et al. (2008) found that children who are bullied tend not to take part in sports. In a South African study, Macdonald (2003) found that children who participated in sport were perceived to be popular and therefore tended not to be bullied, compared to those who were perceived to be intelligent but did not play sport.

A lack of social resources has also been associated with being bullied. Social acceptance and friendship have been viewed as buffers to bullying whereas children who lack in social skills and are socially marginalised have been associated with being bullied (Cook et al., 2010; Farmer et al., 2010). Cook et al. (2010) discovered that children who are bullied have negative peer status, whilst Veenstra et al. (2005) ascertained that some of the strongest predictors for being bullied included isolation and dislikability. Significantly, Troop-Gordon & Kopp (2011) found that children, especially boys, who are dependent on their teachers, have fewer friends, and this is a good predictor of being bullied.

Health-related problems, such as cystic fibrosis, heart problems and cancer, have also been identified as albatrosses that increase the risk of being bullied (Dempsey & Storch, 2010). However, bullying itself is not only a child’s rights issue but also a major public health concern, because of the lasting consequences for children’s psychological and social development (DSD et al., 2012), which
perpetuates the cycle of bullying, in that they have been identified as risk factors for being bullied.

2.3.2.3 Demand characteristics\textsuperscript{22} found among children who are bullied

Demand characteristics, such as age, gender\textsuperscript{23}, skin colour or physical appearance, can either invite or discourage reactions from the social environment and can promote or upset the course of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Tudge et al., 2009). Individual factors such as race\textsuperscript{24} (Larochette, Murphy, & Craig, 2010; Rivers, 2004), sex (Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012), age\textsuperscript{25} (Tenenbaum, Varjas, Meyers, & Parris, 2011), sexual orientation (Rivers, 2004), height (Rigby, 2002) and mal-development, such as craniofacial abnormalities (Dempsey & Storch, 2010), have been identified as factors placing children at risk of bullying.

Physical characteristics such as being short, having red hair, being skinny or obese, wearing spectacles or having a different accent, regardless of sex, have also been associated with being bullied (Rigby, 2002). Physical characteristics such as weight has been shown to be linked to being bullied, with Jankauskiene et al. (2008) finding that children who were obese were twice as likely to be bullied as those within what are considered ‘normal’ parameters of weight. In addition, Sweetingham and Waller (2008) found associations between childhood experiences of being bullied through teasing about their physical appearances as a consequence of eating problems. Being physically weaker than others and having a bad stammer were also associated with being bullied (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Rigby, 2002).

Brown, Birch and Kancherla (2005) and Tudge et al. (2009) explain that the demand characteristics tend to influence initial interactions because of a tendency to form immediate expectations, whereas the resource characteristics by contrast are not immediately apparent. However, assumptions about these can be based,

\textsuperscript{22} Demand characteristics form part of the personal characteristics listed in Table 2.1 and form part of the individual context in Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model in Figure 2.1.

\textsuperscript{23} Gender differences are elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{24} Ethnic differences in bullying are discussed in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{25} Bullying among middle childhood children is expanded upon in Chapter 3.
often erroneously, to the demand characteristics. For example, in the literature pertaining to bullying, an aspect of physical appearance, such as having red hair, has been shown to entice being bullied, but this does not necessarily imply that such a person is weak or afraid to fight back (Brown et al., 2005).

In summary, I have utilised Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model in addition to social constructionism as a framework to investigate the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, as this model not only focuses on the individual but also on the combined influences of the various contexts. In addition to highlighting how individuals influence their environments, this model underscores how the various contexts of the social environment influence each other as well as the individual. Bronfenbrenner uses the PPCT model to help illustrate this. The first two components of this model, namely processes and persons, have been discussed. The third component of the model, context, will now be elaborated upon.

2.3.3 Context

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), a developing child interacts within and between five nested ecological environments (Figure 2.1), which he likens to a set of Russian dolls, each inside the next. He mentions that the objects to which the child responds and the people with whom the child interacts, as well as the nature of the connections between others, have a direct influence on the child's development. Paquette and Ryan (2001) state that the interactions within each system and between the various systems are key to this theory. Bronfenbrenner (2005) refers to this as the 'principle of interconnectedness.'
2.3.3.1 The microsystem

From Figure 2.1, it can be seen that the microsystem is the environment closest to the child. This refers to the innermost region with which the individual interacts. Bronfenbrenner’s latest expanded definition (in italics) of this system is:

A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 148)

The microsystem comprises the relationships the individual has within immediate settings such as peers, the family and the school, with individuals or groups of individuals that have a direct influence on the individual’s development, such as
the church, day-care centre and sporting teams (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Espelage and Swearer (2010) point out that children’s lives are dramatically shaped by adults, such as parents and caregivers, for the first 18 years. It is therefore important that attention be given to the family context among children who are bullied.

A. **Family characteristics responsible for bullying behaviour**

Paquette and Ryan (2001) explain how the bi-directional influences within this system and all other systems operate. For example, the child’s parents can affect the child’s beliefs and behaviour, but the converse may also occur. Paquette and Ryan (2001) stress how the bi-directional influences are stronger on the child’s development in this system than any other system. In the literature pertaining to bullying, parents reportedly also are affected when their children are bullied and tend to feel anger, guilt (in not being able to protect their child) and helplessness, in the face of denial from teachers that their child is being bullied (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). The following factors within the family context increase the risk of being bullied:

- Poor attachment
- Lack of parental care, supervision, control and love
- Lack of family cohesion (dysfunctional families)
- Aggressive, authoritarian parents (lead to generalized beliefs about power in a relationship)
- Overprotective parenting
- Bullying by siblings
- Stressful relationships within family
- Harsh, overacting parenting

Evidence that there are links between poor attachment and being bullied have become apparent (Koiv, 2012; Walden & Beran, 2010; Williams & Kennedy, 2012). Attachment theory suggests that children internalise important aspects of caregiving relationships which then influence their behaviour in later relationships with their peers (Shields & Cicchetti, 2001). According to Stams, Juffer and van IJzendoorn (2002), a higher quality of child-mother relationship predicted better
social and cognitive development. Rigby (1993) noted that girls who were bullied came from poorer functioning families and tended to have negative attitudes towards their mothers. Rigby (1993) and Williams and Kennedy (2012) identified a link between being bullied and bullying and poor attachment to one’s parents, but only females were bullied when there was high attachment anxiety with their mothers. Finnegan, Hodges and Perry (1998) learnt that mothers’ hostility or perception of rejection, predicted that nine-12 year old girls would be bullied. In addition, Walden and Beran (2010) regarded high levels of parent alienation as associated with being bullied and bullying. On the other hand, Curtner-Smith, Smith and Porter (2010) reported that overprotective mothers place boys, but not girls at risk for being bullied, especially when boys reacted fearfully during conflict with their mothers (Finnegan et al., 1998). Koiv's (2012) study also indicates that children who are bullied had more insecure attachment styles than children who bully.

The relationship an individual child has with his or her sibling can also have an effect on the way the individual interacts with his or her peers at school. Menesini, Camodeca and Nocentini (2010) found that both children who were bullied by their siblings, and bullied their siblings were associated with bullying, and being bullied at school. Jankauskiene et al. (2008) noticed that children in families who were teased about their appearance were more likely to be bullied than engage in bullying. Wolke and Samara (2004) found that more than half of the children who were being bullied by their siblings at home were involved in bullying behaviour at school, compared to 12.4 per cent of children who were not being bullied by their siblings. The presence of an older brother in the family has also been positively correlated with being bullied at home (Menesini et al., 2010).

Stressful relationships within the family have been shown to be significantly related to being bullied, whereas support relationships within the family have been associated with less exposure to being bullied (Murray-Harvey & Slee, 2010). The family seems to have an important protective effect on health complaints (Simões & Gaspar Matos, 2011). Bowes, Maughan, Caspi, Moffitt and Arseneault (2010) found that warm family relationships and positive home environments help to protect children from the negative effects of being bullied, as this promoted emotional and behavioural resilience. In contrast, Curtner-Smith et al. (2010)
indicate that a child from a home in which there is continual fighting does not know how to talk in a civilised fashion to others and this promotes bullying behaviour. Maltreatment by parents has also been found to place children at risk, both of being bullied and bullying (Shields & Cicchetti, 2001).

Authoritarian and overprotective parenting styles have been linked to bullying behaviour. Harsh, overacting parenting, which includes corporal punishment, has been associated with both bullying and being bullied (Curtner-Smith et al., 2010). Barker et al. (2008) learnt that being harshly disciplined was a strong predictor of being bullied across pre-school, kindergarten and elementary school years. Intense closeness, that is, an enmeshed or emotionally intense relationship between parent and child, has also been associated with high levels of being bullied among boys (Ladd & Ladd, 1998).

Low parental involvement and support have been linked to being bullied (Curtner-Smith et al., 2010; Hong & Espelage, 2012). That is too little time parents engage with their children in shared activities, lack of interest in their children’s academic and extra-curricular work, unavailability in times of emotional support, and lack of assistance in planning for their children’s future and meeting their physical needs (Curtner-Smith et al., 2010).

Poor parent-child communication has also been associated with predictions of being bullied (Curtner-Smith et al., 2010). Children of both sexes of parents who displayed high intrusive demandingness and low responsiveness were associated with being bullied (Ladd & Ladd, 1998). Here, ‘intrusive’ refers to the extent to which parents interrupt the child during interactions, ignore his or her initiative and dismiss or change the child’s topic of conversation, whilst ‘demandingness’ refers to the tendency of the parent to demand the child conforms to certain tasks, for example to sit up or pay attention, or topics of conversation (Ladd & Ladd, 1998). Matsunaga (2009) points out that parents of Caucasian children are not always aware that their children are being bullied and contends that this may be because children who are bullied do not want to disclose this information as they have come to believe that they are not popular and are lacking in important skills. The same author states that the results may have differed if taken from a collectivist culture in which information is shared more openly within the family.
Females who reported having a family history of child protection services were deemed to be at increased risk of bullying others and for being bullied, whereas boys were more likely to only be bullied (Mohapatra et al. 2010). Similarly, Mustanoja, Luukkonen, Hakko, Säävälä and Riala (2011) state that it is important to screen children who are being bullied for early experiences of violence, as they found that boys who witnessed inter-parental violence at home were a risk factor for being bullied. These same authors indicated that girls were at increased risk of bullying and being bullied if they had early experiences of domestic violence. Children exposed to parental intimate partner violence have been associated with overt forms of being bullied for both sexes (Knous-Westfall, Ehrensaft, Watson MacDonell, & Cohen, 2012). Severe maltreatment, including physical and sexual abuse among children early in life, was shown to manifest in overt aggression in the form of bullying among both boys and girls in middle childhood. Moreover, these children were also discovered to be prone to being bullied (Shields & Cicchetti, 2001). Although there were associations noted between parental alcohol problems and bullying peers, no evidence was associated with this family dysfunction and being bullied (Eiden et al., 2010).

Other factors that have been associated with being bullied and bullying include overtime working mothers (Malone et al., 2004; Christie-Mizell et al., 2011). Children from single parent families were perceived to be more inclined to be bullied but not to bully (Jankauskiene et al., 2008). Rigby (1993) found that boys from single parent families with poor relations with their absent fathers tended to be bullied. Barker et al. (2008) also found insufficient parental income as a risk factor associated with being bullied in preschool.

### B. School factors that increase or decrease bullying

Three elements within the school context which contribute to children being bullied, namely the school, teacher and peers, are discussed as follows.

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26 As discussed in 2.3.3.1.
The school

Hong and Espelage (2012) identify and distinguish two concepts related to children who are bullied within the school context, namely school connectedness and school environment. The former refers to a sense of belonging, whereas the latter refers to a sense of safety (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Table 2.4 (below) highlights the various risk and protective factors associated with being bullied.

**Table 2.4:** Risk and protective factors at the school level associated with bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factors at the school level for being bullied</th>
<th>Protective factors at the school level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sense of not belonging</td>
<td>• School connectedness (sense of belonging)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Negative classroom climate</td>
<td>• Positive classroom climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor relationships between teacher and children and children</td>
<td>• Good classroom management: care and co-operation which underlie values of respect, tolerance and responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor classroom management</td>
<td>• Healthy disciplinary climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of care and co-operation</td>
<td>• School environment (sense of safety)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disrespect, intolerance and irresponsibility</td>
<td>• Teacher’s consistent positive response to bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor disciplinary climate</td>
<td>• Reporting of bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Negative attitudes by peers</td>
<td>• Responsive bystanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feelings of unsafety in school environment</td>
<td>• Quality and quantity of friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of reporting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-participation in school sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unresponsive bystanders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor disciplinary climate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Popular children who bully</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pryce and Frederickson (2013) point out that an increased sense of belonging occurs with a positive classroom climate which is influenced by the teacher, and decreases in bullying and being bullied were associated with an increased sense of belonging. A positive classroom climate that induces motivation and interest in school work has been identified as an important factor in reducing bullying (Neser, 2007; Rigby & Slee, 2008; Yoneyama & Rigby, 2006). According to Smith, Ananiadou and Cowie (2003), classroom climate may be defined as the relationships within the classroom between teacher and children, as well as those
between children which are seen to be influenced by the teacher. Roland and Galloway (2002) noticed that the way a teacher manages a classroom influences relationships between children and hence the amount of bullying. A climate of care and co-operation, in which values of tolerance, respect and responsibility are modelled, sends an anti-bullying message (Shore, 2009). According to Ma (2002), children were less likely to be bullied in schools with a good disciplinary climate than in schools with a poor disciplinary climate.

Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor and Zeira (2004), Roland and Galloway (2002) as well as Yoneyama and Rigby (2006) make a distinction between a classroom climate that is collectively judged by a group of students as well as a judgement that is based on the perception of a child who is being bullied and/or is bullying. Both girls and boys who were being bullied perceived their school/classroom climate far less favourably than did their peers (Yoneyama & Rigby, 2006), but the girls far less than the boys. However, this difference may have arisen because fewer girls were identified as being involved in bullying and been bullied (Yoneyama & Rigby, 2006). Specific factors contributing towards a perceived negative school/classroom climate include the negative attitudes by peers towards children being bullied as a consequence of lacking in qualities such as self-confidence, being depressed and uncooperative and not being able to stand up to the child who is bullying them (Yoneyama & Rigby, 2006).

- Teachers

Teachers have been noted to be the most important protective factor for school satisfaction (Simões et al., 2011), yet Holt and Keyes (2004) report that while some studies indicate that teachers and pupils report similar levels of bullying, most have identified that teachers report lower prevalence rates of bullying than do the pupils. Holt and Keyes (2004) highlight various factors explaining this. Firstly, teachers may dismiss bullying as a non-hurtful interaction, hence they need to know the definition of bullying. Secondly, teachers may be unaware of bullying, as besides not being present at the site of bullying behaviour pupils also refrain from reporting it to teachers due to fear of retaliation or belief of ineffective resolution. Thirdly, even if teachers are aware of this behaviour they may refrain
from reporting it, in case it reflects on their poor classroom management. Another finding related to non-reporting by teachers was that feelings of safety and belongingness for both staff and students were compromised when the person being bullied was perceived as popular and not reported for bullying (Waasdorp, Pas & O'Brennan, 2011). In contrast, it was concluded that incidents of bullying were reported in schools when the person who bullied was disliked, thus promoting feelings of safety and belongingness within their school community (Waasdorp et al., 2011).

➢ Peers

Rodkin (2004) highlights the various bullying peer ecologies within the microsystem, and the important role peers play in either promoting or preventing bullying behaviours. Rodkin (2011) and Farmer et al. (2010) identify two types of children who bully, namely, the socially marginalised and the socially connected. According to Farmer et al. (2010, p. 386), the former children who bully are unpopular, have many problems and fight against the social system, whereas in contrast the latter who bully are popular, socially skilled and competent, and “may use aggression to control others,” to achieve dominance over their peers. Rodkin (2012) further notes that the marginalised children who bully are mostly boys, hold negative attitudes about the self and others, perform poorly academically, have poor social problem-solving skills and are not only rejected but also negatively influenced by the peers with whom they interact. On the other hand, the socially connected children who bully perhaps tend to be the ones who perpetuate the cycle of bullying because they remain ‘hidden’ and are less likely to be recognised as such (Rodkin, 2012). Rodkin and Berger (2008) found that children who bullied had more social status than those they bullied when their status was measured by popularity rather than preference. Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl and Van Acker (2006) found that aggressive peers were nominated as ‘cool.’ Boys who bullied other boys were regarded as popular, but boys who bullied girls were perceived as unpopular (Rodkin & Berger, 2008).

Whereas previous research has focused solely on the personal characteristics and behaviours of children who tend to be bullied, Rodkin and Hodges (2003) argue
that the tendency to be bullied also hinges on the quality and quantity of relationships with peers at the dyadic and group level of these children. Factors such as reciprocated best friends, friends with positive personal characteristics, as well as having a number of friends have been regarded as protective factors against being bullied (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003).

From a bioecological and social constructionist perspective, the role of observers or bystanders of bullying cannot be ignored. Pepler and colleagues (2010) as cited by (Rodkin, 2011) state that bullying is a social event that also involves an audience of peers 90 per cent of the time. Rodkin (2011) argues that the problem of bullying also includes unresponsive bystanders, whether they enjoy watching from the side-lines or fear becoming involved. Cowie (2011) argues that bystanders feel either guilt or discomfort when they see children being bullied. Duffy and Nesdale (2009) observed that even if a classroom norm was anti-bullying, children were more likely to bully if their peer group approved of this behaviour. Kärnä, Voeten, Poskiparta and Salmivalli (2010) found that when bystanders reinforced bullying behaviour, vulnerable children showed an increase in social anxiety and being bullied. More importantly, in contrast, when bystanders defended children who were being bullied there was less bullying. Bystanders of different ages seem to react differently when observing someone being bullied. For example, in Australia, when observing children being bullied, it has been found that young children tend to seek out a teacher, that primary school pupils are more likely to help the child directly, and that high school pupils are more inclined to ignore the bullying (Rigby & Johnson, 2005). In addition, boys in Australia indicated that they were more inclined to ignore bullying than did girls, who involved teachers (Rigby & Johnson, 2005). Of great significance, Janson, Carney, Hazler and Oh's (2009) study revealed that witnesses to bullying were more traumatised than paramedics, emergency workers, firefighters and highway workers following earthquakes in California.
2.3.3.2 The mesosystem

As can be seen in Figure 2.1, the *mesosystem* provides the connections between two or more of the structures of the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Paquette & Ryan, 2001), for example, the connection between the child's teacher and his or her parents, the connection between the sports coach and the child's teacher or parent, the connection between the church and the neighbourhood. The mesosystem involves understanding of inter-relations between two or more microsystems, each containing the individual (Hong & Espelage, 2012). For example, the teacher’s involvement with the individual’s peers can influence the way in which the peers interact with the individual child. A teacher can promote bullying behaviour by humiliating a child in front of his or her peers. Table 2.5 lists the risk and protective factors related to bullying.

### Table 2.5: Risk and protective factors at the mesosystem level related to bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factors at the mesosystem level for being bullied</th>
<th>Protective factors at the mesosystem level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of communication</td>
<td>• Communication between school and parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor relationship with the teacher</td>
<td>• Parent-educator partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Humiliation by the teacher in front of peers</td>
<td>• Parents attend meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents involved in the development of anti-bullying programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Regular two-way communication, mutual support and shared decision making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A. School and parents**

DiBasilio (2008) reports that an effective approach to dealing with bullying involves increased and constant communication between the school and the parent community. Jordan and Austin (2012) identified that parent-educator partnerships are important in responding proactively to incidents involving bullying. Christenson and Carlson (2005) found home-school collaborative interventions which involve

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27 Interventions to address these risk factors at the mesosystem level are discussed in Chapter 3
dialogue and two-way communication with monitoring both essential and highly effective for impacting on child outcomes at school. From a social constructionist perspective this is essential as social interaction facilitates understanding (Burr, 2003).

B. Parents and teachers

Jordan and Austin (2012) argued that parent-educator partnerships are important in responding proactively to incidents involving bullying. For Nordahl, Poole, Stanton, Walden and Beran (2008) it is more effective for parents to be given skills and resources to help their children, rather than try to change their attitudes about aggression. Ideally, parents should be involved in the development of anti-bullying programmes, such as is practiced in the Olweus evidence-based bullying prevention programmes in which parents are included at the school, classroom and individual level (Doll, Song, & Siemers, 2004). At the school level, parents attend meetings, are sent mailings, given hand-outs and are part of committees concerning bullying (Doll et al., 2004; Nordahl et al., 2008). At the classroom level, parents attend meetings regarding bullying in their child’s class and participate in interventions to deal with bullying situations. Doll et al. (2004) stress the importance of at least including families when using interventions to prevent or manage bullying at the classroom level, by keeping them informed of the rules and social skills used to manage the children’s interactions in the classroom. According to Jordan and Austin (2012), parents and teachers need to work collaboratively through regular two-way communication, mutual support and shared decision making. All of these are hallmarks of social constructionism (Burr, 2003).

C. Teachers and peers

Teachers and school officials can influence pupils’ relationships with their peers (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Murray-Harvey and Slee (2007), Murray-Harvey and Slee (2010) as well as Troop-Gordon and Kopp (2011) noted that a poor relationship with the teacher is a risk factor for being bullied. It is proposed that
this is because teachers can influence the child’s reputation among the peers (Troop-Gordon & Kopp, 2011). Another study found that when teachers are actively involved and interested in their student’s academic and social lives, feelings of unsafety significantly decreased (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005).

2.3.3.3 The exosystem

From Figure 2.1 it can be seen that the exosystem is an extension of the microsystem, and contains structures with which the child does not directly interact (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), for example, economic, political, education, government, and religious systems. Gergen (2009a, p. 47) claims that organisations within these structures, such as courts of law, branches of science, and medical faculty, are centres of power in the sense that they “…determine the constructions by which we live.” Structures such as the workplace of the child's parents are included here. For example, a parent’s stressful day at the office may later impact on the child's behaviour at home. Bronfenbrenner (1994) lists three exosystems which affect the development of the child through the family, school and peer group. These are the parent’s workplace, family social networks and neighbourhood community. According to Hong and Espelage (2012), the media and neighbourhood environments are two exosystem factors that can influence the way individual children interact with their peers. Table 2.6 lists the risk factors and protective factors at the exosystem level for being bullied.

**Table 2.6: Risk and protective factors at the exosystem level for being bullied**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factors at the exosystem level for being bullied</th>
<th>Protective factors at the exosystem level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Viewing television more than three hours per day</td>
<td>• Online counsellors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aggressive video games</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social media (e.g., <em>facebook</em>, <em>YouTube</em>, <em>Twitter</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Crime</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poverty in neighbourhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A. Exposure to media violence

A number of studies have suggested a relationship to the exposure of violent media and aggression (Friedlander, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2013; Levermore & Salisbury, 2009; Wright, 2003), positively correlated with relational, physical and verbal aggression (Gentile, Coyne, & Walsh, 2011). Johnson, Cohen, Smailes, Kasen and Brook's (2002) study discovered that children of 14 years who viewed more than three hours of television a day were four times as likely to have acted aggressively by the age of 22, than children who viewed for less than an hour. Rideout, Foehr and Roberts (2010) noted that boys and girls between the ages of eight and 18 were frequently engaged in multiple aggressive media types such as television, music, video games, film, and websites on the Internet, for 7.5 hours per day. This study also discovered that the time spent by young people on the various media types had increased by one hour 17 minutes daily over the past five years (Rideout et al., 2010). In addition, the study found that the 11-14 year-olds spend more time on media use and exposure to it than the 10 year-olds and 15-18 year-olds (Rideout et al., 2010), which could imply that this is the age group that will be most vulnerable to cyberbullying. Table 2.7 lists the average time spent daily with each medium.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>10 year-olds</th>
<th>11-14 year-olds</th>
<th>15-18 year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television content</td>
<td>3 hours 41 min</td>
<td>5 hours 3 min</td>
<td>4 hours 22 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1 hour 8 min</td>
<td>2 hours 22 min</td>
<td>3 hours 3 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>46 min</td>
<td>1 hour 46 min</td>
<td>1 hour 39 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video games</td>
<td>1 hour 1 min</td>
<td>1 hour 25 min</td>
<td>1 hour 8 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total media exposure</td>
<td>7 hours 51 min</td>
<td>11 hours 53 min</td>
<td>11 hours 23 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total media use</td>
<td>5 hours 29 min</td>
<td>8 hours 40 min</td>
<td>7 hours 58 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gentile et al. (2011) found in their study of Grade three-five children that the average child spent 20.8 hours per week watching television and 9.6 hours playing video games. They also found that boys spent more time viewing television and
playing video games than girls. The media comprises a key outlet for entertainment and information, but it is important to recognise how it plays a large role in the process of social constructionism as the information to which individuals are exposed greatly influences their perceptions of the world and hence reality (Donders, 2013). This is particularly significant when one considers the effect of the media on an individual's perceptions of the self.

Abuse of the media, such as sending messages and pictures “…to circulate rumours, secrets, insults and even death threats to harass, manipulate, and harm their victims” (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007, p. 565), is another form of bullying, known as ‘cyberbullying’ or ‘electronic bullying.’ Middleton (2011) reports increasing concerns about how social networking sites create new opportunities for bullying and demeaning others. The impact of this relatively new form of bullying has for example been responsible for nine teenage suicides across the world (Broderick, 2013).

B. Neighbourhood environment

Hong and Espelage (2012) point to a lack of research on how neighbourhood environments have influenced bullying behaviours. It is argued that because schools fall within neighbourhood environments, conditions such as crime and poverty, as well as perceptions of unsafe environments contribute towards feelings of unsafety in schools (Hong & Eamon, 2012). Bacchini, Esposito and Affuso (2009) argued that bullying in general, from the perspective of the child being bullied, the child who bullies, as well as the child who bullies and gets bullied, is significantly associated with the way these individuals perceive not only their relationships with their teachers and peers but also their vulnerability to the dangerous and violent situations within their neighbourhood. These researchers also found that children who were exposed to negative situations within their neighbourhood expressed lack of concern that the risk could be repeated (Bacchini et al., 2009). These researchers attribute this finding to the violent socio-cultural environment and lack of respect for social rules in which they conducted

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28 Cyberbullying forms part of the exosystem.
the study. As South Africa is known to be one of the world’s most violent countries (Bendall, 2010), this latter finding is not unsurprising.

C. Online counsellors

Sawyer, Mishna, Pepler and Wiener (2011) claim that although parents play a pivotal role in helping children who are bullied, their lack of understanding about this complex phenomenon prevents them from doing this effectively, and hence would benefit substantially with the help of social workers. Danby, Butler and Emmison (2011) noted that children who were being bullied preferred talking to an on-line counsellor as teachers tended to make the situation worse.

2.3.3.4 The macrosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1994) describes the macrosystem as the institutional patterns of culture. From Figure 2.1 it can be seen that this system is the outermost environment and comprises the belief systems, material resources, opportunities structures, lifestyles, hazards, cultural values, laws, public policy, bodies of knowledge, economy and customs (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Hong and Espelage (2012) identify two macrosystem levels within the context of bullying, namely, cultural norms and beliefs and religion. However, the role of the law also plays a fundamental role in a phenomenon such as bullying. Certain laws in South Africa supposedly protect children from being bullied. For example, in the South African Constitution, Chapter 2, subsection 7.1., the South African Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 5) states “…a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. ...enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.”

The Bill of Rights, clearly states in subsection 28.1. “Every child has the right… (d) to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation.” (Republic of

29 The South African and Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) operate counselling lines from Sandton, Gauteng from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week (South African Depression & Anxiety Group (SADAG), 2015).
South Africa, 1996, p. 11). Subsection 9.4 also states, “No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3).” Subsection 9.3 states, “The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth” (Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 6). Subsection 10 of the Bill of Rights states, “Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected” (Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 6). Subsection 12.e of the Bill of Rights also states that every person has the right, “…not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way” (Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 6).

Furthermore, South Africa’s Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy\(^30\) (Department of Education, 2001) which consists of ten values, expresses the importance of making schools safe and secure so that effective learning can take place. One of these values, Ubuntu (human dignity), embraces the value of human difference. More recently, in South Africa, on Freedom Day, 28 April 2013, The Protection from Harassment Act came into law in South Africa, legislating for a child or for any adult on behalf of a child, including a parent or teacher, to apply for a protection order, in the case of school or cyberbullying (Serrao, 2013).

Despite children rights acts, newspaper articles\(^31\) and daily news highlight how South African children are being raised in one of the most violent countries in the world. On a daily basis, children in South Africa are being bullied, victimised, raped, and murdered (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), 2007; Parker, 2010). One of the factors highlighted as contributing to the high rates of violent crime in the country, including the vulnerability of young people, is poor child rearing and youth socialisation (Parker, 2010). Examples include a young child of eight years old dying after being kicked and beaten for a week, by three of her peers during break time (eNCA, 2014). Another newspaper article (October 2013) reported the toilet murders of two children and mentions two other child murders (Preskey, 2013). Other recent examples of bullying and its relationship to violence experienced by South African children, are listed in

\(^{30}\) Forms part of the macrosystem.
\(^{31}\) Forms part of the exosystem.
Appendix 6. This appendix together with Appendix 1 has identified that bullying in the South African context is rife and hence sheds light on the importance of my research. Table 2.8 focuses on identified risk factors for being bullied at the macrosystem level.

Table 2.8: Risk factors at the macrosystem level for being bullied

- Attitudes of acceptability towards aggression
- Authoritarian culture
- Myths
- Religious minority

A. Cultural norms and beliefs

According to Gendron et al. (2011, p. 153), “Individual children’s beliefs about the normative status of behaviour have been linked to both bullying and aggression.” These authors contend that these beliefs guide children’s actions and therefore as they learn that bullying behaviours are acceptable and appropriate, they are inclined to engage in bullying or other forms of aggression (Gendron et al., 2011). Vernberg and Biggs (2010) claim that a school’s culture in terms of attitudes of acceptability towards aggression seem to matter more than socioeconomic conditions, and racial or ethnic composition. Research on children with sexual orientation differences highlighted how anti-lesbian/gay/bisexual attitudes were reinforced by teachers (Rivers, 2010). Hanlon (2009) explains that teachers are afraid to address homophobic attitudes in their schools rather than feel comfortable talking about them. In River’s study, it was acknowledged that these attitudes stem from stereotypes and images drawn from the media, cultural attitudes, belief systems and peer group attitudes (Rivers, 2010). In South Africa, traditional values, such as men having the right to exercise power over women and children (DSD et al., 2012) have filtered through to the Soweto school in which a Grade 2 girl was kicked and beaten to death by three peers during break time in the school playground (eNCA, 2014).

32 Forms part of the macrosystem.
Graham (2010) highlights how myths can cloud an understanding of bullying behaviour and prevent others from intervening appropriately. One of these myths views bullies as having low self-esteem and being unpopular. In contrast, many studies have indicated that some bullies are popular and are socially skilled. Another myth depicts bullying as a natural part of growing up which builds character. For example, Simplicio (2013) believes that children of today are overprotected and that the desires to nurture and protect them, besides having spilt over into school policies such as ‘zero tolerance’ of bullying, have also rendered children dependent agents who are not able to solve problems such as bullying on their own. Glassner (1999, p. 301) argues that “…fear is socially constructed through efforts to protect against it.” He points out how mothers’ fears can be transferred onto their children. However research clearly indicates how detrimental bullying is to the individual who is being bullied. Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2008) pinpointed that teachers were less likely to intervene in bullying behaviours if they viewed them as normative.

B. Religion

Abo-Zena (2011) stresses how being a religious minority in schools can impede development and academic performance through being bullied and discriminated against if the value of respect for all religions is not embraced. Although no religious statistics were revealed in the 2011 South African census, the 2001 South African census indicated that Christianity was the country’s dominant religion (Statistics South Africa, 2004). The school in which I work and where my research participants were selected is a religious school, but embraces the presence of pupils of different faiths and encourages tolerance of other religions.

Before proceeding to the final component of Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model, time, a brief overview of the preceding discussion of context will be presented. It became apparent that the closest context to the individual is the microsystem. Factors within the family and school that contribute towards or prevent being bullied were discussed. Then a discussion of both the risk and protective factors

33 Forms part of the macrosystem.
relating to bullying within the mesosystem unfolded. This involved understanding the interrelations between two or more microsystems, such as school and parents, parents and teachers, and teachers and peers, each containing the individual. This was followed by a review of structures in the exosystem with which a child does not interact directly, such as the media and neighbourhood factors that facilitate being bullied. Finally, the cultural norms and values found in the macrosystem alongside the institutional patterns of law and religion associated with bullying were examined.

2.3.4 Time

Traditionally, time has been associated with chronological age and to reflect developmental changes within an individual. The element of time is not only employed for categorising individuals according to age, but also for ordering events in their historical sequence and context. As Bronfenbrenner (2005) indicates, even though persons in the same age group share a life history of common experience, they could have quite diverse experiences, depending on the period in which they live. It allows one to “…identify the impact of prior life events and experiences, singly or sequentially, on subsequent development” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 83).

2.3.4.1 The chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner (2005) states that the chronosystem encompasses change or consistency over time not only within the person, but also of in the external environment in which the child lives, hence forming the outermost ring in Figure 2.1. Paquette and Ryan (2001) explain that characteristics within the child can include physiological changes that take place as a child ages and changes in the external environment can include, for example, the death of a parent or the birth of a sibling. Furthermore, these experiences may be regarded as normative (e.g., school entry, puberty) or non-normative (e.g., a death, severe illness within the family, divorce, moving, winning the sweepstakes) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). For example, negative life events such as boys growing up without their biological
fathers have been affiliated with being bullied at school during childhood (Fosse & Holen, 2002).

Finkelhor, Ormrod and Turner (2007a) and Finkelhor, Ormrod and Turner (2007b) indicated that victimisation of any type in childhood led to increased vulnerability of other types of victimisation in subsequent years. More concerning, these same researchers noted that youth who experienced four or more types of victimisation within a single year were exceptionally vulnerable, and were the ones most likely to experience the most serious victimisations and most serious psychological damage. Table 2.9 (below) lists factors which have been associated with being bullied over time. Furthermore, bullying may heighten or become apparent in certain periods. For example, in South Africa (de Wet, 2005) reports claim that Grade 8 learners are bullied by Grade 12 learners in the first few weeks of the new academic year when they enter high school for the first time.

Table 2.9: Risk factors at the chronosystem level for being bullied

- Natural disasters (Terranova et al., 2009)
- Peer rejection and no friends (Terranova, 2009)
- Illness (Fekkes et al., 2006)
- Divorce (Jansen et al., 2011)
- Domestic violence (Mustanoja et al., 2011)
- Living without biological father (Fosse & Holen, 2002)
- Medical conditions and chronic illness (Dempsey & Storch, 2010)
- Parents with HIV (Ishikawa, 2010)
- Depression and anxiety (Fekkes et al., 2006)
- Number of victimisations (Finkelhor et al., 2007a)

A. Changes in the characteristics of the individual

Examples relating to changes over time within the person include puberty and severe illness (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Green (2007) brings our attention to how the hormonal changes during the time of puberty can be difficult for children in
middle and high school. Such developmental changes have been identified as a risk factor for being bullied in females in puberty (Wai-ming & Zhao-qin, 2012), while advanced pubertal development in boys was associated with sexual harassment or physical and social dating aggression towards girls (Pepler, et al., 2006). Dempsey and Storch (2010) report that one third of children with a chronic illness report being bullied because of their medical condition. They also highlight how children with chronic illnesses present with comorbid social difficulties, deficits in cognitive functioning and academic performance which increases their chances of being bullied. Lumeng, et al. (2010) detected that there was a significant association between being obese and being bullied among children in Grades 3, 5 and 6. Moreover, Fekkes, Fredriks, Pijpers, Verloove-Vanhorick and Vogels (2006) perceived that children with symptoms of depression and anxiety had a higher chance of being bullied. In Chapter 3, however, it will be argued that depression and anxiety, as well as some other risk factors at the chronosystem level, may also be regarded as consequences of being bullied.

B. Changes in the environment

In the literature pertaining to bullying, Terranova (2009) points out that peer rejection and having no friends leads to an increased risk of being bullied over time. Natural disasters (Terranova et al., 2009), divorce (Jansen et al., 2011) and domestic violence (Mustanoja et al., 2011) are all factors which have been associated with being bullied. Ishikawa (2010) found that parents with HIV status kept quiet about their condition to protect their children from being bullied, but increased their psychosocial vulnerability by doing so (Bejerot, Edgar, & Humble, 2011).

From the above it is evident that the element of time, or the chronosystem, cannot be overlooked, when examining the life experiences of children who continue to be bullied, because it is used both for categorising age and for ordering events in the child’s historical and contextual experiences. Furthermore, it enables us to view both changes within the child and in the child’s external environment, either

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34 Refer to albatrosses in 2.3.2.2.
normative or non-normative, that contribute towards being bullied. The defining properties, forming the foundation of the bioecological model will now be explored.

2.4. DEFINING PROPERTIES OF THE BIOECOLOGICAL MODEL

The following propositions, as also indicated in Figure 2.2, highlight distinctive properties of the bioecological model which form the foundation for the model. These propositions served to highlight important information regarding the life experiences of my research participants that I may have overlooked when gathering and analysing my data.

I developed a model (Figure 2.2) to visually explain the defining properties of the bioecological model to provide insight and understanding of the processes that promote human development which Bronfenbrenner initially discounted as important in his earlier theory (Tudge et al., 2009).

2.4.1 Current perspectives

Bronfenbrenner (2005) stipulates that his model is evolving, hence some of the following propositions are recent in origin and some date back to the model’s earliest beginnings.

2.4.1.1 Proposition 1

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), the first proposition states that a critical element of the bioecological model is experience (proximal processes). He stresses that both objective and subjective elements direct the course of human development, neither of which operate in the same direction. The objective element is more often used to perceive the environment and changes as human beings enter different stages of their life, commencing in infancy and proceeding through childhood, adolescence, adulthood and finally old age. Terranova et al. (2009), for example, reported increased bullying and an increase in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms in children who are bullied following natural disasters. Bronfenbrenner (2005) explains that experience relates to subjective
feelings including anticipations, hopes, doubts or personal beliefs. Whilst these subjective feelings emerge in early childhood, they continue throughout life and may remain stable or change. These subjective experiences can relate to self or to others, such as friends and family. Rodkin and Hodges (2003) report that children who are bullied demonstrate both internalising (emotional) and externalising (hyperactivity) behaviours. They also include activities in which one engages. Bronfenbrenner (2005) stresses that these subjective experiences are emotionally and motivationally charged, with the polarities of these emotions existing at the same time, but in differing degrees. These include love and hate, joy and sorrow, curiosity and boredom, desire and revulsion.

Regarding bullying behaviour, desire and revulsion may for example be depicted simultaneously within a child who is bullying another child as he or she gains great satisfaction from it. These polarities of emotion may also be seen in bystanders who seem to reinforce the aggressive acts of bullying by communicating admiration so that they do not have to fear retaliation from their peers (Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011).

2.4.1.2 Proposition 2

Bronfenbrenner’s second proposition states that:

Over the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 6)

Bronfenbrenner (2005) views proximal processes as primary engines of human development because through participating in activities and interactions individuals come to make sense of their world, understand their place in it, and both play their part in changing the prevailing order while fitting into the existing one (Tudge et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner (2005) refers to the active reciprocal, regular interactions between children and other people, objects and symbols in their immediate environment, over extended periods of time as proximal processes, which include:
... feeding or comforting a baby; playing with a young child; child-child activities; group or solitary play; reading, learning new skills; athletic activities; problem solving; caring for others; making plans; performing complex tasks; and acquiring new knowledge and know-how. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 6)

These become progressively more complex over time (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), as indicated in the next paragraph.

In the literature pertaining to bullying, Georgiou (2008), for example, noticed that over-protective mothers had children who are bullied, whereas depressed mothers had children who bullied and who are bullied. Wolke and Samara (2004) also learnt that children who were bullied by their siblings were also more than likely to be bullied at school, and were at increased risk of behaviour problems. According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), these proximal processes become progressively more complex over time. However, processes function differently, depending on the person and the context, both spatial and temporal (Tudge et al., 2009), as he explains in his third proposition.

2.4.1.3 Proposition 3

Bronfenbrenner believed that proposition 3 speaks to the research design whilst propositions 1 and 2 are theoretically interdependent and subject to empirical test. A research design which allows simultaneous investigation of proposition 1 and 2 is referred to as a process – person – context – time model (PPCT for short). The element of time has special importance and indicates that the research design must show the dynamic relationships of the developing person over an extended time. Bronfenbrenner (2005) illustrated the importance of this time by means of sharing how parent monitoring of their children has changed over the previous three decades as a consequence of spending increased time commuting to and from their workplaces. Bronfenbrenner’s third proposition states:

The form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes producing development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person (including genetic inheritance); of the environment—both immediate and more remote—in which the processes are taking place; of the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration; and of the continuities and changes occurring in the environment over time, through the life course, and during the historical period in which the person has lived. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 6)
This latter proposition may explain why some children continue to be bullied, while others escape being bullied (Smith et al., 2004).

2.4.1.4 Proposition 4

Bronfenbrenner states that for a child to develop,

...intellectually, emotionally, socially and morally a child requires participation in progressively more complex activities, on a regular basis over an extended time, with one or more persons with whom the child develops a strong, mutual emotional attachment and who are committed to the child's well-being and development, preferably for life. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 9)

These prerequisites of proposition 4 lead to the developmental consequences in proposition five. Hence, it was important that I also included the primary parent of my research participants regarding their life experiences, not just to illicit early memories but also to establish the emotional attachment of my research participant to this parent. This was important because, according to Rigby (2013), the parenting style and quality of relations between parents and children are risk factors in children who are bullied.

2.4.1.5 Proposition 5

According to Bronfenbrenner,

The establishment of a strong mutual emotional attachment results in the internalization of the parent's activities and expressed feelings of affection. Such mutual ties, in turn, motivate the child's interest and engagement in related activities in the immediate physical, social and-in-due course-symbolic environment that invite exploration, manipulation, elaboration, and imagination. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 9)

The sixth proposition broadens the family circle, which necessitated involving both parents in the interview or, if absent, making inquiries about the third party.
Figure 2.2: Defining properties of the bioecological model
2.4.1.6 Proposition 6

This proposition states that the,

...complex interaction and emotional attachment between parent and child depend in substantial degree on the availability and involvement of another adult, a third party, who assists, encourages, spells off, gives status to, and expresses admiration and affection for the person caring for and engaging in joint activity with the child. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 10)

It is advocated that it is better that the third-party be of the opposite sex as it is more likely that the child will be exposed to a variety of different activities and experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Bronfenbrenner states that developmental problems such as:

...hyperactivity or withdrawal; poor academic achievement; behavioral difficulties; absenteeism; concentration difficulties; delayed gratification difficulties; smoking; drinking; dropping out of school; adolescent pregnancy; drugs; suicide; vandalism; violence and criminal acts have been associated with children of single parents families, even living in good socioeconomic circumstances. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 10)

It is thus important that the life experiences of interactions with the child's father are also obtained.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) apparently jumps from Proposition 6 to Proposition 8, leaving a gap to be filled in the literature. One that automatically springs to mind is that Bronfenbrenner seems to view development from the time of birth onwards, but excludes the effect the mother has on the development of the foetus.

2.4.2 The bioecological model: Future perspectives

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), the following propositions do not yet have sufficient empirical data, but should not be ignored when researching human development.

2.4.2.1 Proposition 8

Bronfenbrenner (2005) points out that, with the exception of Vygotsky, theory and research on human development have focused on the effect the older generation
has had on the younger. Bronfenbrenner (2005, p. 12) proposes that “…the psychological development of parents is powerfully influenced by the behaviour and development of their children.” I have come across very little literature which shows the effects that bullied children have on their parents, thus indicating a gap in the existing literature on bullying research. In my experience as an educational psychologist, this cannot be overlooked as parents are negatively affected by this phenomenon. One qualitative study that included the perceptions of parents of children who were being bullied found that “…most parents described feeling a mixture of emotions such as “anger” or “frustration” and “concern” or “worry” about the negative effects of bullying” (Sawyer et al., 2011, p. 1798). In another study, feelings of “helplessness,” “anger,” “guilt,” “disappointment,” and “frustration” were experienced by several parents when the school failed to resolve the bullying issues (Brown, 2010). One parent in this study stated “It’s hell [mother begins to cry]” (Brown, 2010, p. 175).

2.4.2.2 Proposition 9

Bronfenbrenner’s ninth proposition states that:

Over the life course, the process of attachment exhibits a turnaround. In the beginning, it is the children who are the beneficiaries of the parents’ irrational commitment, whereas toward the end the roles are reversed. Then it is the elderly parents who receive the love and care of their now middle aged children. If however, there was no attachment at the beginning, there may be no attachment at the end. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 13)

This proposition is critical in the sense that children who are bullied will eventually become adults who in turn will have children of their own. Research indicates the long-term effects of children who are bullied, such as symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress (Rivers, 2004), anxiety, social phobia, agoraphobia, a tendency to externalise when stressed (to yell), and non-melancholic depression (Gladstone et al., 2006), may contribute to the cycle of being bullied.

2.4.2.3 Proposition 10

Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000) report that the tenth proposition states:
Chaos integrates the various elements involved, and foreshadows the role of chaos in the biological model in terms of what is called a “chaotic system.” Such systems are characterized by frenetic activity, lack of structure, unpredictability in everyday activities, and high levels of ambient stimulation. Background stimulation is high, and there is a general lack of routinization and structure in daily life. The environment is also a major source of interruption of proximal processes in the form of residential noise, crowding, and classroom design. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 21)

It is thus important that we do not ignore the developmental consequences of being bullied. In Bronfenbrenner’s own words, “No society can long sustain itself unless its members have learned the sensitivities, motivations, and skills involved in assisting and caring for other human beings” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 14).

In summary, it can be seen how Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological propositions, both the evolved and future perspectives need to be taken into consideration when examining the individual life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, as these will add depth and breadth to the findings as they shed light on the unique life experiences which is pertinent to phenomenology.

2.5 INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND BRONFENBRENNER’S BIOECOLOGICAL MODEL

As an educational psychologist researching children who continue to be bullied, it was important for me to choose theories with a strong connection between theory, methods and analysis, and which would help explain the phenomena under study, whilst providing insights leading to the discovery of new connections. Social constructionism, whilst enabling me to investigate bullying as a social phenomenon, falls short of omitting the individual. Burr (2003, p. 184) points out that social constructionism “…needs to reconceptualise the relationship between the individual and society…” Cromby and Nightingale (1999) also contend that the strong emphasis on language highlights a lack of focus on three significant elements of human life, namely embodiment, materiality and power. Burr (2003) cites Giddens’ (1984) use of a metaphor of individual and society as two sides of the same coin. I see Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model as bridging this gap, in that it accounts for both the individual and society. Despite this major difference these two theories share certain assumptions.
First, both theories challenge the traditional view that knowledge is based upon objective unbiased observations of the world and that there can be only one single truth (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2009a). Second, Urie Bronfenbrenner (2005, p. xxvii) states that “...to a greater extent than for any other species, human beings create the environments that shape the course of human development.” Similarly, social constructionism assumes that people together, construct the nature of our world or reality (Burr, 2003). Third, Bronfenbrenner’s emphasis on the relationships between and among the various systems in the context of the child, dovetails with social constructionism’s emphasis on social interaction. Fourth, the way in which we describe and explain our world are based on outcomes of relationship. Fifth, both theories acknowledge the social role. Sixth, both theories are optimistic in that they offer a vast spectrum of possibility or alternative ways of viewing any given situation. Seventh, both theories subscribe to ethical values as there is no expert due to the bi-directional influences. Eighth, neither theory focuses on individualism.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the theories that have guided ME to understand the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. The link between social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, as well as the rationale for using these two theories was discussed in 2.5. From this perspective, it can be seen that to identify and describe these life experiences in order to develop an intervention for children who continue to be bullied, every system the child encounters and interacts with, over time, needs to be taken into account.

In the next chapter the definitions of middle childhood and bullying will be discussed. Thereafter, the various types and various theoretical explanations on bullying will be portrayed. This will be superseded by a discussion of gender and ethnic differences. Next, the prevalence of bullying worldwide and in South Africa will be highlighted. Following this, the consequences of bullying will emerge. The chapter will conclude with the most successful bullying interventions that have been implemented in schools to reduce bullying.
CHAPTER 3

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD CHILDREN WHO CONTINUE TO BE BULLIED

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is on middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, from a social constructionist and bioecological perspective. This chapter opens with definitions of middle childhood and bullying, followed by various explanations as well as gender and ethnic differences. The prevalence of bullying is discussed, succeeded by an exploration of the consequences. Interventions to reduce bullying are examined and the chapter concludes with an overview of chapter 4.

3.2 DEFINING MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

Middle childhood may be defined as the developmental period between six and 12 years (Coll & Szalacha, 2004; Mah & Ford-Jones, 2012), during which children begin to interact with multiple contexts outside their families, such as friends’ homes, schools, churches, mosques, academic outreach programmes, shopping malls, video arcades, and sport clubs (Coll & Szalacha, 2004), as indicated in Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model in Figure 2.1. The experiences, interactions and environments to which a child is exposed during this period have a direct bearing on physical, social, emotional and cognitive development (Mah & Ford-Jones, 2012). Mah and Ford-Jones (2012, para. 4) explain that while middle childhood children are “…growing physically stronger and more co-ordinated, they are also becoming cognitively more abstract in their thought processes and more aware of their own feelings and the world around.”

Mah and Ford-Jones (2012) report that physical activity throughout middle childhood plays a critical role in instilling self-confidence as well as being a channel for learning. Socially, from the age of seven, children begin to distinguish
between their own feelings and those of others. In addition, from six to ten they come to understand stereotypes, such as terms as ‘bully’ and ‘victim’. Coll and Szalacha (2004) claim that it is during middle childhood that they perceive the presence of racism and its derivatives of discrimination, oppression and discrimination in their environments. An oppressive school environment creates fear in a child and prohibits learning (Mayer, 2007). Mah and Ford-Jones (2012, p. 82) point out that, academically, children “…have a greater chance of reaching their potential when they have access and opportunity to engage in stimulating environments, experiences and interactions that support and promote their individual capacities and capabilities.” It is during this phase that children develop their competencies and academic self-perception, highlighted by Coll and Szalacha (2004) as the development of positive attitudes towards school, academic achievement and future aspirations, with major implications for success in adulthood. Furthermore, children who continue to be bullied during middle childhood are at risk for present and later psychopathology (Rønning et al., 2009).

As this study focuses on bullying in middle childhood I will integrate relevant literature pertaining to bullying in middle childhood. Mackay et al. (2011) argue that bullying appears to occur more in primary schools than secondary schools and younger children are more likely to be exposed to direct forms. Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O’Brennan (2007) and Jankauskiene, Kardelis, Sukys, and Kardeliene (2008) found that middle school children tend to experience the greatest exposure to and concern about bullying, yet Jankauskiene et al. (2008) found that bullying peaked in Grade 8. Interestingly, younger children (between the ages of ten and twelve) were found to cry or run away when bullied, compared to older children of 13 to 14 who tended to ignore the bullying (Smith, Shu & Madson, 2001, as cited by Elledge et al., 2010).

Wolke, Woods, and Samara’s (2009) study showed that children who were bullied at age six to nine were twice as likely to be bullied two to four years later. According to Shaffer and Kipp (2010), physical and verbal aggression declines over the course of middle childhood, when hostile aggression tends to increase. As children enter middle childhood, relational aggression becomes an increasingly useful tool to use to hurt their friends, because they share a wider range of experiences with their friends, are privy to a widening range of information and
their social groups expand (Stauffacher & DeHart, 2006). Research also indicates that children between the ages of six and 12 were less willing to make use of parent support as they grow older (Hunter, Boyle, & Warden, 2004).

Of significance is that associations of alterations in the neurobiology of 12 year old children who have been bullied have been found (Vaillancourt, Clinton, Mcdougall, Schmidt, & Hymel, 2010; Vaillancourt et al., 2008). This finding excluded children with a history of maltreatment, diagnosed psychiatric illness, foster care placement and medication use (Vaillancourt et al., 2010; Vaillancourt et al., 2008). As discussed in Chapter 2.3.2.2 neurobiological disorders, such as Autism are also associated with being bullied.

Most of the literature on the neurobiology of stress in humans, has focused on the HPA (hypothalamic-pitutary-adrenocortical) system which is associated with the stress hormone cortisol (Vaillancourt et al., 2010). Excessive exposure to cortisol has been shown to be harmful and has altered the structure of the hippocampus, a structure of the brain involved in learning and memory (Vaillancourt et al., 2010), as well as inhibiting the immune system (Ouellet-Morin et al., 2011). Reduction in the volume of the hippocampus has been found in posttraumatic children and adults (Vaillancourt et al., 2010). Hyposecretion of cortisol is the consequence of extreme or chronic stress, whereas hypersecretion of cortisol is associated with less stress (Vaillancourt et al., 2008). Alterations in the HPA axis was found to affect males and females exposed to bullying, differently. Males who were exposed to being bullied had higher cortisol levels compared to females who were bullied (Vaillancourt et al., 2008). Vaillancourt et al. (2010) point out that these findings are consistent with other researchers35 whose studies investigated children who were bullied and cortisol production and found a significant relation between being bullied and decreased cortisol. Furthermore, Vallaincourt et al. (2010) highlight two other studies36 within the broader literature indicating reduced levels of cortisol following an extreme traumatic event. Lower cortisol responses were also associated with more social and behavioural difficulties among 12 year old children who were bullied but who were also exposed to early childhood stress (Ouellet-Morin et al., 2011).

35 (Kliwer, 2006; Hansen et al., 2006)
36 (Heim et al., 2000; Yehuda, 1997)
3.3 DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Definitions of bullying play a critical role in the way we manage and prevent it (Cheng et al., 2011; Pepler, Craig, O’Connell, Atlas, & Charach, 2004), yet there is currently no universally agreed upon definition of bullying (Rigby, Smith, & Pepler, 2004). According to Cook et al. (2010), bullying should be looked at within a social context, hence my theoretical framework, which involves more than just scrutinising the personal characteristics of any individual. Extracting the individual from the context risks limiting the understanding of bullying (Cook et al., 2010).

Bullying is an aggressive act of behaviour (Kowalski, Morgan, & Limber, 2012; Olweus, 2003; Rigby, 2002; Rigby, 2006), which can be carried out by a single person or by a group of people. Rigby (2006, p. 165) contends that “bullying has been conceived broadly as the systematic abuse of power,” and in line with social constructionism, the various definitions of bullying have been written from the various perspectives of the person who is being bullied or who is bullying.

Figure 3.1, in the form of a flower, illustrates the evolving concept of bullying. The flower is symbolic of the fragility of the human being. Just as heavy winds, excessive rain and hail can damage an otherwise healthy flower, so too can bullying harm a healthy human being. Moreover, as with human beings, some flowers are more vulnerable than others. The term ‘evolving concept’ is used here, in the sense that, over time, different criteria and forms of bullying have unfolded. At the core or the eye of the flower are several necessary, but not sufficient criteria on their own, to be constituted as bullying (Rigby, 2012). These criteria will be explained in more detail. Different forms of bullying are represented by the petals of the flower, varying from one context to another and evolving over time. For example, cyberbullying was non-existent until the venue for it, the Internet, came into being in the mid-1990s. In addition, in a different context, there may be other forms of bullying that are prevalent that do not appear as one of the petals here. Furthermore, these various forms of bullying may occur separately or simultaneously. For example, in any given day an individual may be bullied by being pushed around, called names, excluded from a game on purpose or tricked into doing something hurtful.
Rigby (2012) argues that there are several necessary but on their own insufficient criteria to be conceptualised as bullying. These are highlighted in the core of Figure 3.1. According to Rigby (2014a, para.11) these criteria include: “…a desire to hurt + hurtful action + power imbalance + (typically) repetition + an unjust use of power + evident enjoyment by the aggressor and a sense of being oppressed on part of the victim.” From my experience of dealing with bullying behaviour I contend, in agreement with Rigby, that not all of these criteria have to always be present to constitute bullying. Rather, five of these seven criteria need to be present, so that it is possible to differentiate bullying from other acts of aggression, such as fighting (Aalsma & Brown, 2008). I believe that these criteria help discern whether behaviour can be constituted as bullying as it provides essential clues. For example, when the person bullying says “It was just a joke,” it illuminates the pleasure this person has derived from his/her behaviour or his/her desire to hurt.

The first criterion mentioned by Rigby, a desire to hurt, was first proposed by Tatum and Tatum (1992) as cited by Rigby (2002, p. 27), when they suggested that “Bullying is the wilful, conscious desire to hurt another and put him/her under stress.” As Rigby (2012, 2014a) points out, there are most probably numerous occasions when each individual has had a desire to hurt another, thus rendering this criterion on its own insufficient to conceptualise bullying. However, from a bio-ecological perspective one cannot ignore the subjective experience of desire on the part of the person doing the bullying. Rigby (2007) asserts that bullying begins when the initial wish or desire of the person bullying is to inflict pain or hurt another.
Figure 3.1: Definition of bullying (Designed by H. Macdonald 2015)
The following further criteria were identified by Dan Olweus, who viewed bullying from the perspective of the person who is being bullied (Rigby, 2002). These prominent criteria include negative actions or aggressive behaviour (Olweus, 2003), that occur repeatedly over time (Aalsma & Brown, 2008; Cheng et al., 2011; Rigby, 2002, 2006; Smith, 2010), and involve an imbalance of power (Aalsma & Brown, 2008; Cheng et al., 2011; Olweus, 2003; Rigby, 2002, 2006, 2014a; Skrzypiec, Slee, Murray-Harvey, & Pereira, 2011; Smith, 2010; Solberg, Olweus, & Endresen, 2007). According to Olweus,

> The person who intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort on someone else is engaging in negative actions, a term similar to the definition of aggressive behaviour in the social sciences. (Olweus, 2003, p. 12)

Thus, some authors also include the intention to harm or inflict pain into their definitions (Aalsma & Brown, 2008; Rigby, 2014a; Smith, 2010). It is important to realise that this power imbalance favours the perpetrator (Rigby & Smith, 2011) in the sense that various physical, social and/or psychological differences (Paul, Smith, & Blumberg, 2012) place the person who is bullying in an advantageous position, whilst simultaneously placing the person who is being bullied in a vulnerable position. Rigby (2014a) cites as examples of imbalances of power, a sharper tongue and a better command of language, having status or supporters, and the discovery of hidden vulnerabilities such as phobias, stammering, a parent in prison, or an intellectual talent.

Rigby (2012) highlights other necessary but not sufficient criteria towards the definition of bullying. He believes it important to distinguish between aggression by a more powerful person who is justified, and therefore not bullying, from one who is not justified and therefore is bullying. He cites examples of justified behaviour, such as a teacher disciplining a child who is playing up in class or an older sibling standing up to a younger sibling who is being cheeky (Rigby, 2014a). The last criteria necessary to conceptualising bullying behaviour refer to the feelings of both the perpetrator and the person being bullied. The former displays evident enjoyment whereas the latter feels oppressed and hurt by the person who is bullying (Rigby, 2014a).

Despite the above criteria, as mentioned in Chapter 2, there remains confusion between bullying and violence, as some authors still use them interchangeably.
(Whitted & Dupper, 2005). The American Psychological Association (APA, 2013, para. 1) defines violence as “…an extreme form of aggression, such as assault, rape or murder.” Whilst this definition clearly differentiates between bullying and violence, according to the World Health Organisation’s (WHO, 2002, p. 80) report, interpersonal violence is defined as “…the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.” This definition implicates bullying as violence.

Farrington, Baldry, Kyvsgaard, and Ttofi (2008) and Ttofi and Farrington (2011) stipulate that school bullying is different from school violence, as not all violence involves bullying or vice versa. For Burton and Leoschut (2013), violence is often associated with crime, but not all violence is criminal and vice versa. Burton and Leoschut (2013, p. 2) argue that “…bullying is often considered too inconsequential to constitute violence, with little recognition of the damage – psychological, emotional and/or physical – that can be caused,” whilst Gabarino, in the foreword to “Bullying in American Schools” edited by Espelage and Swearer (2004), implicates bullying as emotional violence rather than physical violence.

From the above, it is evident that there is a strong link between bullying and violence. Ttofi, Farrington and Lösel (2012) found that school bullying predicted violence, whilst Liang, Flisher and Lombard (2007) found that violent and anti-social behaviour increased among adolescents in South Africa who bullied and were bullied. Furthermore, Dupper and Meyer-Adams (2002) refer to bullying as low-level violence underlying violence. However, according to the website Bullying Statistics (2009, para.7), there is a fine line and a strong link between bullying and violence, but with one important distinction: “Violence is against the law, while bullying generally isn't unless it crosses the line into harassment or assault.” It is this latter argument, the claim that bullying is not a legal matter that I used for the purposes of this research, to differentiate bullying from violence.
3.3.1 Types of bullying

Paul et al. (2012) write that forms of bullying change over time, whilst Rigby (2002) argues that types of bullying can be identified by looking at the nature of the bullying behaviour and different types of bullying can occur simultaneously, either directly/overtly or indirectly/covertly. Figure 3.1 (above) illustrated the various types of bullying, classified as physical (e.g., pushing, hitting, kicking); verbal (e.g., name-calling, spreading rumours, threatening); relational (e.g., social isolation, rejecting, neglecting, snubbing, discriminating); proprietorial (e.g., blackmailing, taking other’s belongings, damaging personal possessions, extorting); coercive (e.g., buying things and writing homework for the bullies, cleaning up after their meals); behavioural (removing the victims’ trousers, locking the victims in the toilet, barring the victims from going to the toilet, splashing water, messing up or hiding their belongings, playing tricks); racial (e.g., marginalising another because of racial identity); disability; sexual (e.g., the use of inflicting sexual connotations); and cyberbullying.

The last of these, cyberbullying has been defined as “…an overt, intentional act of aggression towards another person online,” (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004, p. 1308). David-Ferdon, Hertz, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009) state that one of the risks of technology is electronic aggression, which they define as:

Any type of harassment or bullying (teasing, telling lies, making fun of someone, making rude or mean comments, spreading rumours, or making threatening or aggressive comments) that occurs through e-mail, a chat room, instant messaging, a website (including blogs), text messaging, or videos or pictures posted on websites or sent through cell phones. (David-Ferdon, Hertz, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009, p. 3)

Rapid advances in technology have influenced the way people interact (David-Ferdon et al., 2009) and are causing methods of cyberbullying to evolve at rapid rates (Paul et al., 2012). Cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying, though they share common features (Kowalski et al., 2012; Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012). According to Hinduja and Patchin (2007), there are two concepts, ‘online’ and ‘offline’ bullying. Firstly, cyberbullying is characterised by perceived anonymity whereas in traditional bullying the person being bullied knows the perpetrator (Kowalski et al., 2012; Schneider et al., 2012). Secondly, cyberbullying
takes place at any time during the day or night, while most traditional bullying takes place at school (Kowalski et al., 2012). Thirdly, perpetrators of cyberbullying may feel a reduced sense of responsibility compared to face-to-face perpetrators (Schneider et al., 2012). For Paul et al. (2012), cyberbullying is similar to traditional bullying in the sense that it involves indirect forms of bullying via mobile telephones (text messages, voice mail and picture imaging) and the Internet (email, instant messenger, chat rooms and websites). Kowalski et al. (2012) found that the risk of being cyberbullied is greater for children already involved in traditional bullying (Schneider et al., 2012).

3.4 VARIOUS THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS OF BEING BULLIED

The literature indicates that there are many more theories explaining bullying behaviour than there are theories on being bullied. Theories can provide useful insight into intervention guidelines (Rigby, 2003a). As pointed out in Chapter 1, meta-analyses of bullying interventions have reflected substantially below a 50 per cent reduction in bullying behaviour. Each of the theories mentioned below has limitations, as they do not account for all cases of being bullied. This implies that currently, alternative theoretical explanations to being bullied are lacking in the literature. It is within this light, that my research question, “What are the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied?” hopes to fill this gap in the theory, so that my aim of developing an intervention for children who continue to be bullied will not only be achieved, but useful too.

3.4.1 Attributions to individual differences

This perspective assigns certain personal characteristics to the child who bullies and to the one who is bullied. For example, Slee and Rigby (1993) argue that the bully tends to be low in empathy, in that he/she is an insensitive and an uncaring individual, and is associated with psychoticism. The child being bullied, on the other hand, tends to be introverted, has low self-esteem and lacks social skills, such as assertiveness (Rigby 2003a). In Chapter 2.1 three types of personal characteristics, namely dispositions, bioecological resources/albatrosses and
demand characteristics, with relevant examples, were mentioned associated with children who are bullied. Social constructionism views these dispositions and bioecological resources/albatrosses as dependent upon the social interactions individuals have in particular social and economic climates in their culture at that time and not as located within the individual (Burr, 2003). For example, for Hunter, Boyle and Warden (2007), the type of power imbalance experienced by children who were being bullied will influence their levels of depression. Graham (2010, p. 67) also sites myths that cloud understanding of behaviours relating to being bullied, such as “…once a victim, always a victim” and bullies have low self-esteem and are unpopular.

3.4.2 Bullying as a socio-cultural phenomenon

The theory of bullying as a socio-cultural phenomenon fits well with both social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model. In Chapter 2.3.3.4, it was explained how the macro-system of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, influences bullying behaviour. In this instance, historical and cultural beliefs have a direct bearing on social attitudes towards such aspects as gender, race, ethnicity and social class (Rigby, 2003a). Felix and Green (2010) write that gender and bullying are influenced by characteristics of the macro-system, whilst for Turkel (2007) socialisation into gender roles explains why boys tend to display their negative feelings through direct confrontation, compared to covert and subtle forms of bullying by girls. In addition, socially scripted ideas of masculinity and femininity have also been found to reinforce what is considered acceptable behaviour for each gender (Felix & Green, 2010). Rigby (2003a) recommends that schools implement interventions through the school curriculum for children to respect socio-cultural differences.

3.4.3 Bullying as a response to group and peer pressures within the school

This theory tallies with social constructionism as it relocates being bullied away from the individual. It also agrees with Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model as it highlights the bidirectional influences between the person and his/her contexts.
Rigby (2003a) brings to attention how children can be powerfully influenced by a smaller group of peers when there is a close association. According to Nesdale and Scarlett (2004), preadolescents favour children who bully significantly more than those who are bullied. Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) found that bullying behaviour is a way of gaining power and status in a group or school class and that this status is maintained by short communicative situations, such as name-calling. In this way “…bullying behaviour creates cultural norms and forces all pupils in the bullying community to follow them” (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008, p. 333). This creates group cohesion as it instils fear in the other pupils who dare not fight bullying (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008). The bidirectional forces, as mentioned in Chapter 2.3, can clearly be seen here, as according to Rigby (2003a) the ethos of the school influences individuals to behave in a certain way, which in turn create norms for others to follow. Rigby (2003a) states that schools need to be aware of the roles played by groups and advocates the ‘no blame approach’ and ‘method of shared concern’ to work with groups of children who have been bullied or are suspected of bullying others.

3.4.4 Personal and social integration

Rigby (2002) highlights how personality theory explains how problems in relationships and overall happiness are linked to how one feels about oneself and about others. Rigby (2002) cites examples of how Morrison (2001) uses the dimensions of self-respect and pride (In one’s community) to describe children who bully, children who are bullied, children who bully and are bullied and others who are not involved in bullying at all (refer to Table 3.1). Both social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, sees the lack of self-respect in the child who is being bullied as emanating from the disrespect shown to him/her by the individual who is doing the bullying, rather than being an inherent personality trait.
Table 3.1: Typology of children who bully, who are bullied and others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Respect for self</th>
<th>Pride in the school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullies(^{37})</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims(^{38})</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bully/victims(^{39})</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.5 Bullying from the perspective of restorative justice

The central tenet for the practice of restorative justice is that “social relationships are important for regulating social life” (Morrison, 2002, p. 2) a central tenet of social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model. According to Morrison (2002, 2006), and Ahmed et al. (2001), one of the known risk factors in predicting bullying and a central factor in understanding bullying and victimisation in schools is shame management. Ahmed et al. (2001) as cited by Morrison (2002) state that in adaptive shame management, individuals take responsibility for the wrongdoing (acknowledgement) and make amends (discharge of shame). In this way connectedness to the individual’s community remains intact (Morrison, 2002). In contrast, when responsibility is not taken for the wrongdoing, and shame is not discharged, it is internalised and expressed as anger. Levine and Kline (2006, p. 78) explain that shame is a symptom of trauma “when constriction, freeze, and immobility continue for prolonged periods.” This shame is exacerbated when the individual experiences feelings of rejection and lapses into a mode of self-protection, which leads to further breakdown of relationships (Ahmed et al., 2001, as cited by Morrison, 2002). Ahmed et al. (2001) as cited by Morrison (2002) distinguish how shame management differs among the four categories that characterise bullying and victimisation. These differences are portrayed in Table 3.2.

\(^{37}\) Children who bully
\(^{38}\) Children who are bullied
\(^{39}\) Children who bully and are also bullied
Table 3.2: Shame management among children who bully and are bullied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-bullies/non-victims(^{40})</th>
<th>Acknowledges and discharges shame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge shame of wrongdoing, BUT are caught up in cycles of self-critical thinking through ongoing feelings of rejection. So their shame becomes persistent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bullies(^{42})</th>
<th>Less likely to acknowledge shame of wrongdoing. Their shame is displaced or projected onto others. This manifests as anger and other forms of anti-social behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bully-victims</td>
<td>Feel the shame, but fail to acknowledge it and get caught up in cycles of self-critical thought</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the theory of restorative justice claims that adaptive shame management restores social relationships, but maladaptive shame management weakens them (Morrison, 2002). It is thus important that two restorative processes are present when schools manage issues of bullying. The first involves a community of support (respectful and caring individuals) for assisting the perpetrator and child who is being bullied. The second includes a process of shame, whereby the individual reintegrates the shame rather than becoming stigmatised by it (Morrison 2002). This intervention is discussed in section 3.9.

3.5 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN BULLYING

Numerous studies have indicated that more boys are likely to be bullied at school than are girls (Camodeca, Goossens, Terwogt, & Schuengel, 2002; Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, & Zeira, 2004; Schneider et al., 2012), but more boys tend to bully than girls (Jankauskiene et al., 2008; Liang et al., 2007; Roland & Galloway, 2002). However, Cassidy (2009) mentions that in his study more girls were prone to being bullied than boys, while Jankauskiene et al. (2008) found no significant differences of gender among children who were bullied. A survey in South Africa, conducted by a consumer insights company, *Pondering Panda*, found that both genders were equally affected (SAPA., 2013). Nor is the extent of

\(^{40}\) Children who do not bully and are not bullied

\(^{41}\) Children who are bullied

\(^{42}\) Children who bully
gender differences in cyberbullying clear, as some studies have found no differences whilst others have indicated that more girls than boys experience it (Kowalski et al., 2012; Schneider et al., 2012). For example, Low and Espelage (2013) found that girls from Grade 6 through to Grade 8 encountered higher levels of cyberbullying than did males. In addition, it was reported that females are twice as likely to be perpetrators and recipients of cyberbullying (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). In my opinion, it seems that the hidden, anonymous and hands-off nature of cyberbullying, in which the perpetrator can remain faceless (Snakenborg, Van Acker, & Gable, 2011), may appeal more to females because of the passive, covert form of aggression involved.

Espelage and Swearer (2003) and Crick and Grotpeter (1995) highlight the different forms of aggression displayed by boys and girls. Boys typically display overt forms of physical and verbal aggression, which include the starting of fights, hitting and pushing others as well as yelling and calling others mean names (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). On the other hand, girls use covert forms of aggression, such as indirect and relational aggression (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefooghe, 2002; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Smit, 2003), which Pepler, Craig, Jiang and Connolly (2008) refer to as a social form of aggression. According to Osterman et al. (1998, p. 1), indirect aggression is defined as “social manipulation, attacking the target in circuitous ways,” whereas relational aggression is referred to as “harm within relationships caused by covert bullying or manipulative behaviour” (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, p. 24). Girls are reportedly more likely to experience indirect forms of bullying, such as being left out and the spreading of rumours (Sawyer, Bradshaw, & O’Brennan, 2008). In addition, girls experience relational aggression, which includes behaviours such as telling friends they will stop liking them unless they do what they say; ignoring them or stopping talking to them when they are angry; and trying to keep certain people from being in their group during activity or playtime (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to experience direct forms of being bullied, such as pushing and hitting (Sawyer et al., 2008). Osterman et al. (1998) found that indirect aggression was the aggressive style used most by girls across nations, ethnic groups and age groups. This was followed by verbal aggression, whilst physical aggression was the least style of aggression to be used. Boys
between the ages of eight and 11 were found to use physical and verbal aggression equally, compared to boys of 15 years who mostly used verbal aggression (Osterman et al., 1998). It has also been found that aggressive boys are more likely to have a wide base of reputational support compared to aggressive girls and as Rodkin and Hodges (2003) also report, aggressive boys from fourth to sixth grade were well connected to others, whilst aggressive girls tended to be segregated from the mainstream peer ecology, because aggression is less normative among girls.

Strategies used by girls and boys between Grades 4 and 6 who are bullied seem to vary. Girls who were chronically bullied seem to be passive and pessimistic when being bullied as they were found to be less inclined to use a strategy to counter bullying behaviour (Elledge et al., 2010). On the other hand, boys in this same study made use of adult recommended strategies, such as walking away, ignoring or joking to counter bullying, which did not seem to have the same effect in the Grades 5-7. Interestingly, it was found that boys who retaliated in this way reported higher levels of verbal and relational bullying behaviours than boys who resorted to physical strategies (Elledge et al., 2010). Of great significance is the finding that children who tend to be bullied chronically, “…are trapped in a distinctive pattern whereby strategies for dealing with school bullies fail to reduce peer victimization…” (Elledge et al., 2010, p. 139).

Other research findings relating to gender differences include:

- Boys are more likely than girls to report frequent incidents of being bullied (Sawyer et al., 2008; Ma, 2002).

- In a sample of nine-11 year old children who were bullied, girls felt less in control of frequent bullying than did boys (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Hunter & Boyle, 2002).

- In South Africa, black boys experienced more racist bullying than did black girls (Greeff, 2004).

- In Australia, six per cent of boys and nine per cent of girls stayed at home to avoid being bullied (Rigby, 2002).
Boys who were bullied preferred to make use of school support in the form of teachers and classmates, whereas girls preferred to use their parents for social support (Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Tenenbaum, Varjas, Meyers, & Parris, 2011).

From the above, it becomes obvious that these various findings differ from place to place, from time to time and from one individual or groups of individuals to the next. From a social constructionist and bioecological perspective, It seems that first, we cannot ignore the social and cultural influences presiding in the different contexts at the time that influence these findings. Second, we need to take cognisance of the bidirectional influences between the various contexts to explain and understand these various findings.

3.6 ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN BULLYING

Sawyer et al. (2008) report that there are too many inconsistencies relating to ethnic differences in the risk of being bullied. These authors highlight the following findings. Firstly, a report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicates that the rates of being bullied at school do not vary by ethnicity (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Secondly, although African American students were more likely to be subjected to violence outside the school, white students were more likely to be targets of theft at school. Thirdly, while the World Health Organisation (WHO, 1998) study found no significant differences in being bullied among African Americans, Hispanic and white students, Spriggs, Iannotti, Nansel and Haynie (2007) found that African American youth were less likely to be bullied at school than Hispanic or white students. Sawyer et al. (2008), as well as Juvonen, Graham and Schuster (2003) found that minority groups were less likely to report being bullied than were white students. However, Sawyer et al. (2008) found that the minority youth (African Americans, Asians) were less likely than the white students to report being bullied frequently when presented with the definition-based single item measure, but more inclined to report being bullied frequently when given the various forms of bullying in the definition.
Little research concerning ethnic differences related to bullying has been conducted in South Africa, however one study did find that black student’s attitudes in a multi-racial school were more positive towards that of white students than those of black students in a single race school (Moholola, 2007). A survey conducted by *Pondering Panda* found that 34 per cent of black respondents believed bullying was one of the most significant problems in their schools, compared to 41 per cent of whites and 43 per cent of coloureds (SAPA, 2013). Greeff (2004) found that a greater proportion of black learners, from Grade 4 to 6 in a multi-racial but single sex school, compared to white learners, were exposed to comments about their race and colour. In addition, Greeff (2004) found in the same study that a greater proportion of white learners than black learners were bullied by children in their own class and grade, which leads to the next discussion concerning the prevalence of bullying.

### 3.7 PREVALENCE OF BULLYING

Reported rates of bullying depend on the definition of bullying, the length of time it is measured and the age of children surveyed (Simon Fraser University, 2008). Sawyer et al. (2008) found that fewer children (20-30 per cent) reported being bullied when responding to the definition based on a single-item question. These authors reasoned that the concept of ‘bullying’ was probably perceived as relating to the physical form of bullying only. On the other hand, these authors found that 55-80 per cent of children responded to being bullied when the definition involved several forms of bullying behaviour. Bradshaw et al. (2007) report that teachers across all grades, from elementary to high school, underestimate the prevalence of bullying. Teachers can make either a positive or negative difference in the lives of children who are bullied. Carrol-Lind and Kearney’s (2004) study on bullying found a clear link between children’s belief that teachers were making an effort regarding bullying and the occurrence of bullying within a school. Similarly, Rogers and Hodges (2003, p. 396) indicate that it is the teachers who know their “peer ecologies” through sociometric assessments, who are very successful in reducing bullying. Jankauskiene et al. (2008) found that although there was no significant discrepancy in socio-economic status and being involved in bullying, children from
rich families were more involved in this type of behaviour (65.2 per cent) than children from middleclass (58 per cent) and poor families (54.1 per cent). A cross-sectional, multilevel study conducted in 35 countries also found that adolescents who attend schools and live in countries where socio-economic differences are wider, are at greater risk of being bullied (Due et al., 2009). These findings imply that children from affluent families tend to bully.

The prevalence of bullying reportedly appears to be most frequent during elementary and middle school years and lessens significantly during the high school years (Tenenbaum et al., 2011). Eslea and Rees (2001) concluded that the most memorable, and therefore perhaps the most severe memories of being bullied occurred in middle childhood. Casey-Cannon, Hayward and Goven (2008) state that children between the ages of 10 and 13 experience greater levels of bullying behaviour. Bradshaw et al. (2007) highlight that both children and staff from the middle school years report the greatest exposure to and concern regarding bullying, compared to the high school. While some studies indicate a decrease in prevalence of traditional bullying from middle school to high school, other studies have found an increase in cyberbullying during the middle school years and some have found no consistent relationship between cyberbullying and age (Schneider et al., 2012).

Prevalence rates of being bullied vary throughout the world, but show that a considerable number of children are bullied throughout the world. Casey-Cannon et al. (2008) document that 81 per cent of school aged males and 72 per cent of school-aged females report being bullied. Dracic (2009) states that research contends that 15-25 per cent of students are bullied. A study in October 2010 in the USA indicated that in a sample of 500,000 children surveyed, from Grade 3-11, 16.8 per cent of children were being bullied two to three times per month. A South African study conducted in 1990 reflected that of 1,073 Grade 1 and Grade 2 pupils, 38 per cent reported being bullied (Richter et al., 2000, cited by Greeff & Grobler, 2008). A South African researcher, Greeff (2004), found that 56.4 per cent of children were being bullied. Neser’s (2007) survey results revealed that from a sample of learners ranging from Grade 6 to Grade 11, across 17 schools, in the Tshwane South, District 4, South Africa, 53.1 per cent had been subjected to being bullied. Another more recent South African study by Liang et al. (2007)
revealed that of 36.3 per cent of children involved in bullying behaviour, 19.3 per cent were bullied and 8.7 per cent were both bullied and bullied others. A recent survey in South Africa conducted by *Pondering Panda* found that 40 per cent of 13 and 14-year-olds identified bullying as a major problem, compared to 32 per cent of respondents aged between 15 and 17 (SAPA., 2013). The latest statistics in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) show that South Africa has the highest bullying rate for the Grade 4 age group in the world. An estimated 55 per cent of grade 4 pupils in South Africa are bullied on a regular basis compared to the 20 per cent international average (Howie, van Staden, Tshele, Dowse, & Zimmerman, 2012; Mullis, Foy, & Drucker, 2012). Figure 3.2 (below) shows the frequency of bullying of Grade 4 learners internationally and in South Africa. A detailed account of these bullying statistics per country can be found in Appendix 9 (Mullis et al., 2012). The PIRLS study also found that at least half of the learners across all the languages tested (see Figure 3.3), (except for isiXhosa) experienced bullying on a weekly basis (Howie et al., 2012). A similar finding was also obtained from the Grade 5 data, in that in South Africa, just under a half (48 per cent) of Grade 5 learners reported being bullied weekly (Howie et al., 2012). These highlighted statistics indicate that bullying is prevalent among middle childhood children in South Africa.

![Figure 3.2: Frequency of bullying of Grade 4 learners internationally and in South Africa (Howie et al., 2012, p. 83)](image-url)
Figure 3.3: pre-PIRLS 2011 Grade 4 learner reports on bullying at school (Howie et al., 2012, p. 84)

The results of an informal longitudinal bullying study (Figures 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8) of the same cohort of children in different year groups are reflected below. This informal study was conducted by the researcher at the school in which I work. It is important to highlight that before these surveys were carried out, the definition of bullying as well as the various types of bullying were discussed in detail. As mentioned above, Sawyer et al. (2008) found that responses to being bullied increased when the definition mentions several forms of bullying behaviour. The survey (Appendix 7) used to capture these statistics came from A Teacher’s and Parent’s Guide to Bullying (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch, & Swart, 2000), but has been adapted over the years to include new forms of bullying, such as cyberbullying.

The graphs below (refer to Figures 3.4 - 3.8) reflect a high percentage of children who are bullied each year. These results include children who were bullied once, twice and often. This correlates with international research that indicates more children being bullied in primary than in secondary school. The results of the informal longitudinal bullying study of the same cohort of children in different year groups also indicate that more children seem to be bullied between Grades 3 and 5 than between Grades 6 and 7 (refer to Table 3.3, below). In addition, it was
found that the percentage of children who are bullied often is greater in Grade 4 than in Grade 5 (see Table 3.4, below). This finding correlates with the 2011 PIRLS study, however, the percentage of children who are bullied often in Grades 4 and 5 in the informal longitudinal study is far less than the percentage of those bullied in the 2011 PIRLS study for Grades 4 and 5 respectively (55 per cent and 48 per cent) (Table 3.3, below). No pattern emerged for children who bully. Although Table 3.3 indicates an increase in the number of children who bully each year, from Grade 3 to Grade 7, the other figures did not. This suggests that age is not a predictor of bullying others. Figures 3.4 to 3.8 also show the large percentage of children who consistently witness bullying incidents over time.

**Table 3.3:** Informal longitudinal study: percentage of children who are bullied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Between Grade 3 and 5</th>
<th>Between Grade 6 and 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>77.67 per cent</td>
<td>69.50 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>74.33 per cent</td>
<td>65.00 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>71.33 per cent</td>
<td>57.50 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>58.00 per cent</td>
<td>57.00 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>69.33 per cent</td>
<td>61.00 per cent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.4:** Informal longitudinal study: percentage of children who are bullied often

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage of learners who get bullied often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43.94 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.18 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43.84 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.85 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.94 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19.67 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.09 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.78 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30.26 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21.33 per cent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although each group of children reflect a different pattern in the rate of being bullied, it appears that in general children tend to be bullied more in Grades 3, 4 and 5 than in Grades 6 and 7.

**Figure 3.4:** Informal longitudinal study 2006-2010
**Figure 3.5:** Informal longitudinal study 2007-2011

**Figure 3.6:** Informal longitudinal study 2008-2012
From the above it would make sense to anticipate that the participants in this study may have been bullied more between Grades 3 and 5 compared to between Grades 4 and 6.
Grades 6 and 7. These findings may also suggest that they encountered more experiences of being bullied in Grade 4 compared to any other year.

3.8 CONSEQUENCES OF BEING BULLIED

Bullying is known to negatively affect the children who bully, children who are bullied, as well as children who witness bullying (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Research has indicated that many teachers are unaware of the seriousness of children who are bullied and the negative effects it has on them (Adam, 2007; Bradshaw et al., 2007). Vorster (2002) points out that because bullying is a repetitive act, the intensity will increase and the consequences will become more severe. Stressful events early in life can affect children's mental health problems (Shakoor et al., 2011), whilst negative consequences of bullying include mental and physical harm, as well as damage to property or rights (Cheng et al., 2011). Consequences of being bullied indicate both negative short-term and long-term emotional (Krige et al., 2000), behavioural, somatic (Krige et al., 2000), social (Krige et al., 2000) and academic difficulties (Krige et al., 2000; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Whitted & Dupper, 2005; Vorster, 2002).

A list of the various consequences of bullying appears in Table 3.5 (below).

Table 3.5 Consequences of being bullied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological</th>
<th>Behavioural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Loneliness</td>
<td>• Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Depression</td>
<td>• Sleeping difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anxiety</td>
<td>• Wetting of the bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low self-esteem</td>
<td>• Violent behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Possible adult psychosis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alcohol/drug dependence or abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Suicidal thoughts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feelings of frustration and hopelessness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td>• Nail biting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somatic</td>
<td>• Headaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Backaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Loss of appetite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor posture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stomach ailments (ulcers, sore stomachs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unexplained aches and pains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>• Lonely and isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unhappy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have no friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Few friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social hopelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Avoid socializing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have difficulty mixing with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Become very shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Peers avoid them for fear of being bullied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>• Refuse to go to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Keep close to their teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Spend time in the school library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lower grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Disliking school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Concentration difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Absenteeism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hide their lack of understanding for fear of being teased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Under achieve so they don’t appear to be clever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Afraid to ask questions in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Withdraw from school activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children who are regularly bullied by others are at risk for severe psychological adjustment problems, including loneliness (Aalsma & Brown, 2008), depression (Aalsma & Brown, 2008; Santalahti et al., 2008; Smith, 2010), anxiety (Krige et al., 2000), suicidal thoughts (Bonanno & Hymel, 2010; Young, Yun-Joo, & Leventhal, 2005) and low self-esteem (Aalsma & Brown, 2008; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008; Krige et al., 2000; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). According to Solberg and Olweus (2003), both girls and boys who are bullied report higher levels of social disintegration, global negative self-evaluations and depressive tendencies than children who are not bullied. Farrow and Fox (2011) report that girls are more likely to be socially and verbally bullied, exhibit
more emotional difficulties, restrain their eating and show body dissatisfaction than are boys. Lataster et al. (2006) reveal that childhood bullying may even be associated with adult psychosis, whilst Rivers (2004) found in a sample of 92 men and 27 girls, with a mean age of 28 years, who had been bullied in childhood, aged between 16 and 24 years, presented with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and either alcohol and/or drug dependence or abuse.

Behavioural problems such as aggression have also been displayed by children who are bullied (Camodeca et al., 2002; Lataster et al., 2006). Rigby (2003b) also reports that children who are bullied between the ages of seven and 10 years of age experience sleeping difficulties and tend to wet their beds. In addition, Aalsma and Brown (2008) convey that children who have been bullied have increased rates of violence-related behaviour.

Socially, it has become apparent that children who are bullied have reported that they feel lonely and unhappy at school and have fewer friends than their peers (Veenstra et al., 2005). Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2008) and Bonanno and Hymel (2010) found that the more socially hopeless one becomes the greater the risk of suicidal thoughts. Peers of children who tend to be bullied have also been known to avoid socialising with the child who is being bullied for fear of being bullied themselves (Veenstra et al., 2005).

Academically, research has found that children who tend to be bullied make use of avoidant or escaping behaviours, such as refusing to go to school or to go to certain places; keeping close to their teachers; and spending time in the school library (Rigby, 2002). Being bullied is also associated with lower grades, disliking school and absenteeism (Aalsma & Brown, 2008). Nakamoto and Schwartz (2010) found that children who are bullied do not perform well academically. In addition, it has become apparent that such children are prone to concentration difficulties as a consequence of recurring memories of being bullied (Rigby, 2003b).

3.9 INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE BULLYING

From a bio-ecological perspective, the obligation of alleviating bullying should rest with every system, from the individual to the macro-system, however, Rigby
(2014d, para.1) argues that, “…the prime responsibility for bullying in schools rest with schools…,” because this is where the bullying mostly takes place. I contend that with the advent of cyberbullying it is perhaps unfair to place the prime responsibility of diminishing bullying solely with schools. Furthermore, Downes (2010) highlights the issue of bullying outside school, in contexts of socio-economically disadvantaged communities, such as is the case of South Africa. In view of bullying not merely being confined to schools, I maintain that schools have the prime responsibility for educating children and parents about bullying, and should therefore educate them about interventions that can be put into place in the home environment. Downes (2010) similarly claims that schools should be focal points of community education. This is essential because from a bio-ecological perspective, schools form part of the exo-system and are in a position to work together with the community to manage this phenomenon effectively. To do this each school requires a toolkit of multiple strategies both to prevent bullying and intervene with bullying (Vorster, 2002).

Despite the measureless amount of research on bullying, various meta-analyses of bullying interventions have indicated subtle rather than profound differences, reflecting substantially below the 50 per cent reduction mark (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). Ttofi and Farrington’s 2011 study in the UK found that bullying behaviour had declined by an average of 20-2 per cent, whereas victimisation declined by only 17-20 per cent (Rivers, 2013) when using intervention strategies. In light of the seriousness of children who are bullied, it is important that interventions both prevent and deal with cases of bullying (Rigby & Slee, 2008). Rivers (2013) argues that schools should not be too quick to rely on expensive anti-bullying interventions which are offered by outsiders, because he claims in-school practices can effectively do this themselves. From a bioecological and social constructionist perspective, as discussed in Chapter 2, many factors need to be considered before deciding what interventions to use.

Smith, Ananiadou and Cowie (2003) recognise interventions at the individual (Table 3.9), class (Table 3.7) and school levels (Table 3.6) that are necessary to reduce bullying. In addition, the age of a child also has been highlighted as an important factor that needs to be taken into consideration, as some interventions are understandably better suited to the older children (11-18 years) than the
younger ones (4-11 years) (Nordahl et al., 2008; Rivers, 2013). Examples of such interventions are listed in Table 3.9. Furthermore, from a social constructionist perspective, the type of bullying taking place at the individual level, will make a difference to what intervention is chosen. Table 3.8 lists intervention methods (Rigby, 2010) and intervention strategies (Rigby, 2014e) advocated by Rigby for different types of bullying. For example, because of the anonymity of cyberbullying, Snakenborg et al. (2011) point out that a threat of punishment in this instance is insignificant. Rigby and Bauman (2010) also point out that educators should not treat all forms of bullying as equally severe. They argue that the more serious forms of bullying happen less frequently than the less serious forms of bullying (Rigby & Bauman, 2010). Although I agree that not every case of bullying should be treated in a similar way, and that some cases are more severe than others, I do not agree with the statement that frequent forms of bullying are less harmful. For example, I speculate that a child who is exposed to repeated name calling may be severely affected, despite this form of bullying being regarded as mild. Other factors, such as earlier childhood trauma, also need to be examined because Seeds, Harkness and Quilty (2010) imply that when children experience both childhood physical and emotional abuse as well as being bullied, they develop perceptions of a low sense of belonging and hence receive poor social support, and would therefore benefit from cognitive and behavioural interventions. For the purpose of this research, interventions pertaining to middle childhood children who are bullied will be focused upon and discussed.

Anti-bullying interventions mainly target three different levels of intervention: the school, the classroom and the individual (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009). Whole school approaches to reducing bullying incidents, such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme, are known to be the best as they typically include a systematic approach which address interventions at the school, classroom and individual level (Olweus, 2004; Rigby, Smith, & Pepler, 2004; Rigby & Slee, 2008; Rigby, 2010). Such an approach dovetails with the bioecological model and social constructionism because it includes different levels of the social system. The most successful intervention to date was Olweus’s Bullying Prevention programme in Bergen, Norway, which indicated reductions of 50 per cent in bullying and inspired many other anti-bullying programmes (Karna, Voeten, Little, Poskiparta, Kaljonen,
& Salmivalli, 2011). However, it is important to point out that this same programme produced near-zero results in Stavanger (Rigby et al., 2004), with reductions of only 21-38 per cent in a 1997-1998 study involving 30 schools in Norway and decreased effectiveness in the United States (Olweus, 2003). In addition, Merrell et al. (2008) ascertained from their meta-analytic school bullying intervention research between 1980 and 2004, that the majority of findings evidenced no meaningful change, either positively or negatively.

Rigby et al. (2004) argue that no single programme offers a comprehensive approach to tackling the complex phenomenon of bullying. As pointed out above, it has been argued that such programmes need to address the age of the child as research has shown that certain interventions have only been successful with younger children (Nordahl et al., 2008). In addition, Merrell et al. (2008) found that in their meta-analytic study over a 25-year period of various bullying interventions that the programmes tended to influence attitudes, self-perceptions and knowledge, rather than actual bullying behaviours. However, from a bioecological perspective, the importance of attitudes cannot be overlooked, because the bi-directional influences suggest that attitudes will influence behaviour and therefore could be viewed as preventative.

In a South African study in a primary school it was found that an authoritarian culture underlies bullying (Macdonald, 2003; Macdonald & Swart, 2004), and as Vorster (2002) states, only once educators have examined their own attitudes towards bullying can safe environments be created. Likewise, Farrington et al. (2008, p. 3) claim that many programmes focus on common-sense ideas about what will reduce bullying rather than focusing on “…why children bully, or why they get bullied or why bullying acts occur.” This is apparent in a claim by Greef and Grobler that the high prevalence rates of bullying in South Africa may be attributed to preventative measures not being as effective as hoped (Greeff & Grobler, 2008). This is one of the reasons I chose to focus on the life experiences of children who continue to be bullied. As Greef and Grobler (2008) also signify, more research is required on children who are bullied in South Africa.
3.9.1 Interventions at the school level

Strategies at the school level include interventions designed to change the overall culture and climate of the school (Whitted & Dupper, 2005), in particular the quality of interactions among the members of the school’s community and the influence of the physical and aesthetic school environment to enhance learning and nurture the individual (Singh, Orpinas, & Horne, 2010). The School Social Competence Development and Bullying Prevention Model (Figure 3.9) reflects eight critical areas for promoting a positive school climate and reducing bullying (Orpinas & Horne, 2006, as cited by Orpinas & Horne, 2010). This model emphasises the bidirectional forces as in Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, referred to in Chapter 2.3, and also indicates the student/individual at the centre.

Figure 3.9: School Social Competence and Bullying Prevention Model
(Orpinas & Horne, 2006)

Excellence in teaching is an important component in preventing bullying, because when students are motivated to learn, and lessons are well prepared, fewer behavioural difficulties will occur (Orpinas & Horne, 2010). Furthermore, school
values play an integral role to the contribution of a positive school climate. It is advocated that the school community participate in a process to define the school’s values and that educators and students exercise the following three values outlined in the School Social Competence Model: “(a) all children can learn; (b) all people in the school community deserve to be treated with respect and dignity; and (c) violence, aggression and bullying are not acceptable in school” (Orpinas & Horne, 2010, p. 51). Modelling of positive relationships and communication strategies as indicated in Table 3.6 is an example of such a school intervention. In addition, becoming aware of a school’s strengths and problems through qualitative assessments such as questionnaire surveys, as indicated in Table 3.6, to measure the problem of bullying at the school level is also required, and will help to determine the extent of the problem so that it can be addressed through an intervention programme (Horne, Stoddard, & Bell, 2007). Various types of meetings, listed in Table 3.6, can be used to discuss for example, issues of bullying and ways of improving peer relations. This is important, because from a bioecological (Chapter 2.3) and social constructionist (Chapter 2.2) perspective the nature of bullying will differ from school to school. Orpinas and Horne (2010) and Rigby (2014b) stress the need for policies for the prevention of bullying as well as the accountability of offenders to create and maintain a positive school climate. Rigby (2014b) recommends that values pertaining to why bullying is unacceptable be included in an anti-bullying policy alongside other pertinent information, such as information about bullying, a statement of responsibilities, prevention and intervention measures, and an evaluation plan. Examples of such policies include, Olweus’s bullying prevention programme, whole school policies and discipline policies, listed in Table 3.6. Moreover, the values of care and respect need to be modelled (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Children should be treated with respect and dignity by, for example, acknowledging the various learning styles, and promoting approaches such as co-operative learning (Singh et al., 2010) and encouraging bystanders to take a stance against this behaviour as indicated in Table 3.6. Such values lie at the heart of preventing bullying and, according to Singh et al. (2010), they are the place to begin when developing whole-school bullying interventions, as they serve as guiding principles, monitor accountability and highlight why bullying is unacceptable (Rigby, 2014b).
Behavioural norms can also be clarified and communicated through the development of school-wide and classroom rules (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Positive expectations between teachers and students as well as administrators and teachers, is a further way of enhancing a positive school climate. This can be achieved through, but not limited by, videos and anonymous reporting procedures as suggested in Table 3.6. Such positive expectations have been found to be lacking in teachers experiencing greater levels of burnout, so teacher support is also crucial for a positive school climate. This can be achieved through on-going training for all school staff as intimated in Table 3.6. The last component of the School Social Competence Development Model relates to the physical environment of the school. As most bullying occurs on playgrounds in primary schools (Smith et al., 2003), improving playground design can change the climate of a school (Farrington & Ttofi, 2010). This has led to reduced physical aggression on the playground between 51-65 per cent (Smith et al., 2003). Some specific school strategies for doing this also appear in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Specific school level strategies for reducing bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modelling of positive relationships and communication strategies (Johnson,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, &amp; Gielen, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A questionnaire survey (Ttofi &amp; Farrington, 2009; Whitted &amp; Dupper, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/teacher meetings to discuss the issue of bullying (Ttofi &amp; Farrington, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings among teachers to discuss ways of improving peer-relations (Ttofi &amp; Farrington, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff discussion groups (Ttofi &amp; Farrington, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings among teachers to discuss ways of improving peer-relations (Ttofi &amp; Farrington, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent circles (Krige et al., 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The formation of a co-ordinating group (Ttofi &amp; Farrington, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olweus’s Bullying Prevention programme (Olweus, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole school anti-bullying policy (Olweus, 2004; Rigby et al., 2004; Rigby &amp; Slee, 2008; Rigby, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline policy that has a code of conduct with strict anti-bullying policies (Whitted &amp; Dupper, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operative learning (Singh et al., 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operative group work between professionals (Pearce, Cross, Monks, Waters, &amp; Falconer, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging bystanders to take a stance against this behaviour (Shore, 2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Ongoing training for all school staff (Whitted & Dupper, 2005)
• Videos (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009)
• Anonymous reporting procedures (Whitted & Dupper, 2005)
• Increased playground supervision (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009)
• Improvement of playground facilities (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009)
• Improving the school grounds (Orpinas and Horne, 2010)

3.9.2 Interventions at the class level

From the literature, a number of interventions may be made at class level. I summarised these according to appropriate ages in Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7: Bullying interventions at the class level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Age 4-11 years</th>
<th>Age 11-18 years</th>
<th>Both age groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>• Classroom rules for safety and kindness</td>
<td>• Enhance awareness of violence and its negative effects</td>
<td>• Assessment of bullying situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Talking about and presenting lessons on bullying in the classroom</td>
<td>• Building perspective taking skills-Bully Court</td>
<td>• Active participation versus lecturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Disconnection Detector</td>
<td>• Schoolwatch</td>
<td>Promoting a climate of care and co-operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Circle time</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Commenting on positive behaviours elicited from the pupil that bullies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Befriending</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitoring pupils who are being bullied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Informing other teachers about bullying situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Encouraging peers to support the bullied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Classroom meetings to discuss bullying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classroom level interventions target teachers and other adults in the school (Whitted & Dupper, 2005), and as Ttofi and Farrington (2009) highlight, at the
classroom level interventions need to include information about bullying, thorough class rules against bullying, classroom activities, and meetings with parents and children. Of the many different ways this can be achieved, Smith et al. (2003) and Rigby and Bauman (2010) advocate including various programmes in curriculum work in the classroom, to create an awareness of bullying and ideas of how to manage it. Some of these interventions have been tabulated in Table 3.7 according to age, because as previously noted, this needs to be taken into consideration when planning interventions (Nordahl et al., 2008; Rivers, 2013). Crothers and Kolbert (2008) suggest that the first step in managing bullying requires an assessment of the bullying situation by identifying who is bullying, who is being bullied and who the observers are. Lock and Trautman (2003), Shore (2009), as well as Smith et al. (2003), advocate the use of active participation, such as practicing skills and playing games, rather than lectures. This is important, because from a social constructionist perspective, group activities, such as drama, promote collaboration and sensitisation as children learn to live in a world of conflicting realities (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008; Gergen, 2009). Furthermore, “...especially for young children, drama, art, projects, videos, books, and discussions about bullying can help give children the symbolism and language to identify and talk about the experience of bullying” (Crothers & Kolbert, 2010, p. 536). Vorster (2002) proposes that drama and role-play are powerful ways of creating awareness of bullying. For example, ‘Bully court’ is a class activity that involves children recognising bullying behaviour and respect by inviting different characters to tell their side of the story to a judge and jury (Childline, n.d.). Teaching aids such as DVD’s, role-play activities and literature could be incorporated to facilitate this (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008; Smith et al., 2003), as according to Ackermann (2001), from a social constructionist perspective, Papert stressed that engagement with tools, media and context is critical for human development.

A word search on books for children with ‘bullying’ on the search engine Google, for example, found 1, 820, 000 results. Shore (2009) also lists some ways to prevent bullying from happening in the classroom, some of which are promoting a climate of care and co-operation; commenting on positive behaviours elicited from the pupil who bullies; talking about and presenting lessons on bullying in the
classroom; monitoring pupils who are being bullied; and informing other teachers about incidences of bullying. The latter two strategies are important because, as Brown, Birch and Kancherla (2005) reported, children who are bullied do not know what to do to stop it. These researchers also found that children who are bullied but do not bully tried to stop the bullying of others but not themselves. One strategy, the so-called ‘disconnection detector’ (Melton, 2014), can be used to detect lonely children by constantly monitoring who would like to sit next to whom. Smith et al. (2003) also highlight the importance of classroom management to facilitate positive relationships between teacher and pupils and between pupils and pupils, to prevent children from being bullied. Smith et al. (2003) advocate the use of peer-support systems that enhance collaboration among peers, such as circle time, befriending and Schoolwatch. According to Smith et al. (2003) these interventions involve the majority of pupils themselves in managing issues related to bullying. Smith et al. describe these interventions as follows:

In circle time, the pupils attend to relationship difficulties which include anger, fighting and bullying; befriending, in which a pupil or pupils are assigned to ‘be with’ or ‘befriend’ a peer; Schoolwatch, a programme in which pupils elect a committee of peers who propose and implement antibullying activities. (Smith et al., 2003, p. 591-592)

Interestingly, according to Gergen (2009), the circular seating in circle time, when the pupils are discussing relationship issues whilst seated in a circle, signifies the importance of equality as opposed to hierarchy, a hallmark of social constructionism.

3.9.3 Interventions at the individual level

Interventions at the individual level include strategies that target individuals, or small groups of children who bully or are bullied (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). According to Ttofi and Farrington (2009), ideally interventions at the individual level need to include talking to the child who is bullying and his/her parents, the child who is being bullied and his/her parents, as well as the children who are not involved to make them effective helpers. As this research study involves children who are bullied, emphasis on these type of interventions will take priority. Rigby (2010) lists six major interventions methods and later nine intervention strategies (Rigby, 2014e) that can be used successfully in schools at the individual level.
Nordahl et al. (2008) report that interventions at the individual level that were based on rules, sanctions and policies had reduced bullying for pre-adolescents but not adolescents, because it is claimed that adolescents reject conforming to anti-bullying rules and policies. Baldry and Farrington (2004) found that adolescents, but not pre-adolescents, respond better to individualistic programmes, such as developing social cognitive competence skills to understand the negative consequences of aggressive behaviour. The literature is replete with many interventions, but this study will focus on Rigby’s recommended interventions, as they place emphasis on relational responsibility rather than blame, as advocated by Gergen (2009).

**Table 3.8: Interventions to use for various types of bullying at the individual level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Bullying</th>
<th>Possible interventions to use at the individual level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Assertiveness training (fogging, making choices, I messages, using body language); mediation; restorative practice; method of shared concern; the no blame approach, BPIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Assertiveness training (martial arts; tattling versus reporting); mediation; restorative practice; method of shared concern; the no blame approach, BPIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Assertiveness training (making choices, I messages, using body language; tattling versus reporting); mediation; restorative practice; method of shared concern; the no blame approach, BPIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Assertiveness (tattling versus reporting); mediation; restorative practice; method of shared concern; the no blame approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercing</td>
<td>Assertiveness training (refusal skills, making choices, I messages, using body language); mediation; restorative practice, BPIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial</td>
<td>Assertiveness training (Fobbing, I messages, using body language, tattling versus reporting); mediation; restorative practice; method of shared concern; the no blame approach, BPIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber</td>
<td>4 step process: Stop, Save, Block and Tell, BPIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td>Assertiveness training (Fobbing, I messages, using body language); mediation; restorative practice; method of shared concern; the no blame approach, BPIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>Assertiveness training (Fobbing, I messages, using body language, tattling versus reporting); mediation; restorative practice; method of shared concern; the no blame approach, BPIS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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43 The Bully Prevention in Positive Behaviour Support
Rigby’s (2010) first two methods include the traditional disciplinary approach (for the child who is bullying) and strengthening the victim (for the child who is being bullied). The other interventions, such as mediation, restorative practice, the support group method and the method of shared concern include both the child who is being bullied and the child who is bullying. The Bully Prevention in Positive Behaviour Support (PBIS) is noted as an additional intervention strategy in Rigby’s (2014e) list. Careful selection is necessary as the child who is being bullied often does not want to confront the child or children doing the bullying, preferring environments free from fear and intimidation (Schwartz, Barican, Waddell, Harrison, & Gray-Grant, 2008).

Table 3.9: Bullying interventions at the individual level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Age 4-11 years</th>
<th>Age 11-18 years</th>
<th>Both age groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Individual    | • The No Blame Approach  
• Play therapy | • Cognitive behaviour therapy/Counselling  
• The Method of Shared Concern (peer group)  
• Stop, save, block and tell | • Assertiveness training  
• Mediation  
• Restorative Practice  
• Traditional disciplinary approach  
• Serious talks  
• Bully Prevention in Positive Behaviour Support (PBIS) |

3.9.3.1 Assertiveness training (strengthening the victim)

Assertiveness training has been recognised as a way to help some children who are being bullied to cope more effectively (Rigby, 2011; Smith et al., 2003). Fogging, for example, allows the individual who is being bullied to acknowledge the alleged criticism whilst simultaneously focusing on the real issues behind it to prevent intimidation (Rigby, 2011). For example, a response to “You are sooo gay” could be “Yes, I would rather be happy than miserable.” It is a technique which is especially useful for verbal bullying, but not for physical bullying (Rigby, 2014c).
This is a skill that needs to be practiced and can mainly be utilised in one-to-one verbal bullying situations in which there is not a large imbalance of power (Rigby, 2011). Other assertiveness skills listed in Table 3.8 include:

- refusal skills – a variety of ways to say no (Davies, 2012)
- making different choices (Davies, 2012)
- I messages\(^{44}\) – I feel...(state the emotion), when you...(describe the action), because I...(say why) (Davies, 2012)
- using body language - 1. Maintain eye contact 2. Keep your voice calm and even 3. Stand an appropriate distance from the confrontational person 4. Use the person’s name when speaking to her/him (Whitson, 2014b)
- tattling versus reporting (Whitson, 2014a)
- martial arts (Rigby, 2014e).

Table 3.9 indicates that assertiveness training can be used across all age groups.

3.9.3.2 Mediation

Mediation can be used when both the child who is being bullied and the child who is bullying are willing to resolve the bullying problem with a mediator, such as a teacher, or trained peer mediator (Rigby, 2010). The child who is being bullied, as well as the child who is bullying, are required to give their perspectives of the bullying situation. Each child is also required to summarise the other’s perspective before suggestions are made to resolve the problem. This apparently is an effective method when there is a small rather than substantial imbalance of power (Rigby, 2011; Rigby, 2014e). Table 3.8 highlights proposed types of bullying this intervention may be used for, while Table 3.9 shows that it is suitable for all age groups.

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\(^{44}\) It may be necessary to first provide a lesson on identifying feelings. Charts or pictures of various feelings may be used to teach this concept.
3.9.3.3 Restorative Practice

This intervention requires the person or persons doing the bullying to acknowledge the bullying behaviour in front of the child they have bullied and to present a restorative action to prevent this type of behaviour from recurring (Rigby, 2010). An element of remorse on part of the child who is bullying should be present for this method to be effective. This may take place with only the child who is bullying and the child being bullied, or with a class or group of children involved in bullying behaviour, or with significant others such as parents (Rigby, 2014e). Table 3.8 shows what types of bullying this intervention can be used for. In addition, Table 3.9 suggests that it is suitable for all ages.

3.9.3.4 The Method of Shared Concern

The Method of Shared Concern is a non-punitive intervention devised by a Swedish psychologist, Pikas (2002), which involves a one-on-one meeting first with the child who is suspected of bullying or children who are suspected of bullying, and then with the child being bullied (Rigby, 2011). It aims to empower all the children to find an agreed solution to resolve the problem amicably (Rigby & Griffiths, 2010). According to Rigby (2011) and Smith, Pepler and Rigby (2004), this approach has been used successfully in anti-bullying policies in England, Australia, Finland and Spain. Other countries, such as Scotland, Sweden and Canada, have also employed this method (Rigby & Griffiths, 2010). As approximately 20 per cent of the time the child who is being bullied may provoke the bullying (Solberg & Olweus, 2003), it is a useful method to use when the child who has been bullied by a group of children behaves provocatively (Rigby, 2011). Pikas argued that this method is better suited for older children in secondary school, as it requires cognitive maturity (Rigby & Griffiths, 2010), and that younger children responded better to authoritative measures. Nordahl et al. (2008) and Rigby and Griffiths, 2010) agreed with this, however, Duncan (1996) as cited by Rigby and Griffiths (2010) reported that this method was successfully used with children in the second and third years of primary school. Table 3.8 points out
which types of bullying this method can be used for, while Table 3.9 pinpoints which age group this is more suitable for.

3.9.3.5 The No-Blame or Support Group Approach

This method was devised in England by Barbara Maines and George Robinson (1992), also a non-punitive seven-step problem-solving approach (Rigby, 2010, 2011). A group of children who have bullied a child, as well as selected children who are expected to be supportive of the child being bullied, attend a meeting after evidence has been obtained from the child who has been bullied. The child who has been bullied is not present at this meeting. Each child at the meeting is requested to come up with a practical solution about how to help the child who is being bullied. This is then carefully monitored. Although this approach does not take into account any provocation by the child who has been bullied, it has been rated as a very ‘satisfactory’ method by Smith, Howard and Thompson (2007), as well as by Young and Holdorf (2003). This method is mainly used in primary schools (Rigby, 2014e). Table 3.8 specifies which types of bullying this approach is suitable for, while Table 3.9 highlights which age group this is more suitable for.

3.9.3.6 Bully Prevention in Positive Behaviour Support

The Bully Prevention in Positive Behaviour Support (BPIS) approach is mainly used by schools in America (Rigby, 2014e), the goal being to equip all staff and children with skills to respond to incidents of safety and disrespect, regardless of intent, power differentials and frequency (Johns & Patrick, 2012). Positive behaviour is positively reinforced and negative behaviour is negatively reinforced (Rigby, 2014e). According to Johns and Patrick (2012, p. 8), BPIS is “The intentional structuring of learning environments to equip students for behavioural success based on principles of human behaviour.”
3.9.3.7 *Stop, Save, Block and Tell*

This method is only used for cyberbullying cases and is comprised of the following four basic steps (Snakenborg et al., 2011, p. 93):

- **Stop** – the individual must refrain from responding in any manner
- **Save** – if possible a copy of the email, picture, message, text, etc., should be saved to help identify the person who is cyberbullying
- **Block** – block further communication by using the blocking operations available through the internet or cell phone provider
- **Tell** – individuals should tell a trusted adult (parent, teacher, older sibling) about the incident

It has been hypothesised that cyberbullying is associated with an increase in age, as younger children do not use as much technology for communication (Görzig & Frumkin, 2013). It is in this light that Table 3.9 does not apply this intervention under the 4-11 year group. However, this does not imply that 10 and 11 year olds will not be subjected to cyberbullying.

**3.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has elaborated upon the concepts of bullying and middle childhood, from a bio-ecological systems theory and social constructionist perspective. It has become apparent that middle childhood is a critical stage of development because children begin to interact with the microsystem, such as friends, schools and sports clubs. It has been shown that the experiences, interactions and environments to which children are exposed have a direct bearing on their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. Moreover, it has become apparent that oppressive environments create fear in children and prohibit learning. Many studies have found that middle school children tend to experience more bullying than other age groups. It also transpired that children who were bullied between the ages of six and nine were twice at risk of being bullied two-four years later. Relational bullying appears to be a form of bullying which increases during middle childhood. I have argued that bullying is an ‘evolving’
concept in that different criteria and forms of bullying change over time. For the purposes of this research, to differentiate bullying from violence, I have claimed that bullying is not a legal matter. In addition, I have argued that the current theoretical explanations regarding being bullied are lacking in the literature and it is in light of this problem that this study is being conducted. This chapter also highlighted that the extent of gender differences regarding experiences of being bullied is not clear. However, it has emerged that boys use more overt forms of aggression than girls. There are also too many inconsistencies related to ethnic differences in risk of being bullied. Of concern, are the very high rates of bullying among Grade 4 and 5 children in South Africa compared to the rest of the world. This chapter revealed that the consequences of being bullied have a negative affect on the psychological, behavioural, somatic, social and academic realms of the individual, both short-term and long-term. It has also materialised that from a bioecological perspective that interventions should be present in every system, from the individual to the macrosystem. It has also been argued that from a bioecological perspective, schools need to become the focal point of community development with regard to bullying interventions. This is important because this chapter disclosed that despite much research surrounding bullying interventions, there has been subtle rather than profound changes in the prevalence of bullying. Such interventions need to take place at the individual, classroom and school level and target not just actual bullying behaviour, but also attitudes, self-perception and knowledge regarding bullying. After all it has come forth in this chapter, that apparent high rates of bullying in South Africa are attributed to preventative measures not being as effective as hoped. In the next chapter the research design and methodology will be discussed.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to outline how the research study unfolded over four phases (Figure 4.3). Due to the vulnerability of the participants this chapter commences with a discussion of the ethical considerations that guided me in the research, followed by a description of the context. Next, an explanation of the epistemological assumptions surrounding the research paradigm, design and methodology are presented. A description of the data collecting methods is followed by an examination of how the data was interpreted and a review of the process employed to ensure trustworthiness.

4.2 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are many ethical challenges that need to be considered in any qualitative study (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2010). Ethics pertains to doing good and avoiding harm (Beauchamp & Childress, 1989, as cited by Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). The British Sociological Association (2002) point out that there are no recipes for resolving ethical dilemmas but rather that such choices are based on principles and values and on the often conflicting interests of those involved. I made use of the Hammick’s (1996) Research Ethics Wheel (REW), as cited by Whiting and Vickers (2010), to assist me in evaluating ethical dilemmas for this study (Figure 4.1). According to Whiting and Vickers (2010), the wheel comprises quarters, detailed as follows.

4.2.1 Principles of research using people

The first quarter of the wheel addresses the principles relating to the use of people as research participants (Whiting & Vickers, 2010).
4.2.1.1 Scientific basis

In Mouton’s Three Worlds Framework, World 2, may be described as the world of science and places emphasis on the epistemic interest that underlies knowledge production (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). Hammick (1996) as cited by Whiting and Vickers (2010) stresses the importance of utilising a compatible methodological approach for particular research studies. My theoretical framework, a social constructionist, bioecological model determined a qualitative approach in order to answer my research question. This study was therefore based on a phenomenological design which was felt to be appropriate because it not only revealed the shared life experiences of being bullied, but also unveiled the unique and lived experiences of middle childhood children being continuously bullied, which is a hallmark of phenomenological research (Spinelli, 2005). The semi-structured interviews, with the aid of expressive art therapy techniques, also enabled the participants to explore, identify and express their experiences.
4.2.1.2 Knowledge

The aim of any research study is to uncover new knowledge, in order to solve pragmatic problems in everyday life or World 3 of Mouton’s Three World Framework (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). My research question, “What are the life experiences of children in middle childhood who continue to be bullied?” and my research aim, “To investigate the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied (refer to Figure 4.2) steered the research process in World 2 (Figure 4.2). Hammick (1996) as cited by Whiting and Vickers (2010) recommends that a comprehensive literature study be undertaken to identify previous findings, in order to prevent replication. An intensive literature search in this study indicated that although considerable research has been carried out in the area of bullying it continues to be a serious social phenomenon which negatively impacts on individuals, peers, the family, the school and society (Baldry, 2004; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012; Rigby, 2013). In addition, various meta-analyses of bullying interventions have achieved disheartening results, reflecting substantially below the 50 per cent reduction mark (Swearer et al., 2010). This study aims to contribute to filling this gap of knowledge by developing an intervention for children who continue to be bullied (refer to Figure 4.2).

4.2.1.3 Equal respect

The importance of treating the research participants fairly and respectfully cannot be overemphasised (Whiting & Vickers, 2010). Keogh and Daly (2009) point out the vulnerability of working with participants with emotional problems and place emphasis on mutuality and respect for treating them as people, whilst minimising power differentials. This was particularly important in this study as bullying involves power differentials. Respect for the participants also includes being on time for interviews and adhering to promises such as issuing a copy of the findings (Burns & Grove, 2005, as cited by Whiting & Vickers, 2010).
4.2.1.4 Respect autonomy

Houghton et al. (2010) remind us that exploitative relationships are one of the possible challenges in qualitative research that could arise between researcher and research participant. Hammick (1996) as cited by Whiting and Vickers (2010) as well as Rivière (2011) state that it is important that the participants decide on their own free will whether they want to be involved in the study. In this study, there were certain potential participants who could have been included but they did not wish to be part of it. One did not wish to let his father know that he was being bullied. Another participant’s parents did not want their child to be involved in such a study, providing no reasons for this. The third participant’s parents were not comfortable with their child’s participation in the study unless it was exclusively oriented towards helping their son, so he could not be included in the study.

4.2.2 Duties of a researcher

This segment focuses on the responsibilities of the researcher towards the participants of the study.

4.2.2.1 Veracity and consent

According to Hammick (1996) as cited by Whiting and Vickers (2010), veracity is about truth-telling, so unless the participants are informed about the aims of the study it is problematic for them to provide informed consent. This was provided to the school as well as the participants and their parents (refer to Appendix 8.1). Consent to undertake this research project was first approved and finalised on 15 March 2013, by the University’s Faculty of Education Ethics Committee (page iii). Next, the research project had to be approved by the school at which I was working. This was approved on 16 March 2013 (Appendix 8.3). McDonnell, Jones and Read (2000) point out that because of the emergent design in qualitative research, one-off informed consent forms are unsuitable. Ensign (2003, p. 47) argues that “...informed consent is a process and not just a form...” In addition,
from an interpretivist perspective, the issue of informed consent is subjective in
that individuals may have different perceptions of what is and what is not ethical
(Houghton et al., 2010). I therefore needed to constantly check with my
participants that they were comfortable (Ensign, 2003; Houghton et al., 2010). It
was also important to inform my participants that they had the right to withdraw
from the study at any time (Houghton et al., 2010). The withdrawal of three
participants from this study will be discussed under 4.2.3.3. For this study, I
obtained written consent from the parents of the children I was researching, as
well as assent from the children (Appendix 8.2). This was important, because in
South Africa, anyone under the age of 18 is considered a child, and according to
the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 section 10,

> Every child that is of such an age, maturity and stage of development as to be
able to participate in any matter concerning that child has the right to participate in
an appropriate way and views expressed by the child must be given due
consideration. (Republic of South Africa, 2006, p22)

Strode, Slack and Essack (2010) also point out that although there is no clear
legal statute specifying when children can independently consent to research in
South Africa, there are ethical norms requiring child assent for children under the
age of 18, over and above parental permission. I provided a précis of the research
project which parents read to their children so that they could decide whether they
wished to participate or decline if not interested (Appendix 8.1). Houghton et al.
(2010) point out that on the matter of obtaining consent for observations there are
conflicting opinions. As a researcher in the school setting I had obtained
permission from the school to conduct the research and the observations I made,
were not harmful to the participants or non-participants. Moreover, it is important
to point out that I also recorded unplanned conversations in my journal by hand,
because the most common source of field data in qualitative research is talk
(Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008) and I needed such information for analysis
because it supplemented information that had been given to me by my research
participants. I did not divulge to the non-participants that this information was for
research purposes because I wanted to protect the confidentiality of my research
participants.
4.2.2.2 Confidentiality

Ensign (2003, p. 47) points out that “...in qualitative research, breach of confidentiality and resultant invasion of privacy are usually the greatest risks of harm.” It is therefore advocated that pseudonyms be used to protect the identity of the participants (Houghton et al., 2010). In addition, it is suggested that member checking be employed as a method, not just to enhance the rigour of the study, but also to give the participants an opportunity to see that no personal detail has been revealed in the interview transcripts. Ramcharan and Cutcliffe (2001) highlight how the principle of confidentiality in social research is a shortcoming as it is unenforceable, but this is now being addressed in the literature by using ethics as a process to fill the gap between literature and practice. The interviews in this study were also held in privacy to ensure confidentiality. Furthermore, the context of the inquiry was described in general terms as protection of the participants was first and foremost.

4.2.2.3 Risk versus benefit

Even though it is difficult to anticipate the balance between risks and benefits prior to qualitative research, such as interviewing or observing (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001), it is important that the researcher at least anticipate the possible outcomes (Houghton et al., 2010). Richards and Schwartz (2002) identify four possible risks to participants in qualitative research: anxiety and distress; exploitation; misrepresentation; and identification of the participant in publication. Care was taken to avoid these risks, but due to the nature of the research the participants were deemed vulnerable to distress and anxiety. Whiting and Vickers (2010) advocate that in the event that harm to the participant outweighs the benefit of an interview, such as when the participant becomes distressed, the researcher needs to stop the interview and refer the participant for counselling. In anticipation of the impending distress, a contract was drafted (refer to Appendix 8.4), stipulating that as an educational psychologist I could support the participant’s distress whilst talking about upsetting bullying experiences, but would refer to another psychologist if necessary. To prevent exploitation, I tried my best to make the participants feel comfortable and in control of the situation. I would ask them when
it was suitable for me to interview them and would schedule my arrangements around them. However, at times there were situations that could have made the participants feel vulnerable. For example, the creative art therapy technique projects involved effort, to which boys are generally averse, especially when they have their school studies to focus on. I realised that one participant was under immense pressure and did not have time to prepare for his project by my time schedule, so we discussed whether he could wait until the holiday to prepare to take the pressure off him. This particular participant eventually chose to leave the study because of this pressure. To avoid misrepresentation, I co-constructed the interpretation with the participants themselves (refer to 4.5.4 and Table 4.5 for examples of this) and I offered the participants scripts of the transcriptions before analysis began. As discussed above, pseudonyms were used to prevent identification of the participant or school following publication. Furthermore, as protection of the participant was first and foremost, prevention of the identification of the school was critical. To this end, I decided to describe the school and its context in general terms.

4.2.3 Nature of the outcome of the research

This third quarter of the REW (Research Ethics Wheel) (Figure 4.1) refers to the effects the study may have on the participants once completed.

4.2.3.1 Consequences

According to the British Sociological Association (2002), the researcher has an obligation to anticipate and avoid potential harmful consequences, despite the consent given by the participant. Cognisance of associated unknown data in the research study may be addressed through discussion at the end of an interview or by providing the participant with the researcher’s contact details (Whiting & Vickers, 2010). I gave my cell phone number and email address to the parents and children so that they could contact me if necessary. One of the mother’s
contacted me when she had concerns about her son’s wellbeing and I suggested that he would benefit from seeing a therapist.

4.2.3.2 Hazards

This segment of the wheel relates to avoiding undue risk for the participant (Whiting & Vickers, 2010). Potential hazards included protecting the confidentiality of the participants whilst observing and interacting with them at the school. To do this, I chose not to engage with the participants at the school, unless they approached me. I also did not reveal my identity as researcher to their friends or peers. Another potential hazard was dealing with the participant’s emotional side whilst being a researcher. The contract that I drew up beforehand turned out to be a blessing in disguise, because it was very clear what needed to be done when one of the participants needed therapy during the course of the research process. His mother took him to another therapist.

4.2.3.3 Non-participation

Regard for participants who do not wish to participate or who wish to withdraw from the study must be respected (Whiting & Vickers, 2010). It is advocated that rapport with the participants is established, so that they feel comfortable to do this at any time of the research process (Houghton et al., 2010; Whiting & Vickers, 2010). Two of the children did not complete the first task assigned and when I followed this up, one boy indicated that he no longer wished to participate because he was under too much stress academically, and felt he was not being bullied at that time. The other boy did not offer to withdraw, but when he was asked if he wanted to pull out from the study having never commenced the first task, he welcomed the opportunity to do so. The third boy withdrew from the study after sustaining brain injuries from a motorbike accident in his garden for failing to wear a crash helmet.
4.2.3.4 Aims

The final segment pertains to aims and objectives of the research which need to be considered and identified to avoid being unethical (Whiting & Vickers, 2010). These were clearly indicated in the project information I provided to the participants prior to commencing the study (Appendix 8.1).

4.2.4 Practicalities of the research process

The final quarter of the wheel concerns the external environment (Whiting & Vickers, 2010).

4.2.4.1 Codes and laws

This segment stresses that the necessary ethical codes of conduct need to be adhered to (Hammick, 1996, as cited by Whiting & Vickers, 2010). I am a registered educational psychologist with the Health Professional Council of South Africa and abided by these principles. The British Sociological Association (2002) reminds researchers that national laws such as the Human Rights Act may affect the conduct of the research.

4.2.4.2 Ability

Besides having the ability to conduct the research the researcher needs to acknowledge limitations and bias (Whiting & Vickers, 2010). This is an appropriate section in which to describe myself as researcher. At the time of the study I was working at the participants’ school, three mornings a week, also in my private practice during other time. I had trained as a primary school teacher after leaving school and taught for a number of years before deciding to enter the field of psychology. I therefore have many years’ experience in dealing with children in middle childhood. My research topic for my master’s degree involved the study of bullying, and I had become very involved with addressing the phenomenon at the
school. As an educational psychologist, as well as dealing with many cases of the individuals who had been bullied I was used to dealing with other sensitive issues, so felt confident and comfortable engaging in this sensitive type of research.

Through the nature of my job, dealing with children who are bullied, I was motivated to research bullying further. As a specialist in dealing with trauma I had made a link between being continually bullied and having earlier experiences of trauma in many of the children who came to me for therapy. My first approved research proposal was entitled, *An educational psychological framework to address bullying as trauma*, however, it was established that I was making an assumption about seeing bullying as trauma so had to resubmit the proposal. Hence, my assumption of seeing bullying as trauma may be regarded as a definite bias. I reflected on this as part of my reflexive bracketing, which can be read in Appendix 5.

4.2.4.3 Resources

Various resources, such as availability of time, materials and the effect of the research on other work commitments are important (Whiting & Vickers, 2010), and applied to the research participants as well as myself, the researcher. For example, in this study, I tried to balance the time at which to meet with research participants with times that suited me and the participants, as we all had work commitments.

4.2.4.4 Scrutiny

This research study was scrutinised by the University of Johannesburg, following a proposal first presented to a panel, then discussed and approved by the Higher Degrees Committee and Ethics Committee. According to Houghton et al. (2010, p. 15), ethical challenges include, “…issues of informed consent procedures, the relationship between the researcher and the participant, the ratio between risk and benefit, confidentiality and the dual role of the researcher-psychologist.” I reflected upon my dual role as researcher-psychologist using reflexive bracketing, which can be read in Appendix 5.
4.3 THE CONTEXT OF THE INQUIRY

The participants all attended a school, in Gauteng, with which I am involved in. Gauteng is South Africa’s smallest, wealthiest and most populous province (The Local Government, 2012). The 2011 census indicates that Gauteng has a population of 12.3 million of the 51.8 million people in the country. There are wide disparities in wealth across the metropolitan area. The school consists of boys from the reception level to Grade 7 level of the South African independent school system. Tight security at the school was a precaution against incursions of violent crime in society.

The school had a Rector as its chief executive officer and was governed by a Council as its highest decision-making body, with overarching responsibility for and authority over the school, with its own liaison and facilitating body, known as the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and its own Head, operating under the authority of the Council and Rector.

The school as a whole employed 39 staff in total, including specialists for Music, Art, Drama, Technology and IT (Table 4.1). The class sizes at the school were 27 learners, but the learner: staff ratio for 2014 was 12:7.

The school embraces a religious ethos and set of values. This is reflected in the school’s Charter which sets out the purpose and the core principles which are fundamental to its being a religious school. Although it is a self-governing institution, the theological institution to which it belongs has the final say in all matters concerning spiritual welfare, religious instruction, and worship at the school. Table 4.2 reflects the learners’ race, the majority of the boys at the school being white (75 per cent). Two of the research participants were white and one was ‘coloured’ (mixed-race).45

45 In South Africa, the term ‘coloured’ is still used instead of mixed-race as an ethnic label for people of mixed ethnic origin. Documents such as the 2011 Gauteng Census reflect this (Statistics South Africa, 2012).
Table 4.1: Staff strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Full-time</th>
<th>Academic Part-time</th>
<th>Academic Intern</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Admin</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Number of pupils as at February 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNER RACE STATS</th>
<th>Black Africans</th>
<th>Mixed-race 'Coloured'</th>
<th>Indian/Asian</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learners</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Groenewald (2004, p. 6) clarifies the meaning of a ‘paradigm’ given by Stanage (1987), who traced the concept to its Greek (paradeigma) and Latin (paradigm) roots, “…meaning pattern, model or example.” It contains the researcher’s beliefs, which guide action and can be defined as, “…the patterning of the thinking of a person; it is a principal example among examples, an exemplar or model to follow according to which design actions are taken” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 6).

Based on Lincoln and Guba’s metaphysical beliefs (Figure 4.2) and the chosen theoretical framework, outlined in Chapter 2, this study used a qualitative rather than quantitative approach. Lincoln and Guba’s ontological belief is that the nature of reality is socially constructed and dependent on language, which implies that each of the participants had different perspectives of reality, dependent on their individual and unique experiences, as experience is subjective and context-dependent (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Epistemologically, I came to know their unique realities through understanding (Verstehen), rather than explaining their experiences, so making sense of and giving meaning to their worlds (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). I did this through the use of open-ended interviews, by interviewing the participants through their creative products,
because besides enhancing trustworthiness, these creative products enabled me as researcher to not only hear, but see their stories behind the participants’ perceptions and experiences (Deacon, 2000). Methodologically, I also needed to have an inside or ‘emic’ perspective into their unique life experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2009).

From the above, it became apparent that in order to answer my research question and accomplish the aim and objectives of the study, I needed to use an approach specifically relevant to the study of social relations, and one aligned with my metaphysical beliefs and theoretical framework. A qualitative approach was thus selected as it allowed me to select appropriate methods (Figure 4.2). It permitted me to recognise and analyse my participants’ different perspectives, encouraging me to reflect on my thoughts, actions and the research process, and providing a means to use a variety of approaches and methods (Flick, 2014). Next, I needed to make a plan and research design, to specify as clearly as possible what I wished to find out and to determine how best I could do this (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). As my study involved investigating the life experiences of middle childhood children I chose a phenomenological research design (Figure 4.2).
Figure 4.2: A qualitative phenomenological research paradigm to investigate the life experiences of children in middle childhood who continue to be bullied.
The goal of phenomenology is to investigate more deeply the internal world as it is experienced, in order “…to understand someone else’s world as if you were standing in her shoes…” (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010, p. 11). As Welman and Kruger (1999, p. 189) as cited by Groenewald (2004, p. 5), point out, “the phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved.” According to Smith (2011, para.2), “…phenomenology is the study of ‘phenomena’: appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience.” The reward phenomenology offers, lies in seeing into the “heart of things” (Rilke, 1987 as cited by van Manen, 2007, p. 12). It is a philosophical perspective that assists researchers to investigate and understand everyday experiences without presupposing knowledge about them (Converse, 2012). According to Morse (2004, p. 591), “…soft data, such as subjective experiences, can be used as hard evidence…” These experiences go beyond mere sensations, also encapsulating the meaning attributed to the “…significance of objects, events, tools, the flow of time, the self, and others, as they arise and are experienced in our ‘life-world’” (Smith, 2011, para 4). Hard evidence that arose in this study for example, included the use of objects, such as sharks chasing a dolphin, a poisonous frog, a Cerberus and a chopped off head of a buffalo, which depicted bullying as being traumatic. The need for phenomenological research arose from my intention to uncover not only the shared life experiences of being bullied but also the unique and lived experiences of middle childhood children being continuously bullied (Spinelli, 2005).

It was important to address the apparent gap in the literature, in many aspects, despite the copious amount of research that has already been carried out on bullying. Firstly, the majority of research on bullying has been quantitative rather than qualitative in nature. Secondly, much research has focused on common-sense ideas about what will reduce bullying, rather than focusing on why children are bullied (Farrington et al., 2008). Thirdly, there is a need, especially in South Africa, to conduct more research on children who are bullied, rather than bully (Greeff & Grobler, 2008). Refer to Appendix 2 to verify this. Fourthly, research of children who are bullied tend to focus on consequences of being bullied, but rarely on their experiences of being bullied (Kvarme et al., 2010): “Phenomena which are
not well understood and that are central to the lived experience of human beings are appropriate for phenomenological research" (Carpenter, 1995, as cited by LeVasseur, 2003, p. 409).

There are many schools of phenomenology which have “…commonalities but have distinct features” (Dowling, 2007, p. 131). Although Kant and Hegel may be regarded as the originators of phenomenology, Husserl is considered to be the founder of phenomenology, having started the phenomenological movement in 1913 (Converse, 2012; Groenewald, 2004). Husserl believed that the goal of phenomenology was to understand human thought and experience through the unbiased study of how things appear (Converse, 2012). It is a descriptive phenomenology which entails ‘bracketing’ or stripping away of the researcher’s preconceptions, so that the essence of the phenomenon comes to light (Dowling, 2007). Bracketing in this sense is not consistent with an interpretive research project such as this one (LeVasseur, 2003), because the theories that underlie it acknowledge the bidirectional influences between the person and his/her contexts and how meaning is socially constructed. However, Gearing describes six different forms of bracketing, of which I chose to use ‘reflexive bracketing’ (Appendix 5) as congruent with the theories in this study, by which the researcher makes apparent his or her:

…personal suppositions and ideas about the phenomenon prior to investigating the phenomenon in an effort to minimise their impact on the phenomenon under investigation … [to disclose his or her] internal suppositions, such as personal values, judgements, culture and history to facilitate transparency in the research process. [There is no need to bracket out external suppositions] …as it is impossible to remove the context, culture and environment from the phenomenon. (Gearing, 2004, p. 1445)

Heidegger, a student of Husserl, believed that the world is an essential part of understanding of the meaning of being and is not separate (Heidegger, 1996). It is in this light, that phenomenology dovetails with social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model to help understand why some children continue to be bullied. Heidegger thus emphasised understanding rather than description, with the view that lived experience is an interpretive process (Heidegger, 1996). Heidegger said that the nature of being is a circular, never-ending process and conceptualised this as the hermeneutic circle (Heidegger, 1996). In light of my research this implies that life is a process of experiences,
each life experience contributing both to the past and future life experiences, thus expanding or enhancing meaning and understanding of life. Bullying is a negative life experience which would enhance negative rather than positive life experiences. The philosopher Gadamer, a student of Heidegger (Green, 2011) contributed towards the further development of the hermeneutic circle (Dowling, 2007), and stated that the social, cultural and historical world needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting phenomena (Gadamer, 2004), as do social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. In Gadamer's own words:

...the important thing is to recognise temporal distance as a positive and productive condition enabling understanding. It is not a yawning abyss but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which everything handed down presents itself to us. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 297)

This necessitated that I collected data about other systems in the individuals' lives and not just about the individuals, such as family, peers, school, culture and context. From this perspective, the preconceptions of the researcher are incorporated, and shift from preconceptions to new understandings as the interpretive process moves forward (Converse, 2012), rather than attempts being made to bracket them (Gearing, 2004). This research study therefore embraced this latter phenomenological perspective, which dovetails with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model and social constructionism. More importantly, these all link to my qualitative research paradigm in that I was able to view and interpret the various perspectives of the children's life experiences using a variety of theories and methods to do so, while being able to reflect on my assumptions as well as the research process.

Gadamer's ontological position is that researchers are deeply influenced by their culture (Gadamer, 2004). From this position, I was able to bracket my personal values and assumptions about bullying by disclosing them, but could not separate myself from the context, culture and environment of which I was part (refer to Appendix 5). In addition, from an epistemological position, Gadamer also views knowledge as interpretation, “…which is a way of being rather than knowing” (Converse, 2012, p. 29). Epistemologically then, as there is no single truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), it made sense that I came to know the participant's unique realities through understanding (Verstehen), rather than explaining their
experiences, in order to make sense and give meaning to their worlds. The goal of phenomenology is not to generalise the results to the wider population, but to gather the lived experiences of each participant in order to understand the unique meaning each sheds on the phenomenon studied (Converse, 2012). I could therefore ultimately develop an intervention for children who continue to be bullied.

4.4.1 Gaining access

Gaining access to the research field can be particularly difficult, especially if it involves a sensitive topic (Johl & Renganathan, 2010). Cowles (1988) as cited by Johnson and MacLeod Clarke (2003) argues that sensitive topics are those that are likely to arouse emotional reactions. Ethical considerations were paramount as participants were particularly vulnerable to anxiety and stress. I drafted a separate contract form (Appendix 8.4) stating that should counselling be needed, as advocated by Whiting and Vickers (2010), I would have to refer the child for counselling as I could not confuse my role as researcher and psychologist. In addition, as identified by Keogh and Daly (2009), I needed to treat my participants with respect and minimise the power differentials. This was also due to the nature of the research, with the children, for example, calling me by my first name. Other examples included giving them the choice to choose what topic they wanted to begin talking about. Furthermore, the participants led the discussion and I followed. Just by listening and paying attention to every word they said, empowered them. They felt important, because I had also told them that by sharing their life experiences, was also going to help many other children in the world. Another example that comes to mind, is when the one participant wanted to hold the video camera and film his sand tray whilst he was talking about it. In addition, it was the participants who approached me in the school environment, not I them.

Laurila (1997) as cited by Johl and Renganathan (2010) identifies three types of access, all of which I used in this study. Firstly, I used personal access by approaching the head of the school to communicate my intentions regarding the research project. I then made use of formal access by submitting the research project information for approval by the organisation (Appendix 8.1). This
information contained not only the research design but also the background to the study, intention of the project, procedures involved, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality, participation and withdrawal, and future interest and feedback. This was approved by the organisation on 16 March 2013. The third type of access, *individual rapport*, was first gained with the participants of the study, as I came across their experiences of being bullied at the school. The nature of my own work in the school includes dealing with children who are bullied and individual rapport was established by just listening to their latest experiences of being bullied. I used this opportunity to tell these children about the nature of the research project and asked if they would be interested in participating in it. If the children showed interest I approached their parents telephonically to inform them of my intentions then organised a time and venue to discuss the research project. The parents were given the same information as given to the organisation, which they had to read to their children. This then needed to be signed by the parents and their child before their life experiences could be investigated. Establishing personal rapport was integral to gaining access, but was certainly not the only criterion. As bullying is a sensitive topic, this was not an easy task. For example, one potential research participant did not want to participate as he did not want his father to know that he was being bullied. According to the Department of Justice (2006), Act 2b (iv), “the best interests of a child are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child” (Republic of South Africa, 2006, p.18). Furthermore Act 6.2 a states:

> All proceedings, actions or decisions in a matter concerning the child must-(a) respect, protect, promote and fulfil the child’s rights set out in the Bill of Rights, the best interests of the child standard set out in section 7 and the rights and principles set out in this Act, subject to any lawful limitation. (Republic of South Africa, 2006, p. 20)

Another child’s parents did not want their child to be part of such a study, but refrained from giving me any reasons, while another set of parents refused to agree to their child’s participation because of the separate contract that had to be signed. This possibly indicated that their child was already in need of therapy.
4.4.2 Sampling

In this study I made use of purposeful sampling to draw on three children in middle childhood from the school at which I was working at and who had a history of being bullied. The samples were selected purposefully rather than randomly, so they could offer this research project insight into their life experiences, consistent with qualitative research in general, and with Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) orientation in particular (Smith et al., 2009). The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases according to the purpose of the research, in order to study them in depth and to yield insight and in-depth understanding (Patton, 2001). I made use of extreme or deviant case sampling because I selected children who not only were bullied but also who continue to be bullied (Smith et al., 2004) and who also approached me. However, purposeful sampling is also limiting in that the findings of the research cannot be generalised to the larger population. This is clearly conveyed in Babbie and Mouton (2009, p. 202) when they state that, “The most carefully selected sample will never provide a perfect representation of the population from which it is selected. There will always be some degree of sampling error.”

Patton (2001, p. 232) argues that “…the logic of extreme case sampling is that lessons may be learnt about unusual conditions or extreme outcomes that are relevant to improving more typical programs.” More can be learnt from studying exemplary cases instead of a representative sample, such as including children who escape being bullied, because it is the extreme nature of such cases that make them so powerful. Identification of these children was possible because bullying happens daily in the context of the school in which I was working. I came to hear of such cases in a variety of ways, for instance, the younger children, in Grades 3 and 4 and 5, generally reported incidents of bullying, whereas the older children, in Grades 6 and 7 did not. Generally, teachers or the parents of the older boys in Grades 6 and 7 brought issues of bullying to my attention. The participants of this study were all English speaking boys, two White, and the third Coloured. The one White boy was 12 years old in Grade 6, and the Coloured and other White boy were 11 in Grade 5. The younger boys personally reported incidents of being bullied to me, whereas the older boy was identified by myself when he
delivered me a pamphlet concerning a course he was attending enhancing emotional intelligence. He relayed that the person offering the course requested that this be handed out to children who bully. Although he and his parents had previously seen me about being bullied when he was in Grade 5, it became apparent during this conversation that he was still being bullied. This research study also included interviewing these children’s parents, and in one instance, a grandparent. It became apparent that I needed to interview Martin’s grandmother when interviewing his parents, as they claimed she was the one who picked him up from school every day and got to hear his daily school news. Table 4.3 reflects participants of the study who were interviewed. Although I was planning to interview relevant peers and teachers, I decided not to as I felt this compromised the participants’ confidentiality and put them at risk. Instead, I waited for information to come to my attention, rather than intervene. Such information was presented in the form of memos in ATLAS.ii 7.5 (Figure 4.21). This was possible to do, because I am a member of the school organisation and I deal with bullying issues daily, so I did not put the participants’ identity at risk. It is important to point out that this sampling strategy lacks generalisability (Patton, 2001), as will be discussed in greater detail in the section on trustworthiness.

Table 4.3: Participants\textsuperscript{46} of this study who were interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Relationship to Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Craig (Grade 5)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Mother (2 interviews); Craig (2 interviews)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kade (Grade 5)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Father and mother (1 interview); Kade (3 interviews)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin (Grade 6)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Mother and Father (1 interview); Grandmother (1 interview); Mother (1 interview); Martin (2 interviews)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

Given (2008, p. xxix) claims that “…qualitative methods are central to research conducted in education…and in the humanities, social sciences…” Although

\textsuperscript{46} Pseudonyms have been used for all participants for anonymity.
qualitative inquiry offers a wide variety of data collecting techniques there is no single correct one (Draper & Swift, 2011), but rather appropriate research methods ensure high quality research (Carter & Little, 2007). Firmin (2008) mentions four qualitative data collecting methods: interviews, fieldnotes and memos, triangulated information and member checks. Firmin (2008) explains that triangulated information besides enhancing credibility, is used by qualitative researchers to compare information obtained from other sources, for example using observation and checking to verify the degree to which the interview reflects reality. Firmin (2008, p. 192) asserts that “An apt adage for qualitative researchers’ data collection is “When in doubt collect too much.”

Figure 4.3: Phases of research process
During the second phase of the research process (Figure 4.3) I made use of multiple data collecting procedures (Table 4.4), a hallmark of ‘good’ qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), in order to describe and understand the experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, then ultimately to develop an intervention for them. As seen in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, qualitative research is a process, and does not adhere to a linear or structured format, in that Phases 2 and 3 occurred simultaneously. For example, whilst I continued to collect the data I was also emerged in analysing the data until the final themes emerged (see Figure 4.3). The final phase of the research process involved designing an intervention for children who continue to be bullied, based on the final superordinate themes that emerged from the data analysis in the third phase of the research process.

4.5.1 Research diary

Richardson (1994, p. 516) as cited by Ortlipp (2008, p. 699) states that the research journal “…is a place for writing as a method of inquiry” in order to address the problem of bias in qualitative research as pointed out by Guba and Lincoln (1994). Researchers are encouraged to reflect and to talk about themselves, “…their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process” (Mruck & Breuer, p. 3 as cited by Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695). As mentioned above, this is also a form of bracketing in phenomenological research. A copy of part of my research diary can be viewed in Appendix 5, highlighting important presuppositions of mine which were written down during phase 1 of the research process. As the researcher is considered to be the central instrument for collecting data in qualitative research, it is imperative that researchers also reflect on data collection (Draper & Swift, 2011). This was done during phase 2 of the research study (refer to Appendix 10). Birk, Chapman and Francis (2006) note how this strategy can enhance all qualitative methodologies and state that it is a major shortfall of many qualitative studies. Furthermore, during the first phase of research, besides also doing a literature review, I started to reflect on the research process in my research journal by writing down what I saw, heard, experienced and thought (Groenewald, 2004). According to Cronin (2013, para.1), reflexivity
may be viewed as “interpreting the interpretation,” as it involves reflecting on the research process. Refer to Appendix 11 to see excerpts of this.

Table 4.4: Data collecting procedures used with the various participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Data collection method</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Martin’s parents</td>
<td>Discuss research</td>
<td>6 December 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Martin’s parents</td>
<td>In-depth interview</td>
<td>3 January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Martin’s grandmother</td>
<td>In-depth interview</td>
<td>8 January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Martin</td>
<td>In-depth Interview about significant life experiences</td>
<td>9 January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Craig’s mother</td>
<td>Telephone discussion concerning research</td>
<td>22 January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Craig’s mother</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td>28 January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13 February 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Kade’s parents</td>
<td>Discuss research</td>
<td>27 March 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6 Teacher</td>
<td>Informal interview</td>
<td>11 April 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Kade’s parents</td>
<td>In-depth interview</td>
<td>14 April 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Kade</td>
<td>In-depth Interview about significant life experiences</td>
<td>17 April 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Craig</td>
<td>In-depth Interview about significant life experiences</td>
<td>22 April 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Kade</td>
<td>In-depth interview about sand tray world of bullying</td>
<td>24 April 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Richard Sawyer</td>
<td>Notes from conversation</td>
<td>23 May 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friend of Martin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Martin</td>
<td>In-depth interview about sand tray world of bullying</td>
<td>30 May 201447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Craig’s friend</td>
<td>Notes from conversation</td>
<td>4 June 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Jeanne Pierre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Craig</td>
<td>In-depth interview about sand tray world of bullying</td>
<td>6 June 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin’s parents; Kade’s parents;</td>
<td>Memberchecks - sent full transcription for participants to</td>
<td>19 June 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig’s mother</td>
<td>read</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Martin’s mother</td>
<td>In-depth interview (membercheck)</td>
<td>21 June 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Kade and *Aidan</td>
<td>Notes from reporting bullying incidents</td>
<td>11 July 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47 *indicates that these are pseudonyms
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Data collection method</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Kade</td>
<td>Informal interview</td>
<td>14 July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Aidan, *Kade’s friend</td>
<td>Notes - following up on some information given by *Kade</td>
<td>16 July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Lindani-pupil from Grade 5</td>
<td>Notes from meeting - confirming *Kade’s perceptions</td>
<td>16 July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5 Teacher</td>
<td>Notes from conversation</td>
<td>21 July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Martin, *Kade</td>
<td>Observations on the playground</td>
<td>4 August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5 Teacher</td>
<td>Notes from conversation whilst walking around the playground</td>
<td>4 August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Kade</td>
<td>Observation in the classroom</td>
<td>4 August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Craig</td>
<td>Observations on the playground</td>
<td>10 September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Martin’s Grade 6 teacher</td>
<td>Notes from conversation with *Martin’s teacher</td>
<td>10 September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Craig, *Kade</td>
<td>Observations on the playground</td>
<td>19 September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Kade</td>
<td>Notes from conversation with *Kade after break</td>
<td>19 September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig’s mother</td>
<td>Member check - checking up on a meaning and spelling of a word</td>
<td>12 November 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Martin’s parents</td>
<td>Member check - review of research report</td>
<td>10 December 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Craig’s mother</td>
<td>Member check - review of research report</td>
<td>12 December 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Kade’s parents</td>
<td>Member check - review of research report</td>
<td>Scheduled early January</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.2 Observations

In qualitative research, the use of unstructured rather than structured observations is utilised because the researcher has no predetermined idea of what might be observed (Mulhall, 2003). However, Draper and Swift (2010) claim that both structured and unstructured observations may be used. Observation as a data collection tool allows the researcher to check whether people do what they say they do, providing insight into interactions between people and illustrating the
wider picture, whilst describing events, capturing the context or process and gathering information about the influence of the environment (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007; Mulhall, 2003). I was particularly interested in observing the behaviour of the boys whilst in the classroom and on the playground, as well as during the interviews. Draper and Swift (2010) claim that the strength of observations lies in capturing what people do, rather than what they say they do, thereby accessing the unconscious. Thus, observation as a tool for researching bullying behaviours is useful to discern whether people’s perceptions of what they do is actually what they do. Examples of these observations can be viewed in Appendix 12.

4.5.3 Expressive art therapy techniques

Expressive art techniques are essentially used to gather data for investigations (McNiff, 2008). They enable the participants to express internal conflicts or problems through artistic expression (Synder, 1997), whilst facilitating understanding of the problem to the researcher (Curry, Fazio-Griffith, & Rohr, 2008). It is important to point out that I did not make use of arts-based research, as McNiff stresses that these techniques should not be confused with arts-based research, which can be defined as:

…the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both the researchers and the people that they involve in their studies. (McNiff, 2008, p. 29)

Furthermore, arts-based research is a research paradigm and is not to be substituted for other forms of qualitative methods (Smithbell, 2010). Barone (2008, p. 31) also points out that arts-based research is defined by the presence of aesthetic qualities and that “…an arts-based manuscript… may take the form of a novella, a documentary film, or a cluster of poems that enables the reader/viewer to re-experience the world from a previously unavailable vantage point.” Expressive art therapy techniques on the other hand do not rely solely on conversation or language proficiency (van Schalkwyk, 2010). Lewis and Greene (1983) as cited by Purdy (2012, p. 114) stated that “…a child’s drawing was a message that explained, or told, what a child could not verbalize.” According to
Rogers (2013, para.1) “…expressive art refers to using the emotional, intuitive aspect of ourselves in various media.” Ways to do this include, but are not limited to, “…drawing, painting, sculpture, play, music, movement and psychodrama with families” (Synder, 1997, para.6). Other means could include collages (van Schalkwyk, 2010), the use of videos (Frey, 2006), sandplay (Carey, 2006), intimate diaries (Harvey, 2011), improvisation (Rogers, 2013), photographs (Keegan, 2008), sound (Rogers, 2013) and eco-mapping (Curry et al., 2008). It is important to point out that I did not interpret these forms of art, but instead used them as a means to interview the children. As Sheila Keegan (2008, p. 622) indicates, “…these approaches require discussion and interpretation by research participants before analysis and integration into the overall research findings.”

I initially asked the boys to illustrate or show me the life experiences that had shaped their lives in any format with which they felt comfortable. One of the boys made a ‘book’ of pictures, which I utilised for an in-depth interview about the significant life experiences, both positive and negative, that had shaped his life (Figure 4.4). Another boy did a collage (Figure 4.5) and the third boy illustrated his good and bad life experiences on an A3 sheet of paper (Figure 4.6). I also gave each of the boys a book so that they could record any past and present experiences of being bullied. Only one of the three boys used this book (Figure 4.7). Very little information was conveyed in it though.

---

48 Names have been omitted
People I love

Sister

Grandad

Grandma

Mom

Dad

Granny

The Hobbit

Figure 4.4: First page of Martin’s book
Figure 4.5: Kade's collage
Figure 4.6: Craig’s significant life experiences

1. My brother being born
2. My dad dying
3. Me winning my first kung fu contest
4. Being squirted in the face and being put on YouTube
5. My mom getting married again
In addition to the participants’ illustrations of their significant life experiences, I also asked them, on a separate occasion, at my private practice, to construct a sand tray of their experiences of being bullied. My instruction to them was “to create a ‘bullying world.’” Photographs of these ‘bullying worlds’ are reflected in Figure 4.8, Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10, below. I then utilised their illustrations of their life experiences and their sand trays of the ‘bullying worlds’ to interview the participants.

Figure 4.7: Excerpts from Craig’s diary

I was physically bullied
I was strangled by
one of the older boys in
my grade. I was pushed
on the floor I was punched
in the stomack. I was
hit in the throat. I
couldn’t breath for a few
seconds and I was
kicked in the back.
Figure 4.8: Martin's sand tray
Figure 4.9: Craig's sand tray
Figure 4.10: Kade’s sand tray
4.5.4 Interviews

Interviews may be regarded as the most common method of collecting data in qualitative and in phenomenological research (Flood, 2010), for gaining insight into a participant’s experiences (Anyan, 2013; Doody & Noonan, 2013; Nunkoosing, 2005; Turner, 2010). The interview allowed me access to my participants’ life experiences in that I could probe, reflect, clarify, and request examples (Flood, 2010), in order to answer my research question and fulfil my research aims. Qualitative interviews may be regarded as conversations which do not follow a specific set of questions (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). Nunkoosing states that:

We interview when we want to know something about what another person has to say about her or his experience of a defining event, person, idea, or thing and that the interview invites and persuades individuals to think and to talk about their needs, wants, expectations, experiences, and understandings at both the conscious and unconscious levels. (Nunkoosing, 2005, p. 699)

Kvale (2007b) makes use of miner and traveller metaphors to explain the different purposes of interviewing. The former seeks facts and concepts that are there already, whereas the latter, as employed in this study, involves both the interviewer and interviewee co-constructing knowledge through narratives. For example, the following interview excerpt shows how it assisted in co-creation of the findings concerning bullying by friends when I had reflected to Kade, “So he was a very good friend of yours and now you’ve drifted apart” and his response to me was:

Kade: CJ, but he has stayed as a good friend. But the weird thing is when I’m around CJ he stays quiet. When I go away he is quite loud. If you know what I mean?
Researcher: So give me an example.
Kade: Like the one day he was talking to Evan and I was like “Hey CJ”, and he was like “Hey” and then he kept quiet, then I went away, and then he chatted to Evan again. Like he completely backed out when I was there.

(QU:42:11:230-232)

As Patton (2001) points out, the focus of phenomenological inquiry is to know what people experience and how they interpret the world, rather than merely obtaining the facts. Flood (2010) also points out that from a phenomenological perspective, meaning is co-created and not merely interpreted as the researcher may have different contextual factors or agendas. I was therefore interested in
being the traveller, entering the participants’ lived worlds by ‘wandering along’ with them during interviews and asking questions that encouraged them to tell their own stories (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). It is therefore important that I point out that firstly, even though I used a sand tray for the participants to create a ‘bullying world’ I did not use it as a therapy tool, but as a research tool, because my aim as researcher was to investigate the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. Secondly, I did not interpret the sand trays on my own, but rather, was guided by the participants firstly and then taking it to a more theoretical level later in order to understand and interpret the various participant’s perspectives. The following is an example of co-constructing knowledge so that meaning is not lost:

Table 4.5: The co-construction of knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant and researcher</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher:</strong> And this robot here. What is that symbolic of?</td>
<td>The symbol of the robot illustrates not only the cold, hard, mechanical, rigid and artificial relationship that developed between Martin and Kevin, but also the repetitive manner in which Martin was ignored by Kevin. In addition, robots do not have ears, depicting how Martin was ignored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Martin:</strong> Someone who used to be a friend, but is now an enemy. Someone who uses their intellect and thinks they’re better than me in every way. But we are really equal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher:</strong> Who is that in your life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Martin:</strong> Kevin Schmidt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher:</strong> And how does he use that? Give me an example.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Martin:</strong> Umm, whenever he is speaking he is smiling, using his fake laugh, which is really cheesy and whenever I start talking you just hear his (?) speech like “Ugh, ugh ugh, like he’s not listening, he’s not listening,…” (QU:17:96:130-135)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

McNamara (2006) lists the following eight criteria towards preparing for an interview: (1) Choose a setting with little distraction. I arranged to conduct the interviews where the interviewees felt most comfortable. Mrs. Lewis first chose to be interviewed at her place of work, which happened to be a nursery school she
owned. There were many distractions during the first interview, such as the telephone ringing, teacher interruptions (because a teacher had been bitten by a spider), or noises from the children moving from one place to another. The home environment was a better environment for conducting interviews, as there were far fewer distractions. This was true for the second interview I had with Mrs. Lewis, as well as for all the other participants’ interviews. (2) **Explain the purpose of the interview.** I discussed this prior to the interview. (3) **Address terms of confidentiality.** I asked the boys to choose a name that I could use in lieu of their real name. Interestingly enough, all of them requested that I choose the name for them. Participants also signed a form to protect them in this regard. (4) **Explain the format of the interview.** I explained to the parents that I would be asking them to tell me about their child’s significant life experiences and that I would be videotaping them for clarity and the purpose of looking at their body language. I explained to the boys that I would be asking them to tell me about their life experiences through their creative work and would also be videotaping them doing this. I also explained to the boys, that they would be interviewed when talking about their creative worlds in the sand trays. (5) **Indicate how long the interview usually takes.** Phenomenological interviews are long, so I indicated that I would need between one and two hours, depending on how much information there was. In one situation, I had to return to complete the interview on another day, due to the depth of the information. (6) **Tell them how to get in touch later if they wished.** All participants were given my cell-phone number and email address. (7) **Ask them if they have any questions.** Before the interview the nature and purpose of the research were discussed and any questions that needed to be asked were addressed here. (8) **Do not count on memory to recall their answers.** All in-depth interviews were videotaped. I carried a note book and hand recorder with me at the school to take notes or tape any informal interviews.

Collins, Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2010) point out that, besides capturing the words of the participant, it is also important to capture non-verbal communication as this promotes understanding or **Verstechen**, which clarifies the spoken words and vice versa. I also made use of the video camera when recording the interviews as it was easier to pick up on these observations when transcribing the interviews. These observations were captured in the transcripts. According to
Gordon (1980) as cited by Collins et al. (2010), there are four forms of non-verbal communication. Three of these assisted in answering the research question: (a) proxemic (the use of interpersonal space to communicate attitudes); for example, in my one interview, Mrs. Lewis got up to go over to calm her baby, indicating an attitude of care; (b) kinesic (body movements or postures); for example, one of the boys after suddenly complaining of a headache and then stomach ache, ran to the toilet to vomit whilst talking about his brother; and (c) paralinguistic (all variations in volumes, quality, and pitch of voice); these were captured in bold in the transcripts. The volume and pitch of voice helped ascertain some themes, such as the theme of trauma, as I highlighted these in bold when transcribing. For example, the following interview excerpt shows the traumatic effect bullying by teachers has on children:

At that stage he started crying, and said, “She is so horrible to us, she shouts at us every day, she tells us we are so bad, we’re all so stupid and you know on that day I just wanted to say to her fuck off bitch, I don’t care if you tell my mommy and if you can show her how ugly I can write, I will show you how ugly I can write.” And those kids were bullied for six months. (QU:6:374:71)

All the interviews in this study were recorded and transcribed into text for data analysis purposes. The following types of interview designs were used:

4.5.4.1 In-depth open interviews

The in-depth open-ended interview is an unstructured, informal type of interview which provides greater breadth than other types. Unstructured interviews are used to understand the complex behaviour of individuals without imposing preconceived notions or predetermined questions with the aim of understanding rather than explaining. It is essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction, which is guided by the research question. The objective is to pursue topics raised by the interviewee, by using open-ended questions to gather the information (Babbie & Mouton, 2009; Fontana & Frey, 2008).

In order to understand what life experiences of middle childhood children could possibly contribute towards them being bullied continuously, the in-depth open interview seemed to be the best option for parents. The open-ended question I
used to gather this information was: “Can you tell me about your child’s significant life experiences he has encountered from the moment he was conceived up until the present moment?” It was important to interview the parents about their child’s life experiences, because, according to Van Abbema and Bauer (2005), school-aged children recalled fewer than half of the distant events. However, it was also found that those distant events that were recalled were recollected in an accurate and detailed way.

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the children’s perspectives of their significant life experiences I asked them the following open-ended question in order to prepare their expressive art product for the in-depth interview (adapted from Kvale, 2007a). “Experiences mould or shape our lives. Our lives are changed by the happenings that come our way, good or bad, happy or sad. I want to understand the meaning of your life experiences, to walk in your shoes, to feel the things as you feel them, to explain the things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand? Can you illustrate or show me the life experiences that have shaped your life by means of a collage, poem, drawing or painting?” A ‘conversation’ about their life experiences then emanated from their work of art.

I proceeded to use a semi-structured interview to elicit the children’s experiences of being bullied. My questions to both parents and children were “directed to the participant’s experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions about the theme in question” (Welman & Kruger, 1999, p. 196).

4.5.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Kvale (2007a, p. 51) argues that the semi-structured life-world interview attempts “…to obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomenon; it will have a sequence of themes to be covered as well as some suggested questions.” In such interviews, I needed to be flexible and open to changing the sequence of questions (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). I made use of sand tray media and asked the children to depict their experiences of being bullied by building a scene of this in the sand tray. Refer
to Figures 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10. Carey (2006, p. 153) states that the sand in sand
trays, “…is of the earth and as such reconnects and grounds the individual in a
way that is not possible with other media.” The following interview guide was used
to conduct these semi-structured interviews.

A. Interview guide

Table 4.6: The interview guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Interviewer questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the life experiences of children in middle childhood who continue to be bullied?</td>
<td>Memories</td>
<td>Can you tell me about your earliest recollection of being bullied?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do you remember an occasion when you felt like the (symbol) in the sand tray?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Could you describe in as much detail a situation in which you were bullied?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Why do you think you are bullied?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>What did you actually do when….?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>What is happening in your body?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts</td>
<td>What were you thinking?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td>What pictures come to mind when you….?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>What emotions did you experience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensations</td>
<td>While you were constructing a world in the sand tray depicting your bullying experiences:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. What did you notice happening in your body?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Where in your body did you feel that?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. What are you experiencing now when we talk about your bullying experience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>What did your family do when you were being bullied?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>What did your friends do when you were being bullied?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>What did your teachers do when you were being bullied?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal meaning</td>
<td>What significance has bullying had in your life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interview guide is a script which directs the flow of the interview (Kvale,
2007a), which in semi-structured interviews either includes an outline of topics to
be covered or a detailed sequence of interview questions. However, the flow of the
interview is also determined by the interviewees’ answers. Whilst the research question is expressed in theoretical language, the interview questions are expressed in everyday language. Kvale (2007a) argues that the ‘why’ and ‘what’ questions should be asked and answered before the question of ‘how’ is posed (Table 4.6).

4.5.4.3 Informal interviews

I made use of an open ended informal interview (Fetterman, 2008) with one of the participants, at the school, when I wanted to follow up about something he had mentioned to me in front of his friend on a previous occasion. At that time, I did not want to discuss this in front of his friend, for ethical reasons, as discussed in Chapter 4.2. These forms of interviews resemble a casual conversation but are used to discover how people conceptualise their culture (Fetterman, 2008). I audiotaped and transcribed this informal interview, which I put into the memo section of the qualitative computer software programme ATLAS.ti 7.5 (Dowling, 2008). In addition to this interview, I also made use of informal interviewing with note taking, which is typical of naturalistic observation (McKechnie, 2008), when friends of the participants relayed relevant information to me. For confidentiality purposes, formal, oral consent was requested from certain friends only, when the participants had invited me to obtain their friends’ perspectives (Roulston, 2008). At other times, I made notes of what was said in my research journal either during a conversation or soon after the conversation (Brodsky, 2008). These were all captured and put into the memo section of ATLAS.ti 7.5.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

As can be seen in Figure 4.3, the third phase of the research process overlapped with the second phase, as I engaged with data analysis whilst collecting the data. I used IPA, an important approach to phenomenological research in psychology (Smith, 2010, 2011), to analyse and interpret the qualitative data. IPA aims to offer an interpretive account of what it means for the participant in their particular context (Larkin et al., 2006). “IPA is a meaning-focused, qualitative method, which is committed to understanding the first-person perspective from the third-person
position, so far as is possible, through intersubjective inquiry and analysis” (Larkin, 2013, slide 7). I followed Smith et al.’s (2009) guidelines to do this, and made use of ATLAS.ti 7.5, a qualitative analytical computerised programme, to assist me “…to manage, extract, compare, explore and reassemble meaningful pieces from large amounts of data in creative, flexible, yet systematic ways” (Friesa, 2013, p. 9).

4.6.1 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an important approach to analysing and interpreting qualitative data in phenomenological research in psychology (Smith, 2010; Smith 2011). It draws on three theoretical approaches, namely phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). Smith argues that:

The approach is phenomenological in being concerned with participants’ lived experience and hermeneutic because it considers that experience is only accessible through a process of interpretation on the part of both participant and researcher. IPA is also idiographic as it is committed to a detailed analysis of each case. (Smith, 2010, p. 186)

In this study, I focused on the children’s lived experiences, as experienced by themselves, their parents, their relevant peers and teachers. This was important in order to understand and interpret the various perspectives. IPA aims to offer an interpretive account of what it means for the participant in his or her particular context (Larkin et al., 2006). It may be “concerned with the detailed examination of personal lived experience, the meaning of experience to participants and how participants make sense of that experience” (Smith, 2011, p. 9). The three characteristic features of IPA are considered to be idiographic, inductive and interrogative (Smith, 2004). IPA is idiographic in that it is concerned with the particular, firstly in the sense of detail and therefore depth of analysis, and secondly, from understanding the experiential phenomenon from the perspective of a particular person (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is inductive in that it employs “…techniques which are flexible enough to allow unanticipated themes to emerge during data analysis” (Smith, 2004, p. 43). Finally, it is interrogative, as Smith (2004, p. 43) argues that “…the key aim of IPA is to make a contribution to psychology through interrogating or illuminating existing research.” Smith et al.
(2009) and Todorva (2011) highlight the importance of moving from one case to another, starting with the most detailed, complex and engaging interview. Although there is not a single prescribed method for working with data, Smith et al. (2009) make use of six steps, which I followed, in an attempt to make sense of the participants’ experiences. Despite these clear guidelines and steps for conducting the research, flexibility and innovation are called for (Larkin et al., 2006; Todorova, 2011), as it is not regarded as a prescriptive methodology (Smith, 2010).

4.6.1.1 Step 1: Reading and re-reading

Smith et al. (2009) recommend commencing with one participant at a time. I began with Craig Lewis’s life experiences. The first step involves immersing oneself in the data (Roberts, 2013) and actively engaging with it, by listening to, reading and re-reading the interview transcript in order to ensure that the participant becomes the focus of the analysis (Eatough & Smith, 2006; Fade, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). By transcribing the video tapes myself, I was automatically positioned to do so, and this involved listening very carefully to the audio recordings, to capture the data whilst going backwards and forwards to do this accurately. According to Conroy (2003), immersion in the participants’ world adds credibility to the research. For example, by transcribing the data myself, I made use of member checking (another form of credibility), by text messaging a participant’s mother, when I could not understand what the mother meant in an interview extract when talking about her son’s grandfather (refer to Table 4.7). It was advocated that non-verbal communication be inserted into the transcripts as these notes can be helpful in interpreting the data (Fade, 2004). For example, the following body language in the interview excerpt indicates what a bad effect that a teacher who bullies, has on a child: “And you know Helen, to go from having Mrs. Strauss to then having Mrs. Naicker was not good for Craig (shaking head and hands)” (QU:6:289:71). Repeated reading allows a model of the overall interview structure, such as chronological accounts to develop, which help bind sections of an interview together.
Table 4.7: Text message for member checking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.7: Text message for member checking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hi Ann. How are you doing? I am finally finishing off this research!!!! Just one question please. You referred to Craig’s (omitted) grandfather, as his achial. Achial in what sense please? I don’t want to make an assumption. Many thanks. Kind regards Helen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi the word is &quot;(omitted)&quot; ... Which is (omitted) for Father’s Father ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.1.2 Step 2: Initial noting

This step is known to be the most detailed and time-consuming of the analysis, as it requires exploring and examining the semantic content and language use of the data with an open mind, whilst capturing and identifying interesting and specific ways in which the participant talks about, understands and thinks about a certain issue (Smith et al., 2009). Fade (2004) advises numbering each line, to assist with later identification of examples of different themes. ATLAS.ti 7.5 does not do this, as it only numbers each line when another person enters discussion. The aim is to produce a comprehensive and detailed set of notes pertaining to the data, which includes three levels of comments, namely, descriptive, linguistic and conceptual, which are linked and connected in order to immerse the self into the life world of the participant (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) recommend using three different coloured pens when commenting about the three following task areas. These authors also advocate that the hard copy of the transcript include three wide margins for commenting. Interestingly, they suggest working from right to left (for right-handed people), beginning with the initial comments in the right margin, as Jonathan Smith was left-handed and worked from left to right. An example of this format is illustrated in Box 4.1 below. I initially did this, manually (before I received training in ATLAS.ti 7.5), but could not use this format when using ATLAS.ti 7.5, as this computer programme only has two columns, as can be seen in Figure 4.11. Furthermore, even though I had entered the initial comments into ATLAS.ti 7.5, bundle T6 (refer to Figure 4.11), this then complicated the coding because when I started coding, the programme recorded approximately 2000

---

49 Actual words were left out so that the participant could not be identified

50 Pseudonym has been used
codes for one participant, which was way too many. To overcome this problem, I opened another project in ATLAS.ti 7.5, bundle T9. I did the initial notes for each transcription, but then deleted the relevant initial notes when forming emergent themes. Evidence of the initial notes that were not deleted can still be identified in the Code Family Manager, in the bottom right hand corner of Figure 4.12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX 4.1 Initial comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergent themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. Descriptive comments

Descriptive comments, including key words, phrases or explanations, focus on the content of the transcription and are likely to include a description of things which are of important to the participant, such as relationships, processes, places, events, values and principles and the meaning of those things for the participant (Smith et al., 2009). These comments were written in blue and can be viewed in Figure 4.11.

B. Linguistic comments

Looking at the language that the participants use helps the researcher to understand why and how the participant has the concerns (Smith et al., 2009). The following components of language can be noted whilst analysing the data: “Pronoun use, pauses, laughter, functional aspects of language, repetition, tone, degree of fluency (articulate or hesitant)” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 88). Smith et al. (2009) also highlight how metaphors can serve as a bridge between descriptive
and conceptual data. These comments were written in red and also can be seen in Figure 4.11.

C. Conceptual comments

These comments are more interpretative and often take an interrogative form in the early stages of analysis to aid in moving away from the explicit claims of the participant towards a broader understanding of the issues he or she is discussing (Smith et al., 2009). These comments were made in purple and viewed in Figure 4.11. The aim is to open up a range of provisional meanings rather than find answers or pin down understandings (Smith et al., 2009). The analyst’s interpretations may, for example, develop from personal reflection (such as drawing on one’s own experiences or professional knowledge), thinking logically about the construction of an expression, or referring to a critical sense of timeframe (Smith et al., 2009). An example of one of my conceptual comments based on my professional knowledge is presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Conceptual comment relating to (QU:6:37:11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Researcher’s analysis</th>
<th>Transcription of interviewee’s answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Trauma of seeing mother’s uncontrollable epileptic fits</td>
<td>Mother: Craig was standing over me and said, “Mommy am I still going to have a mommy or are you going to die now and have no mommy?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.11: Initial notes in ATLAS.ti 7.5
Figure 4.12: Evidence of initial notes in ATLAS.ti 7.5
D. Overview of writing initial notes

There is no prescriptive way of writing initial comments (Smith et al., 2009). The analyst can first write descriptive comments and then upon re-reading write up linguistic comments, following with conceptual comments. Alternatively, the analyst can underline any language that appears important, then verify in the margin why it was underlined and therefore important. Another approach includes free association with the participant’s text whereby the analyst writes down whatever comes to mind when reading certain words or sentences. This was easier to do when working in a programme like *ATLAS.ti 7.5*. An example of how I did this this is presented in Table 4.9 and can also be seen in some of the codes not in the family, in the bottom right hand corner of the Code Family Manager in Figure 4.12.

**Table 4.9:** Conceptual comment relating to (QU:6:145:6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Researcher’s analysis</th>
<th>Transcription of interviewee’s answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Is this the voice of a guilty mother? / mother’s guilt returning to work?</td>
<td>Mother: “…he purposefully didn’t want the boob anymore and he wanted his bottle and so I explained to my boys that was the first decision you boys made for yourselves.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.1.3 Step 3: Developing emergent themes

Emergent themes arise from the initial notes which are closely tied to the transcript (Smith et al., 2009). Rigour is preserved through emergent themes (Conroy, 2003). Analysing the initial notes (discreet parts of the transcript) is regarded as one manifestation of the hermeneutic circle (Smith et al., 2009). According to Debesay, Naden and Slettebø (2008), in the hermeneutic circle one constantly gains new knowledge rather than remaining in the same place because understanding is achieved by moving from the whole (transcript) to the individual parts (initial notes) and from the individual parts (initial notes) to the whole
(emergent notes) through the hermeneutic circle. It is significant to emphasise that, in each stage of the process of analysis, despite the analyst moving further away from the participant and including the analyst more, he or she is still closely involved with the lived experiences of the participant and therefore the final whole or the resulting analysis will be a collaborative product of both the participant and the analyst (Smith et al., 2009). It is important that “…the connection between the participants’ words and the researcher’s interpretations is not lost” (Eatough & Smith, 2006, p. 120).

The process of emergent themes commences with turning the initial notes into concise phrases which “…contain enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 92). Themes therefore reflect the participant’s original words but also the analyst’s interpretation, “…a synergistic process of description and interpretation” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 92). The initial notes may be described as “…loose and open…” but the emergent themes as reflecting understanding (Smith et al., 2009, p. 92). I made use of the computerised programme, ATLAS.ti 7.5 in conjunction with Johnny Saldaña’s (2013) coding methods to enable me to do this. Saldaña’s coding manual assisted me with developing emergent themes, in particular the elemental and effective methods, each of which has a variety of coding methods to capture the complex phenomena in the data. The specific coding methods I used are encapsulated in Table 4.10 and include: values coding (lilac), process coding (green), emotion coding (pink), descriptive coding (blue), versus coding (orange) and in vivo coding (red) to assist help me in the development of emergent themes. Refer to Figure 4.13 to compare emergent coding with initial coding in Figures 4.11 and 4.12.

Table 4.10: Coding methods used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODING METHODS</th>
<th>Colour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elemental Methods</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective methods</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lilac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Coding</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Vivo Coding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process Coding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotion Coding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values Coding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versus Coding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mother: I was hospitalized for three weeks, for quite a long time and we had just moved out of our house (25:51) (mom calming baby down—hums a tune whilst rocking baby) (28:06). That was very traumatic and they only released me from hospital and I was very uncontrolled so I would have a lot of outbursts and the one time I woke up, Craig was standing over me and said, "Mommy am I still going to have a mommy or are you going to die now and have no mommy?" I felt terrible, I didn't even know what to tell him. And I promised him very faithfully, "that nothing is going to happen to me and I'm going to be fine." "What if you die?" What do you do to your 3 1/2 year old child when they feel like if their mom is going to die? Then he tells me, my mommy dies and then she wakes up again, so it was very hectic for him. That's 3 1/2 it gets worse (laughs). So that was at the end of September and we moved into this house in the November. And he had been an only child until then, and he also knew that I was pregnant and I lost that baby on 12 September 2006. So we moved into this house and I am a domestic worker who had been with me since 2001 or the beginning of 2002. There was a little boy who I used to take to the office with me every single day. So Sophie, who was the domestic worker used to go to the office and then she would look after him there. Then in 2004 she moved in with us. Then she would tell me all these sad stories about her whole sad life and all those children she was looking after blah blah blah. Now I was in a very emotional space because my husband and I had decided that we wouldn't practice law anymore because it was too terrible for me. We were trying to ascertain what the stressor that had brought on such a powerful, reactive reaction. I had been stressed, and that was the second miscarriage I'd had. Jason was like, "do you really have to do this?" I really do earn enough to carry on for us. You know, I think you should stay at home and be a mom. I was like okay, but I felt like that everything had been taken away from me. So then I jumped onto a charity bandwagon, Angela Jolie/Madonna and drove to Winburg and went to collect all those children that that belonged to the domestic worker on some other level and brought them all here to live with us here in Johannesburg where I then became a surrogate mother—was Craig's mother but a surrogate mother to nine other children, so it was hectic. And the one little boy—it wasn't all in one go because Sophie was a live in domestic worker then her daughter came to Johannesburg in 2005 and in the December January we ascertained that she was very pregnant. We took her to the Gynaec, she said she was three months pregnant, she thought, the baby came in April 2005. That was, Kabo, and Kabo has lived with us every single day since the day he was born. So Craig did get this kind of brother called Kabo and so on Kopano was there and then in January of 2007 he now got lots of extra brothers and sisters. We went and fetched Lesego, Mosegi, Tau, Bandi and Kagiso—live extra and then I had Craig, I had Kabo and I had Kopano, so I had eight. Then in the January of 2007, so he got a new house and then all these new children to live with him and then his mommy was falling down, she was dying and then she would come alive again.

**Figure 4.13:** Emergent themes in *ATLAS.ti 7.5*
4.6.1.4 Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

This step involves the development of a charting or mapping, of how the analyst thinks the emergent themes, which have been ordered chronologically and fit together. Only emergent themes related to the research question need to be incorporated into this stage of the analysis and the aim is to connect the emergent themes and produce a structure that allows the analyst to point to all of the most interesting and important aspects of the participant’s narrative (Smith et al., 2009). Smith and Osborn (2003, p. 71) as cited by Eatough and Smith (2006, p. 120) suggest that to do this, researchers “…imagine a magnet with some of the themes pulling others in and helping to make sense of them.” This was initially done for every participant before looking for patterns across the cases, which is step 6. The following ways of looking for connections between emerging themes were employed in this research study (Smith et al., 2009).

A. Abstraction

Abstraction, a basic form of connecting emerging themes, involves putting together similar themes and establishing a name for the group (Smith et al., 2009). This involves putting “like with like and developing a new name for the cluster” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 96). For example, in Figure 4.14 it can be seen how different families were developed. By clicking on a family, I could then import relevant emergent codes from the bottom right hand box – codes not in family – into the left hand bottom box – codes in family, into the relevant family. For example, from Figure 4.14 it can be seen how the relevant emergent themes for ‘Bullying incidents at school’ were clustered under this family.
Figure 4.14: Families of themes in ATLAS.ti 7.5
**B. Polarisation**

Polarisation involves focusing on differences instead of similarities between the emergent themes in transcripts, in order to develop a name for the cluster of emergent themes (Smith et al., 2009). Johnny Saldaña’s (2013) versus coding assisted me with this. For example, in the superordinate theme ‘experiences of supportive relationships’, the emergent code ‘We are not friends versus we are friends’ highlight that even though certain friends can play a supportive role, they can also have a negative influence.

4.6.1.5 *Step 5: Moving to the next case*

After completing analysis of the first participant’s transcript or account it is recommended to commence with the next participant’s account and to follow the same steps so as to allow the emergence of new themes and to bracket the ideas that arose from the first transcript (Smith et al., 2009). This procedure is to be followed with every subsequent case. It was at this stage that I opened project T9 in *ATLAS.ti 7.5* and imported all my transcripts into P-DOCS (primary documents). I commenced each case with initial notes, as I did in Project T6, then went back and replaced initial notes with emergent themes, to avoid clutter, as there were far too many codes. It was easier doing this than going from one document to the next.

4.6.1.6 *Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases*

After completing analysis of each participant’s transcript, Smith et al. (2009) recommend looking for patterns across cases by laying each figure or table on a large surface and looking across how one theme in one case illuminates a theme in another case. Smith et al. (2009) point out that this may lead to a re-labelling of themes, but helps the analysis move to a more theoretical level, as the analyst recognises how particular themes relating to one case relate to higher order concepts which other cases share. I made use of the networks in *ATLAS ti 7.5* to do this. The word ‘experiences’ in my research question directed the outcomes of
the superordinate themes, because I looked at what types of experiences were
common in each participant's coded families. Once the superordinate themes had
been identified, I clicked on networks and then on network view manager and
clicked on the icon that said create a new item. Next I typed in the name of the
superordinate theme and clicked OK. Once this was done, I clicked on nodes and
then new node and typed in the superordinate theme and soon after, did this for
the sub themes too. Each sub theme was colour coded yellow. I left the
superordinate theme neutral. Thereupon I went to the nodes button and clicked on
import nodes. At that point I clicked on the relevant codes (which were already
colour coded), imported them and aligned them with the relevant sub themes.

Smith et al. (2009) write that no single strategy is more important than the other
and that using multiple strategies may shift the analysis to a higher level. A
research journal, reflecting the analyst's process of analysing the data is
recommended (refer to Appendix 14), in conjunction with a graphic representation
reflecting the gestalt of the analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Paige and Smith (2013),
for example, used concept maps and tables to help identify patterns and
relationships between themes. Refer to Figures 4.15 to 4.18, to see my conceptual
representation of the superordinate themes and sub themes and Table 4.11 to see
a tabular relationship between the superordinate and sub-themes. It is advocated
that the graphic representation show how the development of the superordinate
themes arose by listing the emergent themes under each one and also reflecting
the page and line numbers with key words used by the participant (Smith et al.,
2009). Figures 4.15 - 4.18 illustrate to how the emergent themes were listed under
each superordinate theme. The advantage of using a programme like ATLAS.ti 7.5
is that by right clicking on an emergent code, a drop down menu box appears.
When clicking on ‘import neighbours’ in the drop down menu box another drop
down menu box opens and when clicking on ‘import quotations’ a small box with
source of quote appears next to the emergent code. These little boxes can be
seen in Figures 4.15 - 4.18. By double clicking on these small boxes, a quote
appears with the exact location of the quote. Refer to Figure 4.19 to see such a
quotation. Eatough and Smith (2006, p. 120) stress that if this has been
successfully done it should be possible for another person “…to track the analytic
journey from the raw data to the end table.” This study made use of a computerised programme called ATLAS.ti 7.5 to do all of this.

**Table 4.11:** Relation of sub-themes to superordinate themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPERORDINATE THEMES</th>
<th>SUB-THEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of maternal stress</td>
<td>Unplanned pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother’s personal trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother’s health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother’s personal wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of trauma</td>
<td>In utero trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying as trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traumatic events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symptoms of trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple traumas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of innocent versus wicked</td>
<td>Bullying by peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying by friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying by teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying by siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying by relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying by ‘innocent’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of supportive relationships</td>
<td>Positive and negative perceptions of friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive and negative perceptions of grandparents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive and negative perceptions of family (parents, mother, father, siblings, domestic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive and negative perceptions of the self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive and negative perceptions of support at school (teacher, counsellor, interventions, discipline)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive and negative perceptions of the community (security/crime, shaolin, EQ course)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Smith et al.(2009) advocate an optimum number of three cases for IPA student work, but state that a sample size of six can also be used. Once a final table for each case has been established, these tables are compared with each other to elicit the themes across the group (Smith et al., 2009). It is recommended that
recurrent themes, whether emergent or super-ordinate themes be present in at least a third or half in all the participants interviews to increase the validity of the research (Smith et al., 2009). The results can be illustrated in a table format such as I did in Box 4.2.

There are no set of criteria for what counts as recurrence, but the degree of it is influenced by the level of commenting and theming (Smith et al., 2009). Once criteria have been established to identify recurring themes, then the interconnections between these themes can be drawn up graphically using the processes described above (Smith et al., 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4.2 Identifying recurrent themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Super-ordinate themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of innocent versus wicked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of maternal stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of supportive relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of trauma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.15: Conceptual representation of experiences of maternal stress in ATLAS.ti 7.5
Figure 4.16: Conceptual representation of experiences of trauma in ATLAS.ti 7.5
Figure 4.17: Conceptual representation of experiences of innocent versus wicked in ATLAS.ti 7.5
Figure 4.18: Conceptual representation of experiences of supportive relationships in ATLAS ti. 7.5
4.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in qualitative research helps to clarify the notion of objectivity by persuading both the researcher and his/her audience that the findings of the study are important and useful (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). Williams and Morrow (2009) argue further that trustworthiness helps differentiate qualitative research from mere journalism. Trustworthiness of the data was verified through the methodological norms of Babbie and Mouton (2009), founded by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which included **credibility** (internal validity), **transferability** (external validity or generalisability), **dependability** (reliability) and **confirmability** (objectivity). These constructs correspond to the criteria employed by quantitative researchers found in the parentheses (Shenton, 2004). In addition, **crystallisation** was also employed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). These criteria helped assess the quality and robustness of this qualitative phenomenological research study (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

4.7.1 Credibility

Credibility addresses the fit between the participants’ perspectives and the researcher’s representation of them (Tobin & Begley, 2004), or captures the value of truth (Tuckett, 2005). According to Patton (2001), the background experience
and qualifications\textsuperscript{51} of the researcher are also very important when credibility is involved, as the researcher is the main instrument in collecting and interpreting the data. Credibility in this study was accomplished through strategies such as the use of prolonged engagement, triangulation, persistent observation, audio-taping and member checks (Babbie & Mouton, 2009).

**Prolonged engagement** entails staying in the field until data saturation occurs (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). Shenton (2004) also suggests becoming familiar with the culture of the participating organisation prior to the study to develop a relationship of trust. The fact that I have worked in the organisation for a lengthy period of 10 years, certainly assisted with this. **Triangulation**, or the use of multiple methods, requires evoking the various perspectives of reality within the context of the study by using different questions, using different methods and different sources (Babbie & Mouton, 2009), to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Denzin and Lincoln (2013) point out that triangulation in qualitative research is not a tool for validation, but rather an alternative to validation. In this study, for example, I also sought the perspectives of parents, teachers, peers and child to elicit the unique life experiences of the children to see if they tallied with information I received from the participants. Although Tobin and Begley (2004) discuss using mixed methods to achieve this, Tuckett (2005) illustrates how this can be achieved by making use of different methods to capture the data, such as a research journal, tape-recorder and transcript. I made use of field notes\textsuperscript{52}, my research diary\textsuperscript{53}, photographs, observations\textsuperscript{54}, audio-recordings and transcripts of the interviews to triangulate the data. These are all captured in *ATLAS.ti* 7.5. Figure 4.20 show examples of some of the different primary documents which contain all the in-depth interviews, photographs of the sand trays, and photographs of the creative works of art. For example, P9 which is currently open indicates that this primary document 5 is Craig Lewis's (CL), picture of the sand tray regarding his perception of a bullying world (BW), who is a male (M) and 11 years old. The next primary document, document 6 is that belonging to Martin Carr (MC), of pictures of his book relating

\textsuperscript{51} Refer to Appendix 5 to see my background experience and qualifications
\textsuperscript{52} Refer to Appendix 13 to see relevant excerpts of field notes
\textsuperscript{53} Refer to Appendices 5, 10, 11, 13 to see relevant excerpts from research diary
\textsuperscript{54} Refer to Appendix 12
to his significant life experiences (LE), who is a male (M), and is 12 years old. Figure 4.21 shows the different types of memos which include reflections, observations, informal interviews, conversations and field notes. Babbie and Mouton (2009) highlight that persistent observation involves consistently attending to interpretations in different ways by searching for what counts and what does not count.

To document my findings, I also made use of audio-recordings to tape the interviews. I made use of voice recorders to tape short informal interviews and a video recorder to record in-depth interviews to capture non-verbal cues such as body language, in line with social constructionism (Burr, 2003). I also took photographs of the various products of the expressive art therapy techniques that were employed to engage the children in their life experiences, such as can be seen in Figures 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.9, and 4.10. I also utilised member checks, which invited the participants to review the collected data and interpretation thereof in order to verify the accuracy of the data at various stages of the research process (Babbie & Mouton, 2009; Shenton, 2004). For example, when the audio-recordings of the parents’ interviews had been transcribed, I emailed them to each of the parents to verify the accuracy of the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2009; Shenton, 2004). Figure 4.22 is an example of one of these emails. For the purposes of confidentiality I forwarded the email to myself, so that I could delete the participant’s email address and change the name of the participant. Tuckett (2005) argues that this form of credibility is inconsistent with social constructionism because, from this worldview, meaning and understanding are open to interpretation over time. However, Tuckett (2005) states that when member checking is employed with the view for participants to recognise something of themselves, and it is used step-by-step throughout the research process, rather than at the end of the process as advocated by Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002), then this is credible. For example, I requested another interview with Martin’s mother on her own, when it became apparent that this was necessary to do. In the very beginning, Martin’s mother had initially requested that she and her husband be interviewed separately. However, she changed her mind and I interviewed them together on the 3 January 2014 (Table 4.4). It was during the interview that I realised that a separate interview may have been more
beneficial. I contacted her later after having transcribed the interview and invited her to do another interview, which she willingly participated to do on 21 June 2014 (Table 4.4). It was during this interview that she reflected her distress in reading the transcript when she said, “...it was quite hard to read it...” (QU:27:20:86). Furthermore, as shown in Table 4.7, I also sent a text message to one of the mother’s to shed light on a concept I was unsure about that was used during an interview. Another form of credibility undertaken included reflecting upon the research process through my research journal55 (Ortlipp, 2008).

4.7.2 Transferability

Transferability pertains to the generalisability of the inquiry or to the extent the findings can be applied in different contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2009; Maxwell, 2002; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Babbie and Mouton (2009), as well as Maxwell (2002) note that this is not the purpose of qualitative research, but rather ensuring that the findings in a particular context may be useful in making sense of similar persons or situations. Tuckett (2005), as well as Babbie and Mouton (2009), argue that in qualitative research it is the reader who does the generalising and not the researcher. To this end, transferability in this study was attained through thick description and purposive sampling, as advocated by Babbie and Mouton (2009).

A detailed description of the specific research setting was deliberately avoided to protect the participants of the study. However, by giving detailed descriptions of the specific life experiences of my research participants, it is possible for the reader to make judgements about the transferability of the findings to other individuals and groups, to their own experiences or to other research findings (Babbie & Mouton, 2009; Curtin & Fossey, 2007). Maxwell (2002) argues that when description is specific there can be no issue of generalisability. Purposeful selection of the location of the research site and participants enabled me to maximise specific information (Babbie & Mouton, 2009).

55 Refer to Appendix 11
Figure 4.20: Primary documents in ATLAS.ti 7.5
Richard Sawyer friends of Martin Carr

Richard said Martin does get bullied quite often and on the way back from camp he started crying in the middle of the bus because they were play fighting and the boys started calling them gay, because they looked like gays. Richard verbalised that when Martin was about to cry, the boys “bring up more stuff” to make sure that Martin does cry. Richard stated that some of his own friends spread the rumour that him and Martin are gay. Richard apparently went to speak to his “so-called friends” that spread the rumour and his one friend Dave, said he was not responsible for this because he only said one thing about them. Richard told Dave that it still counted. Richard reported that he told the boys on the bus to “shut up” and that was when Martin burst out crying, because he said, “When I see all the bullies faces it reminds me of what they have done to me in the past few years.” Richard uttered, that his old friends, which are still his friends, say that he has become gay since he has started to hang out with Martin, which he thinks is a lot of “rubbish”.

Richard mentioned that at the beginning of the year, he offered Martin a seat next to him in the classroom and that their friendship has grown since then because they have much in common. Richard said that they have become very good friends and that even his mom, mom’s new husband and dad invite Martin’s parents over. They even went to his mother’s wedding.

Richard said it is not true anyway, so he does not let it bother him. He said his friends and others tease them about being gay. Richard recalled an incident when he and Martin were “hanging out” and playing together, when one of his friends asked, “Have you and Martin broken up yet?” Richard said that this related to being called gay.

Richard said he is no longer “hanging out” with his friends anymore and that he tries to avoid them, by going down to the field, where there are two goals set up together. He and Martin have put nets up to resemble a hammock and that is where the two of them hang out, because it is far away on the field, where nobody goes.
4.7.3 Dependability and confirmability

In order to address **dependability**, Shenton (2004, p. 71) states that “…the processes within the study should be reported in detail enabling a future researcher to repeat the work…” According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) there can be no validity without reliability and thus no credibility without dependability. Babbie and Mouton (2009) explain that that if a study has shown to be credible it is not necessary also to demonstrate dependability. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended an internal audit to eliminate any criticism, whereby an auditor examines the various data and attests that the findings are supported by the data. However, from a social constructionist perspective, there is no single truth and I argue that no other researcher will get exactly the same findings because they have not conducted my research. Instead, I contend that intracoder reliability be adopted as a measure of reliability rather than intercoder reliability. In highlighting the difference, van den Hoonaaard (2008) writes: “…intracoder reliability refers to the consistent manner by which the researcher codes” (van den Hoonaard, 2008, p. 445). As mentioned above, I made use of Saldaña’s Coding Manual for qualitative researchers in conjunction with **ATLAS.ti 7.5** to code my data. **ATLAS.ti 7.5** can benefit qualitative researchers “…in terms of speed, consistency, rigour…” (Dowling, 2008, p. 36). Evidence of this can be found in on
the T9-ATLAS.ti 7.5 bundle which will be exported to an html file and copied onto a memory stick, so that it can be viewed only by researchers, for assessment purposes, as an internet file. The names of the participants however, will remain confidential.

**Confirmability** is the degree to which the findings are a product of the focus of the inquiry and not the researcher’s bias (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). To reduce the effect of my bias I used multiple methods (triangulation) to collect the data (Shenton, 2004). In addition, I acknowledged my assumptions and beliefs in my research diary and gave an in-depth description of the methodology so that it could be scrutinised (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, I made use of diagrams to demonstrate an audit trail (Babbie & Mouton, 2009; Shenton, 2004), which included my raw data such as written field notes and audio clippings. In addition, I included a memory stick of my data analysis for anyone to follow and scrutinise.

4.7.4 Crystallisation

The term crystallisation is a postmodern view of qualitative inquiry, as it asserts that the crystal rather than the triangle is a better image for qualitative inquiry, as it encaptures multiple lenses rather than a rigid and fixed object (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Ellingson, 2009). Crystallisation also fits within a social constructionist theoretical framework (Ellingson, 2009), as it enabled me to tell the same tale from different perspectives or the different points of view of my research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Ellingson (2009) states that crystallisation provides another way of achieving depth in qualitative research, through representing and analysing the data in different forms.

4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter expanded upon the research design and methodology of the study. From the above it can be seen that a phenomenological qualitative research study is certainly not a simple linear process, but rather a complex process entailing

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56 Refer to Appendix 5
multiple methods of collecting the data to bring to light the various life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. Furthermore, the process of interpreting the data through IPA involved continual movement through a hermeneutic circle, in which meanings of segments of the text were considered in relation to the whole text, so that sense of the participants’ experiences can be understood rather than just known.

In the next chapter the data analysis procedures will be discussed and the findings of the study presented.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes phase 3 of the research process and engages with interpreting the final themes of the life experiences of children in middle childhood who continue to be bullied. It emerged from using Smith et al.’s (2009) guidelines of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, in conjunction with ATLAS.ti 7.5 as described in Chapter 4.6. The table of themes is presented as the basis for an account of the participants’ responses. Each theme will first be elucidated by means of verbatim extracts from the transcripts to support it, marked by a code, such as (QU:6:390:2). This conveys that the quotation comes from document 6, code 390, line 2, which can be verified in the ATLAS.ti 7.5 bundle. The verbatim extracts will then be utilised to interpret what I have found. Finally, a discussion linking the analysis to the extant literature will be presented.

5.2 MASTER TABLE OF THEMES FOR THE GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS

The following superordinate themes and nested superordinate themes found in Table 5.1 (below) emerged from the data analysis. These will be used to report on the life experiences of each participant, before a general discussion of the findings pursues. Pseudonyms have been adopted in order to preserve the anonymity of all of the participants.

Table 5.1: Themes and sub-themes of the research study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPERORDINATE THEMES</th>
<th>SUB-THEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of maternal stress</td>
<td>Unplanned pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother’s personal trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother’s health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work stress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SUPERORDINATE THEMES | SUB-THEMES
---|---
Experiences of maternal stress | Financial stress  
| | Mother’s personal wellbeing  
Experiences of trauma | In utero trauma  
| | Bullying as trauma  
| | Traumatic events  
| | Symptoms of trauma  
| | Multiple traumas  
Experiences of innocent versus wicked | Bullying by peers  
| | Bullying by friends  
| | Bullying by teachers  
| | Bullying by siblings  
| | Bullying by relatives  
| | Bullying by ‘innocent’  
Experiences of supportive relationships | Positive and negative perceptions of friendships  
| | Positive and negative perceptions of grandparents  
| | Positive and negative perceptions of family (parents, mother, father, siblings, domestic)  
| | Positive and negative perceptions of the self  
| | Positive and negative perceptions of support at school (teacher, counsellor, interventions, discipline)  
| | Positive and negative perceptions of the community (security/crime, shaolin, EQ course)  

#### 5.3 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

I begin with an interpretation of the participants’ life experiences by first looking at the common types of stress experienced by their mothers. These experiences of maternal stress emanated as super ordinate themes from the parental interview transcripts of the participants’. I also made use of ATLAS.ti 7.5, a qualitative analytical computerised programme to assist in locating, coding and annotating findings in the primary data. Figure 5.1 (below) provides a network view of the findings of experiences of maternal stress.
Figure 5.1: ATLAS.ti 7.5 – Network view of superordinate sub-themes, codes and quotation codes of experiences of maternal stress
5.3.1 Experiences of maternal stress

The experiences of maternal stress in the lives of all three participants commenced at conception. As this research regards the life experiences of children and not the parents, detailed descriptions of the parental experiences have been omitted. Mrs Lewis’s account of her unplanned pregnancy illustrates the element of shock and surprise experienced by all three mothers when they found out they were pregnant, albeit each had their own personal style.

5.3.1.1 Unplanned pregnancy

Mrs Lewis, Craig’s mother, was initially shocked and surprised when she found out that she was pregnant, for a number of reasons as revealed in the following extracts:

…we had been married for less than one year and my practice was less than one year old and we had just reached this firm decision to postpone children for at least another two years. (QU:6:390:2)

In addition she expressed that, “…it was a shocking surprise because really we were not in that mindset we were not in that space at all but we were very excited once we had this long chat” (QU:6:390:4).

The words in bold reflect the stress and shock as emphasised by Mrs Lewis, Craig’s mother, who added that they were using two forms of contraception. The couple were happy once they had overcome the initial shock of the pregnancy.

The other two participants’ mothers were also shocked and surprised. Mrs. Carr reported: “…we hadn’t been going out for very long so we obviously weren’t expecting to have a baby brought into the relationship” (QU:13:244:3). Mrs Abbot said, “…we were on the contraceptive and we weren’t planning to have another baby” (QU:25:23:3), “…because we had so many emotions from the loss of Kirsten”(QU:25:24:8).

Although each mother had different reasons for not planning to have children they were all initially shocked and surprised to find out that they were pregnant, as having children is a lifetime commitment.
5.3.1.2 Mothers’ personal trauma

The mothers’ stress was fuelled by personal traumas to a greater or lesser extent, though it became apparent that Mrs Lewis had more than the other two. She disclosed, “But in my pregnancy I also had to deal with a whole lot of my personal issues” (QU:6:392) and “It’s like this very buried, very big eina⁵⁷ - we just don’t talk about it…” (QU:6:316).

Evidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) unfolded in these two extracts as Mrs Lewis conveyed that her pregnancy with Craig had triggered unpleasant memories. Moreover, she describes her feelings as a “…buried very big eina…,” highlighting the extent of the trauma. She goes on to mention a serious car accident in which she was involved with Craig when he was just 30 months old. Craig was uninjured but “I on the other hand sustained quite a serious whiplash in my neck and in my back and I think my trial is the verdict-the trial is in March this year [2014]” (QU:6:33:7). At a later stage she mentioned that, “…the medical legal orthopaedic surgeon has now told me that the seizures I am having are a result of this car accident…” (QU:6:345:38). This latter passage indicates that Mrs Lewis had had to deal with the impact of the car accident since it happened, almost nine years before, and had suffered regular epileptic seizures as a consequence. When Craig was three years old she had to fetch him from school after he was grabbed by hijackers and had a gun held to his head. She stated that she was “…an absolute hot mess” (QU:6:328:13).

Finally, she described the trauma of losing her husband in a motorbike accident, when Craig was four years old and she was eight months pregnant with her second son (refer to Appendix 15 to read this). She related how the family had gone away for their last family holiday for Mr Lewis to compete in an annual motorbike competition before this traumatic event took place.

There are many indications of trauma that arise from the passage in Appendix 15. Mrs Lewis firstly illustrates her shock in instinctively knowing that bad news was going to be broken to her, because a paramedic and nurse had accompanied her friends. Indications of trauma are present not just in the obvious descriptions, the

⁵⁷ Eina is the Afrikaans word for pain.
scream and deathly silence, and use of the metaphor “bombshell” to depict the traumatic news, but also in her body language as she told her story. For example, her face and whole body went stiff, depicting the freeze response, and her eyes filled with tears. The freeze response had also been apparent in her friend’s body gestures when she mentioned how they were just ‘staring’ at her, speechless and together like a clump. The tone of her voice also highlights the intensity of the trauma, as illustrated in the words in **bold**.

Mrs Abbot mentioned five traumatic events in her life, the first of which was the stillbirth of baby Kirsten at 38 weeks, two years before the birth of Kade: “*We weren’t planning to have another one because we had so many emotions from the loss of Kirsten*” (QU:25:24:8). This indicates a symptom of trauma in that Mrs Abbot deliberately avoided falling pregnant again after she had lost her first child, almost at full-term. The second was her stressful pregnancy with Kade, as evident in the words: “*It was a very trying pregnancy. It was very hard emotionally for both of us because of what we went through with Kirsten*” (QU:25:24:13). She possibly found the pregnancy trying because it triggered or evoked memories of her previous loss. The third traumatic event related to Kade’s disappearance from a shopping centre when he was two years old. Mr Abbot said, “*That was traumatic for us, I don’t think it was traumatic for him*” (QU:25:30:43). “*For me, it was like in a movie, where, you’re standing still and everything is just spinning around you and you feel like you can’t move or talk*” (QU:25:30:45). Indications of the freeze response is portrayed when she felt she couldn’t move or talk. The fourth and fifth traumas occurred within the same week of one another when Kade was attacked by dogs and her older son had a gun pointed at his head in an armed robbery at their home:

> so between my elder son having a gun held at his head and tied up for three hours... then having Kade having his dog bites, then Kade saw me burst, breakdown like literally into tiny little pieces...it was a very trying, very trying week for everybody you know, it was very hard on everybody. (QU:25:53:401)

Finally, Mrs Abbot conveyed how her personality fragmented as a consequence of the trauma both her sons underwent.

Mrs Carr’s trauma emerged when she revealed her feelings following the news of her pregnancy (QU:27:2:5).
5.3.1.3 Mother’s health

Two of the three mothers suffered from pre-eclampsia during their pregnancies, which can cause premature births and low birth weight:

_"I went in at thirty four weeks and I was under pressure ummm and they were trying to keep in in a little bit longer- then at thirty six weeks, I wasn't in labour or anything but I was in a bad way- I mean I had water everywhere - even in my shoulders- I had to go for physio- I mean I was packing up generally, and so the gynae said alright, look we have to take him out now and I was like finished. So he came at thirty six weeks, a full month early he was a tiny weenie little baby -you know they measure them- he was a long baby, but he was two point four kg._ (QU:6:28:4)

The words, “packing up”, “in a bad way”, and “I was like finished”, indicate how life threatening pre-eclampsia was for the mother, and Mrs Lewis indicates the physical stress placed on her body when she mentions her high blood pressure and high weight gain due to water retention as a consequence. In addition, that she was hospitalised at 34 weeks and had to have a Caesarean at 36 weeks illustrates the urgency of this situation.

Mrs Abbot, on the other hand, had a markedly different experience, conveying that she was nervous as she had had two previous pregnancies and pre-eclampsia in both previous pregnancies. She had already lost a child because of this at 38 weeks and spent much time visiting and staying in the hospital awaiting the birth of Kade due to perceived and real threats to the pregnancy. Kade was born at 36 weeks and weighed 2.3kg, because, "my amniotic fluids started disappearing, my kidneys were not healthy, so they wanted to get him out as quickly as possible" (QU:25:25:22). Mrs Abbot understandably managed this situation from the outset with anxiety because of her previous loss, causing both emotional and physical stress.

Mrs Lewis reported that nine months after her motor accident:

_"I suddenly started having an entire session of epileptic seizures, where I that day I think I had thirty, taken away in an ambulance, um put in ICU, dad was phoned, and they basically told Jason, that if they couldn't stabilize me, I might actually die because, they couldn't control, didn't know if I was having a stroke-what was happening. They didn't know, they couldn't ascertain, they were doing ECGs, I was completely out of control, they were giving me medication and they actually didn't know how to bring it under control. Unhappy little story._ (QU:6:320:7)
This highlights how the accident impacted upon her health, both one year and nine years later, as she was still suffering from epileptic seizures. That the doctors could not initially diagnose her condition immediately also placed additional stress on her and her family, as they did not know if they were dealing with a stroke or epilepsy.

5.3.1.4 Work stress

While all the participants’ mothers presented with work stress, there were differences in how it impacted in their lives and those of their children. All three mothers work full time. Mrs Lewis described her pregnancy with Craig as very stressful because she was trying to “run a new practice which was very stressful” (QU:6:406), and “Um, in the pregnancy I was on my feet a lot, I argued a lot of matters in court, I drove around till the very enth degree ummm went to classes for exams, and it was basically a very hectic programme” (QU:6:318:4).

It is clear that Mrs Lewis did not have time to rest during her pregnancy, and the word ‘hectic’ suggests that she worked for many hours during each day:

Now I was in a very emotional space because my husband and I had decided that I wouldn't practice anymore because it was terrible for me. We were trying to ascertain what the stressor that had brought on such a powerful, reactive reaction. I had been stressed, and that was the second miscarriage I'd had. (QU:6:339:11)

Here she encapsulates how her work stress negatively impacted on two pregnancies following the birth of Craig. In order to fall pregnant again it was decided that she was going to stop practising her profession.

Mrs Carr had a different type of work stress, describing how she was studying eight hours a day for her first professional exam whilst not being aware she was pregnant with Martin. She reflected, “I had to work very hard” (QU:13:251:53) and it was only when she returned to work that she found out that she was pregnant. After the birth she studied for the first six months: “Studying was quite hectic, it’s not easy” (QU:13:246:27), and due to the demands was unable to spend time with Martin, “So, our maid, she was also his nanny, would spend the day with him and then I would be with him at night” (QU:13:246:27). Mrs Carr succinctly conveys that initially, apart from the first month, she did not have time to spend with her son.
as she had to focus on her studying. Ironically, she also described this as ‘hectic’. Also like Mrs Lewis, she reduced her work stress by getting a new job: “I was doing X\textsuperscript{58}, but much less pressure, much less hours and much more of a comfortable environment” (QU:13:248:43).

Mrs Abbot also conveyed albeit in indirect ways, that she too has encountered stress related to work. In the first instance she recalled, “…he went to play school from six months when I went back to work which was very difficult for me to do, to put him in there, because he was still so tiny at six months…he was quite sick for the first six months…” (QU:25:32:48). She also reiterated this whilst talking about a rigid regime she has for Kade in the afternoons because, “I want to be this hard mom, it’s because we work, we are busy, it’s a busy day, it’s crazy…” (QU:25:47:213).

The above reflects that Mrs Carr found her job too stressful to manage with a newborn baby, but because she needed to work she opted for a less pressurised job. Unlike Mrs Lewis, who felt supported by her husband and was able to discontinue working, Mrs Carr perhaps felt less secure in stopping work because of their relatively new relationship. Mrs. Abbot on the other hand initially experienced stress at work for the first six months of Kade’s life due to her apparent guilt of leaving her young baby at a crèche who consequently was sickly. She later implies that she needs a strict routine for her son in the afternoons, in order to manage her busy work load, as she revealed both during and after the interview that she works from home in the afternoons when she is not travelling.

5.3.1.5 Financial stress

While all the participants’ mothers exhibited the impingement of financial stress at some stage in their children’s lives, this differed considerably from one family to the next. Mrs Lewis had encountered the most debilitating financial difficulties, having become a single mother when Craig was four years old. She had also given up her practice due to epileptic seizures and because her husband had died in a motorbike accident she had to rely on her parents for financial support. In

\textsuperscript{58} Substituted X for type of job to avoid giving identity away
addition, besides supporting her own family financially, she was supporting her surrogate children, nine in total. The following two extracts highlight her financial stress:

*I was unable to pay my Edgars account, I had to buy so many school uniforms,..... We would pay for all the school fees, we would buy all the food and we would pay for all the clothes, we’d fetch and carry the children, we’d buy them air time, we would do absolutely everything.* (QU:6:333:15)

*Ag, I battled my arse off. My dad spent his entire pension and all his money, and everything, trying to support us.... So there I was destitute and also no real insurance money. The only thing he left, I think he had a small amount of two hundred rand and something thousand rand that paid out and then he had a global education protection policy, which is specifically school fees, thank God for that.* (QU:6:61:25)

By the time Mrs Lewis’s new husband arrived in South Africa (Craig was eight years old), she was almost bankrupt, as indicated in the following extract from the interview:

*Then by that stage, I had honestly and truly run out of money and my parents had run out of money.....I hadn't paid the bond on the house, hadn't been able to pay the water and electricity. My dad had been on pension for a year by that stage, he had run out of resources, and we were deeply, deeply in the poo, and I nearly lost this house.... I was lending the money from Stokvel just to pay her, her salary, and she was lending it back to Stokvel at massive interest. It was like, he was like, no way, so he started to pay her.* (QU:6:383:27)

From the above, it is evident that Mrs Lewis had managed to get into a very stressful financial situation in that she was no longer able to pay her accounts, pay for the bond on her home and had also run into arrears with the water and electricity bills. Moreover, it conveys that besides educational funding her husband had not set up an insurance fund in the event of him dying early in life. Mrs Lewis suggests that she managed to get into this precarious situation because, besides paying for bills relating to her surrogate children, she also foolishly lent money from the Stokvel in order to pay her domestic worker. The passage reveals that as a consequence, she almost lost her home. In addition, her own father, who was on pension and assisting her financially, had also run out of finances. Her new husband seemed to alleviate some of the pressure by taking over the responsibility for paying the domestic worker’s salary.

59 Stokvel is a popular South African way of saving money to create wealth.
Mrs Carr’s financial situation differed considerably from that of Mrs Lewis. She stated that for the first two years of Martin’s life, prior to her marriage to Mr Carr, she struggled financially because, “…I didn’t have a lot of money at the time…” (QU:27:31:19). Mrs Abbot’s financial situation was initially stressful in the first year of Kade’s birth, as a consequence of the unplanned pregnancy:

**Mother:** Ja, I think it was a bit stressful. We were under pressure with our finances. We had one car, we were sharing a car. I didn’t have a job for six months

**Father:** Ja, and oh because Lesley hadn’t been a year there, they didn’t pay any maternity leave. (QU:25:64:36-37)

In Mrs Lewis’s situation, the unplanned pregnancy had no effect on the stressful financial situation but was triggered by the premature death of Mrs Lewis’s husband, her poor health and the acquisition of surrogate children. However, both Mrs Carr’s and Mrs Abbot’s stressful financial situations were triggered by their unplanned pregnancies. Mrs Carr was in a short-term relationship and was still busy with her professional examinations so had not yet commenced working as a qualified professional, whereas Mrs Abbot had recently started a new job, so forfeiting maternity benefits.

5.3.1.6 Mother’s personal wellbeing

It is reasonable to expect that because all three mothers had personal traumatic issues in their lives such events would contribute negatively towards their personal wellbeing. Mrs Lewis presented with many more personal issues than the other two mothers and indicated that her emotional wellbeing during her pregnancies was affected by her earlier personal traumas (QU:6:410:4). In addition, as previously mentioned, her two miscarriages following the birth of Craig also contributed towards her stress. Moreover, she recalled feeling guilty about the time Craig thought she was dying when she had seizures: “…I didn’t even know what to tell him. And I promised him very faithfully, that nothing is going to happen to me and I’m going to be fine” (QU:6:379:11). Furthermore, the following passage conveys in a nutshell how empty Mrs Lewis was feeling after she gave up her practice:
I needed something to fulfil me and reaffirm me because my whole life had been taken away and I felt valueless so now I am taking on all these children to make me feel better. Obviously in hindsight, a large degree of insanity. (QU:6:323:13)

It was evident from the responses that Mrs Lewis was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with indications of depression symptomatic of this. She demonstrates feelings of worthlessness and acknowledged the irrational nature of her thoughts at the time. Mrs Lewis then disclosed how the muti she was subjected too, hidden behind the skirting boards of her and the children’s bedrooms also impacted on her wellbeing:

The person told us it was spells so that I couldn't stand up to her, that I had no resistance and that I would love her more, so I didn't let any men into my life, so that I had no resistance against her and she basically had an open wallet and that was exactly the stuff she was putting into my bedroom. (QU:6:344:31)

This passage suggests that Mrs Lewis’s irrational behaviour was also perhaps influenced by this muti, as reflected in her words to one of her surrogate children: “…my children go without, I go without, so you can have” (QU:6:394:27). Even Mrs Lewis was eventually able to reflect upon and acknowledge her irrational behaviour once she had met her new husband, Lucas, as she neatly sums up in the following passage:

And by that stage, I had realized, my eyes had been opened, I felt like I was in the movie, you know Lord of the Rings, and that Wormtongue had been living with me (points to head) and Gandalf had arrived [dramatizes a sword going through a chest] to break the spell over me. I don't know if you've watched the Lord of the Rings, but that is how I felt and I basically woke up and smelt the coffee. (QU:6:393:27)

Much is conveyed about Mrs Lewis’s personal wellbeing in the above literary reference to Wormtongue, notably how her irrational thoughts prior to her new husband’s arrival had manipulated her to behave in the ways she did, and how her new husband, whom she likens to the fictional wizard Gandalf, rescued her from this, so she was able to see reality. Her description of being in a film and the cliché about coffee suggest her loss of contact with reality.

Similarly, Mrs Abbot’s anxiety during her pregnancy with Kade, as a consequence of having had a stillborn baby previously, is depicted in the following interview excerpt:

60 Muti is a term used for traditional medicine in Southern Africa
We were very, we were very, I was very nervous, I was very very nervous, like Paul said, I spent a lot of time in hospital and it was for good reason, even if I was paranoid [indicates quotation marks with her fingers when she mentioned the word paranoid], I would go to the doctor and he understood the circumstances.  

Mrs Abbot had great reason to be ‘paranoid’, but her overwhelming anxiety throughout her pregnancy is also indicative of PTSD. She found it difficult to separate herself from Kade as revealed earlier when he initially went to play school. It might explain why Mr Abbot claimed that she was overprotective of Kade:

Father: No, Lesley\textsuperscript{61} is completely overprotective of him.
Mother: I think it’s a whole combination of things.
Father: like if I run late and she has to go out, she doesn’t like Kade being on his own with the domestic worker even for five minutes, someone must be at home to look after him. If we go riding on our bikes, helmets on and when he goes out he’s got to wear six jerseys [mother packs up laughing]. (QU:25:58:451-453)

This also suggested attachment issues between Mrs Abbot and Kade.

Mrs. Carr indicated that she was uncomfortable for her wellbeing to be publicly disclosed.

5.3.2 Discussion of experiences of maternal stress

In summary, the participants all first experienced stress at various stages in utero, commencing at conception as neither mother had planned to fall pregnant, for a variety of different reasons. Mrs Carr had not planned to bring a baby into her new relationship, whereas Mrs Lewis was not ready to commence having children as she had just started a new practice, and Mrs Abbot was still grieving over the loss of their baby daughter.

All three mothers conveyed the emotional stress they endured throughout their pregnancies. Mrs Lewis related how her pregnancy triggered awful memories, while Mrs Abbot conveyed how it was an emotionally trying pregnancy due to the death of their baby daughter, and Mrs Carr explained how heartbroken she was for the first month of her pregnancy. Also, two of three mothers, Mrs Lewis and Mrs Abbot, experienced preeclampsia in the third trimester of their pregnancies,

\textsuperscript{61} This is a pseudonym
which placed stress on their health as well as their babies. In addition, all three mothers, experienced stress related to work and study either throughout their pregnancies, and/or within the first two years of their children's births. Mrs Lewis had a busy practice and Mrs Carr was working and studying for her professional exam, while Mrs. Abbot had to contend with a sick baby as a consequence of sending him to crèche so early in his life. For Mrs Carr this stress also continued in Martin’s first year of life.

Stress for all three mothers continued to prevail following the births of their children. Both Mrs Abbot and Mrs Carr experienced financial stress, due to unplanned pregnancies, in the first year of their babies being born. For Mrs Lewis this stress came later, following the death of her husband when Craig was four years old. In addition, both Mrs Lewis and Mrs Abbot experienced further traumas, involving incidents relating to their sons. Mrs Abbot lost Kade in a shopping centre when he was two years old, then had to cope with Kade been bitten by dogs and her older son having a gun held to his head within the same week. Mrs Lewis, on the other hand, had to deal with the trauma of Craig having a gun held to his head at the age of three years, and the death of her husband. Besides these traumas, Mrs Lewis also suffered epileptic seizures following a car accident when Craig was three and a half years old, which persists to this day.

Both social constructionism, as well as Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model enabled me to include the experiences of the participants’ lives from the moment of conception because both theories look at interrelations of events over extended periods of time (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Gergen, 1973). The shared assumptions of both these theories, as outlined in Chapter 2.2 and 2.3, allowed this. The literature indicates that stress in a pregnant mother has a profound effect on the foetus’s wellbeing, as “the ‘social brain’ is shaped and an individual’s emotional style and resources are established during pregnancy and in the first two years of life” (Gerhardt, 2004, p. 18). This has significance when talking about being bullied, because, looked at within a social context, it involves more than just the personal characteristics of an individual: “The foetal period is a time of enormous neurological changes and thus experiences during this period can dramatically influence development” (Davis & Thompson, 2014, p. 6).
As discussed in Chapter 2, Bronfenbrenner refers to this as the ‘bi-directional influences’ which are apparently stronger in family systems than any other system (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Many studies have now shown that if a mother is stressed while pregnant her child is at increased risk for having a range of problems, including emotional ones (Blair, Glynn, Sandman, & Davis, 2011; Davis & Thompson, 2014; Glover, 2011a; Talge, Neal, & Glover, 2007). From a social constructionist perspective, stress may be regarded as the unspoken language occurring between mother and foetus in their interaction with one another, because “…the ways in which we describe and explain the world are the outcomes of relationship” (Gergen, 2009, p. 6). Whilst “Attachment theory provides a useful theoretical background for linking parental and peer relationships” (Koiv, 2012, p. 160), for Rigby (2013) the quality of relations between parents and children are risk factors in children who are bullied.

As discussed in Chapter 2, links between poor attachment and being bullied have become apparent. According to Koiv (2012), an insecure attachment style is a risk factor for being bullied. As previously noted, Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of human development, uses the term ‘proximal processes’ to convey the fused and dynamic relation of the individual and the context (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), which in this instance relates to how the mother’s womb may be regarded as one of the multilevel contexts that has an influence on the individual. According to Marianne Littlejohn, a South African midwife, Frank Lake first coined the term ‘maternal-foetal distress syndrome’ to convey the extent of foetal dependency on the mother’s state of wellbeing, and documented that this already commences in the first trimester of pregnancy (Littlejohn, 2004). Similarly, Blair et al. (2011) also found that higher maternal pregnancy-specific-anxiety between 13 and 17 weeks of gestation was associated with increased negative temperament when the babies were two years old.

Davis and Thompson (2014) refer to the foetal programming hypothesis to explain the outcome of a pregnant mother’s stress on her foetus. According to this hypothesis, raised maternal cortisol seems to affect the development of the foetal stress systems (e.g., the HPA axis) (Davis & Thompson, 2014), hence exposure to maternal stress is more fearful and more reactive to change than for infants or young children (Blair et al., 2011). According to Scaer (2005, p. 107), newborns of
depressed mothers, “…were more irritable, cried more, and were more difficult to console and keep quiet”, whilst (Stein et al., 2014) also emphasise how perinatal disorders such as depression impact upon the developing child, from foetal development to adolescence across all socio-economic levels. Of significance is Glover’s statement that:

It is clear that it is not just toxic or extreme prenatal stress that are important, as several studies have shown that problems such as daily hassles, pregnancy specific anxiety or relationship strain can have an adverse effect on the developing foetus. (Glover, 2011b, p. 2)

For example, high job strain (more than 32 hours per week) during the first trimester has been associated with underweight babies (Vrijkotte, Wal, Eijsden, & Bonsel, 2009), and Hakim, Senterman and Hakim (2013) point out short- and long-term consequences of pre-eclampsia on both the mother and child. According to Gerhardt (2004), studies have indicated that maternal stress affects the baby’s brain, as it decreases the volume of the hippocampus, a brain structure involved in memory, as well as the amygdala, which is the brain structure central to emotional reactions (Gerhardt, 2004). Moreover, poor amygdala-prefrontal connectivity is significantly correlated with both depression (Dannlowski, Ohmann, Konrad, Domschke, Bauer, Kugel, & Suslow, 2009) and anxiety (Kim, Loucks, Palmer, Brown, Solomon, Marchante, & Whalen, 2011). These examples succinctly illustrate Bronfenbrenner’s four interrelated elements of human development outlined in chapter 2.3, namely process-person-context-time: “…heritability is a direct function of the magnitude of proximal processes and the quality of environments in which they occur” (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 2005, p. 176).

An external negative environment, such as a stressed mother’s womb (context) impacts negatively on the individual over time, from the foetal stage to adolescence. Besides antenatal or prenatal stress, Lupien, McEwen, Gunnar and Heim (2009) also indicate the effects of stress throughout the lifespan on the brain, behaviour and cognition. These authors state that stress in the prenatal period affects the development of the hippocampus, the frontal cortex and the amygdala, whereas the hippocampus is the area of the brain most affected during childhood and the frontal cortex in adolescence (Lupien et al., 2009). This has profound implications for the socialisation of middle childhood children because,
according to Luby et al. (2012, p. 2858), “…the hippocampus is a brain region central to memory, emotion regulation, and stress modulation, all areas key to healthy social adaptation.” These authors found that early maternal support predicted larger hippocampal volumes. As outlined in Chapter 2.3.3.1 A, factors within the family context that increase the risk of being bullied, such as poor attachment, overprotective parenting and mothers working overtime, were also found in this study.

5.3. Experiences of trauma

While all the participants encountered traumatic experiences, some encountered many more than others. Some of these experiences were recalled by their mothers, while others were recalled by the participants.

Table 5.2: Superordinate and sub-themes of experiences of trauma

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<tr>
<th>Experiences of trauma</th>
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<td>Bullying as trauma</td>
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Some experiences occurred too early in life to recall on a conscious level. Figure 5.2 (below) provides an ATLAS.ti 7.5 network view of the findings of experiences of trauma.
Figure 5.2: ATLAS.ti 7.5 – Network view of superordinate themes, sub-themes, codes and quotation codes for experiences of trauma
5.3.3.1 In utero trauma

All three participants can be said to have experienced *in utero* trauma, although they had no recollection of this. It included the effect of maternal stress, the impact of personal trauma as well as the mother’s health on the developing foetuses. For Craig, in the words of his mother, Mrs Lewis: “…the actual traumatic history of the child it is profound and it does not get any better” (QU:6:327:13). She also reported:

*look in utero I was trying to run a new practice and it was VERY stressful and Craig will say things like to this day, When I was a baby I was very strong because I could withstand my mom’s stress threshold.* (QU:6:315:4)

These words signify the impact Mrs Lewis’s stress had on Craig as a foetus. As mentioned above, besides a stressful job, she also had to deal with her personal traumas. This emotional stress would also have distressed Craig. Moreover, in the next extract Mrs Lewis adds Craig’s premature birth as a consequence of her poor health: “…he was a bit prem- he came at [hand on head to remember] thirty six weeks, due to the preeclampsia” (QU:6:407:4). What is striking here is that Craig not only would have felt the effects of his mother’s poor health but also the aftermath of being born a full month early, as he was obviously developmentally immature.

Similar to Craig, Kade too was born prematurely at 36 weeks, also as a consequence of his mother suffering from pre-eclampsia:

*um and I think on the last check-up we went to and the doctor said how are you feeling today and we said, “I’m feeling strong and I’m happy and he said, “Well, you’re having your baby today whether you like it or not.” We weren’t even ready. We rushed through to the clinic and three hours later they pulled him out, because my amniotic fluids started disappearing, my kidneys were not healthy, so they wanted to get him out as quickly as possible.* (QU:25:28:22)

It is apparent that although Mrs Abbot was oblivious to the impact of her poor health on the foetus when she says that she was feeling strong, Kade would have unquestionably felt the effects of his mother’s poor health (pre-eclampsia) whilst *in utero*. Like Craig, his premature birth would have negatively affected him.

5.3.3.2 Bullying as trauma

While all the participants demonstrated the debilitating effects of being bullied there are peculiarities in how this was manifested. Bullying as trauma was portrayed in the
form of various miniature objects, words in the form of similes and metaphors, bullying experiences and symptoms of trauma by each of the participants.

It will become apparent how the miniature objects used by the participants in the sand tray (Figures 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10) turned out to be useful metaphors for depicting bullying as trauma. Craig likened a big bully to a Cerberus, a mythical three-headed dog with a serpent’s tail, a mane of snakes and lion’s claws, when he vocalised, “This cerberus is also a bully, a very big bully” (QU:8:99:3). He added that bullies were like poisonous frogs that can kill (QU:8:151:11).

Kade similarly likened his cousin who bullied to “…the mean guy who cut the head off the buffalo” (QU:43:4:69). These symbols are associated with death and hence signify trauma. In addition, Kade used a hippo with a wide open jaw and stated, “The bullies, but I am saying it is kind of like the dogs because it is like a big open jaw” (QU:43:1:15). Kade here likens his experiences of being bullied to his traumatic experience of being attacked by the dogs, by using the wide open jaw of a hippo (Figure 5.3) to illustrate how children who bully say such “hurtful things” (QU:43:1:19). This too signifies bullying as trauma.

Figure 5.3: Open jaw of a hippo
Martin reported that when he was being bullied he felt frightened, “...like that baby deer up against that tree” (QU:17:86:37) (Figure 5.4), and that he just wanted to, “...leave, go away, hide, get everything away from me” (QU:17:86:39). This metaphor is symbolic of withdrawal and avoidance, both symptoms of trauma.

Figure 5.4: Close up of deer

The following two interview extracts highlight the use of similes and metaphors as how traumatised Martin felt when he is being bullied:

Everything nice like nature and everything that is innocent is being attacked by everything wicked. Nature is being destroyed by carbon emissions, contractors taking it down and everything that is alive like the innocent things like that deer and the two cheetah cubs and the Buffalo and the butterfly and nature, they’re all being attacked by everything wicked. That is how I feel when I am bullied. (QU:17:107:3)

Well they are destroying the planet, just like people are destroying me like I feel really bad when I get bullied, just like I bet the earth feels bad when the carbon emissions go in because it’s probably living and I bet it hurts. (QU:17:109:33)

Martin uses the metaphor of nature (Figure 4.8) to depict his innocence when being bullied. He likens himself to our living planet which is being harmed steadily and continually by pollutants. He compares children who bully to carbon emissions and contractors (Figure 4.8) which destroy nature and the planet. His choice of words
used to describe how the bullying hurts him, such as ‘destroy’ and ‘attack’, encapsulates doom and gloom.

Craig also conveyed feelings of trauma surrounding bullying, making use of certain words, such as “terrorising” (QU:8:147:63) when speaking about a bullying incident he had witnessed. In addition, he stated that “I don’t want them to end up feeling like me” (QU:8:119:75), implying how uncomfortable being bullied had made him feel. Of interest is that he chose to talk about a bullying incident he witnessed, rather than talking about a personal experience. This finding, together with his reply to the question “How do you feel?” (QU:8:147:76), “Sometimes I feel mad, sometimes I feel cross, sometimes I feel scared, sometimes I feel frightened, but most of the time I am happy. That’s the good thing I still like about myself, is that I’m always happy” (QU:8:118:77), indicates dissociation, another symptom of trauma.

Bullying as trauma also emerged when Craig depicted fear in the bystander as well as himself when being bullied by a group of older children: “Then afterwards I was trying to go away, but they kept following me and my friend didn’t do a thing to help me” (QU:8:100:15). Indications of a freeze response associated with trauma is portrayed by the helplessness Craig personally felt as a consequence of witnessing his friend’s ‘helpless’ response to the above bullying situation. His friend was probably was too frightened to help Craig, and possibly ‘froze’ as he could not fight back or run away from a group of older boys to assist his friend. Furthermore, the use of Craig’s words suggest that even though he was moving it was possible that a part of his body, such as his lungs, might also have ‘frozen’, for example, holding his breath, when he realised that his friend was not going to assist him. Certain types of bullying experienced by Craig do not need to be analysed by a psychologist to be defined as traumatic, as appeared in Craig’s diary (QU44:3) (Figure 5.5 below).
Figure 5.5: Excerpt from Craig’s diary

Besides being physically abused, a lack of being able to breathe signifies impending death. Mrs Lewis describes this boy who strangled her son as the “…tin guard in this reign of terror…” (QU:6:402:60) because he also bullied other boys. This metaphor depicts that the person bullying had no feelings, was cold, hard and inhumane. Moreover, it implies that the person bullying used these qualities to have control over terror and in order to induce fear. Such fear or terror also became evident in one of Craig’s significant life experiences (QU:10:5) regarding a bullying incident in Grade 3 (9 years old) by older boys in the high school (13-14 year olds), as portrayed in the figure below.
Besides involving a large age difference, these boys were in a group of three (power of abuse) when they approached Craig. The drawing of the above bullying incident was given the caption, “Being squirt in the face and put on YouTube” (QU:10:5). When I interviewed Craig about his life experiences, he almost ‘forgot’ to talk about this particular experience, until I pointed out that he had not done so, when he uttered, “Ooh I completely forgot about that!” (QU:7:131:120). This possibly signifies avoidance of talking about the incident, which is a symptom of trauma. The following interview excerpt indicates how Craig felt following this bullying incident:

I felt embarrassed, sad, like this would affect so much, this would make my life go, it would make that moment of my life just go, down the toilet [shows flushing movement with his hands] down, flushed, poof [smacks lips together]. Bye bye! (QU:7:134:132)

The metaphor of being flushed down the toilet, disappearing forever, besides indicating his humiliation, also suggests feelings of depression and that he would rather be dead than alive if this video got onto the social media. His mother, Mrs Lewis revealed that he was “terrified” because:

his biggest panic at that stage was that they were going to put this on Facebook. That is what he reacted to instead of if they had just sprayed water on him that
could have been one thing but the fact that they filmed it and told him they were
going to put it on Facebook, that is what's took it to another level for him and
took it to another level for us as well. I must be very honest with you. (QU:6:400:54)
The words, “taking it to another level” informs two perceptions, the first of which
conveys that the bullying incident escalated from being squirted in the face with
water to being filmed and put on social media. The second perception suggests that
this bullying incident was traumatic not only for Craig but also for his parents.

Martin also illustrated actual bullying incidents as traumatic (QU:18:5). When I first
interviewed him I asked if there was a part of the book he put together (P18) that he
found difficult or that he did not enjoy. He replied that the last part, entitled ‘Events’
was uncomfortable: “...Thinking of those things and putting them down and feeling
like that” (QU:16:1:13). The events included a few bullying incidents such as are
revealed in the following interview excerpts, illustrated in the figures below: “I was
called a really bad thing, a gay Satanist, as I also said earlier also, the Halloween
party where I had to watch Jack bully the other guy” (QU:16:119:209). That Martin
claimed that he did not like thinking about those things because it made him feel
uncomfortable implies that these pictures triggered traumatic memories.

![Figure 5.7: Gay Satanist](image1)

![Figure 5.8: Halloween party](image2)

During the interviews with Martin’s parents and his grandmother a bullying incident
involving Martin attempting to strangle another boy, when he was in Grade 4 was
raised. Mrs Carr said that she only heard about this incident months after it
happened and that Martin “…didn’t tell me about the incident whatsoever. He would not tell me about it” (QU:13:303:399). Martin’s grandmother said:

…he didn’t tell me, but when I heard Wendy said that he had actually retaliated and hurt a boy because he got angry, so I believe he grabbed the boy from the neck or something, I don't know who it was and I was sort of taken aback. Martin doing that, it doesn’t seem right, they must have really and truly cornered him or been really nasty to him, for him to actually um. (QU:14:67:31)

From the above, it can be seen how Martin’s grandmother found it difficult to believe that Martin was capable of such behaviour. She could not use the word ‘strangled’, instead using “retaliated and hurt” and “um”. Martin presents as a polite and sensitive person, but on 3 November 2014, a bullying incident took place on the playground involving Jack (Figure 5.9), one of Martin’s “enemies” (QU:16:111:155), I was informed about this Grade 4 strangling incident by three boys, with Ian’s version of the strangling incident:

He is known for getting into a rage. At my old house we had taken something from Martin. I had it. He got angry. He grabbed me by my throat. Rogan tackled him and he fell and hit his head on the ground and to this day has no recollection of it. (Memos: Diary: 3 November 2014)

![Figure 5.9: Jack – an enemy](image)

From the above, it can be seen how Martin’s grandmother found it difficult to believe that Martin was capable of such behaviour. She could not use the word ‘strangled’, instead using “retaliated and hurt” and “um”. Martin presents as a polite and sensitive person, but on 3 November 2014, a bullying incident took place on the playground involving Jack (Figure 5.9), one of Martin’s “enemies” (QU:16:111:155), I was informed about this Grade 4 strangling incident by three boys, with Ian’s version of the strangling incident:

He is known for getting into a rage. At my old house we had taken something from Martin. I had it. He got angry. He grabbed me by my throat. Rogan tackled him and he fell and hit his head on the ground and to this day has no recollection of it. (Memos: Diary: 3 November 2014)

It is evident from the above that Martin was renowned among his peers for having rages. This was confirmed by Jack whilst talking to him about a bullying incident involving Martin: “He has fits of rage when he loses it… He goes flipping mad - he
tries to jump on me” (Memos: Diary: 22 October 2014). These rages evidently occurred instantaneously when something upset him. His peers probably viewed their behaviour as ‘harmless’, but then get a sense of satisfaction from Martin’s reaction, the rage. His grandmother found it difficult to believe that Martin was capable of strangling someone, but all three boys, despite their stories varying in how they initially upset him, conveyed that Martin had had a “meltdown” (Memos: Diary: 3 November 2014) then had strangled Ian. The rage was apparently beyond being controllable, related to the survival brain (amygdala) rather than the neocortex, and therefore symptomatic of trauma.

Kade also displayed a symptom of trauma whilst conveying a bullying incident by his older brother when he was six or seven years old. This became evident when his legs started shaking uncontrollably during the first interview (QU:42:16:381-394). Initially, I thought it was because of the way he was sitting, but his legs began to shake again whilst talking about his older brother. This is known as a ‘somatic’ symptom of trauma, to be discussed later in the chapter.

5.3.3.3 Traumatic events

All three participants had experienced traumatic events in their lives, to a greater or lesser extent. Some of these consisted of personal experience of threatened death, or witnessing significant others being threatened with serious injury or death. While one of the participants had also been confronted with an event that involved the actual death of a loved one some of the participants did not personally recall these events as they were either too young or perhaps too frightened to do so. However, such traumatic events were conveyed to me by their parents. Craig experienced a life-threatening event at the age of three years 10 months. Mrs Lewis reports:

he goes to the school in Greendale62 and this dear old granny drives her car in to the school, like she does every day to fetch her grandchild, and these hijackers are running behind her, they ride down and run to where the children are, they grab my precious son Craig, put a gun to his head and explained to her very nicely, that they're going to shoot him in the head if she didn't hand over the car keys and she mustn't forget the cell phone. (QU:6:326:13)

62 This is a pseudonym
At the age of three, to have the sense of being grabbed by a dangerous man then to feel a gun on the head whilst simultaneously hearing words of impending death would be traumatic.

During the interview, Kade chose to talk about his traumatic experience of being attacked by the dogs. Kade had prepared a collage (Figure 4.5) of his significant life experiences which was used as a tool to interview him. Interestingly, the picture of a dog was also placed last on the sheet of paper. He stated that “…it was a scary experience” (QU:42:13:286), and explained that they had gone to his uncle’s house for a braai\(^{63}\), to watch the rugby. He had a friend, Evan, with him and they had climbed onto a wall then jumped into the back garden where the dogs had been kept. As soon as they saw the dogs they started to run back to the wall knowing that they were chasing them:

> I was quicker than Evan but I stayed behind him so I could push him up because I didn’t want him to get attacked because then it would have been my fault, we wouldn’t have been friends anymore, but I did that because I didn’t want him to get hurt in my safety, well in my area, and then I was actually half way up the wall with my left leg up like that (QU:42:13:286-290) and I was just about to put this leg up like that and the dogs\(^{64}\) jumped and grabbed me and they bit me on these three parts here and they tried to pull me down and they ripped me like that. That’s why these are so big (pointing to the scars on his leg). And um I found a pole because I knew I couldn’t get back up there, otherwise they would just keep on doing it, so I found a pole and just hanged onto it, and the dogs were just biting and biting and biting and there was blood everywhere and my friend Evan was actually shocked, he couldn’t move and I was screaming, “Evan, call my mom, call my mom!!!” And eventually he got out of his shock and ran to my mom. (QU:42:13:290)

A number of frightening events unfold in the two passages above. Kade was not attacked by one dog but by two. Moreover, these dogs were robust and powerful. He felt helpless as he knew he could not get over the wall and the dogs continued to pull him down. Even when he was clinging to a pole he witnessed the helplessness of his friend due to shock. His friend’s immobility highlighted the trauma of this situation. All Kade could do was scream, as his mother, Mrs Abbot recalls:

> I think the most emotional and worrying part of that journey, from the house to the hospital, was that, Kade kept saying, “I can’t feel my legs, I can’t feel my legs, I am going to die today.” He said, “I’m going to die today,” and we said, “No, you’re not going to die today.” (QU:25:52:375)

\(^{63}\)Braai is a South African word for a barbeque

\(^{64}\)Left out the breed of dog for confidentiality purposes
This, besides highlighting how traumatic it was for Kade, also illustrates how traumatic it was for Kade’s parents.

Both Craig’s and Kade’s traumatic experiences include the *personal* experience of being threatened with death. Martin probably also experienced this on an unconscious level when his mother conveys that at birth “…he didn’t breathe for quite a while. It must have been for a minute or two… But ja, it was quite stressful.” (QU:13:245:15)

The witnessing of significant others being threatened with serious injury or death was also experienced by two of the three participants, Craig and Martin. Craig experienced his mother having epileptic fits when he was just three years old:

> so I would have a lot of seizures and the one time I woke up, Craig was standing over me and said, "Mommy am I still going to have a mommy or are you going to die now and have no mommy?"… Then he tells me, my mommy dies and then she wakes up again, so it was very hectic for him. (QU:6:379:11)

A three-year old’s cognitive skills lack rational thinking. This is why he sees his mommy dead and then alive again because from a 3 year old’s perspective even inanimate objects such as clouds are seen as being alive if they are moving. Martin on the other hand was a lot older, 10 or 11 years old, when he experienced saving his granny’s life (QU:13:318:324). According to his mother:

> even though my mom has said you know you saved my life that day and all that, he doesn’t seem like, "Wow, I have saved my gran’s life!" He doesn’t really say that, he doesn’t say anything. (QU:13:318:324)

That Martin did not like to talk about saving his grandmother’s life (QU:13:318:324) suggests that it must have been a frightening experience for him.

In August 2008, when Mrs Lewis was eight months pregnant with Craig’s brother, and Craig was 4 and a half years old, his father was killed in a motorbike accident whilst away on a family holiday weekend. Mrs Lewis explains how Craig was with her when this news was revealed to them:

> And Craig still remembers, I just gave this blood curdling scream. Apparently… it was like a bombshell…Craig now has just found out that his dad is dead, he’s now screaming and crying and he doesn’t even know how to process this, he doesn’t even know what death is, just understands that something very bad has just happened, and that his daddy is dead for ever. (QU:6:93:75)
At such a young age, Craig was probably reacting to his mother’s blood curdling screams rather than the news of the death of his father, as he would have been too young to comprehend the concept of death, but it may also have epitomised the tragic moment of a young boy learning of his father’s death. Following this, Craig, according to his cultural tradition, had to attend his father’s funeral. Mrs Lewis reported:

You must understand there were more than eight hundred people at his funeral...Craig has gone through that as well. Because in the Y trades you have to go to the funeral. So here was this small boy, four and a half years old who had to be at his dad's funeral and he had to watch his dad be put in the ground. (QU:6:294:75)

At the age of 4 and a half years it is overwhelming to be surrounded by so many people at a time when one’s own mother would not be able to give him her undivided attention then to witness the lowering of his father’s body into the ground. His logical thinking had not yet been developed and at this stage he would not have been able to understand the concept of burial.

5.3.3.4. Symptoms of trauma

A variety of symptoms of trauma among all three participants were evident both at the time of their traumatic experiences as well as in their present everyday lives. The interview excerpt below reflects symptoms of trauma that were evident after Craig had had a gun held to his head.

So then we have to keep Craig at home and find another nursery school for him to go to. Because he’s now terrified of the police, because the police came and it was sirens, guys running all over the place, screaming and gun shots and the whole nine yards. I picked my child up, as you can imagine an absolute hot mess. I am still falling down and having seizures. So we had this going on and he is now convinced that he is going to be shot and killed at school, so we had to get him over that entire hurdle. So he had to go to a new school. We went shopping for that on a security perspective. And while my nursery school now looks like Fort Knox, you can’t drive any school vehicles onto the property. You have to have an interactive gate with panic alarms and things like that. So we walked through that, whole nightmare. (QU:6:328:13)

A number of symptoms of trauma, which Craig’s mother describes as a “hot mess” and a “nightmare”, are highlighted in the above interview excerpt. Firstly, evidence emerged of avoidance of the school at which the incident occurred for fear of being

65 Left out the name of the culture for identification purposes
killed. This then necessitated the finding of a new school with additional security. This latter symptom is related to the parent’s trauma as a consequence of her son’s trauma, which also manifests in the way she had designed her own school, as she would not allow any cars onto the school property. The fear of police which he developed indicates how the police triggered the traumatic experience. Other possible triggers for trauma as suggested in the above passage also include sirens and people running around.

Symptoms of avoidance also became apparent in Martin and Kade’s behaviour. Frequent evidence of this manifested in reports of Martin’s behaviour in the form of abstaining from conversations about unpleasant events. His mother, for example, highlighted how he “…doesn’t like to talk about it…” (QU:13:318:316) when referring to his grandmother’s poor health. Martin’s father also claimed that, “…we are not getting the feedback from our kid because he thinks that he shouldn’t talk about it” (13:310:182) when bringing up bullying incidents at the school. On the other hand, Mrs Carr’s view concerning Martin’s skirting of bullying issues was because he said, “I am used to it by now, I don’t have to talk about it all the time” (QU:13:321:224). Kade also displayed the symptom of avoidance when during the interview he avoided talking about the nightmares he had following the dog biting incident and instead spoke about the sleeping arrangements on the night of the dog attack (QU:42:13:298). Martin and Kade avoided talking about their unpleasant memories because these triggered uncomfortable feelings associated with the unpleasant event, just as Craig avoided actual events or places, such as police, sirens, and the actual school associated with his trauma of having a gun held to his head.

All three participants also demonstrated symptoms of dissociation which on the surface appeared to be a form of denial. This became evident in displays of being disconnected from their memories, feelings or thoughts, as apparent in the following interview excerpts. When Craig was asked to reflect on being bullied by his surrogate brothers and sisters he stated, “Never, never in my entire life, never ever” (QU:8:125:119), even though his mother had indicated otherwise (6:244:29). Similarly, Kade, despite agreeing to be part of this research and being bullied from several different sources, stated, “I hope I won’t get bullied” (QU:42:1:61). Both these comments serve to protect the self from being further hurt by disconnecting from...
reality. Craig sees his surrogate family as family members who would not harm him, whereas Kade talks as though he had not been bullied.

The next interview excerpt highlights an example of how Craig disconnected from a memory:

_I don't think, that is how it started, because I remember, us talking when they, I can't remember what they said, they yelled at me, something, I don't know what it was and afterwards I turned around and they called me, “You are such a yellow little quitter”, and then JP laughed, they mimicked him and then he started feeling more or less the same way as I did, then he started getting angry with them. I think that is how it started. I can't remember._ (QU:8:139:233)

Martin too displayed disconnection from his memories: “I don’t remember any words. There are too many words to remember” (16:108:123), while Kade reflected, “There was one time I think, I’m not sure if it is right. I was really sad, I don’t know why, I can't remember…” (QU:42:8:184). Both Craig and Kade tried to recall what happened, but were unsure of themselves, whereas Martin recalled nothing that was said to him. This type of conversation epitomises others surrounding bullying with all three of the participants.

Evidence, including being disconnected from feelings, emerged in the following statements. Craig stated, “Sometimes I feel mad, sometimes I feel cross, sometimes I feel scared, sometimes I feel frightened, but most of the time I am happy. That's the good thing I still like about myself, is that I’m always happy” (QU:8:118:77). Martin similarly revealed, “I have forgotten the feeling because I don’t know. I think I actually don't remember the feeling at all” (QU:16:114:165). Craig recalls certain feelings, but chooses to believe that he is happy, whereas Martin has disconnected from the feeling he once experienced.

The following interview excerpt underscores how Craig’s thoughts are disconnected from reality:

_And that after that once you have reported them everybody knows about that. The bully will stop bullying. His bullying starts going from every day, to every second day, to every third day, to every fourth day, to every fifth day, then to every two weeks, every month, every five months and then never._ (QU:7:141)

The above statement draws attention to Craig’s irrational thinking.
Kade was the only one who displayed somatic symptoms during the interviews. In the following transcript excerpt, somatic symptoms of trauma arose whilst Kade was videoing his sand tray and talking about his brother bullying him:

**Kade:** Um, can you just quickly put this up? (wants me to hold the camera) Because my head is getting sore, I don't know why.

**Researcher:** Your head is getting sore?

**Kade:** Ja, can I put this up?

**Researcher:** Ja, I'll take the camera, come and sit on the couch [he starts to collapse]

**Kade:** Aghh, I still have a headache, I don't feel so well, my stomach is sore, it feels like I am going to vomit.

**Researcher:** Do you want to go to the toilet?

**Kade:** Ja. [Leaves the room in order for him to go and vomit in the bathroom]. (QU:43:6:169-175)

In the above extract Kade demonstrates headaches and a stomach ache before actually vomiting whilst talking about his brother bullying him. This indicates how emotional stress can lead to physical pain in the body.

Two of the three participants also presented with depression. Martin’s depression manifested in a variety of ways as will become evident from the following interview excerpts: His mother relayed “…he was cross with himself about something, like he couldn't find something in the morning, he just sat in the car and said, ‘you know my life hates me mom’” (QU:27:25:100). Negativity about his life is apparent here. His grandmother then revealed that “…most days he’s not chirpy when he gets into the car. Most days” (QU:14:63:17). That the grandmother repeats most days indicates that Martin was generally sad, and the depression seemed to affect his scholastic performance, as stated by his mother: “When he is having a bad patch, the schoolwork is bad” (QU:13:315:259). Bad moments in his life clearly had a direct bearing on school performance. Mrs Carr mentioned that he also coped less well at home:

*He would definitely cope less at home. Like, he’s got five jobs to do and he would feel like he was under a humongous pressure to do those five jobs even though he knows he's got to do those five jobs every day. Then you would like nag, “Marty you need to go and do those jobs, Martin you need to go and do the jobs, for goodness sake go and do the jobs!” And then he would be like cowering and upset and more tearful than usual. So those sort of things. He would cope less with everyday things he should have been doing anyway but then he would avoid doing them, then he would get into trouble, then he would, he would be more upset than he should be,*
you know, that’s sort of how we started realising that maybe something is going on at school and if you actually asked him about it, like “is something going on at school?” And he’d, “Ja, I guess so” and as you ask more questions he’d open up, then he’d be fine again, you know. (QU:27:9:42)

From the above it is clear how Martin’s parents realized that something was wrong when he did not have the energy to perform his regular chores and became emotional about them. Martin, also illustrated his depression in the sand tray (Figure 4.8), as becomes apparent in the following interview extract:

**Researcher:** And in this world, this house, who does this belong to?

**Martin:** I guess that house, I don't know why I put it there, but I think it might belong to, it might be my happy place, which is really hard to get to past everything that wants to hurt me. (QU:17:118:104-105)

Martin clearly conveys here that he finds it hard to be happy. A look at his sand tray (Figure 4.8) and (P20) shows that his world is full of creatures that hurt.

Signs of depression in Craig became apparent in the following excerpts: “*When I am sad, I feel down, I am not full of energy*” (QU:8:143:249). His friend also conveyed that “…*when he’s like happy and things he would draw like these cool robot things and when he’s like sad and things like that he would draw little things, like it's basically showing his emotions*…” (Memos: Conversation: 4 June 2014). A lack of energy and small drawings are associated with depression.

Indications of flashbacks also became apparent in Kade, when his mother mentioned, “*That’s the first time he said he is thinking about, he didn’t say that I am thinking about what happened with the dogs, he just said, I’m thinking about the dogs*” (QU:25:40:146). Kade said this the night before the interview for this research. In this extract it is evident that at one stage Kade was having flashbacks: “*I am thinking about what happened with the dogs.*” It is apparent in this extract that Kade was probably thinking about the dogs because he had prepared a collage for the interview and this had triggered the memories of this horrific experience.

5.3.3.5. Multiple traumas

From Table 5.3 (below), it becomes apparent that each of the participants have had multiple traumas.
Table 5.3: Experiences of multiple traumas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Craig</th>
<th>Kade</th>
<th>Martin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In utero</strong> – preeclampsia; Mother’s personal stress.</td>
<td><strong>In utero</strong> – preeclampsia; Mother’s personal trauma of having lost a baby at full-term prior to the birth of Kade</td>
<td><strong>In utero</strong> – mother’s stress of finding out that she is pregnant within a month of dating; the sudden disappearance of Martin’s father for a month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 weeks - Premature birth</td>
<td>36 weeks - Premature birth</td>
<td>7 years: Witness sister falling down staircase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years: Witnessing mother’s epileptic fits</td>
<td>7 years: First school bullying incident</td>
<td>7 years: First of many school bullying incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 3 y 10 m: Gun to head</td>
<td>9 years: Electric shock</td>
<td>10 years: Fire in the bathroom (saw aftermath)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years: Surrogate brothers and sisters arrive</td>
<td>10 years: Snowboarding accident</td>
<td>10 years: Saving gran’s life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years 4 months: Death of father</td>
<td>10 years: Dog attack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years: First of many school bullying incidents</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was Mrs Lewis who repeatedly pointed out the many traumas experienced by her son Craig, when she passed comments such as, “So my son has a lot of trauma... the actual traumatic history of the child it is profound and it does not get any better” (QU:6:327:13). However, the following interview excerpt succinctly summarises the many traumas Craig experienced within a period of a year:

So he goes through a series of traumatic events in twelve months that most adults would not get better from (giggles), most adults would still have very serious side effects as a result of all of that trauma, it was just dished up in large large, large, large loads. This wasn't small stuff, it was like huge huge stuff. (QU:6:329:13)

The above excerpt vividly reflects the impact this must have had on Craig’s wellbeing. The words “huge stuff”, which were also emphasised, brings attention to the effect this had in Craig’s life. In addition, it also makes one wonder what impact these multiple traumas may have had when combined with being bullied continuously.
5.3.4 Discussion of experiences of trauma

To summarise, all the participants in this study have experienced multiple traumas from *in utero* through to middle childhood, which have been listed in Table 5.3. *In utero* trauma commenced as a consequence of the participant's mother's stress, which included work stress, personal traumas, as well as poor health, also discussed in detail in 5.3.1 and 5.3.2. In addition, as an outcome of pre-eclampsia, two of the three participants were also born prematurely.

It is important that the concept ‘trauma’ first be clarified before elaborating upon the findings with the literature: “Trauma is perhaps the most avoided, ignored, belittled, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering” (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 3; Levine, 2008, p. 7), because, “It has commonly been believed that traumatic symptoms are the result of and equivalent to the type and enormity of an external event” (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 4) or “…the horrific extremes of human experience” (Scaer, 2005, p. 2). Scaer (2005, p. 2) defines trauma as “…a continuum of variably negative life events occurring over the lifespan, including events that may be accepted as ‘normal’ in the context of daily experience because they are endorsed and perpetuated by our own cultural institutions.” Perhaps bullying may also be regarded as one such event. Scaer (2005, p. 2) also emphasises that trauma is dependent on the meaning an individual attributes to it “…based on the cumulative burden of a myriad of prior negative life events, especially those experienced in the vulnerable period of early childhood.” Referring to Table 5.3 it is evident that all three participants have experienced not only trauma since conception but also multiple traumas in their lives, albeit to differing degrees. Levine and Kline (2006, p. 4) explain that “trauma is not in the event itself; rather trauma resides in the nervous system,” the antithesis of empowerment, because it involves an experience (a real or perceived threat, conscious or unconscious), which overwhelms an individual, leaving him or her helpless and hopeless. Scaer (2005, p. 58) describes trauma as an “imprisonment of the mind” because the brain has lost the ability to distinguish the past from the present, and it is frozen in the past. This implies that an individual’s perception of the world is thwarted through “…a murky lens of danger…” and “…life choices are often influenced by old, unremembered and supposedly trivial life trauma” (Scaer, 2005, p. 62). It is the incapacity to deal with
the experience or threat that becomes the critical factor, rather than the actual event, because “…trauma is trauma, no matter what caused it” (Levine, 2008, p. 11). According to Levine and Kline:

Vulnerability to trauma differs from person to person depending on a variety of factors, especially age and trauma history. The younger the child, the more likely she is to be overwhelmed by common occurrences that might not affect an older child or adult. (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 4)

This latter quote may provide the missing link to why some children continue to be bullied, while others escape being bullied or are overcome being bullied (Smith et al., 2004). The first environment shaping the human brain is the womb and the first 33 months of life, from conception until two years of age are the most vulnerable (Levine & Kline, 2006). Levine and Kline (2006, p. 8) point out that “…prenatal infants, new-borns, and very young children are the most at risk to stress and trauma due to their underdeveloped nervous, motor and perceptual systems.” These authors further claim that:

What happens from the foetal period until two years of age creates the blueprint that influences every system in the body from immunity to the expression and regulation of emotion to nervous system resilience, communication, intelligence and self-regulatory mechanisms for such basics as body temperature and hormone production. (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 34)

It does not take much to traumatise a baby (Rogers, 2012) because at such an early stage of development a foetus or infant cannot respond by fleeing from or fighting the real or perceived threat, and instead unconsciously freezes then collapses (Levine & Kline, 2006). It is this which results in traumatic symptoms as a consequence of “…the undischarged survival energy that was originally mobilised to flight or flee” (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 7). This undischarged energy does not go away but instead remains trapped as fear “…in such a way that feelings of terror and helplessness become a “normal” state of being” (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 34). van Der Kolk (2014) explains that this is why, long after the event, the brain may continuously send signals to the body to escape. In the face of danger, either a perceived or a real threat, this feeling of fear in a traumatised person cannot be reasoned away as it bypasses the frontal cortex⁶⁶ (Levine & Kline, 2006). This seems to explain why the participants in this study continued to be bullied. Each had a traumatic history which commenced in utero, rendering them susceptible to

⁶⁶ The frontal cortex is responsible for thinking and reasoning.
becoming overwhelmed by experiences that might not affect another child. Karr-Morse, in an interview with Rogers, highlights a correlation between soldiers who have returned from war with PTSD\textsuperscript{67} and early childhood trauma versus those who come back without PTSD (Rogers, 2012), whilst Scaer argues:

\textit{…the cumulative experiences of life’s “little traumas” actually shape virtually every aspect of our existence – our personality, choice of mates, profession, clothes, appetite, pet peeves, social behaviours, posture, and, most specifically, our state of physical and mental health and disease.} (Scaer, 2005, pp. 2-3)

According to Levine and Kline (2006), trauma is at the root of health, psychological and societal distress. Attempts to rewrite the definition of PTSD are underway, but the pervasive influence of life trauma may be overlooked (Scaer, 2005). For example, the diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) does not consider the developmental effects of complex trauma exposure (Cook et al., 2005). The term “Complex Trauma”:

\textit{…describes the experiences of multiple, chronic and prolonged, developmentally adverse traumatic events, most often of an interpersonal nature (e.g., sexual or physical abuse, war, community violence) and early life onset. These exposures often occur within the child’s caregiving system and include physical, emotional and educational neglect and child maltreatment beginning in early childhood.} (van Der Kolk, 2005, p. 402)

The above definition of complex trauma however claims that this begins in early childhood and does not refer to \textit{in utero} trauma. Furthermore, it claims that the traumatic events are mostly of an interpersonal nature involving the maltreatment of the child on an emotional, physical, and educational level. None of the participants in this study were subjected to maltreatment in early childhood. Scaer (2005) also draws attention to the foetus and intrauterine trauma, pointing out that the foetal brain is capable of responding to messages of threat. Moreover, he states that there is evidence to show that a mother’s stress levels have a direct bearing on the health and brain development of a foetus.

Each of the participant’s mothers was stressed whilst the participants were \textit{in utero}, as explained above. Scaer (2005) demonstrated how societal trauma also has a direct effect on foetal distress, due to a mother’s raised cortisol levels, and how this then has an effect on societal health due to the later development of many diseases. South Africans live in a comparatively violent and traumatic society, by which few

\textsuperscript{67} PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
citizens have remained unaffected (Hamber & Lewis, 1997). This is typical of what Bronfenbrenner (2005) termed the bidirectional influences between the person and his/her contexts. Levine and Kline (2006, p. 278) point out that “The mother’s mental, physical and spiritual health during gestation plays a crucial role in laying the foundation for a healthy baby” and therefore it is erroneous to assume that a foetus is protected from harm until birth. Essex, Klein, Cho and Kalin (2002) show that exposure to stress in the neonatal environment sensitises children to subsequent stress exposure. From this perspective the mother has an effect on the development of the foetus.

Bronfenbrenner, as pointed out in 2.4.1.6, overlooked the mother’s womb as a context for her fused and dynamic relation with the foetus. He confirms this in Proposition 1, as highlighted in 2.4.1.1, when he states that a critical element of the bioecological model is experience which commences in infancy, negating the gestational period of development. Social constructionism, on the other hand, recognises that wellbeing is achieved through relationships which include not merely interaction with people but also the environment (Gergen, 2009). According to Hakim et al. (2013), preeclampsia affects not only the mother but also the unborn child. According to these authors, literature indicates that such babies have higher blood pressure, are prone to strokes, are vulnerable to depression and demonstrate a reduction in cognitive ability. In addition, “Preterm birth may represent a traumatic situation for both parents and a stressful situation for the infant” (Borghini, Habersaat, Forcada-Guex, Nessi, Pierrehumbert, Ansermet, & Müller-Nix, 2014, p. 624). It has been found, for example, that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) when delivering pre-term infants can negatively impact on the relationship between mother and child (Forcada-Guex, Borghini, Pierrehumbert, Ansermet, & Muller-Nix, 2011).

In addition to in utero and pre-birth trauma, trauma relating to being bullied also emerged from the data. The participants conveyed bullying as trauma in a variety of ways, whether through symbols, words, symptoms or actual experiences. Firstly, the objects the participants chose to use in their sand trays (Figures 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10) to depict children who had bullied them, included symbols such as the cerberus, poisonous frogs, a tin guard, the ‘mean guy’ who cut off the buffalo’s head and sharks. In contrast, the participants portrayed themselves with objects such as a
frightened deer hiding behind a tree (Figure 5.4) and a dolphin being chased by a shark (Figure 5.13). The wide open jaw of a hippopotamus (Figure 5.3), besides being used to portray how children who bully say hurtful things, was simultaneously likened to the trauma of being attacked and bitten by dogs, thereby relating these events as being equally traumatic. Secondly, the participants also made use of words, similes or metaphors to depict bullying as trauma. One of the participants, for example, compared his experiences of being bullied to the planet Earth, which is being harmed steadily and continuously by pollutants. Moreover, words such as ‘terrorise’ were used as substitutes for bullying. Thirdly, some of the participants’ actual experiences of being bullied, such as being strangled, do not have to be debated as being traumatic or not. Similarly to social constructionists regarding language as a social sign that occurs between people in multiple forms (Burr, 2003), Jung viewed symbols as the natural language of the unconscious (Eisenbach, Snir, & Regev, 2015). For Baron (2009), metaphors or symbols provide safe and natural links to convey unconscious feelings which are difficult to put into words.

It became apparent that whilst reading the literature pertaining to bullying, little investigated it as a trauma, despite many implications. A study of the literature found more research relating workplace bullying to PTSD (Laschinger & Nosko, 2015; Malinauskiene & Einarsen, 2014) than school bullying to PTSD (Nielsen, Tangen, Idsoe, Matthiesen, & Magerøy, 2015). However, Penning et al. (2010) produced evidence to show there was a statistically significant relationship between bullying and trauma and that this was strongest for the child being bullied. Carney (2008) found that the frequency of exposure to bullying events was the greatest factor in predicting trauma level after Grade 6 learners read a hypothetical bullying scenario then completed the School Bullying Survey (SBS) and Impact of Event Scale (IES).

A meta-analysis of the bullying-health literature found bullying is a significant international public health issue and that children who are bullied are at significantly greater risk of having a variety of psychosomatic problems (Gini & Pozzoli, 2009), which Levine and Kline (2006) recognise as the body’s response to trauma. Similarly, paediatricians, wrote an article to make other paediatricians aware of the somatic complaints related to bullying (Undheim & Sund, 2011). Moreover, a study found that children (eight and 10 years of age) who were chronically bullied at school were at risk for developing Borderline Personality Disorder (Wolke, Schreier,
Zanarini, & Winsper, 2012), which has been related to trauma brought about by relational issues (Blizard, 2008; Howell, 2008; Sauer, Arens, Stopsack, Spitzer, & Barnow, 2014). Many other authors have implied that bullying is traumatic, for example, Rigby (2002) draws attention to Einarson's (1999) perspective on the stressful effects of severe victimisation which relies on Bulman’s (1992) ideas of trauma, while Maree (2005) indicates PTSD as one of O’Moore's and Kirkham’s (2000) side effects of bullying. Besides these specific references to trauma, some of the core criteria used to define bullying, “the power of abuse” (Smith, 2000), the “systematic abuse of power” (Rigby, 2002) and “peer abuse” (Olweus, 1997) epitomise it as traumatic.

Besides experiencing bullying as traumatic it became evident that each of the participants had experienced several other traumatic events. These included personal experience of threatened death, witnessing significant others being threatened with serious injury or death, as well as an actual death of a loved one. Scaer (2005) explains that individuals exposed to sequential, multiple traumas become progressively sensitive to minor stressors and were often labelled as hypochondriacs. Poly-victimisation is a concept utilised by several authors (Finkelhor et al., 2007a; Finkelhor, Ormrod & Turner, 2009a; Finkelhor, Ormrod & Turner, 2009b; Finkelhor, Shattuck, Turner, Ormrod & Hamby, 2011) to indicate children who have been exposed to multiple and different kinds of ‘victimisation.’ More recently, it has been acknowledged that “…bullying is a stressful life event influenced by multiple stressors” (Swearer & Hymel, 2015, p. 349). These authors propose that a socio-ecological diathesis-stress model be used to address bullying and those being bullied as:

… effective bullying prevention and intervention efforts must take into account the complexities of the human experience addressing both individual characteristics and history of involvement in bullying, risk and protective factors, and the contexts in which bullying occurs, in order to promote healthier social relationships. (Swearer & Hymel, 2015, p. 344)

Given the above, it is not surprising that each of the participants presented with symptoms of trauma, including avoidance of places, or talking about the event; new fears, such as developing a fear of the police triggered by traumatic memories; dissociation, which on the surface appears as a form of denial but is a disconnection from memory, feelings, thoughts and reality; somatic symptoms, such as stomach
ache, headaches and vomiting; feelings of helplessness, withdrawal and rage; and depression and flashbacks. Trauma expresses itself through a variety of universal symptoms, in both children and adults (Levine & Kline, 2006), arising from the unused energy released from an initial threatening event which then becomes frozen in the body: “…when there isn’t enough time, strength, speed, or size to overpower the forces against us” (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 74). From a social constructionist perspective, these symptoms may be viewed as a form of language that emerges from a relational process as well as influencing social interaction.

In contrast, Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model sees these symptoms as personal dispositions which would contribute to being bullied. According to Levine (2008) and Levine and Kline (2006), the following symptoms appear soon after a traumatic event: (i) Hyperarousal can take the form of both physical and mental symptoms, such as a racing heartbeat, shallow and rapid breathing, sweating, tingling, muscular tension, worry and racing or repetitive thoughts (Levine, 2008). (ii) Constriction helps the individual focus on the threat, whilst also preparing the body to take defensive action by constricting the blood vessels, extremities and internal organs, to make more blood available to the muscles (Levine, 2008). Constriction also suppresses the digestive system and is responsible for feelings of numbness (Levine, 2008). (iii) According to Levine, dissociation, “…protects us from being overwhelmed by escalating arousal, fear and pain [or] to endure experiences that are at the moment beyond endurance” (Levine, 2008, p. 16). He uses the term denial as a milder form of dissociation to explain how an individual can disconnect from a memory or feeling about a particular event, for example, by not acknowledging what has happened or by regarding something as unimportant (Levine, 2008). (iv) Helplessness is described as a real sense of being “…collapsed, immobilised, and utterly helpless” (Levine, 2008, p. 16), in the moment of an overwhelming event. Levine and Kline (2006) point out that children display different symptoms of trauma to adults, depending on their age and level of cognitive, social and emotional development. Levine (2008) also emphasises that not all these symptoms are caused exclusively by trauma and that anyone displaying them is not necessarily traumatised. They can be ever-present, triggered by stress or suddenly appearing years later. They appear in groups and deliver a message that healing needs to happen, and therefore will only disappear once the trauma is healed. However, when the core symptoms
remain unresolved, secondary or new symptoms emerge over time (Levine & Kline, 2006).

The symptoms of trauma may worsen with the passage of time, as a traumatised individual continues to respond to daily life experience in a “…stereotyped, repetitive and counterproductive…” manner, and therefore reciprocates to “…new events, relations and challenges as if he were responding to the old threat” (Scaer, 2005, p. 68), such as a person who has previously been raped who screams and has a panic attack when bumped in the back whilst on a crowded bus. Perhaps this explains why Liang, Flisher and Lombard (2007) found that individuals who were bullied displayed higher levels of violence and anti-social behaviours compared to controls. These behaviours may be due to the need for self-defence, however, a traumatised brain reacts differently from a non-traumatised brain. The survival brain is tuned to “high alert” and is sensitive to the tiniest trigger, as “A child’s sense of safety becomes highly distorted, causing a perception of danger when there is none [which] sends a cascade of unneeded chemicals, marching like soldiers to the battleground (to the most primitive parts of the brain), to fight a war that doesn’t exist” (Levine & Kline, 2006, pp. 73-74). Some of the secondary symptoms of trauma identified by Levine and Kline (2006, p. 75-78) associated with the abovementioned core symptoms of trauma are listed in Table 5.4 (below), however, in line with social constructionism, which views personality traits as unstable over time and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, which acknowledges change within the person over time, there are other symptoms which may develop over time. These include attraction to dangerous situations; addictive behaviours; amnesia and forgetfulness; fear of dying; self-mutilation; loss of sustaining beliefs; inability to make commitments; chronic pain; immune system problems; and skin disorders. Besides these symptoms, another which Levine has identified as being unusual and less straightforward than the others “the compulsion to repeat the actions that caused the problem in the first place” (Levine, 2008, p. 19).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When hyperarousal predominates, these symptoms may appear over time</th>
<th>When constriction, freeze and immobility, these symptoms may appear over time</th>
<th>When dissociation predominates, these symptoms may appear over time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panic attacks, anxiety and phobias</td>
<td>Headaches and stomach aches</td>
<td>Distractibility and inattentiveness</td>
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<td>Flashbacks</td>
<td>Spastic colon, asthma, digestive problems</td>
<td>Amnesia and forgetfulness</td>
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<td>Exaggerated startle response</td>
<td>Feelings and behaviours of helplessness</td>
<td>Reduced ability to organise and to plan</td>
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<td>Extreme sensitivity to light and sound</td>
<td>Bedwetting and soiling</td>
<td>Feelings of isolation and detachment</td>
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<td>Hyperactivity, restlessness</td>
<td>Feelings of shame and guilt</td>
<td>Muted or diminished emotional responses, making it difficult to bond with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exaggerated emotional response</td>
<td>Avoidance behaviour</td>
<td>Easily and frequently stressed out</td>
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<td>Nightmares and nightmares</td>
<td>Repetitive play</td>
<td>Frequent daydreaming and fear of going crazy</td>
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<td>Avoidance behaviour, clinging</td>
<td>Diminished curiosity</td>
<td>Low energy and easily fatigued</td>
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<td>Attraction to dangerous situations</td>
<td>Diminished capacity for pleasure</td>
<td>Excessive shyness with time spent in an imaginary world or with imaginary friends</td>
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<td>Frequent crying and irritability</td>
<td>Postural and coordination problems</td>
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<td>abrupt mood swings, e.g., rage reactions</td>
<td>Low energy, fatigues easily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temper tantrums</td>
<td>Clinginess/regression to younger behaviours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regressive behaviours, such as wanting a bottle, thumb sucking, bed wetting, using fewer words</td>
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<td>Increased “risk-taking” behaviour</td>
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5.3.5 Experiences of innocent versus wicked

Table 5.5: Superordinate and sub-themes of experiences of innocent versus wicked

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<th>Experiences of innocent versus wicked</th>
<th>Bullying by peers</th>
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<td>Bullying by friends</td>
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<td>Bullying by relatives</td>
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<td>Bullying by ‘innocent’</td>
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This theme emerged from Martin’s sand tray which depicted his experience of being bullied. Martin conveyed at the outset of the interview that “…everything that is innocent is being attacked by everything wicked” (QU:17:107:3). The word ‘innocent’ implies that these children had done nothing to deserve this type of treatment, whilst ‘wicked’ perhaps categorises bullying as evil or cruel behaviour. Six sub-themes, as listed above will be reported upon. Figure 5.10 (below) provides an ATLAS.ti 7.5 network view of the findings on experiences of innocent versus wicked.
Figure 5.10: ATLAS.ti 7.5 – Network view of superordinate themes, sub-themes, codes and quotation codes of innocent versus wicked
5.3.5.1 Bullying by peers

All three participants had encountered experiences of being bullied by their peers, from as early as Grade 1 up to the time of the interviews. Craig and Martin’s parents had been aware of this bullying, but Kade’s parents had not. Furthermore, Craig and Martin had experienced more bullying by their peers than had Kade, however, Kade, like Craig, had also experienced bullying in contexts other than the school. Even though Craig could not recall how regularly: “I don’t know. Twice a month, once a week” (QU:8:147:71). Martin replied that he was bullied every day by his peers: “...if this is just the names” (QU17:102:191), referring to name-calling. Kade mentioned that his cousin, who was his au pair at the time, “...doesn’t do it every day, like once or twice every week...” (QU:42:15:336) and that his brother, “...bullied me quite a lot” (QU:42:16:378) when he was younger. What follows are the various types of bullying encountered by each participant by their peers.

![Excerpt from Craig's diary – racial bullying](image)

**Figure 5.11**: Excerpt from Craig’s diary – racial bullying

Craig had experienced various types of bullying by his peers, from Grade 1 up to the time of the interviews. Craig’s mother claimed that she had not known that Craig had been bullied for being coloured until she had read it in the diary I had given him (QU:6:404:63) (P 44), (Figure 5.11). Craig also claimed that he has been repeatedly followed for no apparent reason: “I don’t know. I don’t know why, they just follow. I just buy something and I walk out. The only thing I do in the tuck shop is get in there, buy something and get out” (QU:8:149:210). The following excerpt highlights a range of different types of bullying Craig had experienced, such as verbal, property and physical: “Sometimes, people say seriously ugly things. They say mean words that hurt, sometimes they physically do things, like they throw
things, like pencils and highlighters and sticky tape. Sometimes they even hit me on the arm or something” (QU:8:146:39). On one occasion he was bullied by his peers after his girlfriend had come to his rescue while he was being strangled. His mother reported:

… he didn't feel that it was a shameful thing or embarrassed that she had come to him in rescue but afterwards the other boys teased him because a girl had to defend him…..but obviously afterwards he was shamed because now a girl had had to come to his rescue. (QU:6:403:60)

Martin had been bullied since he commenced formal education, because according to his mother, “He did cry a lot. I don't know if that was Grade R or, the whole Junior Prep years he did cry a lot. And he did get teased quite a lot for that and losing his temper and what not” (QU:13:310:169). Martin reported that he was bullied daily: “They call me names, that's pretty much all they can to without attracting too much attention” (QU:17:101:183). He also mentioned comprehensive teasing: “Like absolutely every essence of me” (QU:16:107:115). There were also occasions when he was physically bullied for apparently no reason, for which he made an interesting comparison (Figure 5.12): “The giraffe is something completely innocent, just like taking a walk and there is a car coming for it. It's going to hit it” (QU:17:117:217).

Figure 5.12: Endangered giraffe
Kade first experienced being bullied by older learners at his previous school when he was either in Grade 1 or 2 for being a talented cricket player. Kade claimed that, “We weren’t trying to play serious cricket, we were fooling around and all the boys were like, ‘You suck at cricket’” (QU:42:7:192). Intriguingly, Kade also stated that sometimes the older Grades at his present school told him, “…I suck at cricket…” (QU:43:3:31) when he was just fooling around with his friends. Kade also reported an incident at school when Kylen grabbed his tie, punched him in the back and wrapped his right arm around his neck during a game of football. Kade stated that this was the first time that Kaylen had physically hurt him, but that Kaylen tended to verbally bully others and spread secrets that others had told him (Memos: Diary:11 July 2014).

An analysis of the types of bullying that are experienced by the participants reveals that verbal, physical, relational, property and behavioural bullying were the most common forms. Sexual (being called ‘gay’) and racial bullying occurred to a lesser extent and seemed to be specifically aimed at certain individuals. For example, Craig was racially targeted and Martin was sexually targeted, whilst two forms that had not been experienced by any of the participants were cyberbullying and coercing, although Craig was threatened with being put on social media, as indicated in section 5.3.3.2. Significantly, similar patterns of being bullied were noted by each of the participants, Craig having been regularly followed and Martin called names, for example, ‘gay’satanist’ (Figure 5.7), and ‘ebola rapist’ whilst Kade attracted bullying by older boys for having good cricketing skills.

The social role of bullying in the peer group also emerged as a phenomenon. Two of the three participants, Craig and Martin, had experienced being bullied by groups of children. The first interview excerpt below highlights an incident when Craig was in Grade 3 and being bullied by groups of older children. The second excerpt conveys how Craig was bullied by groups of children of his own age and Grade:

"I was at break, on the field, I was going down and my friend was talking to me and some people from Grade 6 came up to me and said to me, “Hey you kid, you, you, yes you. You know you are so ugly, that I do not want to look at your face. Your mom, is the fattest person I’ve ever seen in my life.” Then afterwards I was trying to..."
go away, but they kept following me and my friend didn’t do a thing to help me.
(QU:8:150:15)

Martin used sharks chasing a dolphin (Figure 5.13) to depict times when he was ganged up on, such as when he was winded. In his words, “…the dolphin is like me, innocent, the sharks coming after him, and I don’t think they would leave him alone, the dolphin” (QU:17:108:25):

So I was at break. Just before an English test I think. And they rejected me from the game so I stood by and watched. And he (Brian) called me stupid, so I said, “At least I didn’t stay back a Grade,” and he attacked me. And then when he finished attacking me, Oni, I got up, and he’s like, “Calm down, calm down.” I am trying to push him so that I can get to my shoes, and then he picks me up and throws me on the ground. So I am winded, and I try walk off the field and I get to the stands and there I calm down a bit. Then they come to the stands and they start saying mean things about me, so I tried to scare them away by shouting. They just stared. Then it was the end of break and I went back up and did the test still breathing heavily. (QU:17:108:29)

Figure 5.13: Dolphin chased by sharks

Neither boy in these situations did anything initially to incite being bullied nor react in a derogatory manner, but the bullying continued. The older boys followed Craig and Martin was labelled stupid for watching the boys play. It seemed that no matter what these boys did the groups of children in both cases persisted in taunting them. It was understandable that Craig remained silent as he could not fend for himself against a group of older children, however, Martin responded with an unkind and hurtful comment which consequently led to even more bullying. This escalated to Martin’s rage which in turn resulted in him being winded as the perpetrator thought he was going to retaliate and it attracted and enticed the group of children to continue their
verbal assault, leaving him feeling overwhelmed whilst back in the classroom sitting a test.

Although all three participants experienced being bullied differently, it became apparent that each was negatively affected by this behaviour, as evidenced in the following statements. Kade said that, “I wish the dogs hurt me a lot more so everyone would give me more respect” (QU:43:9:103), “…because sometimes people, like they say mean things to me and it hurts me a lot, but they don’t know that though. And they think it is funny” (QU:43:9:105). Craig perceived that there were some forms of bullying he could manage and some he could not, as he illustrated in the sand tray (Figure 4.9): “The small snakes like this, they just average bullies, bullying people that I can sort out, but the big snakes like this and this [picks up large snakes], they are the bullies I cannot handle.” (QU:8:147:61). According to Martin, “There is no varying in bullying, all bullying is absolutely horrible” (QU:17:83:11). Each viewed bullying in a negative light, as Martin’s description equated with Kade’s horrendous wish and Craig’s association with snakes.

In the sand tray, Martin differentiated between quick and long routes to get to him. The quick route would involve: “...Just get in there, take my stuff, just do everything, say bad things about me, while taking my stuff, maybe even breaking my stuff” (QU:17:91:77). The long routes, “...would be like saying a bad thing about me once a day for a whole year” (QU:17:91:79), such as David Smith who alludes pejoratively to gays with the words “faggot alert” each time he goes past me (QU:17:91:80). Martin claims that the children who take the quick route normally get into trouble because it is noticeable (QU:17:91:087) compared to the long route behaviour, which is less noticeable, such as when the person bullying passes him (QU:17:91:90).

From the above, it appears that the long route bullying seems to be carried out over a long time by a single individual who continuously targets a person, whereas the quick route is carried out by a variety of different children regularly. Martin seems to be the only participant who experiences both the ‘long route bullying’ and ‘quick route bullying’ compared to Kade and Craig who only spoke about ‘quick route bullying.’ An example of being bullied by one individual over a long time, besides been clearly illustrated in (QU:18:1), is also conveyed in Martin’s story about Jack (Figure 5.9):
Jack has pretty much bullied me since day one of my life because we were born in the same hospital. He was born late June and I was born early July and we would be bathed together and things and ever since he started to talk he has bullied pretty much everyone he thinks isn’t cool. (QU:16:115:179)

Mrs Carr, Martin’s mother, admitted that Martin had consistently been bullied by Jack, also the son of good family friends. However, she stated that her friend had told Jack to leave Martin alone as they were tired of his behaviour towards Martin. At the time of the interview, Mrs Carr stated that it was a breakthrough when Martin had returned home happy after being to Jack’s home. Martin at the time reportedly claimed that he had had a fun time with Jack (QU:13:313): “Well he used to bully me and now he doesn’t bully me because I think his parents straightened him out with me because our parents are best friends and have been for a long time” (QU:16:115:181). However, Mrs Carr also stated, “But at school I don’t know how they treat each other, that is still a complete mystery I think. The other kid won’t want to be associated with him, I just know” (QU:13:313). This intuitive thought turned out to be accurate, because Jack had recently bullied Martin, at school on the playground during break time, when Martin approached some of his friends who were sitting on a bench amongst Jack. Jack firstly told him to leave as no one wanted him there. He then asked each individual if they wanted Martin to be there. One of Martin’s old friends firstly answered in the negative but the other boys said they did not mind. Jack then removed Martin’s cap and threw it to other boys. Martin became visibly upset then went into a rage after Jack kicked his lunch bag and passed an insolent disrespectful remark (“diss”) about his mother (Memos:Diary:3 Nov 2014).

Earlier stories of Jack’s behaviour towards Martin were revealed by Martin’s grandmother, Helga. She relayed an event that had taken place one evening at Martin’s home whilst his parents were having a sushi dinner party during Martin’s Grade 3 year. Mrs Carr had apparently asked her mother, Helga, to come over to watch over the children and had invited Jack’s parents, who brought along their son Jack, one of Martin’s ‘enemies’ (QU:16:131:155). Helga frighteningly recalls being upstairs, reading to the children when the boys started playing and “…suddenly, they were on the balcony…just outside their bedroom door…”, when she heard Jack saying to Martin, “Ok now, now you jump” (QU:14:73:73). She got up and found that “…they’d tied a tie to the banister and around Martin’s neck” (QU:14:73:73). On
another occasion, at Caroline’s (Martin’s sister) birthday party, at the family home, when Martin was in Grade 4, Helga recalled another bullying incident involving Jack, who was present at the party, because Mrs Carr had invited her mother Helga who said she had witnessed Jack hit Martin’s face hard: “I can actually see it happening, he was running up past the jumping castle and he put out his hand like that [demonstrates]. Dwaa, right in his face” (QU:14:74:103).

From the above, it can be seen for how long Jack has bullied Martin, never a friend but because of their mothers’ friendship they had been forced to spend time together. It seems that this may have intensified the negative feelings they had towards one another, especially when at school.

Although all three participants had been bullied by their peers, Martin was the only participant who identified and described various types of children who bullied him and others, using animals (Figure 5.14) from the sand tray as symbols. According to Martin the crocodile had “…hard skin, so nothing you say can hurt them. They act like that” (QU:17:94:117) (Figure 4.8). Martin reported that the lions “…pretend they are all fearless and nothing can beat them. But all you have to do is make them feel a little bit bad and they will stop coming after you” (QU:17:99:173). The phoenix was “Someone who doesn’t know he is bullying. Someone who thinks he is being the good guy so he is untouchable” (QU:17:104:203), for example, when

…he thought I was going to rage, but I wasn’t, I was just trying to get away from the situation, so I tried to push him out the way, so he must have been thinking, ‘Oh this guy is going to rage, I must sort him out’, so he winded me. (QU:17:104:207)

Figure 5.14: Symbols of animals who bully
As stated by Martin, monster bullying was “One who has been bullied so he bullies you. Let’s say you have pimples and you get bullied about the pimples, so he bullies you to try and raise his self-esteem” (QU:17:95:121). Martin maintained that hippo bullying, “…is someone who bully’s other people because he hasn’t got enough. He is so low that he needs other people to feel worse for him to feel better” (QU:17:115:63), whilst according to Martin, dinosaur bullying “are the kind that are too big to beat” (QU:17:97:141). Martin viewed rhino bullying as “…dangerous, but they only attack if they are agitated (QU:17:116:63)....They can't control themselves, they just attack” (QU:17:116:65). Martin said they attack with words. “…the ones that they know will hurt the most, the ones they know that will really get in there. Things about my mom. Like, ‘Your mom is so ugly that when she looks in the mirror, the mirror breaks’” (QU:17:116:67-69). Martin claimed that leopard bullying occurs when the person who is bullying, “…tries to hurt the other people which hurts you more than him hurting me, specifically (QU:17:105:209)...He wants to say bad things about other people to make me feel bad (QU:17:105:211). Like when they diss your mom, or they diss my girlfriend, or they are being mean to my friend, or things like that” (QU:17:105:213). Martin referred to spider bullying as, “dangerous, they are venom” (QU:17:111:53) and stated that they destroyed one’s confidence. Martin described dinosaur bullying as “The kind that are too big to beat. Feels like you can't do anything to make it better, but you know that eventually they are going to get themselves into so much trouble they're going to get rid of themselves” (QU:17:97:141).

These various descriptions of the animals summarise the various types of children who bully. For example, the crocodile, phoenix, rhino, spider, dinosaur and leopard are symbolic of the child who bullies, whereas the lion, monster and hippo appear to be the children who bully and are bullied. Interestingly, each of the animals chosen to depict children who bully may be perceived as dangerous.

5.3.5.2 Bullying by friends

Two of the three participants, Martin and Kade, had experienced being bullied by their personal friends, while the third, Craig, had witnessed his friend bullying other children:
Once, I was friends with somebody. I didn't know he was a bully. And one day, I went to go and play soccer with him and I found him terrorizing Grade threes. I asked him to stop, I asked him to please stop, because he was terrorizing Grade threes and they started crying and he started laughing at them. (QU:8:147:63)

From the above, it becomes apparent that Craig sensed the enjoyment his friend was deriving from terrorising younger boys and evoking an upsetting reaction from them.

Martin’s mother relayed the following about a group of friends he had in Grade 2:

So in Grade two they were a crowd of four or five boys and Martin used to hang out with them but then four of them would turn on him and then something would happen and then Martin would go to the teacher and then all the boys would accuse Martin of lying so now it’s four against one boy. (QU:13:307:413)

A vicious circle of bullying is evident here. Firstly, his friends ganged up on him and inflicted something hurtful that upset him enough to cause him to tell the teacher. The friends then denied what they had done to Martin and accused him of lying. Mrs Carr also reported that when Martin was in Grade 4 he had another group of friends who often used to tease him:

The sad thing is, he was actually a friend of Peter’s and the other boys, and they used to hang out together all the time, and yet he often used to feel that the boys were teasing him, so he’d feel that his best friends were even bullying him. (QU:27:13:58)

Again, Martin befriended a group of boys who belittled him, and whilst in Grade 5 he had the misfortune to have a best friend turned enemy. He used the symbol of a robot to illustrate this (Figure 5.14): “Someone who used to be a friend, but is now an enemy. Someone who uses their intellect and thinks they’re better than me in every way. But we are really equal” (QU:17:96:131) and “...whenever I start talking... he’s not listening, he’s not listening... We used to be really good friends and then sometime he just became nasty” (QU:17:96:135). The symbol of the robot illustrates not only the cold, hard, mechanical, rigid and artificial relationship that developed between Martin and Kevin, but also the repetitive nature as conveyed by Martin in the way Kevin ignored him. Mrs Carr then reported that in Grade 6 that year Martin became best friends with Richard: “...him and Martin were both being teased by Richard’s old best friends. It was like his very closest friends that were suddenly saying ‘oh well now you’re gay” (QU:27:28:096). It became apparent that Martin and
Richard were labelled as such because they were “…play fighting…” gently on the bus one day (QU:27:28:99).

During the research process, it also transpired that a best friend of Kade’s, Evan Leach, started to bully him. During the initial interview I was asking Kade who his good friends were, when he replied “I think Evan, was a very good friend to me” (QU:42:10:222). The following conversation then unfolded:

**Researcher:** Are you not as good friends anymore?
**Kade:** No, no, no, we’ve become better friends than last year. We’ve grown our friendship higher. (QU:42:10:223-224)

Later in the same interview, Kade described how a friend of his best friend Evan, CJ, tended to ignore him. Apparently Kade noticed that every time he approached Evan, Evan’s friend CJ did not talk to him, “…he completely backed out when I was there” (QU:42:11:232), but would start talking to Evan again when Kade walked away. One day, at the school, Kade arrived with his friend, Aidan, to tell me about a few bullying incidents. One of these related to his supposed best friend Evan Leach. Kade explained that three months earlier Evan had thrown an acorn at him which hit the side of his eye. It was then stated that, “Leach, thinks he’s the best -he makes up every rule and you are not the boss” (Memos: Diary: 11 July 2014). Kade explained what he meant by this:

…he ran up to me and said, “Sorry, please don't tell anyone ” and I'll say, “Ja cool” but the next day, say I hurt him and trip him on soccer, he'll be like “Dude, why did you do that? There is no reason to do that” and then like say, “I'll go and tell on” or something like that. (Memos: Informal interview: 16 July 2014)

It also emerged that Kade and Aidan had become best friends at the end of the previous term, before the initial research interview (Memos: Diary: 11 July 2014). In a follow-up informal conversation with Aidan it was apparent that Evan was a popular boy and liked to take control (Memos: Diary: 16 July 2014a). Kade also conveyed that “…sometimes he thinks that like I am his best friend and then the next day he's like my worst friend… he just doesn't talk to me and then like he says like stuff behind my back and stuff like that” (Memos: Informal interview: 14 July 2014). This comment tallied with an observation of mine when I saw Kade happily walking and talking with Evan following this conversation (Memos: Observation: 30 July 2014). Similar perceptions of Evan were confirmed by other Grade 5 boys. Lindani mentioned that ‘everyone listens’ to Evan and Paul stated that others were scared of
Evan and therefore allowed him to be ‘the boss’ (Memos: Diary: 16 July 2014b). Kade also revealed that he would not report a best friend for bullying because:

*Like when your best friend hurts you and then you don’t want like um, you don’t want to say anything to the teacher because they don’t want to be friends with you anymore and you try to keep it a secret so your friend that hurt you will still be your friend.* (Memos: Informal interview 14 July 2014)

From the above it is apparent that Evan was a popular bully and Kade wanted to remain friends with Evan, whom he referred to as his ‘best’ and ‘worst’ friend. Furthermore, Kade refrained from informing the teacher about any bullying behaviour in order to preserve the friendship. That Lindani mentioned that the others were scared of Evan and allowed him to be the boss perhaps explains and epitomises the reason for maintaining this friendship.

5.3.5.3 Bullying by teachers

Two of the three participants, Craig and Kade, had experienced being bullied by teachers. Craig first experienced bullying by a teacher in his Grade 1 year. This teacher apparently bullied the boys in the class as a group, the whole class and as well as Craig individually. Mrs Lewis stated, “….she loved the girls but she hated the boys…She would systematically break them down, girls are better than boys, boys are useless, boys are naughty…” (QU:6:374:69) and “Girls are better than boys and they do maths better than us. Girls are better behaved than boys. That was the message they were bringing home every single day” (QU:6:374:71). The words ‘systematically’ and ‘every single day’, highlight the repetitive abusive behaviour of this Grade 1 teacher, whilst ‘broke them down’ convey how this teacher collectively damaged the boys’ self-esteem. This teacher however also bullied the class as a whole, as noted in the following excerpt:

*and she would punish the class together during lunch in Grade One and the impulse control has not fully solidified at that age, and she would leave them on the carpet and expect them to be quiet for hours on end while she dealt with things she wanted to deal with and then if they made a noise she would take stuff away from them. Like the one incident, it was the World Cup that year, and they were supposed to participate in the World Cup, go to all the different stations, because they couldn’t be quiet on the carpet for half an hour while she was doing something else, she wouldn’t let them do it. She took it away from them.* (QU:6:374:69)
The Grade 1 teacher abused her power of authority by implementing a punishment that was not age-appropriate, then punished them again for not being able to carry out or follow through with the punishment she administered.

Figure 5.15: Excerpt from Craig’s diary – teacher bullying

Craig recorded in his diary (Figure 5.15) that he was bullied because he had messy handwriting (QU:44:1), but did not indicate by whom. Mrs Lewis related a meeting with his Grade 1 teacher:

…I explained to me that sometimes Craig would be insolent (Head held between hands). I said, “Explain this to me?” And she said, “No, the one day he was writing in his book” and she opened his book for me to see, and she said to me um, “You see he was writing ugly here.” And so I told him that when your mommy comes for her meeting with me, I’ll show her how ugly you’re writing, so he wrote extremely ugly, and she went to him and asked “Why are you writing so ugly now?” and she said he just wouldn’t answer her, he just sat there (demonstrates tightly closed/sealed lips) and was quiet. And I said to him, “Why are you so disrespectful to your teacher?” and he said, “I was respecting my rights to myself.” And I said, “What?” He said, “I wanted to be silent.” And I said, “Why did you want to be silent?” “Because I think what I wanted to say would have got me into big trouble.” “What did you want to say?” I wanted to say, “Fuck off bitch, but I couldn’t because that would have got me into big trouble, because mommy she is so horrible to us.” At that stage he started crying, and said, “She is so horrible to us, she shouts at us every day, she tells us we are so bad, we’re all so stupid and you know on that day I just wanted to say to her fuck off bitch, I don’t care if you tell my mommy and if you can show her how ugly I can write, I will show you how ugly I can write.” And those kids were bullied for six months, by that woman, for six months… It was hectic, that my own child and Craig is not that kind of boy who has ever got into trouble at school, for being naughty, being cheeky, for back chatting, for arguing, for using bad language, he
knows those words and he knows what they mean, but he never ever uses them... (QU:6:374:71)

The mother’s body language, holding her head between her hands, conveyed the disbelief and confusion about her son being labelled as insolent. In contrast, Craig was a quiet, polite, modest and respectful boy, as portrayed by his mother at the end of the paragraph when she communicated that her son was not that kind of boy. However, it is apparent that Craig was experiencing anger following six months of daily abuse from the teacher, denoted in his actions (untidy writing, almost wanting to scribble), body language (tight lips) and thoughts (swear words). Mrs Lewis then emphasised:

So I also think that this needs to raise in there as a significant issue, that there are teachers in schools, who assert themselves, and who bully and torment children on a daily basis. And it is very worrying. She wasn't there a long duration… Attila the Hun is what I eventually called Mrs Naicker, it is what finally came to mind… I just called her that. Because that is how she acted, she acted like a hun. She was a warring, revolting, vengeful person (she puts her hands over her eyes and wipes them). Sighs deeply, sorry that was very emotional. (QU:6:374:71)

The giving of the name ‘Atilla the Hun’ to the teacher symbolises how dangerous the actions of teachers can be, particularly if as leaders they abuse their power of authority. The emotional reaction of the mother after talking about this teacher indicates the profoundly negative effect this teacher had on the children.

Kade’s parents revealed the following information concerning Kade and his Grade 0 teacher at Merrifield Primary School. Mr Abbot stated, “She and him clashed” (QU:25:35:79), while Mrs Abbot added that, “Ja68 they didn’t get on” (QU:25:35:80). His mother said, “All I know is that he didn’t like her” (QU:25:35:91) followed by his father’s comment that “…he hasn’t very often said bad things about the teachers. He normally adjusts to their style. If they’re strict, he adjusts to it…” (QU:25:35:92).

To not be liked by a Grade 0 teacher would have a profound effect on a child, and it seems that this teacher found him disruptive and could not cope with his disruption. Mrs Abbot said “I think we also clashed with her, hey, because we didn’t agree with the way Kade’s reports were coming home, and the one report, I think it was so bad and we were so upset, by what she had written” (QU:25:35:85).

68 “Ja” is the Afrikaans word for “Yes”.

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Mr Abbot responded by saying, “…it was less about his work” (QU:25:35:87), whilst his mother said, “it was about him, his personality” (QU:25:35:88). Mr Abbot reflected:

*I think it was the same time when they said, oh he's got ADHD and he needs to go and be tested because he is hyperactive. So we said okay will take him to be tested, they tested him and said nothing was wrong with him, he's a normal boy for his age full of energy. So that was my impression of the teacher.* (QU:25:35:89)

From the above it can be seen that Kade did not have ADHD, however, it is possible that Kade was restless because of the anxiety he was experiencing. His parents also indicated that Kade initially (for the first three months) was upset to say goodbye to them when they left him at school in the mornings. Mrs Abbot recalls that, “*He used to stand on the balcony at the top and he’d scream for us. He would cry his heart out*” (QU:25:34:73). Mr Abbot related that:

*… it was fine on the way to school everything, no problem, walking to school, walk in, but when it’s goodbye and you walk away then he's not feeling well or he is crying, he doesn't want to be here, he hates it, or you know, only when we were at school.* (QU:25:34:75)

From the above, it is evident that Kade was experiencing separation anxiety, which may explain why the teacher clashed with him, and because he was perhaps also anxious around her in the classroom, which she interpreted as ADHD.

It transpired that Kade clashed with his Grade 3 teacher when he commenced his new school at Egoli. According to Mr and Mrs Abbot, “*We also had a few disheartening comments, personality comments, so again attacking Kade’s personality, not a reflection*” (QU:25:48:252). The parents had a meeting with the teacher and the principal to resolve this issue (QU:25:48:258).

From the above, it is evident that Kade might again have become anxious when starting at a new school. Again, the teacher interpreted these signs of anxiety as some form of misbehaviour. The words ‘attacking’ imply that the teacher was retaliating to Kade’s anxiety rather than trying to understand and contain it. This indicates a power of abuse by the teacher, whilst the words ‘disheartening personality comments’ also show that Kade was humiliated, no doubt in front of his peers over time, thus rendering it a form of bullying.

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69 ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
5.3.5.4 Bullying by siblings

Analysis of the data conveyed that two of the three participants had experienced being bullied by their siblings. One by his surrogate brothers, the other by his half-brother. Mrs Lewis claimed that Craig was relieved when his surrogate brothers left their home because she believed that he was being bullied by some of them:

*I think there was actually a massive relief, because at the end of it, I think he was being bullied by Letsego*, and Mosegi* and Tau*70 and he had to share all his toys with them, and he had to give them everything, otherwise you know, they were bullying him. (QU:6:244:29)

The words ‘had to’ here indicate that Craig was perhaps forced to share his toys with a group of his surrogate brothers.

Kade conveyed the following bullying incident by his brother when he was six or seven years old:

*Ja, when I was younger, he bullied me quite a lot. Like the one day he, I didn't do anything and he grabbed me, we were play fighting, just like hitting like that [demonstrates] but he pushed me on the floor and he took my hand and shoved it in my mouth and my tooth actually fell out. It was loose, but it wasn't that loose. It just popped out.* (QU:42:16:378)

Kade's use of the words ‘a lot’ conveys that from his perception his brother bullied him often, highlighting the repetitive nature of such incidents. In addition, it is evident that although Kade claimed that they were play fighting it appears that his brother abused his power of strength and age by pushing him to the floor then shoving Kade’s hand in his mouth. The force used was revealed by the loss of his tooth, which suggests aggressive behaviour. Kade clearly was not enjoying this: "I felt bad, he didn't have any respect for me at all. Because he thinks he's in charge of me because he is older” (QU:42:16:394). Kade described his hurt feelings and drew attention to the lack of respect shown to him because of the age difference, which further illustrated abuse of power. Kade responded that his brother did not make him feel good about himself because, “Um, sometimes my brother [zooms up on Pirate with hooked arm in sand tray] (Figure 5.16) ‘cause he sometimes he’s really mean to me” (QU:43:6:153), such as “…when I first got attacked by the dogs, that night, he said, ‘Stop being a woose just stand up and walk.’ And he made me feel sad” (QU:43:6:157).

70 * pseudonyms
Kade unconsciously chose to represent him and his brother as pirates (Figure 5.16) when working in the sand tray (QU:26:3), which suggests an aggressive relationship. He symbolised his brother as a pirate with a hooked arm (QU:26:1), which suggests a more aggressive character of the two. Kade then pointed out how merciless his brother was towards him after he sustained serious wounds from the dog attack, again emphasising hurtful behaviour. Kade’s mother stated that, “They have good days and they have bad days” (QU:25:60:535), while Kade’s father reported that, “Kade is still a child so sometimes he does irritate Kyle and um I don’t think Kyle is mature enough yet to deal with an irritating younger brother, so they do clash” (QU:25:60:536). To determine whether this relationship was sibling rivalry or bullying I referred to Rigby’s criteria in my reflections (Memos: Reflections: 30 July 2014). In this situation, Kade’s brother was older, so he was abusing his power of strength and age, being deliberately hurtful because he changed his style from play fighting to pushing him to the floor and forcing his hand in his mouth, implying that he was
enjoying what he was doing. Kade was being hurt without justification, and not for the first time by his brother. The derogatory comments about his wounds, besides conveying a lack of empathy also imply that he abused this vulnerable situation to deliberately inflict hurt on Kade, thereby gaining satisfaction from doing so. Both these situations seem to fulfil the criteria for the definition of bullying, so rendering such situations more than sibling rivalry.

5.3.5.5 Bullying by relatives

Kade was the only participant to be bullied by a relative. Kade depicted his cousin, Kobus, of 21 years, as “the mean guy who cut the head off the buffalo” (QU:43:4:69), when doing the sand tray (QU:26:2). Refer to Figure 5.17. Kade stated that his cousin treated him in such a way as to not make him feel good. Kade explained that he, “punches me sometimes, but in a friendly way, but it doesn’t feel friendly” (QU:42:15:314), “because it actually hurts me” (QU:42:15:326). Furthermore, “he would always smack my dog and stuff for no reason, and I would always ask him not to do that and he would just carry on” (QU:43:4:47). In addition, “he would squeeze me in my leg over here [points to and squeezes pressure points of the knee]. Like in a very special, well not a special place, but like a very hurtful place, he would squeeze as hard as he can” (QU:43:4:79). “Then I go, ‘Kobus it’s sore’ and he says ‘stop being a girl.’ And I say, ‘Stop Kobus, it is sore and I’m not a girl’ and he says ‘Yes you are’ and he keeps on doing it” (QU:42:15:328). Kade revealed that he was reluctant to tell his mother about this because his cousin was also his au pair and, “Like maybe if I tell my mom, she’ll get mad and fire my cousin, then I’ve got no one to pick me up and my cousins mad at me, so I just try to keep quiet” (QU:43:4:91). Kade’s father acknowledged that he had witnessed Kobus “…roughing Kade up…” (QU:25:57:429) and had heard Kade say, “…stop stop stop’, but he’ll carry on” (QU:25:57:432). Kade’s father stated that “…I think, he learns that from my brother in law, because he lives with my brother in law. My brother in law is very rough with his kids” (QU:25:57:429), and that “…from some of those cultures here is a way of showing affection…” (QU:25:57:432).
From the above it was evident that Kade viewed the way his cousin treated him as cruel. His cousin hurt him not only physically but also verbally, calling him a ‘girl’ and targeting his dog. Kade felt helpless, especially when his own parents viewed the behaviour as a way of showing affection and did nothing to intervene, despite hearing his own pleas to stop.

5.3.5.6 Bullying by ‘innocent’

When I refer to the word ‘innocent’ I am referring to the participants of the study, and one of their words that arose in the interview. Two of the three participants had been involved in situations in which they had been perceived as having retaliated by bullying back. Mrs Lewis, Craig’s mother, relayed that after Craig was strangled by a peer in Grade 1, he “…made his stand and said ‘Right, if you want a piece of me, now you’re going to get it’” (QU:6:371:67). According to Mrs Lewis, when he returned to school, “Craig got the upper hand and punched the boy with two black eyes and gave him a blood nose” (QU:6:371:67). Mrs Lewis indicated that, “…Craig didn’t want to tell me anything, he in fact thought he was
in trouble and I came there that day, and his mates were waiting to tell me..." (QU:6:371:69).

Whilst Mrs Lewis said that Craig planned to get even with the boy who had strangled him, she also states that he felt guilty doing so. Craig may have rather reacted to the aggressor instead of having planned to do so because of the guilt he displayed in lieu of being proud of what he had achieved. Mrs Carr also conveyed that they only learnt about one of Martin's significant bullying experiences months after the actual event. In Mrs Carr's words, “The teacher didn't tell us about it, but Martin obviously whatever had happened, he just decided he was going to climb into this kid and hit him, strangled him and I think punched him in the shoulder or something” (QU:13:303:392). Once Mrs Carr heard about this incident she approached Martin and said:

Look I know what happened but why didn't you tell me what happened?” But still, it was so sketchy, I think he was too embarrassed that he had actually lashed out, or maybe he didn't remember, I don't know. Maybe he had got angry and didn't remember what he had done. (QU:13:303:405)

His grandmother Helga also described the effect one of the bullying experiences had on her:

When I heard Wendy said that he had actually retaliated and hurt a boy because he got angry, so he I believe he grabbed the boy from the neck or something, I don't know who it was and I was sort of taken aback, Martin doing that, it doesn't seem right... (QU:14:67:31)

That both mother and grandmother spoke of this specific event as one of the most significant and devastating bullying experiences is indicative that this type of behaviour from Martin was out of character, giving rise to the question of whether this type of behaviour was in retaliation or out of reaction. This will be reviewed in the discussion.

5.3.6 Discussion of experiences of innocent versus wicked

All of the participants had been bullied continuously since Grade 1, whilst only one of their parents was unaware of this situation until commencement of this study. Despite the differing experiences of being bullied, each of the participants conveyed
the debilitating effects, each having been bullied by their peers to a greater or lesser extent, commencing in Grade 1. To date the bullying has been in the form of mostly verbal, physical, relational, property and behavioural bullying. Racial and sexual bullying have occurred to a lesser extent in that they have been specifically aimed at certain participants, whereas cyberbullying and coercing have not been experienced by any of the participants. Another intriguing finding is that certain apparent symptoms of trauma exhibited by one of the participants, Martin, seem to have encouraged bullying behaviours by his peers at times. These include crying easily and temper outbursts or rages. Craig, on the other hand, seems to have attracted bullying at times for ethnic reasons and Kade for his excellent cricket skills.

Of significance is that similar patterns of being bullied were encountered by each of the participants. Craig was regularly followed, Martin called names (e.g., ‘gay Satanist’, ‘Ebola rapist’) and Kade attracted bullying by older boys because of his cricket. In addition, the social role of bullying in the peer group emerged as a phenomenon in that the two of the participants were also bullied by groups of their peers. It emerged that only one of the participants has been bullied by a single individual over a long time, in addition to being bullied by a variety of different children over the years, one also identified different types of children who bullied through use of dangerous animals. The study revealed that friends also played a role in the participants’ bullying experiences, one of the three participant’s friends having come to his rescue, whereas two of the three experienced being bullied by their friends. One played the role of a popular bully. Besides being bullied by their peers, the study revealed how two of the participants were also bullied by their junior teachers and it transpired that two of the participants were bullied at home by their siblings and that one was also bullied by an older relative. The study indicated that cultural beliefs, such as viewing aggressive behaviour as a way of showing affection, seemed to sustain and perpetuate the cycle of bullying, rendering the individual being bullied as helpless. Finally, as with the above behaviours, the role of the participant also raised the question of whether this was in retaliation or out of reaction.

Craig and Pepler (2003) developed a series of four questions to facilitate a risk assessment for individuals being bullied. The first asked how frequently the bullying
occurred, with the authors contending that if once a week or more then she/he was at high risk of developing problems and therefore required immediate intervention and monitoring. In my study the only participant found to be bullied daily was Martin, with Craig stating that he was bullied once a week or twice a month, and Kade inconsistently, in varying contexts. The second question raised by Craig and Pepler (2003) concerned the history of being bullied, as individuals with a long history of being bullied were at the most risk of mentioned problems and required the most intensive interventions. In my study, all three participants’ experiences of being bullied commenced in Grade 1 and continued, albeit at different rates, up until the commencement of this study, a period of four to five years later. Of interest, Wolke, Woods and Samara (2009) found that children who were bullied at age six were at twice the risk of being bullied two to four years later. Their third question asked in how many different places or relationships the bullying occurred (Craig & Pepler, 2003), and the more pervasive the bullying the more the child was part of the high risk group. In this study it was found that Martin was bullied within the school context, by a multiple number of boys in the same Grade. Craig, on the other hand, used to be bullied at home by his surrogate siblings, in addition to being bullied at school by children in his own Grade, as well as by older boys. It was found that Kade was being bullied by his older brother at home, by his older cousin en route to school as well as in his home environment, and by children in his Grade and older boys. The fourth question asked how serious was the aggressive behaviour and the impact the bullying has on the individual assessed by the distress it caused the victim (Craig & Pepler, 2003). The findings in my study revealed that all three participants presented with symptoms of stress and vocalised being bullied in a negative light. The findings thus reveal that all three were at high risk of being further bullied.

With such a frequency and long history of being bullied it is reasonable to assume that the participants’ parents would be knowledgeable about their children’s experiences of being bullied. In line with the findings of Sawyer, Mishna, Pepler and Wiener (2011), although most of the participant’s parents were aware of their children’s bullying (as in perpetrators) not all of were aware of their child being bullied (as in ‘victim’). One set of parents only became aware that their son was being bullied at the commencement of this study. These parents were of the opinion that Kade socialised mainly with the “sporting fraternity” (QU:25:49:279) and
although he did mention the names of other boys with whom he socialised to his parents, they had not met them because of their non-involvement in sport. It seems that because of this perception, the parents had no reason to doubt that their son was vulnerable to being bullied. According to Macdonald and Swart (2004, p. 50), a culture that “…places an emphasis on sport… [such as in South Africa], subtly results … in distinguishing between the 'cool' and the ‘nerds’”, thereby limiting his chances of being bullied. The ‘cool’ refers to the sportsmen and the ‘nerds’ to the academics.

Over the years, the participants in this study have experienced a variety of forms of bullying (see chapter 3.3, Figure 3.1). All three participants had experienced mainly verbal and physical bullying, which corresponds with Greeff and Grobler's (2008) findings among boys in a South African study. Relational bullying has been experienced by all three participants, corroborating findings of Felix and McMahon (2007) that boys also experience this form of bullying. Other forms, including, property-related, behavioural, racial and sexual were also experienced by some of the participants, however, none were found to have experienced coercive or cyber bullying. This finding regarding the latter form also arose in Gauteng province, South Africa, among middle childhood children (Louw, 2011).

Each of the participants also exhibited certain personality traits which from the outset of Grade 1 initially attracted bullying. From a social constructionist perspective, Burr argues that such traits are not stable over time and change “…depending on who we are with, what we are doing and why” (Burr, 2003, p. 31). However, according to Rigby (2002a), certain negative personality characteristics have been detected among children for being bullied, notably Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) ‘person characteristics’ listed in Chapter 2.3.2, each represented or displayed by a participant in Grade 1 and which initially seemed to attract the bullying. Martin used to cry and lose his temper, which may be regarded as Bronfenbrenner’s disposition related to temperament; Craig was teased for being coloured and called “a yellow boy and a shorty” (QU:44:2), as Bronfenbrenner’s demand characteristic; whilst Kade was teased about his cricket, as what Bronfenbrenner referred to as a bioecological resource. This latter finding negates Rigby’s argument that positive characteristics identified by Tim Field have been found to be lacking in children who are bullied (Rigby, 2002). Of further interest, is that similar patterns of being bullied
were displayed by each of the participants. Craig, for example, was regularly followed, Martin called names and Kade attracts bulling by older boys for his cricket. This may be a less straightforward symptom of trauma that “…we are inextricably drawn into situations that replicate the original trauma in both obvious and less obvious ways” (Levine, 2008, p. 19).

The findings of this study also highlighted the apparent social role of bullying by the peer group, as two of the participants had experienced being bullied by groups of their peers. Rigby (2003b) brings to attention how bullying is influenced as a response to group and peer pressures within the school. Salmivalli (2010) also argues that being bullied is more than just a series of aggressive interactions between the person bullying and the person being bullied, claiming how the peer group is influenced by the bully for a variety of reasons and hence often reinforces bullying behaviour by behaving in ways that are rewarding to the child who is bullying, but discouraging to the child who is being bullied, in Craig’s and Martin’s experiences being followed and shouted or stared at respectively. Salmivalli (2010) also states that the social role in the peer group has many social consequences for the child being bullied, because besides being persistent it also tends to deteriorate over time, as the dislike for the child becomes endemic. This perhaps also explains why in Martin’s case, one of the children, Jack, continued to bully him for many years. Not only did his mother’s friendship with Jack’s mother reinforce the bullying behaviour but so too did the peer group. This also seems to explain Martin’s experience of long routes and quick routes of bullying, the former being indicative of the main person who bullies, the latter symbolic of the role of the peer group.

Reasons found for peers conforming to the bullying behaviour include pressure within the friendship group to maintain it (Burns, Maycock, Cross, & Brown, 2008); keeping their position in a perceived popular peer group (Witvliet et al., 2010); and as a desire to be accepted by the group (Olthof & Goossens, 2008), because peers give reputational support to some aggressive children (Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl, & Van Acker, 2006). This finding was confirmed in this study. Poyhonen, Juvonen and Salmivalli (2010) also point out that pro-social behaviours, such as feelings of empathy for a child who is being bullied, may not be displayed, unless a child feels secure enough within the peer group, because
of the interactive effects of its behaviour (empathy) and the context (peer acceptance). This is a good example of Bronfenbrenner's (2005) emphasis on the bidirectional influences between the person and his/her contexts. In this study, Craig displayed empathy when he asked his friend to stop bullying the Grade 3 children, confirming the above finding as Craig felt secure in this friendship.

Martin also used various forms of wild animals to describe his experiences of children who had bullied him. According to the literature, there are different types of children who bully, such as pure bullies and bully-victims (children who bully but also are bullied) (Ball et al., 2008; Farmer et al., 2010; Holt & Espelage, 2007; Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). Martin used the crocodile, spider, rhino, leopard and phoenix to describe different forms of pure bullies, suggesting that children who bully are not a homogeneous group. Peeters, Cillessen and Scholte (2010, p. 1041) found three sub-types of bullies for both young adolescent boys and girls, namely, “...a popular intelligent group, a popular moderate group and an unpopular – less socially intelligent group”. The findings in this study confirm that there are popular intelligent children who bully, such as Evan, who may resemble Martin’s Phoenix which thinks he is the good guy who is untouchable. Conversely, there are unpopular, less socially intelligent children who bully, such as Jack, who may resemble the spider who is venomous and destroys self-confidence, the dinosaur who is too big to beat or the crocodile which has a hard skin and nothing seems to hurt. The popular moderate child who bullies may resemble Martin’s leopard which hurts other people to hurt him, or Kade’s cousin who hurt his dog.

In this study, it became apparent that Martin also depicted the monster, hippo and lion as representing children who bully, but were also bullied, implicating the heterogeneous nature of so-called bully-victims. According to Yang and Salmivalli (2013), bully-victims are more physical and verbal than pure bullies when bullying. When they are being bullied they are susceptible to more forms of being bullied than the child who is just bullied (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). Farmer et al. (2010) found that children who bully formed part of groups in which there were few children who were bullied and that half of the group was not involved in any form of bullying behaviour. In contrast, bully-victims were found to be part of groups that consisted of bullies and
victims (Farmer et al., 2010). Martin relayed that the hippo child who bullied “needs other people to feel worse for him to feel better” (QU:17:115:63); the rhino children who bully, “they only attack if they are agitated” (QU:17:116:63); the monster child that bullies is described as, “one who has been bullied, so he bullies you” (QU:17:95:121).

Experiences of being bullied by friends, was another finding that emerged in two of the participants’ life experiences. Although friends have been regarded as protective factors against being bullied (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003), there are friendships which can serve as both protective and risk factors within the relationship (Daniels, Quigley, Menard, & Spence, 2010). According to Daniels et al. (2010, p. 78), “…friendships are not necessarily sanctuaries from harm.” This indeed was found to be the case in this study. Mishna, Wiener and Pepler (2008) found that the majority of children she interviewed were bullied by a friend, and it was just as common as being bullied by peers. Wei and Jonson-Reid (2011) also found that a significant proportion of bullying events occur in the context of perceived friendships, with half of these parents or teachers unaware about this conflicted relationship, as the children felt that by telling an adult they might lose their friend or get him/her into trouble (Mishna et al., 2008). Kade conveyed this feeling. Craig and Pepler (2003) argue that these type of peer relationships can be generalise to other developmentally significant relationships.

Bullying by teachers at a young age of development was experienced by two of the participants. The literature about bullying by teachers is sparse and leaves a wide gap, however, it became apparent that the attitudes teachers display towards bullying affects children’s actions (Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2014). This explains why Craig scribbled further and was sullen after the teacher told him she was going to tell his mother about his untidy handwriting. Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco and Brethour (2006) found that 45 per cent of teachers admitted to having bullied a student. Furthermore, a study of bullying in a primary school in Gauteng also revealed how teachers unwittingly bullied children (Macdonald, 2003), whilst “Disrespect for the learners by the educators emanated from humiliating learners in front of their peers, name-calling, passing sarcastic comments, picking on learners and gentle but aggressive physical forms of retaliation” (Macdonald & Swart, 2004, p. 47). It has also been found that teachers
who are unfair contribute significantly to bullying behaviour among children (Lenzi et al., 2014; Santinello, Vieno, & De Vogli, 2011). According to Twemlow et al. (2006), teachers who bully not only have a negative effect on the school environment but also traumatisate children who consequently present with learning and psychiatric problems.

Besides teacher bullying, bullying by siblings was also experienced by two participants. Again, there seems to be a gap in the literature regarding this relationship, reported by several authors (Hoetger, Hazen, & Brank, 2015; Jenkins Tucker, Finkelhor, Turner, & Shattuck, 2013; Skinner & Kowalski, 2013). According to Craig and Pepler (2003), bullying occurs in different relationships and contexts, including the home, where bullying among siblings takes place. As pointed out in Chapter 2.3, Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model acknowledges the role the various different contexts of the child’s social environment have on his/her development. Tanrikulu and Campbell (2015) and Skinner and Kowalski (2013) found that sibling bullying was higher than peer bullying, whilst Hoetger et al. (2015) found that the participants reported bullying behaviours among their siblings as similar to peer bullying, but occurring more often. Bullying by siblings has also been associated with bullying by peers at school (Menesini, Camodeca, & Nocentini, 2010), with Wolke and Skew (2013, p.17) pointing out how children who are bullied both at home and at school, “...have up to 14 times increased odds of behavioural or emotional problems compared to those involved in only one context or not at all.” In addition, it was found that children who had experienced sibling bullying in the previous year for both mild and severe forms of bullying presented with significantly worse mental health (Jenkins Tucker et al., 2013). However, the findings in this study cannot verify this.

Bullying among siblings is apparently widespread and nearly normative (Skinner & Kowalski, 2013; Wolke & Skew, 2012), because as they underestimate the effect of their bullying behaviour they are more likely to be honest and open about their treatment of each other (Skinner & Kowalski, 2013). It has also been argued that sibling bullying may become normalised, as it was found that such incidents went unreported (Hoetger et al., 2015). Gottesman's (2013) claim that sibling bullying can easily be mistaken for sibling rivalry was verified in this study. Menesini et al. (2010) stipulate that an older brother is a risk factor for sibling bullying, as sibling
bullying was more common amongst boys with an older brother. Both the participants in this study were bullied by older siblings, in “…a pattern of behaviour in which one child is the victim and one is the perpetrator” (Gottesman, 2013, p. 42). Monks et al. (2009) state that in families one sibling has the capacity to bully the other as they are rarely equal in terms of age, size and strength. These authors also argue that because of this power differential the conflict that occurs between the siblings is destructive rather than constructive (Monks et al., 2009). The most common method of being bullied by siblings was found to be through verbal teasing in a hurtful way (83 per cent), followed by being physically bullied (69 per cent) and excluded or ignored (66 per cent) (Skinner & Kowalski, 2013). For Wolke and Skew (2013), sibling bullying remained stable over time, unlike peer bullying which decreased during adolescence. In contrast, Finkelhor’s research found that assaults by siblings peaked for the six to nine year olds, with a significant decline as a consequence of spending less time together when older (Finkelhor et al., 2009b), while Jenkins Tucker et al. (2013, p. 80) indicated that the rate of sibling bullying was at its height before adolescence, then peaks during adolescence “…when the highest rates of injury and weapon use are reported.”

One of the participants in this study, Kade, articulated that his brother bullied him when he was younger, but not now that he was older. This supports Finkelhor et al.’s (2009b) findings. Craig, no longer lived with his surrogate brothers or sister so there was no evidence to support any of these findings.

Just as Craig and Pepler (2003) point out how bullying occurs in different relationships and contexts, this study found that one of the participants was also bullied by his older cousin. A study of the literature found no supporting evidence of this finding, indicating another gap in the literature. However, the experience of Kade being bullied by his older cousin highlighted two factors. Firstly, it indicated how the macrosystem, i.e., the cultural norms and beliefs, as identified by Bronfenbrenner (2005) had an impact on Kade’s emotional wellbeing, as reflected in his father’s belief that the cousin’s hurting behaviour was a way of showing affection. Holding onto this belief prevented the father from intervening and helping his son, thus perpetuating the cycle of bullying. The second factor, perhaps highlights how the extended family should be incorporated into Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model in the microsystem.
Bullying by the innocent is another theme that emanated from the findings of this study, which implies that, on occasions, two of the participants appeared to resort to bullying behaviour when they were perceived to have retaliated by bullying back through strangling and punching. Frey, Pearson and Cohen (2015, p. 25) refer to the concept of ‘retaliation’ as “...a common response to bullying that predicts increased victimisation,” in that the peers influence this retaliation or revenge. This was to be found the case in this study. According to Camodeca and Goossens (2005), other studies have claimed that retaliation is a form of reactive aggression, selected by children who bully in response to provocation. I propose a different way of viewing these behaviours from the perspective of the child who is being bullied, as the concept retaliation, in my opinion, does not appropriately explain the participant’s aggressive reactions. Furthermore, their reactions do not match their peers provocative behaviour, which Frey et al. describe as, “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (Frey et al., 2015, p. 25).

I argue instead, that the participant's reactions are not conscious decisions to retaliate, but rather unconscious, irrational and spontaneous reactions that are triggered by provocative behaviours, which may appear harmless to the onlooker or perpetrator, yet the perpetrator purposefully provokes this reaction. I claim that such reactions are the responses of a traumatised brain, seen by Levine and Kline (2006) as having a distinctly different physiology from a non-traumatised one, responding to the slightest threat and being sensitive to the tiniest trigger. Levine and Kline (2006) describe how the higher neocortical brain, responsible for thought and reason lies dormant, while the amygdala or survival brain awakens when triggered, thereby rendering the individual incapable of reasoning the fear away and instead acting out with extreme emotion.
5.3.7 Experiences of supportive relationships

Table 5.6: Superordinate and sub-themes of experiences of supportive relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences of supportive relationships</th>
<th>Positive and negative perceptions of friendships</th>
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<td>Positive and negative perceptions of grandparents</td>
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<td>Positive and negative perceptions of family (parents, mother, father, siblings, domestic)</td>
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<td>Positive and negative perceptions of the self</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Positive and negative perceptions of support at school (teacher, counsellor, interventions, discipline)</td>
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<td>Positive and negative perceptions of the community (security/crime, shaolin, EQ course)</td>
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Supportive relationships, despite being found to be an extraordinary resource for all three of the participants in this study, were also found to have a negative impact in the participants’ lives. Figure 5.18 provides an ATLAS.ti 7.5 network view of the findings of experiences of supportive relationships.
Figure 5.18: ATLAS.ti 7.5 – Network view of superordinate themes, sub-themes, codes, and quotation codes of experiences of supportive relationships
5.3.7.1 Positive and negative perceptions of friendships

It became apparent that friends were an important source of support for all three participants when being bullied or in trouble of some sort. Craig’s use of the object of Pegasus (QU:9:10) in the sand tray (refer to Figure 4.9) epitomises the importance of this for all three participants. Craig conveyed it as being symbolic of, “… a hero. They always is there to help me when I am in a case of bullying” (QU:8:129:163). Mrs Lewis conveyed that a girlfriend\(^{71}\) of Craig’s came to his rescue when he was being strangled by a peer in Grade 1:

...and on that day this boy was bullying Craig and was strangling him and Betty, the love of his life, jumped on this boy’s back, started beating him and strangling him and I think she actually bit him on his back and with that he actually let go. (QU:6:402:60)

Mrs Carr also remarked that a friend was important because “…when Martin talks about the bullying and when he feels like he’s got that support, he, suddenly he feels so much better” (QU:27:8:38), and “...because it is somebody else that can actually see what is happening, and understand what's actually going on” (QU:27:8:40). Kade also chose to represent friends as a significant life experience in his collage (Figure 4.5), and mentioned that, “I like friends because they help you through a lot of stuff whether you are hurt, sad, happy” (QU:42:8:172). Kade said, “Like when I got attacked by the dog, it was teamwork” (QU:42:8:170), and recalled the following about his best friend Evan, during the dog attack experience: “I saved him, he saved me. Like when we were running I helped him up the wall (makes the same body movement as he did when he mentioned the wall part earlier), he ran and called for safety, I got saved” (QU:42:8:174). This traumatic experience also evoked support from the boys in his Grade as well as their parents, which in turn brought about happiness, as portrayed by Mrs Abbot in this next interview excerpt:

But it was so overwhelming, the amount of love and support but we got from the Egoli boys,..... we had two moms arrive here with food for us....I hadn’t bathed for two days and I had my hair in a ponytail , hadn’t slept in a week and we just had visitors upon visitors and some days I would sit here quietly crying because he would smile, and it would be like okay we’ve got a smile, he’s happy, um and he’s on the road to recovery. (QU:25:55:405)

\(^{71}\) Friendship rather than romantic relationship
From the above, the words teamwork, save, hero, help, support and understand collectively bring a sense of synergy to the value of friendships in situations which are potentially fearful or unsafe for all three of the participants. This support brings about not only happiness but also healing. This is indicated by Mrs Carr’s use of the words “feels so much better” and Mrs Abbot’s of “he’s on the road to recovery.” The symbol of Pegasus (Figure 5.19) used by Craig also conveys this metaphorically. This support also cut across age and gender, because it induces relief for the parents too.

Figure 5.19: Pegasus

Best friends also seemed to evoke happiness in all three of the participants’ lives, whereas a lack or loss of friends had the opposite effect. This is neatly encapsulated in the following interview excerpts from Martin’s life experiences. Martin’s mother stated that for Martin to be happy, “He needs to have a best friend” (QU:13:316:259) and “…one thing that definitely makes a difference, is having a best friend. It just makes all the difference. He is just so happy when he has got a best friend” (QU:27:21:90). Martin also conveyed this happiness when he said he was a number 1 on a scale of 0-10, 0 being happy and 10 being unhappy, “Because I've got plenty of stuff going on with my best friend” (QU:17:103:197). Mrs Carr informed me that Martin’s Grade 6 year had been phenomenal because, “He’s got a best friend” (QU:27:7:29). He apparently met Richard on the first day of school when he sat down next to him and from that moment had been inseparable. She also communicated that his new best friend Richard was initially also teased for being gay
because of being friends with Martin, but, “...somehow... they have stayed friends, which is fantastic” (QU:27:7:31). This is unlike his previous friendship with Kevin, which ended abruptly with no explanation given. Mrs Carr mentioned that this caused Martin to feel sad and hurt because he questioned, “…why Kevin doesn’t like me? But I don’t think it’s a thing of Kevin doesn’t like him, I think it is a thing that Kevin doesn’t like being bullied because he is friends with him” (QU:27:21:90).

From the above, it is evident that a ‘best friend’ for Martin was important as it made him feel valuable and validated him as a person. A best friend was also important for the other two participants because, as Craig said, “…this is my best friend’s family (pointing to Lions) (QU:8:98:3), whilst Kade stated, “…Evan Baker is my best friend” (QU:42:6:154). That Richard remained friends with Martin despite also being called gay also validated Martin as a person and built his sense of self-worth rather than eroding it, such as when his previous best friend ended the relationship with no explanation.

All the participants demonstrated changes in friendship over time. Mrs Carr, Martin’s mother, mentioned that, “…the first term of every year, from Grade Two... has...always been a complete disaster and it's because he hasn't actually established that friendship yet” (QU:13:316:263). Martin reportedly had lost good friends because “…you see what has happened with Martin, every time he makes a really good friend, they leave” (QU:13:270:200). However, Mrs Carr also reported that one friendship ended without explanation:

…he made a fantastic good friend at the end of Grade 4 and we actually don’t know what happened. We have no idea why this little boy won’t be friends with him anymore but, we suspect it is because the boys were calling Martin ‘gay’ and they would call this kid gay, because he was friends with him. (QU:13:270:202)

It also became apparent that Kade’s friendships at school had changed over the last year from being friends with sporty boys only to including boys “…not necessarily in the sporting fraternity…” (QU:25:49:279), or boys “…more on the academic side” (QU:25:49:283). His father stated that, “Last year he was very much with his cricket friends” (QU:25:49:289), however, Craig seemed to be the participant who perhaps demonstrated the most change in friendships, as apparent when he generally refrained from using specific names to talk about his friends, apart from mentioning two names in his first interview (QU:7:131:144) or when I asked him to recall the
name of a specific friend (QU:8:100:18). He preferred to use only words such as “my friend” (QU:8:100:15) or “friends” (QU:8:106:23) when referring to various experiences. Both the avoidance of using specific names when referring to friends, as well as mentioning different names of friends each time I inquired about them also verified the change in friendships. This may be regarded as part of normal development, but too many changes can also indicate difficulties with social interaction.

The desperate need to have a friend emerged as a theme and is best conveyed by Craig in the following interview excerpt:

A boy in the class next door to me. Charles Thomson. He is sensitive, he doesn't have any friends, I try and be his friend sometimes, but sometimes whenever I try and help him with something, he says something mean about me, the way I am, the way I sound, the way I look, the way I dress. He always tries to find a way to say something bad so he can get me off him, but in the meantime I am just trying to help him. (QU:8:111:49)

One day whilst on the playground I observed Craig pushing one of two boys down the embankment then following them as if desperately trying to be included in this friendship (Memos: Observations:10 September 2014). Martin also at times forced himself into a friendship when he indicated that one of his friends Ian, “…says we are not friends, but he knows we are” (QU:16:106:91). Martin reported that “…I try talking to him and he is like, “We’re not friends!” (says it with a mean voice) (QU:16:106:107). It is clear that in each of these situations the participants were oblivious to the rejection of the friendship yet continued to impose themselves onto various individuals. In the first instance, Craig displayed empathy, as he was sensitive to the needs of this boy, however, a deficit of social skills is noted in both boys’ behaviours, in the latter two examples indicating a lack of emotional intelligence.

Two of the three participants also had good relationships with girls. Martin’s mother reported that Martin has always got on better with girls than with boys, “…because he has never been a rough and tumble kind of boy. He doesn’t like to get hurt, he doesn’t like to feel sore, feel pain” (QU:13:309:161). The role of a girlfriend72 played an important part in Martin’s life, as he divulged that, “…she just loves me” (QU:16:130:42). Helga, Martin’s grandmother, imparted that after Martin was called

72 Friendship rather than romantic relationship
gay he got “thumbsed up” (QU:14:71:49), that is received positive affirmation, from others in the class when they found out that he had a girlfriend. Apparently Martin felt good when “…they acknowledged him as being a man” (QU:14:71:49), though he also communicated that, “…they also tease me by saying bad things to my girlfriend, about my girlfriend” (QU:16:124:59). As mentioned earlier, Craig too had a girlfriend who once came to his rescue, but Jeanne-Pierre, his friend, relayed that Craig gets bullied because of her as the boys tease him by saying, “Why would you go out with her, she’s the ugliest girl in the world?” (Memos: Conversation: 4 June 2014). In both these situations, the girlfriends prove to be a source of strength in that they induce positive feelings, but also attracted bullying behaviour.

It became apparent that even though certain friends can play a supportive role they can also have a negative influence. Kade’s mother mentioned that after Kade was bitten by the dogs there was a marked change in his behaviour, as indicated in the following interview excerpt:

…but after the dog bite, we saw quite a change in Kade and we thought that Evan was having a very bad influence on Kade in terms of the way that Kade was acting, some of the things that he was downloading on his iPad after Christmas, the way that he was talking… (QU:25:45:182)

Kade’s parents wondered, “…is it a reaction to what happened with the dogs? Or is it Evan? And then we said it must be Evan who’s got this negative influence on Kade because this is how he is speaking to his parents…” (QU:25:45:182). Kade’s parents then came to the conclusion that it was Evan, “because he would literally change personality when Evan was around” (QU:25:45:182). The parents therefore “…took a decision to (indicates with hands to end the relationship) not to let them see each other for a period of time, which we don’t know if we did the right thing or the wrong thing to do and they’ve only just started seeing each other again, now the last three weeks (QU:25:49:289).

Although none of the other participants were negatively affected by friends’ behaviour I included this because Kade’s behaviour changed simultaneously at the time of his trauma with the dogs. The bullying may also have been happening. It was established that Kade’s friend’s parents were going through a separation at the time, which would have affected his friend’s behaviour, however, it is possible that Kade’s
behaviour changed as a combination of the consequence of his trauma, being bullied and the influence of his friend’s behaviour.

5.3.7.2 Positive and negative perceptions of grandparents

The role of grandparents in the participants' lives also unfolded as significant life experiences. Mrs Lewis explained that Craig felt good and positive about himself and responded well to unconditional love and patience which his paternal grandfather had in abundance:

*His grandfather,… is very much painted in the same way, and Craig worships and adores him. And he had endless amounts of… time, where the world stops with my grandchildren and nothing is more important than being with them. That's the old man and he will patiently teach them skills such as making a fire, fishing, how to cook, how to cast, patience of three saints.* (QU:6:351:42)

In contrast, Mrs Lewis reported that Craig did not respond to the conditional love, criticism or impatience displayed by his other grandfather, Mrs Lewis's father, as outlined in the excerpt from the interview below:

*Rugby and cricket and those kind of competitive sports like that, he hates them. And the thing is he missed that whole gap to have someone to teach him to do all of that stuff. Then there is my father, they used to come here every single day, but my dad is that impatient, time urgent, corporate, children are to be at home with the wife person, you know men have important business stuff to do73 and absolutely sport nut…. Sport is the only other important thing in the whole world, and the teacher is terrible, a very impatient, very critical if you can't get it right well…and Craig didn't respond well to that, at all.* (QU:6:352:42)

Unconditional love versus conditional love clearly had an impact on Craig's self-esteem, as well as the activities in which he engaged. The unconditional love he received from his paternal grandfather, in the absence of a father figure, made him feel good about himself and he learned the skill of fishing. In contrast, his maternal grandfather did not form a meaningful relationship with him and Craig did not develop a love for sport. This latter may have made him more susceptible to being bullied.

Martin’s grandmothers also served different roles, with his paternal grandmother (Figure 5.20) entertaining him: “… every weekend I go to her we have a lot of fun. We might go and play golf, we used to go to the ice rink, she wouldn't do it though I

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73 Bold indicates placing emphasis on words when talking
would. Sometimes we would go and see a movie if there was one on (QU:16:127:25).

His maternal grandmother (Figure 5.21), on the other hand, seems to fulfil daily routines such as picking up the children from school then looking after them in the afternoons. Martin said that, “...when I go to her house, we both lie down on her bed and watch TV. We just browse and find something we like to watch” (QU:16:128:29). It also became apparent that Martin told his maternal grandmother more about his bullying experiences than his mother:

I’ll say to him, “have you had a good day today?” And he’ll say. “Not really or it's been great” you know, but he is very responsive and he does talk to me and umm a couple of times I have sort of left it, which I should have mentioned to Wendy on the same day. (QU:14:64:23)

His grandmothers both played different but positive roles in his life. It is interesting to note how he talked about his bullying experiences to the grandmother who collected him from school, and because he was comfortable with both grandmothers and his mother it might have been easier to talk about bullying experiences in the heat of the moment rather than at a later stage.

5.3.7.3 Positive and negative perceptions of family (parents, mother, father, siblings, domestic)

All three participants conveyed the importance of a family in their lives, as illuminated in Kade’s picture of his family which is placed centrally on his collage (Figure 4.5),
just off centre in Craig’s sand tray (refer to Figure 4.9), where he represented his family as the cheetahs, leopard and baby elephant (QU:9:2), and on the first page of Martin’s book in illustrations of people he loved in which his parents are placed centrally (QU:18:2-4) (Refer to Figure 4.4).

The effect of both the presence and absence of parents in the participants’ lives is illustrated in the following examples. Holidays emerged as a happy and influential time for each of the participants to bond with their families, whereas time apart evoked stress. A picture of Mauritius in Kade’s collage (Figure 4.5) depicts the significance of holidays. Kade verbalised, “Ja, it was really nice, because you spend a lot of time on the beach and stuff together” (QU:42:5:132). Craig’s mother also highlighted this in a comment, “…And what we also wanted was time for us to bond as a family” (QU:6:67:27), whilst talking about their trip to Argentina. In addition, Martin’s father commented that, “We saw the country. We would go away for weekends or a week’s holiday here or there to go and see the sights. I think he enjoyed it a lot. He became one of the most travelled kids around” (QU:13:257:99), when talking about their stay in America. In contrast, each of the participants felt the strain on the family bond when family members separated from the family. This is concisely indicated by Craig when he announced, “I want a dad” (QU: 6:334:25) for a birthday present a while after his father’s death. Examples illustrating this from Martin’s life include when Martin’s mother revealed, “Obviously we have had stressful times, you know where, he’s travelling a lot” (QU:13:297:343), whilst talking about the memories of her husband travelling when Martin was six years old. Martin’s father explained, “I had a job at one stage where I was travelling every three weeks of four” (QU:13:297:344). In addition, Martin conveyed the effect it had on him when his mother returned to work:

Well I had tons and tons of spare time so, I could ask her to please bring my kitbag or please can you pick me up now or now the thing changed. Nowadays she is very busy at work, and she’d tell me my Gran or my dad… (QU:16:129:41)

The above conveys that the participants felt happy when they were able to spend quality time with their families, when on holiday, bonding and having fun. In moments such as these, there was little or no stress, but in contrast, when a parent was missing regularly from the home environment over a period of time, stress was felt by the participants. In Martin’s life, his mother was stressed when his father travelled
and it impacted negatively on Martin’s life at that age of six years. Furthermore, it became apparent that Martin was placed under stress when his mother could no longer help him in moments when he needed her to either bring something along to school that he had forgotten or to be collected from school should the need arise.

The role of the participants’ siblings was also important, as exemplified by Kade’s mother mentioning that Kade and his older brother, “…do clash, but then they have their times, where they are the best of mates and they can play for hours in the garden” (QU:25:60:537). Mr Abbot explained:

That’s how Kade actually learnt to play cricket. Kyle taught him, not me. Kyle did. Kyle wanted to play cricket and he needed a bowler. So he got Kade, “Kade bowl.” So that’s why Kade has become such a good bowler. Because he had to bowl the balls to Kyle. And Kyle spent many hours with him. (QU:25:60:538)

The parent’s perception was verified by Kade in the following statements: “Ja. Now I want to be like my brother one day. I want to be playing at the Wanderers\(^{74}\) and all of that” (QU:42:17:248), but “…he sometimes be’s really mean to me” (QU:43:6:153).

Kade’s father’s words “he needed a bowler” followed by the instruction, ‘Kade bowl’ imply that Kade’s brother was using Kade to satisfy his own interests rather than appease Kade’s needs. Kade, being the younger, enjoyed the attention he was receiving from his older brother and did not stop to ask why he was invariably bowling, the more strenuous activity in cricket, and not also batting, generally the more fun aspect. Although Kade learnt the valuable skill of bowling as a consequence, it is important not to let this apparent helpful act detract from times when he was mean to his brother. In both situations, his brother abused his power of being the older sibling to satisfy his own needs. Mrs Lewis also likened this relationship Craig had with his older surrogate brother Letsego: “They were close, they were as thick as thieves but Craig would be very cross when he had to fight with him, and they were very close as brothers but Craig would capitulate to Letsego (QU:6:324:13). However, despite this, Craig also recalls good moments with his surrogate siblings “…we would all wake up, watch some TV, play games, climb up trees. We had fun most of the time” (QU:8:127:141).

\(^{74}\) The main cricket ground in Johannesburg.
The word ‘capitulate’ sums up succinctly what occurs in both these relationships that involve an older sibling, as a power differential which in both these cases is age. It is important that whilst sibling rivalry may be regarded as normal it also be distinguished from sibling relationships which are contaminated with the elements of bullying.

The significance of the participant’s relationships with their fathers also emanated as an important theme. It transpired that the relationships each of the participants’ had with their fathers may be regarded as both frustrating and helpful, as shown in the following excerpt regarding Kade’s father helping him with his homework:

...like last year he was battling with fractions, so I said, “do you know your fractions?” Yes, he knows his fractions. I said, “Okay, bring me your book.” So, he brought his book and we went through his fractions, but he didn’t know his fractions. But now he wants to argue with me that he knows his fractions. So I get upset, “Kadey, I’m not doing this because I’ve got nothing else to do, I’m trying to help you.” So eventually we get over the argument of whether I’m helping or not, or is he taking it seriously or not, then we get to actually doing it. Then he writes the test and he comes home and says, “thank you dad, I wouldn’t have done so well in the exam if you didn’t help me in fractions”. (QU:25:63:503)

Craig too illustrated this in his comments that, “This dad, can be nice sometimes, very nice, but then when he is cross, he can become a boiling kettle of water, but it is nice to have a new dad” (QU:7:126:98), because “It has helped me in lots of ways, like in dads and lads stuff at school. I used to not be able to go because I didn’t have a dad and my uncle, sometimes we could go with him, but sometimes we couldn’t” (QU:7:127:100). Mrs Lewis also said that he felt safe with a father figure because he did not have “…the pressure that he had to look after me” (QU:6:337:27). Likewise, Martin’s mother indicated that “…he gave his dad a very dirty look one day, and I thought, my boy you’d better be careful. But you know what, I liked that he was pushing back. You know normally, he would just get upset, or take it, or just eat the damn food” (QU:27:15:74).

From the above passages, it is noted how Craig was the only participant who personally communicated the value of a father because he was the only participant who has experienced life without one. The other participants, on the other hand, took their fathers for granted. It was the father or mother of the other participants who disclosed how the helpful actions of the fathers outweighed the frustrations experienced by the participants.
Each participant was exposed to different forms of discipline over time. The parents said that certain parenting styles were found to be more effective than others. Kade’s mother revealed aspects which are central also to the other accounts.

Ja, I changed my approach. Because I felt that I travel so much in my job. You know, I’m gone a week a month basically. And life is so short Helen, I don’t want to argue with my child, all the time. So, I change my approach to how I speak to him and how our afternoon’s [dittos with fingers] “should” be together. I am still very strict, because I think routine is important to have. It sets the structure and it sets discipline in terms of you know your homework, um your sport, your school. Your school comes first before play dates. We are quite strict on that, we do not do play dates during the week. Um and I don’t ask a lot from him in the afternoon’s. We have the five rules. And that’s all I ask. Hang up your hat, hang up your blazer, take out your lunchbox, unpack your stuff, do your homework, mommy will be very happy. And it has taken a while, but he now, he now does it and he knows and Rosey knows five o’clock is bath time and if you haven’t finished your homework, you finish your homework. Only when you have finished your homework, after you’ve had a bath then you can watch TV. And since we’ve done that, and since I stopped with the lunchtime bickering (mom laughs), not eating his food, our relationship has grown a lot closer together you know. (QU:25:63:517)

Much information is conveyed here. Mrs Abbot indicates that she had taken control of a negative situation by changing her parenting style from an aggressive one to an assertive one. She did this by firstly deciding not to argue with Kade (screaming) then to establish a structure by introducing five rules to guide his behaviour. This structure provides guidelines, not just for Kade but also for the domestic who takes care of Kade. Moreover, the structure put in place eliminates confusion and the resulting tension, so contributing to an atmosphere of safety and security. This is also highlighted in the excerpt when Mrs Lewis conveyed how Craig recognised how her new husband compensated for her weaknesses:

I want this person to stay here in this house because I feel safer, I feel like there is someone who is big and strong and who has taken control of the situation and who is looking after my mommy and who is looking after us. (QU:6:405:40)

Evidence of being overprotective mothers, albeit in different ways, became apparent in all of the participants’ lives. For instance, Kade’s father said:

...like if I run late and she has to go out, she doesn't like Kade being on his own with the domestic worker even for five minutes, someone must be at home to look after him. If we go riding on our bikes, helmets on and when he goes out he’s got to wear six jerseys. (QU:25:58:453)

Kade’s father communicated that his wife wanted either him or her to be with Kade every moment he was at home, irrespective of Rosey their domestic being on the property, as well as having a secure house, so Kade’s mother then put stress on
herself and her husband when it was unnecessary by waiting for Kade’s father to get home before she leaves. Even though helmets are a necessity when riding a bicycle, wearing six jerseys is not, but is cited as a tongue-in-cheek example to highlight how Kade’s mother wanted to protect him from every eventuality. Similarly, Mrs Lewis was cautious about becoming involved with another man, because in her mind, “…men don’t do other men’s children very well, especially not their boys” (emphasis his) (QU:6:411:27).

The role of the domestic worker also played or had played an important part in each of the participant’s lives. Kade’s mother said: “They are thick as thieves. He is her other son. She would die for him. She does everything for him” (QU:25:61:492), whilst Kade’s father claimed, “He phones on his way home, he phones the domestic worker. ‘Rosey, I am on my way home get me my lunch ready, I'll have toast, scrambled eggs and I'll have tea’” (QU:25:61:491). Mrs Abbot added, “…she’ll say (demonstrates sending text message) ‘I’m making chicken tonight’. And he’ll say, ‘No, I want spaghetti.’ You know, so he dictates what happens from a food perspective…” (QU:25:61:492). Similarly, Mrs Lewis recalled that, “…she was at Craig’s beck and call. Craig controlled Gogo. That’s what he would call her. “Gogo!” He would lie in his bed (demonstrates) and ‘Gogo! Come here …want tea please’ as though he really was the little Lord of the mansion” (QU:6:6:60:23).

Of significance from both these examples is how the participants had a sense of control in their lives over their domestic worker when it came to food and beverages. They felt empowered by taking charge of their dietary requirements, yet simultaneously placed trust in them to provide the food they requested. This might have been a consequence of imitating their parents or might have counteracted the sense of lack of control in terms of power and trust they feel in other social relationships.

5.3.4.4 Positive and negative perceptions of the self

It was interesting to note how all three participants found it easier to deal with bullying that involved others than themselves. This manifested in a variety of different ways, for example, Craig’s finding it easier to stand up for others who were being bullied yet difficult for himself: “It is easier to ask them to stop bullying
somebody else” (QU:8:145:86). This sentiment was echoed throughout the interviews with Craig and his mother, often with references to Craig assisting others who he witnessed being bullied, such as when he observed an older boy terrorising Grade 3’s he stated, “I asked him to stop, I asked him to please stop, because he was terrorizing Grade Threes” (QU:8:147:61). Mrs Lewis also referred to a time when he was in Grade 2 when he stood up to a boy at a birthday party who had pulled another boy’s ears just after they had been operated on. He apparently said, “Mark you are a very nasty little boy and we don’t want to be your friend, so we are going to move our table and we are not going to play with you” (QU:6:398:42). However, when Craig was bullied it became apparent that he felt helpless, as portrayed in his sand tray when he used frogs to show this (Figure 5.22):

I made those three specifically next to each other, like bullies, and the blue one on top of the brown one, bullying someone. And the orange folk is his friend, but is not helping him at all. The bullies are on him, he's not helping them. He doesn't know what to do. (QU:8:100:11)

Figure 5.22: Frogs

Similarly, Martin’s reaction to a particular boy constantly calling him names each time he passed was: “I ignore him until we get to the next lesson” (QU:17:91:93).

The participants also found it easier to report others for being bullied, but refrained from doing this for themselves. Martin’s mother implied his lack of communication skills when she mentioned, “…we don’t always know when these things happen
because he says, I am used to it by now, I don't have to talk about it all the time” (QU:13:321:224). Moreover, Martin’s grandmother revealed several times, “If I don’t ask of anything he doesn't say a word, he doesn't talk about anything” (QU:14:70:49). Likewise, Kade had not told his teachers or parents about any of his bullying experiences until he came to me with a strange wish, “…the dogs bit me much worse then my leg would have come off, and then everyone would treat me with more respect” (QU:42:2:83). Kade also relayed that, “I don’t really tell the teachers” (QU:43:7:207), “Because I’m older and they’ll just think that I’m tittletaling” (QU:43:8:268). However, he remarked that should boys get involved in a punching fight, “I’d go and tell the teacher because it is very serious” (QU:43:8:274). Kade also disclosed that he only mentioned his bullying experiences to his friends but would, “…ask them to be quiet. I’d ask them not to say anything” (QU:43:10:258). From the above it is clear that none of the participants stood up for themselves in an assertive manner when being bullied, but would do this for others. This was exhibited in different ways. Their reluctance to confront people who bully or report their bullying experience to teachers or parents suggests a sense of helplessness when being bullied.

5.3.7.5 Positive and negative perceptions of support at school (teacher, counsellor, interventions, discipline)

A variety of perceptions of support pertaining to bullying from the school unravellled. Parental perceptions of two of the participant’s parents was summarised in Mrs Lewis’s conception of the way bullying was handled at the school, when she likened it to “… the South African way’ - until a baby dies or until somebody gets shot or until the child is beaten up and put in hospital, ag (throws hands up in air), it’s not on the crisis list” (QU:6:401:60). Mrs Lewis explained that much would happen before a child gets “panel beaten” (QU:6:401:60), but no attention was paid to “…the little cues leading up to that colossal event” (QU:6:401:60). Mr Carr also reiterated this when he mentioned several times that, in the past, “…they just brush any bullying incidents (uses hand to sweep) right under the carpet” (QU:13:310:182).
Apparent here is that both sets of parents felt that the school did not acknowledge the individual bullying incidents as they were not regarded as being sufficiently serious. However, the parents believed that the continuous nature of these incidents was having a cumulative effect on their children and consequently a detrimental outcome. This lack of understanding of the complexity of bullying became evident in an incident involving older boys bullying Craig when he was in Grade 3. According to Mrs Lewis, the Grade 3 teacher thought that the parents were:

*making a mountain out of a mole hill here, not taking into consideration, that this tiny little molehill...is a mountain superfluous, ready to explode into ugly stuff in somebody else's life, whether that be their self-esteem, how safe do we feel at school.* (QU:6:401:60)

Mrs Lewis explained that when Craig's Grade 3 teacher did not stop to pay attention to the details of an incident which involved bullying by much older boys, it sparked fury from her husband because it perpetuated the cycle of trauma:

*...they don't know properly the history of this boy, he's been traumatized, he's been hurt. If we don't teach them to stand up for themselves now or one of us stand up for him then it's going to perpetuate the cycle. He's always going to be the child that is hurt and bullied.* (QU:6:401:60)

In the above excerpts relevant and important pieces of information are revealed. Knowledge of a child’s traumatic history needs to be taken into consideration when dealing with bullying situations, because a traumatic child will be triggered more easily than a non-traumatised one. Hence, a lack of knowledge, in addition to a lack of effective training in understanding and managing bullying, perhaps explains why teachers may miss the obvious and potentially dangerous cues to appropriate intervention, which they then interpret as overreacting.

The support the participants received from their teachers, as perceived by their parents, played an important role in the participants’ lives, as well as the prevention and manifestation of bullying behaviours. Mrs Lewis used the term “Yummy Bubblegum” (QU:6:374:71) to describe a teacher who Craig liked because “…she is able to bring out the most marvellous things in little children and she can connect with them at some level” (QU:6:289:71). She then used the term “Attila the Hun” (QU:6:289:71) to describe his Grade 1 teacher as “…a warring, revolting, vengeful person” (QU:6:289:71) who “…was not good for Craig” (QU:6:289:71), because as portrayed earlier, “…she bullied those little boys...” (QU:6:375:71).
The metaphor and the strong use of language suggests that teachers who are perceived in this latter light probably encourage bullying, albeit unwittingly, in their classrooms, rather than bringing out the best behaviours, as portrayed in the first instance. This is elaborated upon in the following interview extracts.

Mrs Carr, Martin’s mother, stated that “…the whole Junior Prep years he did cry a lot. And he did get teased quite a lot for that and losing his temper…” (QU:13:310:169). She recalled organising a meeting with the Grade 2 class teacher whom she felt was unwittingly encouraging Martin to cry by saying:

> Ah, come Martin come here, give the teacher a hug, here is a chocolate, come sit here next to the teacher” in front of the class, so she would overcompensate for him being upset which meant that he was upset more and more. (QU:13:310:171)

It transpired that Martin continued to be teased because he cried a great deal and threw temper tantrums. The teacher unwittingly reinforced these behaviours by excessive care, which encouraged him to cry more, perpetuating the teasing in a vicious circle. This example demonstrates how a teacher can positively reinforce bullying by paying attention to the cues that attract it in the first place. Mrs Carr noted a great reduction in the number of tantrums and crying incidents following her meeting.

A lack of supervision also seemed to exacerbate bullying incidents. Martin claims that bullying happens “…more between classes. When there are no teachers there, or on the playground” (QU:17:100:179), or when “…the teacher just walks outside the classroom…they walk around and do things they’re not supposed to do” (QU:17:100:181).

From the above, it is evident how middle childhood boys utilise moments when teachers are absent to get up to mischief and to bully. An absence or insufficient communication around bullying also seemed to promote this behaviour. Martin’s father stated that he became upset when Martin was in Grade 2 and the school “…flat out denied to us that there were any bullying incidents at the school” (QU:13:310:182) and believed that the school “…need[s] to address it as part of the school ethos…” (QU:13:310:182) because:

> …we are not getting the feedback from our kid because he thinks that he shouldn’t talk about it or that was the case at that stage, now, fortunately getting a bit more open communication of it, but the school would have knowledge of events and just
do nothing about it or have a chat with the kids and as much as having a talk with the kids goes there doesn't seem to be any implications if you're a bully, there are no implications to your actions, well at least that is our perception. (QU:13:310:182)

As a consequence of this he felt that as parents they had to become engaged in the process as “...the school seems to evade the phrase bullying in total” (QU:13:310:252).

Mr Carr mentioned:

The parking lot network, you know that all schools hate. That network is a very powerful network and it’s actually very valuable, so whenever teachers and school headmasters say we don’t want to hear the parking lot network, they actually need to engage with it because it can be very valuable. It’s very valuable for the parents anyway. (QU:13:267:184)

Avoiding telling teachers about bullying incidents also demonstrates a lack of communication, albeit for different reasons, as indicated by Kade: “Because then they are going to get into trouble because of me and then they are going to come for me more often, so I just try to keep to myself” (QU:43:7:209). In addition, Kade revealed that he sometimes told his friends about being bullied, but refrained from doing so often, “Because sometimes they will tell on. Not tell on but tell the teacher, they try to be nice and try to help me” (QU:43:7:215). Martin also revealed that children at school did not go and tell the teachers about bullying, “Because people get bullied for telling on” (QU:17:98:155).

From the above it can be seen that when bullying is not part of regular communication, the communication between children, between children and their parents and teachers, becomes ‘blocked’, resulting in confusion among children, parents and teachers in that no-one knows how to respond to bullying incidents. For children the reasons for this may include feeling guilty and ashamed about being bullied, not knowing that they are being bullied, feeling that they are at fault for being bullied, or fearing that they will be bullied more if the persons bullying them are punished as a consequence. Teachers may have knowledge of an event but if they do not understand what bullying is they may easily overlook it completely or allow the person who is bullying to get off lightly without any consequences. A lack of communication also encourages unhealthy, unresolved, festering communication among parents in the parking lot, instead of healthy resolutions in open communication, as indicated when Kade’s parents stated that the principal of the
school “Andy” (Mr Thomas-principal) was fantastic” (QU:25:48:259), in resolving a personality clash between Kade and his Grade 3 teacher, when the parents, teacher and principal met to discuss this issue.

Perceptions of inadequacy in the management of bullying also surfaced. Mrs Carr said that “Teachers think they have solved the problem” (QU:13:310:253), when they just say, “tell each other you are sorry” (QU:13:310:253), or Martin stating that he did not think the teachers dealt with bullying very well because one of the teachers seemed to believe the other person’s story and “…he looked like a good guy” (QU:16:122:230) while “I looked I was completely the bad guy and then we both went down to break, no punishment or nothing” (QU:16:122:260). Mrs Lewis commented that, “…it is okay for the other children to hurt these children but these children can’t do anything to defend themselves, and their parents aren’t allowed to do anything to defend them either…” (QU:6:401:60), pointing out the clear lack of consequences for children who bully. Such perceptions reveal that teachers perhaps do not know what to do in bullying situations or how to distinguish the person being bullied from the person bullying. If there is a lack of communication about bullying it is not surprising that bullying incidents will be managed inappropriately.

The positive role of psychologists and/or counsellors at a school in supporting children who are bullied was conveyed in the following interview excerpts. Craig stated that he “…felt a whole lot better with seeing me” (QU:7:139:152) after he was bullied by boys from the high school. Kade also mentioned that “…he liked talking to me because I listened to him” (Memos: Diary: 14 March 2014). Kade indicated that he had found psychologist/counsellors) helpful at school when he was being bullied to “…not make you feel sad when you’re bullied, like hurting yourself and that” (QU:43:7:203). It makes sense for schools to employ psychologists or counsellors because they have more time to listen to children’s stories of being bullied than teachers do.

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75 Pseudonym
76 Pseudonym
5.3.7.6 Positive and negative perceptions of the community (security / crime, shaolin, EQ courses)

It became evident that each participant’s self-esteem had been both positively and negatively affected by various institutions or establishments within the community. Mrs Lewis reported that Craig’s “resilient coping mechanisms” (QU:6:387:13) had been an outcome of play therapy he received at the age of four and a half years: “…he went for play therapy like extra mural activities… and he would have post-trauma, he would have massive horrible nightmares, it would be horrible for him and she had to give him the coping skills and mechanisms to draw out his dreams…” (QU:6:332:13). In addition to play therapy, Craig had also been empowered in more ways than one through the martial art shaolin, winning his first kung fu contest (QU:10:4) as one of his significant life experiences. In Craig’s words, “…shaolin teaches you a lot, not to attack but to defend…” (QU:7:116:72), and “The rule is in shaolin never hurt a woman that does not hurt you first” (QU:7:116:70). Then Kade describes how watching South Africa’s cricket team on television had contributed to his passion for a sport which he too illustrated as one of his significant life experiences (QU:4:2):

I just see guys playing on the TV and then I go “I hope like I am like him one day”, “I’m going to be as good as them”. Like Graeme Smith, I know he is leaving but he has been a good captain. And ja Darryl Steyn, Morne Morkel. I want to be as good as them one day. I want to be playing for South Africa, being a hero to the country. (QU:42:17:244)

Finally, Martin’s mother disclosed that Martin took an EQ (emotional intelligence) course at the end of Grade 5, which had been “…positive” (QU:27:15:70). Mrs Carr stated that since the course “He just seems happier… normally, he would just get upset, or take it…he is making his own decisions… he definitely does seem to care a bit less than he used to” (QU:27:15:74). These positive experiences all seem to have impacted effectively on each of the participant’s wellbeing by empowering them. Play therapy assisted Craig with his trauma, whilst shaolin gave him skills to empower himself physically and morally. Kade, on the other hand, identified with positive role models and strived to emulate their behaviour, whereas Martin developed emotional intelligence.
In contrast, feelings of unsafety arising from the community have been experienced by all three participants, as shown form Kade's life experiences: “It’s nice to have a house where you know you are safe and you can sleep” (QU:42:6:142), “…we’ve got security bars everywhere…” (QU:42:6:164). Kade mentioned this after telling me about an armed robbery at his stepbrother’s home: “They tied up my brother and his dad and his step-mom and they stole literally everything” (QU:42:6:156), “And they actually held a gun to my brother’s head” (QU:42:6:158). Although Martin did not convey anything during the interview regarding burglaries, his parents revealed that they had also been victims, and on the second occasion, “The kids were with us when that happened, but again I can tell you a list of a mile long of how Caroline reacted to that, but Martin (mother- shrugs shoulders and shakes head)” (QU:13:289:294). As previously mentioned, Craig had been held hostage in a violent crime at an early age, and crime ubiquitous in the country, as evidenced in security measures of homes and schools. All three participants have been personally and/or vicariously traumatised by such crime, impacting upon their wellbeing in differing ways.

5.3.8 Discussion of experiences of supportive relationships

In summary, all three participants experienced relationships in their lives which were either supportive or destructive with regard to being bullied. Five relationships, emanated from the findings, namely, friendships, grandparents, the family, the self, the school and the community, all of which form part of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model (2005) discussed in Chapter 2.3.

It has been shown that children who are bullied regularly and have low social support are at the most risk for poor mental health (Rigby, 2000). Mann, Kristjansson, Sigfusdottir and Smith (2015) found that the experience of being bullied increased when there was less peer support. It is not surprising then that the role of friends and best friends emerged as an important theme in empowering or disempowering the participants. As mentioned in Chapter 2.3.3.3 B, Rodkin (2004) highlights the important role peers play in either promoting or preventing bullying behaviours within the microsystem. McAuley, McKeown and Merriman (2012, p. 465) study found that

77 Martin’s sister
in general, children ensured “…that they were surrounded by friends to feel safe and secure,” and argued that they did this to avoid being bullied. Having a best friend is important as quality rather than quantity of friendships has been associated with being bullied less (Bollmer, Milich, Harris, & Maras, 2005; Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Malcolm, Jensen-Campbell, Rex-Lear, & Waldrip, 2006). One reason attributed to this is that either reciprocal or unilateral friendships raise the self-efficacy of the person being bullied, thereby decreasing symptoms of anxiety, depression and social withdrawal, which attract bullying behaviour (Fitzpatrick & Bussey, 2014; Hodges et al., 1999).

On the other hand, Bollmer et al. (2005) argue that they did not find a decrease in the mentioned internalising symptoms as a consequence of quality friendships. It has been reasoned that poor quality friends are the ones who possibly bully and would not protect a child from being bullied (Malcolm et al., 2006). A loss of good friends due to moving or going to a different school could leave an individual child vulnerable to being bullied, as happened in Martin’s and Kade’s case. Although Ellis and Zarbatany (2007) found that befriending boys who have been bullied was less risky than it was for girls, it has also been found that a reputation for being bullied makes it difficult to acquire friends because doing so increases one’s chance of also being bullied (Boulton, 2013). This latter finding probably explains why Martin lost two of his friends abruptly for being called ‘gay.’ In addition, Kokkinos and Kipritsi (2012) found that children who are bullied have low emotional intelligence as they have poor problem solving and social skills, but surprisingly found that they have affective empathy but not cognitive empathy. This finding is reflected in examples of when two of the participants, Craig and Martin indicated their need to force friendships. For instance, besides indicating a desperate need to make a friendship, Craig’s description of trying to be helpful when trying to become friends with a lonely boy, highlights his affective empathy. Martin displayed his lack of cognitive empathy when he insists that he was still best friends with his old best friend who did not want to be friends with him any longer: “…says we are not friends, but he knows we are” (QU:16:106:91). A lack of emotional intelligence, on the other hand, was observed in Craig when he firstly pushed someone down an embankment without warning then

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78 Affective empathy refers to the emotional reaction to the observed experiences of others and motivates us to behave considerately towards them (Smith, 2006).
79 Cognitive empathy refers to understanding others’ mental states (Smith, 2006).
proceeded to follow the two boys, despite being ignored. Hosier (2014) links poor emotional intelligence to childhood trauma. Bessel van der Kolk (2014, pp. 240-241) explains that “Even though the trauma is a thing of the past, the emotional brain keeps generating sensations that make the sufferer scared and helpless.” This is because in PTSD\textsuperscript{80}, “Thinking is hijacked by emotion” because the frontal cortex is held hostage by the amygdala (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 11). Problems recognising a feeling when it happens (self-awareness) and managing emotions or “…when feeling overwhelms all rationality” (Goleman, 1996, p. xii) are considered deficiencies in emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996).

According to Underwood (2007, p. 524), the role of a girlfriend\textsuperscript{81} in middle childhood “…may be a good source of help and security for boys when they are victimised by their peers,” as seemed to be the case for Martin when he was “thumbsed up” (QU:14:71:49) from the boys in the class when they found out. Conversely Martin and Craig received nasty comments about their girlfriends, which indicates that they can be both protective and risk factors for being bullied. In addition, the negative influence of a best friend on one of the participant’s behaviour was portrayed. Ttofi, Bowes, Farrington and Losel (2014) found that protective factors that prevented a child from being bullied included having pro-social friends.

It has been reported that many children view their grandparents as part of their family and as one of their closest relationships, as someone in whom they can confide or turn to when worried. For instance, McAuley et al. (2012) found that visiting them over weekends and/or seeing them daily, if the grandparents lived close by or transporting them, can be beneficial. Many children also play cards or visit parks with their grandparents, findings verified in my study. Krauss Whitbourne (2010) identified five types of grandparents, (i) formal, who “follows what are believed to be the appropriate guidelines for the grandparenting role, which includes providing occasional services and maintaining an interest in the grandchild, but not becoming overly involved” (para. 7). This resembles Craig’s maternal grandfather. (ii) The fun seeker, who is described as one who, “emphasises the leisure aspects of the role and primarily provides entertainment” (para.8). This type of grandparent seems to resemble Martin’s paternal grandmother. (iii) The surrogate, who “takes

\textsuperscript{80} PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)

\textsuperscript{81} Friendship and not romantic relationship
over the caretaking role” (para.9). This seems to describe Martin’s maternal grandmother who fetches him from school. (iv) The reservoir of family wisdom, “(usually is a grandfather): the head of the family who dispenses advice and resources but also controls the parent generation” (para.10). This description matches Craig’s loving paternal grandfather. (v) The distant figure who, “has infrequent contact with the grandchildren, appearing on holidays and special occasions” (para.11). This type resembles Craig’s unwittingly maternal grandmother.

The family emerged as a central relationship in all three participant’s lives, the context being viewed as both a protective (Ttofi et al., 2014) and risk (Rigby, 2013) factor with regard to being bullied. A child coming from a stable home and being attached to parents prevents a child from being bullied (Ttofi et al., 2014). In contrast, poor parenting style and quality of relations, between parents and their children, including a lack of emotional and social support, increase the chances of children being bullied (Rigby, 2013). This dovetails with both social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model discussed in Chapter 2.2 and 2.3 respectively, which see child development as an interaction between the individual and others. Moreover, research led by the University of Warwick (UK) found that children exposed to negative parenting, including abuse, neglect and overprotection, were likely to experience being bullied by their peers (Lereya, Samara, & Wolke, 2013). Overprotective mothering and maternal depression were both found to be positively related to their child being bullied (Georgiou, 2008). Although none of the participants in this study were exposed to abuse by their parents, all three were found to be exposed to negative parenting. Kade was found to be overprotected, and did not receive the necessary support from his parents when being bullied by his cousin and brother. The parents’ belief that the aggressive behaviour is a way of showing affection prevented them from intervening, despite Kade’s pleas to stop. According to Troop-Gordon and Gerardy (2012) such parental beliefs significantly increase the chances of their children being bullied and compromise their psychosocial wellbeing. Craig experienced neglect as a consequence of his mother’s poor wellbeing after his father died. Martin, on the other hand, was left in the care of others, whilst his mother studied or worked. As described above, hints of two of the participants being overprotected also arose.
Rigby (2013) related that insecure attachment or bonding in infancy is related to being bullied at school later in life. However, Williams and Kennedy (2012) found that this only applied to female participants. Trust has been identified as a main reason for children feeling close to their family (McAuley et al., 2012) and children reported feeling less close to their parents as a consequence of being unavailable due to work hours (McAuley et al., 2012). Some mentioned that due to parents’ work they were unable to spend the desired time with their parents. In this study, all three participants’ mothers were in full-time employment. Rigby (2013) also points out that when parents are supportive one would expect their children to disclose information that they are being bullied. This was confirmed in this study because Kade’s parents did not support him when he asked his cousin to stop hurting him. It is therefore not surprising he chose not to tell his parents about other bullying incidents at school.

Parental support and time spent with parents were found to be protective factors against group bullying (Mann et al., 2014). In this study, holidays were portrayed as important times for uniting family members, whilst the absence of family members as a consequence of work and death were viewed in a negative light. Of interest, these authors also found that children were bullied more with increased parental monitoring (Boel-Studt & Renner, 2013; Mann et al., 2015). Kade’s father helped him with his homework regularly, which may be a form of intrusive monitoring rather than supportive monitoring, as when parents were perceived to be controlling the homework process, but rather than supporting it their help was deemed as negative (Moroni, Dumont, Trautwein, Niggli, & Baeriswyl, 2015). In addition, Reavis, Keane and Calkins (2010) found that maternal over-control during the elementary or pre-primary years is associated with being bullied. Kade’s mother’s described how she only changed her parenting style from aggressive to an assertive during his primary school years.

A distinction between the various family characteristics and family time also needs to be made. Whilst family characteristics form part of the microsystem, family time forms part of the chronosystem in Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, from which perspective sibling interactions may also be regarded as proximal processes (bidirectional interactions) in the familial context that influence how children function in the peer context. McAuley et al. (2012) point out that although relationships with siblings are often positive they do fluctuate. Referred to as “love-hate relationships”
they have been found to be both beneficial and hurtful (Greer, Campione-Barr, & Lindell, 2015, p. 1567). For Trussell (2014), for example, sport, during informal play facilitates enhanced connection and shared identity, whilst also creating tension between siblings. In this study, it was found that Kade, besides acquiring the skills of bowling in cricket also positively identified with his brother in that he too wanted to become a good cricketer. Despite these positive experiences, he was simultaneously bullied by his older brother. Likewise, although Craig was forced to share toys with his siblings, he also expressed having fun with them.

The role of the domestic also played an important part in two of the participants’ lives. No literature could be found surrounding this topic, also indicating a gap in the literature, especially because many South African children rely heavily on the support of domestics. However, Yeung and Leadbeater (2010) found that adults make a difference in the lives of children who are bullied. Higher levels of emotional support from teachers, mothers and fathers were associated with lower levels of emotional and behavioural difficulties among adolescents who were being bullied (Yeung & Leadbeater, 2010). In lieu of relevant research, this could also be generalised to a caring domestic.

The fourth relationship that presented in the findings was positive and negative perceptions of the self. It was interesting to see how the participants in this study differed in motivation, one of the dispositions as described by Bronfenbrenner (2005), in Chapter 2.3.2, to deal with personal compared to peer bullying. It became apparent that the participants all found it easier to help others but helpless in their own situations. For example, they found it easier to report other peers for being bullied but were not motivated to do this for themselves. Hunter, and Boyle (2004) discovered that children who were bullied for longer than four weeks used less social support than those who had been bullied for fewer than four weeks. The participants in this study also refrained or did not always tell their parents or teachers about their bullying experiences. Matsunaga (2010) found that in individualistic cultures, individuals refrain from telling others about their bullying experiences, based on negative self-consequences. Matsunaga (2009) established that parents of children who are bullied do not always know their children have been bullied. Oliver and Candappa (2007) reported children’s reluctance to tell adults, especially teachers about being bullied. In contrast, all the participants were better able to tell
their friends about their bullying experiences. Oliver and Candappa (2007) reasoned that telling friends about bullying experiences was perceived as less risky than telling adults because the later were perceived as ineffective, insensitive, or influenced by a culture that discouraged ‘telling tales.’ Levine and Kline (2006, pp. 5-6) remind us that “…children, because of their limited capacity to defend themselves, are particularly susceptible to freezing and therefore are vulnerable to being traumatised.” As mentioned earlier guilt and shame are a symptom of the freeze response in trauma and may also prevent a child from communicating with a teacher. “This is why adult support is crucial in preventing trauma and helping young children heal” (Levine and Kline (2006, p. 6).

The fifth supportive relationship that arose with both protective and risk factors related to the participants’ experiences of being bullied was the school. This included factors in Bronfenbrenner’s microsystem as discussed in Chapter 2.3.3.1 and mesosystem as discussed in Chapter 2.3.3.2. The findings revealed that the teachers failed to see the cumulative effects of bullying incidents and tended to water them down. Twemlow and Sacco (2013, p. 73) argue that “when adults deny problems, children become targets,” whilst Crothers and Kolbert (2010) stress that teachers are an important part of the solution to bullying problems and can undermine prevention and intervention if they are uninformed. Teacher training is pivotal to increase teacher’s confidence and skills in helping children who are bullied (Crothers & Kolbert, 2010; Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huising, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2014), whilst Saarento, Boulton and Salmivalli (2015) point out that it is not only the reactions of peers that encourage bullying but teachers too may exert influence on bullying behaviours when they intervene or do not intervene. As discussed above, teachers can also unwittingly encourage bullying behaviours by reinforcing crying, which in turn attract teasing.

Besides encouraging bullying, teachers also can bully and traumatisate vulnerable children (Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005; Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, & Brethour, 2006; Twemlow & Sacco, 2013). Two types of teachers who bully were identified: “…a sadistic bully type and a bully-victim type” (Twemlow et al., 2006, p. 187). The former is vicious and is unlikely to be retrained, so is not suited to the teaching profession (Twemlow et al., 2006). ‘Attila the Hun,’ as previously discussed, appears to be a sadistic type of bully. In contrast, “Yummy Bubblegum,” a teacher who also was
previously discussed and connected with the children seems to exhibit compassionate and empathetic skills, which equip children with “…sound academic and affective skills for a more positive assimilation in society at large” (Dar, 2015, p. 63). Worsening relationships with teachers and disliking school is also considered a risk factor for being bullied (Mann et al., 2015). A lack of communication, knowledge and hence poor management of bullying also emanated from the findings. Nordahl et al. (2008) claim that because teachers are in close proximity to bullying incidents it is critical that they be equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to deal with this phenomenon.

Parents and teachers “…need to be on the same page: in control, protective, and offering guidance and direction to the child, and according to Twemlow & Sacco, (2013, p. 74) it is imperative that home and school promote pro-social behaviour and communicate regularly and clearly so that children can self-regulate. Levine and Kline (2006, p. 85) stress the importance of adults minimising “feelings of fright, shame, embarrassment, and guilt the child is likely to be experiencing already,” by remaining calm and engaging with the child’s own nervous system “through the mechanics of body language, facial expression, and tone of voice.” According to Stephen Porges’s (2011) polyvagal theory, the nervous system sabotages an individual’s ability to relate socially and emotionally. Self-regulation can only happen when a child feels safe and is engaged with a caring person (Porges, 2011). Constant communication between parents and teachers is thus an effective approach to dealing with bullying (Christenson & Carlson, 2005; DiBasilio, 2008). Moreover, from a social constructionist perspective, social interaction facilitates understanding (Burr, 2003). A lack of supervision in the classroom and on the playground also contributed to one of the participant’s experiences of being bullied. Less adult monitoring at school was associated with more bullying behaviour, hence finding that more adult monitoring at school can protect children from being bullied (Wienke Totura et al., 2009). One of the most important components in decreasing bullying behaviour was improved playground supervision (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009).

The role of a psychologist at the school also emanated as a positive aspect regarding bullying at the school. Danby et al. (2011) highlight that telling a teacher about a bullying situation, particularly one involving indirect bullying, can make matters worse for a child but, in contrast, trained counsellors take children’s
concerns of bullying seriously and empower them. The roles of psychologists or counsellors are also important because, at affluent schools, there is a tendency to overlook the psychological impact of pressure on developing children at the expense of academic performance. At disadvantaged schools, learners are likely to support their peers and dislike teachers who represent an authority system (Twemlow & Sacco, 2013).

The last supportive relationship that emerged from the findings was that of the community. Both protective and risk factors emerged that underlie the children’s experiences of being bullied. Most bullying interventions target three different levels of intervention, namely the school, the classroom and the individual (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009). However, from an ecological perspective, the role of the community has been neglected (Mann et al., 2015). Community interventions which protect children from being bullied are advocated by (Mann et al., 2015). However, his findings offered little guidance about this and suggested further research in this area. In this study, the role of play therapy and courses for developing emotional intelligence are examples of one-on-one activities. However, shaolin classes assist in facilitating connections with other children from the community. No literature could be found relating to community risk factors for being bullied. However in this study it became apparent how violent crime emerged in all of the participant’s lives. Finkelhor (1995), Finkelhor et al. (2007, 2009a, 2009b), and Finkelhor et al. (2011) refer to the concept of “Polyvictimisation, i.e., exposure to multiple forms of victimization” (Finkelhor et al., 2011). This suggests a link between being bullied and community crime, and so indicates a need for this to be explored further, especially in light of violence in South Africa.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter forms part of phase four of the research process and presents a report on the results of the data gathered, that emerged from the process of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) in conjunction with ATLAS.ti 7.5 as described in Chapter 3. The themes that emerged from the data were illustrated through the use of direct quotations, vignettes, visual images of sand trays, pictures and collages of
the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. The theories of social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model were used as a guide to formulate a discussion linking the analysis to the extant literature. This chapter highlighted that bullying is indeed a complex phenomenon and that no context, including the context of the mother’s womb, can be afforded to be overlooked when designing interventions to prevent bullying.
CHAPTER 6

DEVELOPMENT OF A THERAPEUTIC BOARD GAME AS AN INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN WHO CONTINUE TO BE BULLIED

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is on the development of a therapeutic board game as an intervention for children who are bullied. It comprises phase four of the research study and begins by outlining the framework, followed by the aims of the game, the content and the design, then its mechanisms.

6.2 FRAMEWORK OF THE BOARD GAME

The development of the board game is based on social constructionism, Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model and the results of this study. A framework that is ideal for the development of a board game as both focus on the social interaction between individuals (see Chapter 2.5). Whilst social constructionism focuses on the social interaction between individuals and language as a form of social action, it does not focus on the individual (Burr, 2003). Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, however, focuses on the individual as well as the context, with people, objects and symbols (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). From a **social constructionist perspective**, experience is socially constructed through language, thereby asserting that language is a precondition for thought, unlike traditional psychology which views it as an expression of thought, as contended by Piaget (Burr, 2003). In other words, **social constructionism** asserts that language provides the structure and content of thought, and ‘what one says is what one thinks’ (Burr, 2003), rather than ‘what one thinks is what one says’. The design of the board game includes, for example, communicating positive affirmations aloud, reframing negative thought patterns, focusing on bodily sensations (the language of the body) and focusing on change and resources rather than the causes of the problems as would some Constructionist therapies, including Solution Focused Therapy and Narrative Therapy (Prochaska &
Norcross, 2013). For example, Solution Focused Therapy focuses on solutions to problems rather than rehashing them (Gergen, 2009; Prochaska & Norcross, 2013), whilst Narrative Therapy externalises the problem to help the clients re-story their lives and not let the problem become their whole identity (Gergen, 2009; Prochaska & Norcross, 2013). Moreover, from a social constructionist perspective, language may be regarded as a social phenomenon or sign that occurs between people either actively or implicitly in multiple forms, such as text, the spoken word, pictures, photographs, body gestures or tone of voice (Burr, 2003), thus lending itself naturally to the development of a board game. Social constructionism was discussed in detail in Chapter 2.2.

6.3 AIMS OF THE BOARD GAME

The ultimate aim of this study was to develop an intervention for children who continue to be bullied, guided by my research question and research aim outlined in Chapter 1.5 and 1.6 respectively. The aim was to utilise the superordinate themes and sub-themes\textsuperscript{82} that emerged from the data analysis to guide me on how to therapeutically intervene in order to facilitate change at the individual level, but in social interaction with others (group therapy). As pointed out in Chapter 2.2, social constructionism let me as researcher go beyond merely answering the old positivistic question why? and instead ask the ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions of experiences, thereby “…making visible important features of otherwise unknown experiences or social worlds” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p. 8). This latter was my primary aim and lay behind my research question. The following results emerged.

The first superordinate theme that surfaced was experiences of maternal stress. The findings revealed how maternal stress is internalized into the participants’ lives, which tallies with Bronfenbrenner’s fifth proposition discussed in Chapter 2.4.1.5, so the first aim of this board game was to devise cards to assist children in not internalizing their mother’s stress. These are referred to as “Do Differently” and address the reframing of negative thought patterns (refer to Table 6.1). Terzian et al. (2011) found from their literature review that social interventions to address internalizing problems were most effective when they teach individuals how to cope

\textsuperscript{82} See Chapter 5 for an in-depth discussion of these themes.
with negative thoughts and emotions, solve problems, and interact effectively rather than engage in activities to boost self-esteem.

**Table 6.1:** ‘Do Differently’ Cards: To not internalise their mother’s stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  My parents tell me that they did not plan to have me.</td>
<td><strong>A:</strong> Do I tell myself that I am not loved?</td>
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<td>2  I find out that my mother was at first shocked to hear she was pregnant with me.</td>
<td><strong>A:</strong> Reward yourself with a medal for being optimistic and hopeful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  I overhear my mother telling her friend that she was shocked to find out that she was pregnant with me.</td>
<td><strong>A:</strong> Reward yourself with a medal for being proactive and taking charge</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4  In anger my mother told me that I was a big mistake.</td>
<td><strong>B:</strong> Reward yourself with a medal for calming yourself down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  My mother never comments about my good marks but instead wants to know why I got some answers wrong.</td>
<td><strong>A:</strong> Reward yourself with a medal for having positive beliefs in your abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6  My mother rarely laughs at my jokes.</td>
<td><strong>B:</strong> Reward yourself with a medal for speaking up.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Action</th>
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</table>
| **7** When my parents disagree with me. | B: Reward yourself with a medal for putting yourself first by taking care of yourself.  
A: Say, “I love and accept myself even though my parents disagree with me.”  
B: Do I feel sad and unloved?  
A: Do I play a quiet instrument like a Rainstick to calm down? |
| **8** When my mother is sad and cries. | B: Reward yourself with a medal for tuning into your feelings.  
A: Say, “I approve of myself and feel great about myself.”  
B: Do I feel guilty that I have made her sad?  
A: Do I think she has a reason to be sad? |
| **9** My mother is very ill. | A: Reward yourself with a medal for finding someone to talk to.  
B: Let fear motivate you, not paralyse you.  
B: Do I talk to someone else about my worry?  
A: Do I worry that she is going to die? |
| **10** A group of children ‘diss’ [respect] me about my fat mother. | B: Reward yourself with a medal for being optimistic or focusing on the positive.  
A: Say, “I am a unique and worthy person so choose not to swallow disrespectful words.”  
B: Do I allow this to upset me and withdraw?  
A: Do I hear this but refuse to swallow their words because I know my mother is such a loving person? |
| **11** When my mother has an epileptic fit. | A: Reward yourself with a medal for overcoming this problem.  
B: Say, “I am calm and relaxed.”  
A: Do I calm myself down and do what I have to do and remind myself that everything will be okay?  
B: Do I have a panic attack and go crazy? |
| **12** My mother told me she almost died when she was pregnant with me. | A: Reward yourself with a medal for separating the past from the present.  
B: Say, “I am alive and happy.”  
B: Do I remind myself that I am grateful that we are both alive and hug one another?  
A: Do I put my hands over my ears and wish she had never told me that? |
| **13** My mother cannot come and watch me play my tennis match. | A: Reward yourself with a medal for being optimistic or focusing on the positive.  
B: Say, “I respect others and in turn they care for and respect me.”  
B: Do I realize that she is under a lot of pressure at work?  
A: Do I think she does not care about me? |
| **14** My mother is too busy to listen to me. | A: Reward yourself with a medal for discussing your problem with someone else.  
B: Say, “I am brave and in control of my life.”  
B: Do I find someone else to tell my news to?  
A: Do I go and sulk in my room? |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Action</th>
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</table>
| 15 My mother is very stressed at work.                                  | B: Reward yourself with a medal for giving yourself permission to talk to your stressed mom  
A: Say, “I am strong and in control.”                                      |
| A. Do I avoid talking to her?                                            | B: Reward yourself with a medal for focusing on the positive  
| B. Do I imagine my feet are my root system connecting me to the earth,  | A: Say, “I deserve all that is good.”                                    |
|   like a giant oak tree before I go and talk to her?                    | B: Reward yourself with a medal for seeing your issue in a positive way |
| 16 My mother takes her work stress out on me.                            | A: Say, “It matters little what others do. What matters is how I react and what I believe.” |
| A. Do I think she has stopped loving me?                                 | B: Reward yourself with a medal for focusing on the positive  
| B. Do I realise she is not upset with me and go and watch a funny movie?  | A: Say, “It matters little what others do. What matters is how I react and what I believe.” |
| 17 My mother does not buy me the latest play station.                    | B: Reward yourself with a medal for seeing your issue in a positive way  
A: Say, “I value myself.”                                                   |
| A. Do I realize that my parents have some financial difficulties?        | B: Reward yourself with a medal for seeing your issue in a positive way  
A: Say, “I deserve all that is good.”                                    |
| B. Do I believe that I am not good enough to deserve a new play station?  | A: Reward yourself with a medal for seeing your issue in a positive way  
A: Say, “I deserve all that is good.”                                    |
| 18 My mother said that she could not afford to buy me a new outfit.      | B: Reward yourself with a medal for talking to your grandparents about your concern  
A: Say, “I value myself.”                                                   |
| A. Do I ask my grandparents if they could buy me an outfit for my birthday? | B: Reward yourself with a medal for seeing your issue in a positive way  
A: Say, “I deserve all that is good.”                                    |
| B. Do I say poor me?                                                     | B: Reward yourself with a medal for seeing your issue in a positive way  
A: Say, “I deserve all that is good.”                                    |
| 19 My parents cannot afford to send me on the school outing/camp.       | B: Reward yourself with a medal for getting in touch with your feelings and doing something positive about them  
A: Say, “My mind is filled with positive and healthy thoughts about my life.” |
| A. Do I feel ashamed about this?                                       | B: Reward yourself with a medal for getting in touch with your feelings and doing something positive about them  
A: Say, “My mind is filled with positive and healthy thoughts about my life.” |
| B. Do I feel disappointed but do something to cheer me up?               | B: Reward yourself with a medal for getting in touch with your feelings and doing something positive about them  
A: Say, “My mind is filled with positive and healthy thoughts about my life.” |
| 20 My parents can’t afford to buy me a new cell phone.                   | B: Reward yourself with a medal for being optimistic or focusing on the positive  
A: Say, “I am grateful for my lovely and wonderful life.”                  |
| A. Do I become fearful that children at school are going to tease me about my old cell phone? | B: Reward yourself with a medal for being optimistic or focusing on the positive  
A: Say, “I am grateful for my lovely and wonderful life.”                  |
| B. Do I feel grateful that we have enough money to buy food and have a roof over our heads? | B: Reward yourself with a medal for being optimistic or focusing on the positive  
A: Say, “I am grateful for my lovely and wonderful life.”                  |
| 21 My mother is very upset with me because I failed my test.            | B: Reward yourself with a medal for recognizing that you can change this situation  
A: Reward yourself with a medal for recognizing that you can change this situation  
B: Say, “I forgive myself. This problem is solvable.”                      |
| A. Do I use this opportunity to start working harder?                   | B: Reward yourself with a medal for recognizing that you can change this situation  
A: Reward yourself with a medal for recognizing that you can change this situation  
B: Say, “I forgive myself. This problem is solvable.”                      |
| B. Do I believe that I am useless and stupid?                            | B: Reward yourself with a medal for recognizing that you can change this situation  
A: Reward yourself with a medal for recognizing that you can change this situation  
B: Say, “I forgive myself. This problem is solvable.”                      |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 22 My mother is furious with me because I forgot to feed the animals.  
A. Do I not eat my lunch because I feel so bad?  
B. Do I go for a swim to calm myself down? | B: Reward yourself with a medal for getting in touch with your feelings and calming yourself down  
A: Say, “Everyone with a belly button makes mistakes.” |
| 23 My mother screams at me because I forgot to do my homework.  
A. Do I think I am useless and that she does not love me?  
B. Do I realise that I am in the wrong and that she has overreacted to my behaviour? | B: Reward yourself with a medal for understanding this situation.  
A: Say, “I love and accept myself even though I forgot to do my homework.” |
| 24 My mother shouts at me because my room is untidy.  
A. Do I decide to tidy my room?  
B. Do I feel sorry for myself and hide away? | A: Reward yourself with a medal for taking charge  
B: Say, “I make my own choices and decisions.” |
| 25 My mother is irritable with me for no apparent reason.  
A. Do I tell myself that I am valuable?  
B. Do I feel unloved? | A: Reward yourself with a medal for believing that you are valuable.  
B: Say, “I am valuable” |

The second superordinate theme that emerged was experiences of trauma. The results of the research indicate how each of the participants were first subjected to traumatic stress in utero and had a history of multiple traumas to a greater or lesser extent, as outlined in Table 5.3. Scaer points out how the foetus and infant are vulnerable to experiential trauma, because the “…foetal brain is capable of responding to messages of threat through activation of the sympathetic nervous system and also by activation of the HPA axis, the hormonal stress-modulating system” (Scaer, 2005, p. 106). Furthermore, “prenatal infants, newborns and very young children are the most at risk to stress and trauma due to their underdeveloped nervous, motor and perceptual systems,” and although trauma cannot always be prevented it can be transformed (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 8).

The aim of the board game here is to change the trauma pattern which exists in the nervous system. Cards were devised to get out of the mind and into the body, and are termed “Free Me” cards (Table 6.2). This is important because, as Levine and
Kline (2006, p. 109) explain, healing trauma requires “…shifting from the realm of thought or emotion to the much more basic realm of physical sensation.”

Table 6.2: Free Me Cards: Get out of the mind and into the body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. To free me from fear do I:  
  A. Stay in my mind and get out of my body  
  B. Get out of my mind and stay in my body | If you chose A, award yourself with a medal |
| 2. To free me from fear do I:  
  A. Find a safe and comfortable place such as a chair and notice how my body is supported by it?  
  B. Go to the funfair and go on a rollercoaster ride? | If you chose A, award yourself with a medal. Name two parts of your body that you can feel are supported by the chair to earn an extra medal. |
| 3. To free me from fear do I:  
  A. Jump on a trampoline or go and play?  
  B. Sit or lie down in a quiet place, close my eyes and feel fear in the body? | If you chose B, award yourself with a medal |
| 4. To free me from fear do I:  
  A. Feel fear in my body?  
  B. Think about my fear? | If you chose A, award yourself with a medal |
| 5. To free me from fear do I:  
  A. Find a comfortable feeling in my body?  
  B. Find an uncomfortable feeling in my body? | If you chose B, award yourself with a medal |
| 6. To free me from fear do I:  
  A. Get in touch with the cold, frozen, chilly, empty sensations?  
  B. Get in touch with the warm, heated, hot, alive sensations? | If you chose A, award yourself with a medal |
| 7. To free me from fear do I:  
  A. Get in touch with the calm, strong, confident, safe, brave sensations?  
  B. Get in touch with the trembly, shaky, wobbly, fluttering sensations? | If you chose B, award yourself with a medal |
| 8. To free me from fear do I:  
  A. Get in touch with the stiff, tense sensations?  
  B. Get in touch with the relaxed, loose sensations? | If you chose A, award yourself with a medal |
| 9. To free me from fear do I:  
  A. Get in touch with the expanding, releasing, easy sensations?  
  B. Get in touch with the tight, shrunken, drawing into a tight ball sensations? | If you chose B, award yourself with a medal |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To free me from fear do I:</strong></td>
<td>If you chose A, award yourself with a medal after you have done this exercise three times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10 | A. Take deep breaths deep into the stomach and release it slowly through my nose?  
B. Take short breaths and pant like a dog? |
| 11 | A. Think about the person who is hurting me as I breathe?  
B. Follow my breath as it goes in and out, feeling it pass through my nose? |
| 12 | A. Lie in a bed under a blanket in a warm room with soft lights?  
B. Climb into a cold swimming pool? |
| 13 | A. Lie on my back and stretch like a cat?  
B. Lie on my back and become as firm as a stick? |
| 14 | A. Take shallow breaths and then release the air quickly?  
B. Take deep breaths until my stomach bulges out and then slowly release the air with a whoosh sound? |
| 15 | A. Scream into a pillow, laugh, or hum?  
B. Blow into a whistle? |
| 16 | A. Pretend that I am a big strong oak tree, with roots in my feet and my leaves waving freely?  
B. Pretend that I am a weak plant that is about to collapse? |
| 17 | A. Act like a scared deer behind a tree?  
B. Act as brave as a lion? |
| 18 | A. Pretend that I am a big strong oak tree, with roots in my feet and my leaves waving freely?  
B. Pretend that I am a weak plant that is about to collapse? |
The third superordinate theme that loomed was experiences of being bullied. The aim here was to develop cards to change the neurological pattern from that of being a ‘victim’ to one of ‘survivor’, in order to empower the individuals by giving them opportunities to take charge and be in control. The literature on bullying generally refers to children who are bullied as ‘victims’ (de Wet, 2005; Espelage, 2014; Smith, 2010; Wolke, Woods, & Samara, 2009; Woods, Wolke, Nowicki, & Hall, 2009; Yoneyama & Rigby, 2006), however, I have used the word ‘victim’ here in the sense of being traumatised or prisoners of trauma. Each of the participants have experienced multiple traumas commencing in utero, and bullying has been found to be one of these traumas, which has rendered them helpless, a symptom of trauma. This may explain why Smith et al. (2004, p. 565) make a distinction between “…non-victims, escaped victims, new victims and continuing victims…,” and also why
“…some children are hurt by one kind of negative treatment and some by another” (Rigby, 2002, p. 62). The cards developed to do this, are called “Would You Rather” cards (Refer to Table 6.3).

**Table 6.3: Would You Rather Cards: To change neurological pattern from ‘victim’ to ‘survivor’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  A child in your grade keeps hiding your stationery. Would you rather:</td>
<td>B - Awarded a medal for being proactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Ask some children in your class to help you find it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  An older child calls you ugly names. Would you rather:</td>
<td>B - Awarded a medal for being assertive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Call him/her an ugly name back?</td>
<td>A - Say something assertive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tell him/her that he/she is disrespectful?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  A child in your grade disses your mother about how fat she is. Would</td>
<td>A - Awarded a medal for being crafty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you rather:</td>
<td>B - Repeat “What did you say?” over and over again after hearing a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Respond by saying, “What did you say?” and repeat this every time</td>
<td>‘diss’ [respectful] comment is made?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the ‘diss’ [respectful] comment is made?</td>
<td>B. Make up a ‘diss’ about their mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Make up a ‘diss’ about their mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  A child from your school continuously kicks and pushes you. Would you</td>
<td>A - Awarded a medal for doing the proper thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rather:</td>
<td>B - Say, “I can do it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Report the child for continuously hurting you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Ignore the child?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  A group of children refuse to allow you to play. Would you rather:</td>
<td>A - Awarded a medal for believing in yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Tell yourself that there are already too many children playing?</td>
<td>B - Say, “I am unique and valuable”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Believe that they do not like you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Your best friend suddenly ignores you. Would you rather:</td>
<td>B - Awarded a medal for being brave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Start being nasty to him/her?</td>
<td>A - Say, “I deserve good things”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Find out what the problem is so that you can do something about this</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Your best friend suddenly won’t play with you. Would you rather:</td>
<td>B - Awarded a medal for being solution-focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Start being nasty to him/her?</td>
<td>A - Say, “I am respectful no matter what”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Find out what the problem is so that you can do something about this</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Your best friend spreads rumours about you. Would you rather:</td>
<td>A - Awarded a medal for being heroic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Tell him/her that this is not the truth</td>
<td>B - Say, “I choose to tell the truth now”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Stay at home for a week?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Your best friend turns your other good friends against you. Would you</td>
<td>A /B - Awarded a medal after you have given a reason for choosing your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Make other friends?</td>
<td>response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Seek help from a counsellor?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Your best friend does not invite you to his/her party. Would you</td>
<td>B - Awarded a medal for being courageous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Cry yourself to sleep every night?</td>
<td>A - Describe your feelings to your friend regarding this situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Ask your friend to provide you with a reason for doing so?</td>
<td>using an “I” statement which shows you take responsibility for your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 A teacher favours someone else. Would you rather:</td>
<td>B - Awarded a medal after you have mentioned one of your lovely qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Believe that you are a horrible person?</td>
<td>A - Name one of your lovely qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Believe that the teacher has not yet noticed your lovely qualities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 A teacher calls you a horrible name. Would you rather:</td>
<td>B - Awarded a medal for dealing with the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Feel ashamed and keep quiet about this?</td>
<td>A - Say, “I am a wonderful person”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tell your parents or the counsellor at school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 A teacher makes a fool of you in front of the class. Would you</td>
<td>A - Awarded a medal for being in control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Focus on your breathing?</td>
<td>B - Say, “I am in control of my emotions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Burst into tears?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 A teacher does not deal with the bullying incident well. Would you</td>
<td>A - Awarded a medal for being so wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Go to the counsellor and discuss this?</td>
<td>B - Say, “My opinion deserves to be heard”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Keep quiet and feel sorry for yourself?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 A teacher upsets you by believing the story of the child who bullied</td>
<td>B - Awarded a medal after explaining why you would not have chosen A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Hate the teacher from that day forward?</td>
<td>A - Say, “I believe my opinion is worth it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tell the teacher your side of the situation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Your older brother/sister shoves your hand in your mouth. Would you</td>
<td>A - Awarded a medal for being so wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Tell an older person what he/she has done?</td>
<td>B - Say, “I deserve to be treated with respect”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Start screaming and hurt him back?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Your older brother/sister pushes you to the floor. Would you rather:   | B - Awarded a medal for standing up for yourself  
A - Say, “I can stand up to my brother/sister respectfully”                                                                                                                                         |
| A. Pretend that you have been badly hurt?                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| B. Get up and say, “That was a very dangerous thing to do!”?           |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Your older brother/sister thinks he is in charge of you because he is   | B - Awarded a medal after mentioning what you would do for him/her  
A - Name 1 thing you don’t think you should do for an older brother or sister                                                                                                                       |
| older. Would you rather:                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| A. Do everything he/she tells you to do?                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| B. Do the things you feel comfortable to do?                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Your older brother/sister slaps you because you accidentally tripped    | A - Awarded a medal for being so sensible  
B - Say, “I choose how I feel by the way I think and talk”                                                                                                                                                |
| him/her. Would you rather:                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| A. Put ice on the sore spot and then show the mark to an older person?  |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| B. Slap him/her back?                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Your older brother/sister is always nasty to you when your parents      | B - Awarded a medal because you have shown respect for yourself  
A - Say, “I love and respect myself”                                                                                                                                                    |
| aren’t watching. Would you rather:                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| A. Just keep quiet about this?                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| B. Tell your brother/sister to stop their disrespectful behaviour       |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| otherwise you are going to inform your parents?                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Your cousin hurts you for no reason. Would you rather:                 | B - Awarded a medal because you have shown respect for yourself  
A - Say, “I am confident and brave”                                                                                                                                                              |
| A. Keep quiet?                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| B. Tell him/her how painful it is?                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Your cousin pinches your knees. Would you rather:                      | B - Awarded a medal for being so smart  
A - Say, “I take charge of the way people treat me”                                                                                                                                                |
| A. Pinch him back?                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| B. Tell him to stop?                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Your cousin slaps your dog with a pillow even though you have asked     | B - Awarded a medal for taking control of this terrible situation  
A - Say, “I am a caring person”                                                                                                                                                    |
| him/her to stop. Would you rather:                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| A. Burst out crying?                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| B. Go and tell your mom, dad or an older person?                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Your cousin punches you in a friendly way but it doesn’t feel friendly. | A - Awarded a medal for being so confident to do this  
B - Say, “I can make things happen”                                                                                                                                                              |
| Would you rather:                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| A. Let him/her know that you don’t enjoy this being done to you ever,   |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| by anyone?                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| B. Pretend it is okay?                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
Your much older cousin gives you a painful neck lock every time he sees you. Would you rather:
A. Say nothing to keep the peace?
B. Tell him that you would prefer to shake his hand because he is much stronger than you?

A - Awarded a medal for being hero like
B - Say, “I am a resourceful person”

The fourth superordinate theme that emanated from the data was that of experiences of supportive relationships. The aim here is to enhance the supportive roles the children have in their lives as resources, by building a solution-focused future. Social support has been found to be an important factor for children who are bullied (Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009; Gini, Carli, & Pozzoli, 2009; Holt & Espelage, 2007; Kendrick, Jutengren, & Stattin, 2012). These cards are called “Suppose cards” (Refer to Table 6.4).

Table 6.4: Suppose Cards: Building a solution focused future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Suppose you could say no to your friends when they are mean to you. What would be different? Move forward 3 spaces and tap yourself on the shoulder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Suppose you could accept the help some friends offer. What would be different? Move forward 1 space and clap hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suppose you did not care what others said about you. What would be different? Move forward 2 spaces and pretend to put a bubble around you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Suppose you were brave enough to stop worrying if some children exclude you and instead you asked other children to play. What would be different? Move forward 2 spaces and shake hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Suppose you suddenly realised that a child who bullies you is not your boss and that you do not have to listen or obey him/her. What would be different? Move forward 3 spaces and say: I am my own boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Suppose you suddenly believed your grandparents when they say: you are special. What would be different? Move forward 1 space and smile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Suppose a miracle happens and you can suddenly be as clever as your grandfather. What would be different? Move forward 2 spaces and say: well done old chap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppose your Grandma whispered in your ear and said: everyone who has</td>
<td>Move forward 2 spaces and rub your belly button</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belly button is allowed to make mistakes. What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Suppose your mom suddenly told you that she believes you can make</td>
<td>Move forward 1 space and make a plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plans. What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Suppose your dad tells you that he is brave and that you have his</td>
<td>Move forward 3 spaces and do a little war cry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genes. What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Suppose your brother or sister suddenly told you that they love</td>
<td>Move forward 1 space and nod your head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you and that you should not allow other people to hurt you. What</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Suppose you started acting like your hero. What would be different?</td>
<td>Move forward 1 space and do a jig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Suppose a miracle suddenly occurred and you are now brave. What</td>
<td>Move forward 3 spaces and high 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Suppose your friends suddenly like and respect you. What did you</td>
<td>Move forward 4 spaces and say “WOW”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do differently to earn their respect?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Suppose a miracle happens and you suddenly believe in yourself.</td>
<td>Move forward 2 spaces and give yourself a hug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Suppose your teacher suddenly notices you in a positive way. What</td>
<td>Move forward 2 spaces and give yourself a star.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would you have done differently?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Suppose you started seeing your teachers as people and not as</td>
<td>Move forward 1 space and say I am me and they are them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idols. What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Suppose you told your teacher that what they say hurts your</td>
<td>Move forward 2 spaces and say I can do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feelings? What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Suppose you went to a teacher you thought was caring and told her</td>
<td>Move forward 2 spaces and show a thumbs up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what is going on. What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Suppose you said to yourself I do not want to take this anymore?</td>
<td>Move forward 7 spaces and stand up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Suppose someone suddenly tells you that you are worth a lot. What</td>
<td>Move forward 2 spaces and say yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Suppose you could suddenly stand up for yourself. What would be</td>
<td>Move forward 4 spaces and stand up and salute yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Suppose you realise the difference between telling on and</td>
<td>Move forward 2 spaces and take a medal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reporting. What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Suppose you realise that your karate skills will stop a child from</td>
<td>Move forward 1 space and do a karate stance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bullying you. What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Suppose a course in your neighbourhood taught you to control your</td>
<td>Move forward 2 spaces and say “I can do it!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotions more effectively. What would be different?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4 CONTENT AND DESIGN OF THE BOARD GAME

The name of the board game, ‘HEROES,’ emerged from the data and was used by all three participants. In the first instance, the hero was displayed as the symbol of Pegasus (QU:8:129:163) in the sand tray by Craig and was described as a source of help (Refer to Figure 6.1). Another participant, Martin, included the word in his book about his life experiences when he spoke of events in his life that had changed him, and included Nelson Mandela as his hero (QU:16:119:209) (refer to Figure 6.2). The third participant, Kade, said that, “I want to be playing for South Africa, being a hero to the country” (QU:42:17:244). It was befitting to use this word because I also regarded each of the participants as heroes in sharing their life experiences with me for the benefit of other children. It is also a word that can empower children who have been bullied so that they too can become survivors or heroes in their own lives, despite being bullied.

![Figure 6.1: Pegasus](image1) ![Figure 6.2: Nelson Mandela](image2)

The content of the board game includes one playing board (Figure 6.3), which consists of 28 squares in the playing area with gridlines to separate the squares. The squares are colour coded, as reflected in Table 6.5.
Table 6.5: Colour coded squares

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour of square</th>
<th>Cards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Free Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Would You Rather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Do Differently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Suppose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>At a zero/You are a hero/Scaling question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mottled Gold</td>
<td>Spin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.3: HEROES the board game (Designed by the researcher, 2015)
In addition to the playing board, there are:

- Two dice (Figure 6.4)

![Dice](Figure 6.4: Dice (Valentine, 2014))

- Four sets of 25 question-and-answer cards:
  1. Suppose Cards (Table 6.1)
  2. Free me Cards (Table 6.2)
  3. Would you rather Cards (Table 6.3)
  4. Do things differently Cards (Table 6.4)

- Medal cards (Figure 6.5)

![Medal cards](Figure 6.5: Medal cards (anon, 2015))

- Seven player tokens: giraffe, Pegasus, dolphin, deer, frog, baboon, cheetah (Figure 6.6). These were designed and made by a street artist from Zimbabwe.
The following information will now outline the instructions of the game.

- 1 spinner (Figure 6.7)

- 1 manual (Refer to Appendix 16)

The following information will now outline the instructions of the game.
6.5 THE BOARD GAME INSTRUCTIONS

HEROES is an educational therapeutic board game for children who are bullied.

6.5.1 The purpose of the board game

The aim of this game is to empower children who are being bullied, achievable on four different levels which emanated from the results of this study. Would You Rather cards serve to change the neurological pattern of being a victim to that of a survivor. For example, the first scenario encourages a child to engage socially, rather than withdrawing, as social engagement is important for self-regulation (Dykema, 2006). Doing Differently cards aim to help prevent internalization of their mothers stress. For example, scenario 1 encourages a child to think positively about the outcome of an unplanned pregnancy. Suppose cards aim to enhance the support roles of people in their lives, ranging from those at home, extended family members, friends, school community and neighbourhood. For example, an answer to scenario 1 would include a positive response indicating respect for the self, such as “I wouldn’t feel so resentful or angry.” Free Me cards aim to change the trauma pattern that has become established and unwittingly exacerbates the cycle of trauma by getting out of the mind and into the body. For example, the correct response to question 1 reinforces getting out of the mind and into the body to track sensations in the body when overwhelmed, rather than dwelling on negative thought patterns which serve to reinforce anxiety. In addition, the spinner has been built into the design of the board game, as it has different self-regulation activities which are intended to reframe the negative affect or internalizing difficulties associated with children who are bullied (Dill, Vernberg, Fonagy, Twemlow, & Gamm, 2004; Rigby, 2002; Terzian et al., 2011).

The board game is directed by a therapist and is ideal for group therapy. This is important because Stephen Porges’s polyvagal theory, advocates engaging with others, rather than isolating oneself and substituting human contact with internet relating to self-regulate (Dykema, 2006). It is also important that the therapist works in a quiet environment and talks softly, whilst modulating tone and pitch of voice to trigger listening behaviours.
Up to seven players can participate at a time. The object of the game is to acquire as many medals as possible, awarded if the correct response is given or action undertaken. The person with the highest number of medals is the winner. Each player competes by answering the scenario or question read by the therapist, an activity that depends on which block the player has landed on.

6.5.2 Rules of play

To begin play each player selects a token (Figure 6.6). Players roll the dice, with the player rolling the highest number moving first. If two or more players tie, they roll the dice again. The player with the first turn rolls the dice again and, starting from **Start and Spin** moves the token the indicated number of spaces in the direction of the arrow. When a token lands on a square, the colour of the square will dictate the type of activity to take place. If it lands on a yellow, green, blue or red square the therapist will draw a card from the relevant pile (refer to Table 6.5).

The therapist will then read out the scenario and/or question from the appropriate question-answer card. These scenarios/questions are displayed in Tables 6.1 – 6.4. The player then responds to the scenario or question. The answers appear underneath the questions. The therapist responds by reading the statement next to the player’s response of A or B. The player is rewarded with a medal card (Figure 6.5) for correct responses. If the player does not answer the question correctly, the therapist reads the statement alongside the alternative response. The aim here is to reinforce positive behaviour to help empower the player.

Should a player land on **At A Zero** then he/she is to talk about a bullying situation which she/he has experienced when they felt at a 0 (in other words feeling terrible/flat/sad/depressed, etc.). The scaling question is a well-known and frequently used solution-focused technique developed by Steve De Shazer, an American therapist and co-developer of the solution-focused approach (Visser, 2009). The 10 represents the desired situation, whereas the 0 represents the undesired situation (Visser, 2009).

Should a player land on **Zero-Hero (0-10)** he or she needs to ‘scale’ their mood from 0-10 in order to tell everyone what number they are at, in the present moment. The
therapist may refer to the information section in the manual, to guide this discussion further (Appendix 16).

Should a player land on **I Am a Hero** he or she needs to discuss a time in his or her life when he/she felt like a hero. The therapist may refer to the information section in the manual to guide this discussion further (Appendix 16).

Should a player land on **Spin**, then he/she needs to spin the arrow on the spinner. Each player in the group participates in this activity. The activity depends on which section the arrow happens to land on. There are eight sections on the spinner, namely:

- Smell
- Touch
- Visualise
- Taste
- Relax
- Act
- Tell
- Listen

Each of these contain different activities to help self-regulate and empower the players, a list of which appears in the information section of the manual (Appendix 16) and is chosen by the therapist in conjunction with the child, to implement. The therapist is also encouraged to make use of his/her own ideas and to add these to the list.

Resources for strengthening self-regulation and emotional coping include meditation exercises (Mercola, 2013; Wisner, Jones, & Gwin, 2010), breathing exercises (Levine & Kline, 2006; Mercola, 2013; Stellitano, 2014; van Dixhoorn, 2008), listening to music (Lamb, 2009; Mercola, 2013; Stellitano, 2014), progressive muscle relaxation (Stellitano, 2014), self-talk (Mercola, 2013; Stellitano, 2014), mindfulness (Stellitano, 2014) and visualization (Mercola, 2013; Stellitano, 2014). Moreover, the quickest way to calm the nervous system is also to engage with one or more of the senses (Segal, Smith, & Robinson, 2015). Activities involving the senses such as
touch (Lamb, 2009; Mercola, 2013; Segal et al., 2015), smell (Evans, 2012; Segal et al., 2015), taste (Segal et al., 2015), movement (Segal et al., 2015), sight (Segal et al., 2015) and sound (Segal et al., 2015) have also been resources for calming the nervous system. The children need to be made aware that because each of them is unique, as a consequence of their very different life experiences, commencing in utero, they may experience activities differently. Therefore, what may be helpful for one person may be unhelpful for another. As Hawkins (2015) states, the preferred method of use depends on the individual. It is in this light that it is strongly recommended that a book or diary be available for each child, so that they can keep a record of their various experiences.

Should the player land on Start & Spin then he or she needs to spin the arrow on the spinner and proceed as for Spin.

6.5.2.1 Continuation of play

Play continues, with cards placed at the bottom of the pile to which it belongs after each question has been answered. The player to the left of the player who commenced the game now rolls the dice. The game continues for whatever time has been set aside for the session and until each player has had an equal opportunity to play.

6.5.2.2 Winning the Game

The player with the most medal cards is the winner.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter looked at the development of a therapeutic board game as an intervention for children who are bullied. Its design was based on the super-ordinate themes and sub-themes that arose from the results of this study. I was inspired to develop it because firstly middle childhood children love participating in such games. The element of fun itself reduces negative stress and because most children who are
bullied regularly tend to withdraw from other children socially, I felt that this would serve as a resource to interact socially, whilst empowering them on four different levels. This board game also enables up to seven players to play at a given time, thereby addressing a potential problem of the lack of time, as well as a lack of therapists. In South Africa, especially, there are many vulnerable children in schools who could benefit from this.

The next chapter will conclude the study with a review of the study and make recommendations.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will offer a full summary of the research study, first reviewing the theoretical framework, background, problem statement, aims, design and methods used, before reflecting on the findings, trustworthiness, contributions, limitations and recommendations. This discussion will determine whether the objectives of the study have been met.

7.2  BACKGROUND, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND AIM OF THE STUDY

The motivation to engage in this study arose from my curiosity as an educational psychologist, to understand why the problem of bullying in schools was not improving substantially, both nationally and internationally, despite numerous interventions worldwide. Although Rigby and Smith (2011) found that many countries have reported a significant decrease in bullying, various meta-analyses of bullying interventions have indicated achieving disheartening results, substantially below the 50 per cent reduction mark (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). The most successful intervention to date was Olweus’s Bullying Prevention programme in Bergen, Norway, which indicated reductions of 50 per cent in bullying, however, this same programme produced near-zero results in Stavanger (Rigby, 2004), with reductions of only between 21 per cent to 38 per cent in a 1997-1998 study involving 30 schools in Norway, and decreased effectiveness in the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK) and Germany (Olweus, 2003). In addition, Merrell et al. (2008) ascertained from their meta-analytic school bullying intervention research between 1980 and 2004 that the majority of findings evidenced no meaningful change, either positively or negatively.

As an educational psychologist with an avid interest in the phenomenon of bullying, I am concerned that the interventions that have been implemented at the school in
which I work have had little positive impact on the reduction of bullying, as evidenced in an informal longitudinal study. In my experience, there are erroneous perceptions that bullying is normal behaviour and nothing is being done by the school to combat it. I was motivated to discover how I could come to better understand this because “...human beings are greater than the sum of their parts, and therefore cannot be reduced to parts without losing something in the process” (Chinn & Kramer, 2008, p. 56). People are complex synergetic products of interactions with others and their environment.

The purpose of this study, to investigate the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, was achieved through social interaction with the participants and their parents by means of observations, semi-structured and in-depth interviews which were recorded, transcribed and analysed through Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Informal interviews were conducted with the participants at school and conversations held with the participants’ friends and peers when the opportunity presented itself. Expressive art therapy techniques were utilised as tools to elicit the participants’ life experiences. The first in-depth interview concerning their significant life experiences, both positive and negative, was conveyed through a collage, an illustrated book and illustrations on an A3 sheet of paper. The second in-depth interview was conducted through a construction of a sand tray depicting their experiences of being bullied. Four themes emerged from the findings which were used to develop an intervention in the form a board game for children who are bullied.

The aim of this study was to investigate the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied with the objectives of: identifying and describing their significant life experiences from conception to the present moment; identifying their sensations, emotions, thoughts and memories; narrating and giving voice to their individual stories; and, finally, developing an intervention for middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. This latter objective was presented in Chapter 6.

The research question was:

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83 Figures reflecting these statistics are presented in Chapter 3.7.
What are the life experiences of children, in middle childhood, who continue to be bullied?

The sub-questions that enabled me to answer this question were:

a. What significant life experiences has a child encountered since conception until the present moment that could have in some way affected or influenced him?

b. What cognitions, sensations, emotions and memories, are experienced by a child who continues to be bullied?

c. How does the child who is being bullied experience this physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively?

The answers to these questions were presented in Chapter 5.

7.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilised social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development to investigate the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied because as mentioned in Chapter 1 people are complex synergetic products of interactions with others and their environment. Social constructionism enabled me to view the participants' life experiences in social interaction with others, rather than merely focusing on their individual behaviour, because the theory focuses on the social interaction between individuals and language as a form of social action (Burr, 2003). It was in this light that I was also able to view the phenomenon of bullying emerging from a relational process, rather than merely arising from the participants' individual behaviour (Gergen, Lightfoot, & Sydow, 2004). Due to the emphasis on language I largely refrained from using terms such as ‘victim’ and ‘bully’, because from a social constructionist perspective we create the world we live in through language and therefore such words become labels which tend to become self-fulfilling prophesies (Gergen, 2009).

As social constructionism focuses on the social interaction between others, I needed an additional theory to look at the individual whilst simultaneously looking at his or her interaction with others in a variety of contexts. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological
model of human development enabled me to do this because it “…focuses on the importance of interactions within and between life contexts” (Duerden & Witt, 2010, p. 108). This model made it possible for me to view the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied from five organized sub-systems, ranging from the microsystem to the macrosystem, as discussed in Chapter 2.3.3.1 and 2.3.3.4 respectively. Moreover, Bronfenbrenner’s propositions, as elaborated upon in Chapter 2.4, enabled me to focus on the processes that fostered their development and contributed to them being bullied continuously, which he had discounted in his earlier model. Proposition 1 allowed me access to the participants’ objective and subjective experiences, whereas proposition 2 highlighted the interactions that all three participants had with their mothers in their early stage of development. Proposition 3 assisted me in investigating the participants dynamic relationships over an extended period of time, from conception up until middle childhood. Proposition 4 facilitated me in exploring the emotional attachment the participants had with their mothers as Rigby (2013) stated that the quality of such relations are risk factors for being bullied. Proposition 5 contributed towards one of the superordinate themes that arose from this study and revealed how maternal stress is internalised into the participants’ lives. Then proposition 6 aided me in examining the role of the father in the participants’ lives. Bronfenbrenner jumps to proposition 8, leaving a gap in his model to be filled, which I claim could include the context of the mother’s womb and the effect of the mother’s wellbeing on her unborn baby. Proposition 8 helped me in looking at the effect the participants behaviour had on the parent’s psychological development. Bronfenbrenner’s ninth proposition illustrates how elderly parents one day will depend on love and care of their children but points out that if there is no attachment in the beginning that their can’t be attachment at the end. This proposition therefore indicates the importance of prevention and intervention strategies to assist with the phenomenon of bullying. In addition, it highlighted the impact of trauma on the participants emotional wellbeing which if left untreated could certainly have a negative influence on the way they interact with their parents in adulthood, but also on the way they interact with their potential offspring. This proposition thus contributed towards the development of the board game HEROES. The last proposition 10, illustrates how chaos integrates the various elements involved. Ironically trauma disrupts the nervous system of a developing human being, in particular the very young, but Levine also highlights that
through love, care and understanding, trauma can be integrated and healed which leads to a spiritual transformation. Knowledge from this study was derived socially from the interaction between and among my research participants and myself as researcher, because in a world of multiple realities there can be no universal truth (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). The use of my theoretical framework thus highlights trustworthiness of my study.

7.4 STUDY PHASES

This study was conducted over four phases, as laid out in Chapter 4. 4.3.

7.4.1 Phase 1

This phase comprised the planning and preparation of the research study. This firstly involved the development and acceptance of the research proposal, alongside a critical review of the literature. This proved to be an arduous phase as it became apparent that although my first research proposal had been accepted and approved by the Higher Degree Committee of the university I was forced to narrow my original research question further, which culminated in a different problem statement, research question, aims and title of the study. As a consequence of this, I as researcher had to reflect upon this change in my research journal as a form of reflexive bracketing (Addendum 1). This was imperative because my first title was entitled, “An educational psychological framework to addressing bullying as trauma” and therefore I as researcher could be seen to be biased in my research study without reflecting upon this.

7.4.2 Phase 2

The second phase of the research process comprised data collection. Multiple data collecting procedures were used in order to describe and understand the experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, as this is a hallmark of good qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). The data was collected through observations, informal interviews, in-depth interviews, semi-structured
interviews, conversations, expressive art therapy techniques and a research diary. As can be seen in Figure 4.3, qualitative research is a process and does not follow a linear pattern, hence phase 2 and phase 3 overlapped and occurred simultaneously. I commenced with data analysis, whilst I was still in the process of collecting data, as will be discussed next.

7.4.3 Phase 3

In the third phase I engaged with data analysis whilst still collecting data, as discussed in 7.4.2 and clearly reflected in Figure 4.3. Use was made of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Saldaña’s coding manual for qualitative researchers (Saldaña, 2013) in conjunction with ATLAS.ti 7.5. IPA enabled me to offer an interpretive account of what it meant for the participants in their particular contexts (Larkin et al., 2006) and helped me to understand the first-person perspective (the participants) from myself as researcher, as a third-person position, through inter-subjective inquiry and analysis (Larkin, 2013). I followed Smith et al.’s (2009) guidelines, as explained in Chapter 4.6.1.

In addition, Saldaña’s coding manual assisted me with developing emergent themes in step 3 of IPA, in particular the elemental and effective methods, each of which has a variety of coding methods to capture the complex phenomena in the data. The specific coding methods I used were elaborated upon in Chapter 4.6.1.3.

Furthermore, ATLAS.ti 7.5, a qualitative analytical computerized programme helped me “…to manage, extract, compare, explore and reassemble meaningful pieces from large amounts of data in creative, flexible, yet systematic ways” (Friesa, 2013, p. 9). I managed my data from the outset with ATLAS.ti 7.5, integrating it all into the software package. This helped me keep sight of the whole whilst going into detail (Friesa, 2013). Evidence of this was shown in Chapter 4.6. In addition, I have a record of this captured as a bundle.

7.4.4 Phase 4

The fourth phase of the research process, as indicated in Figure 4.3, involved the development of an intervention for children who continue to be bullied. This emerged
from the super-ordinate themes, which were also used to develop the intervention. This phase more explicitly focused on the development of a board game, as outlined in Chapter 6, for children who continue to be bullied. It is important to point out that, as can be seen in Figure 4.3, the process of this only unfolded in this last phase.

### 7.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

This study was approached within a social constructionist theoretical framework and used a qualitative phenomenological lens, as outlined in Figure 4.2, to explore the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. Knowledge was thus derived socially from the interaction between and among myself as researcher and my research participants, because in a world of multiple realities there can be no universal answers (Creswell, 2007). The goal of phenomenology is to investigate more deeply the participants’ internal world as it is experienced, in order to “…understand someone else’s world as if you were standing in her shoes…” (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010, p. 25). Furthermore, besides uncovering the shared life experiences of being bullied I also uncovered the unique and lived experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, a hallmark of phenomenological research (Spinelli, 2005). The methods used to collect the data were mentioned in Chapter 7.4.2 and the methods employed to analyse the data discussed in Chapter 7.4.3. Trustworthiness of the data was verified through the methodological norms of Babbie and Mouton (2009).

### 7.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

As discussed in detail in Chapter 4.7, trustworthiness of the data was verified through the methodological norms of Babbie and Mouton (2009), founded by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and included credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity or generalisability), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity). As pointed out in Chapter 4.7, these constructs correspond to the criteria employed by quantitative researchers found in the parentheses (Shenton, 2004). In addition, crystallisation was also employed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I worked according to all these principles and also made thorough use of member checks throughout the
research process, both formally and informally, to establish credibility (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008).

7.7 RELATIONSHIP OF THE FINDINGS TO PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The four superordinate themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data are summarized below indicating what is novel, what is confirmed and what is disputed in the literature surrounding children in middle childhood who continue to be bullied. In addition, gaps in the literature about bullying are mentioned.

7.7.1 Experiences of maternal stress

New knowledge arising from this study, surrounding children who are continually bullied, indicated that the participants were all subjected to maternal stress from the time of conception. There is evidence in the literature indicating the long-term negative effects of maternal stress, especially on unborn babies and infants within the first 2-3 years of a child’s life (Blair et al., 2011; Gerhardt, 2004; Levine & Kline, 2006; Scaer, 2005; Talge et al., 2007). Only one study highlighting the role of prenatal stress in being bullied was found when doing a literature search. Lereya and Wolke (2013, p. 650) found that “prenatal stress due to family adversity and maternal mental health problems directly increases the risk of being bullied.” Bronfenbrenner (2005) mentions the importance of attachment for healthy development in his propositions and other researchers have acknowledged the negative effect of maternal stress. Espelage and Swearer (2010) mention that children’s lives are dramatically shaped by adults for the first 18 years. Stams et al. (2002) also stated that a higher quality of child-mother relationship predicted better social and cognitive development and Murray-Harvey and Slee (2010) talk of stressful relationships within the family among children who are bullied. Malone et al. (2004) refer to overtime, working mothers and Christie-Mizell et al. (2011) specify how single parent families are linked to children who are bullied.

Davis and Thompson (2014, p. 6) explain that “The foetal period is a time of enormous neurological changes and thus experiences during this period can dramatically influence development.” According to Giover (2011), these stresses do
not have to be extreme stress, as several studies have shown how daily problems, such as pregnancy-specific anxiety or relationship strain can have a negative effect on the developing foetus. In this study the following forms of maternal stress were found to be present: Unplanned pregnancies, mothers’ personal traumas, mothers’ health, work stress, financial stress (not low income but rather trying to maintain a certain standard of living), and mother’s personal wellbeing, both during pregnancy and thereafter. The literature indicates that stress in a pregnant mother has a profound effect on the foetus’s wellbeing as: “The ‘social brain’ is shaped and an individual’s emotional style and resources are established during pregnancy and in the first two years of life” (Gerhardt, 2004, pp. 18-19). Stephen Porges’s (2011) polyvagal theory gives insight into the way our autonomic nervous system unconsciously mediates social engagement, trust and intimacy. Furthermore, according to Lupien et al. (2009), prenatal stress has long-term neurodevelopmental effects on the foetus, including neurological, cognitive and behaviour disturbances such as unsociable behaviour. Murray (2014) found that prenatal stress has a detrimental effect on the limbic system, especially the hippocampus, with profound implications for the socialisation of middle childhood children if overlooked. According to Luby et al. (2012, p. 2858), “…the hippocampus is a brain region central to memory, emotion regulation, and stress modulation, all areas key to healthy social adaptation.” These findings are significant, as experiences of being bullied highlight social difficulties within an individual. For example, Cook et al. (2010) found predictors for being bullied included a lack of adequate social skills, poor social problem solving skills, and are noticeably rejected and isolated by peers. Cassidy (2009) found that children who are bullied scored lower on social self-esteem and social identity, while Ahmed et al. (2001) as cited by Morrison (2002) explain how experiences of rejection exacerbate feelings of shame which leads to further breakdown of relationships. Various theoretical explanations of being bullied were presented in Chapter 3.4, but none of them include the role of prenatal stress and postnatal stress to explain why some children continue to be bullied. Findings from previous research on bullying provide clues as to why children are bullied such as listed in Table 2.2 and Table 2.3. Of interest is that Guerra, Williams and Sadek (2011) point out that a cycle of being bullied begins with weaker children in the early school years because of a lack of self-confidence. This is what these authors contend make young children vulnerable to being bullied in the first place, which then
leads to a further decrease in their self-esteem, “leading to subsequent increases in vulnerability and continued or increasing victimization” (Guerra et al., 2011, p. 307). A look at these personal dispositions and bioecological resources/albatrosses found among children who are bullied seem to be a consequence of prenatal and postnatal stress. This finding may also explain why the findings concerning the demand characteristics as listed in Chapter 2.4 are not consistent. For example, the literature indicates conflicting research findings relating to gender such as, who is bullied more? Girls or boys?

7.7.2 Experiences of trauma

Different knowledge arose from this study in that it was found that all the participants experienced multiple traumas from in utero through to middle childhood, as listed in Table 5.3. Scaer (2005, p. 2) defines trauma as “…a continuum of variably negative life events occurring over the lifespan, including events that may be accepted as ‘normal’ in the context of daily experience because they are endorsed and perpetuated by our own cultural institutions.” This may explain why bullying as trauma was one of the findings of this study. Scaer (2005, p. 2) also emphasises that trauma is dependent on the meaning an individual attributes to it, “…based on the cumulative burden of a myriad of prior negative life events, especially those experienced in the vulnerable period of early childhood.” Referring to Table 5.3 it is evident that all three participants had experienced trauma not only since conception but also experienced multiple traumas in their lives, albeit to differing degrees, which Finkelhor et al. (2009a), Holt, Finkelhor and Kantor (2007) and Wolak, Mitchell and Finkelhor (2007) refer to as “polyvictimisation”, Bessel van der Kolk as developmental trauma and Scaer as complex trauma. DeAngelis (2015) explains that such concepts hope to bridge the gap to adequately capture what symptoms children with multiple traumas present with, as the diagnosis of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders does not apply well to traumatised children. Other experiences of trauma found in this study included, in utero trauma, traumatic events and symptoms of trauma.

Very little literature links in utero trauma to bullying except, for Lereya and Wolke’s (2013) study which was mentioned above. However, Schlotz, Jones, Godfrey and
Phillips (2008) established that an adverse foetal environment is associated with behaviour problems such as hyperactivity in childhood. Hyperactivity was one of the behaviours linked to being bullied (Dempsey & Storch, 2010; Jansen et al., 2011). Moreover, Lomas, Stough, Hansen and Downey (2012) found that adolescence who are bullied scored low in emotional intelligence and emotional intelligence has also been linked to childhood trauma (Hosier, 2014). Porges (2011, p. 192) also highlights that “…difficulties both in expressing social behaviour and in reading social cues (i.e., social awareness)…” are linked to trauma. In addition, shame is viewed as a secondary symptom of the initial freeze response in childhood trauma. Levine and Kline (2006) explain that when the core symptom, such as the freeze response is not resolved, over time new symptoms such as shame and guilt can arise.

As already indicated in 5.3.3.2, the literature surrounding bullying as being traumatic is scant. In this study, the participants depicted bullying as trauma in the form of symbols, metaphors, words, and symptoms. Penning et al. (2010) produced evidence to show there was a statistically significant relationship between bullying and trauma and that this was strongest for the child being bullied. The participants in this study besides using animals, metaphors and words to convey bullying as trauma, also displayed symptoms of trauma in their sand trays which included: withdrawal, avoidance, the freeze response and dissociation. Campbell and Morrison (2007) and Lopes (2013) both considered bullying as a traumatic experience, which is contrary to the DSM-1V (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Then again, other researchers associated traumatic symptoms with being bullied, which infers bullying as being traumatic. Gini and Pozzoli (2009) reported that children who are bullied are at a higher risk of psychosomatic problems. Some researchers found that infrequent bullying (once or twice a month) is associated with adjustment problems (Gower & Borowsky, 2013). Ouellet-Morin et al. (2011) report that 12 year old children who are bullied had lower cortisol responses and that these were, in turn, associated with more social and behavioural problems. Wolke, Schreier, Zanarini and Winsper (2012) found that children who were bullied by their peers in childhood were at risk for developing borderline personality disorder at 11 years of age. Kelleher et al. (2008) highlight associations between psychotic symptoms, early childhood trauma and bullying, whilst Lataster et al. (2006) found a strong association between being bullied and non-clinical psychotic experiences. Sansone,
Leung and Wiederman’s (2013, p. 825) findings indicated a relationship between being bullied in childhood and “...externalised aggressive behaviours in adulthood such as hitting walls, breaking things, getting into fists fights and pushing/shoving a partner.” Interestingly, Terwogt and Schuengel (2002) established that children who are bullied, but do not bully, were reactively aggressive, another hallmark of trauma. In addition, as mentioned previously in Chapter 5.3.4, one of the core criteria used to define bullying, “the systematic abuse of power” (Smith, 2000, p. 295; Rigby, 2002, p. 12) and “peer abuse” (Olweus, 1997, p. 496) epitomise bullying as being traumatic. Moreover, many researchers have described and indicated the short and long-term psychological consequences of being bullied (Ayenibiowo & Akinbode, 2011; Carbone-Lopez, Esbensen, & Brick, 2010; Fekkes et al., 2006). These symptoms of trauma explain why children who are bullied have been found to have the following dispositions among many others:

- Weak and vulnerable (Rigby, 2002b)
- Exhibit poor psychosocial functioning (Cook et al., 2010; Veenstra et al., 2005)
- Withdrawn, quiet, anxious, depressed, isolated, insecure (Rigby, 2002b; Veenstra et al., 2005)
- Negative cognitions of the self (Cook et al., 2010)
- Aggressiveness (Veenstra et al., 2005)

As mentioned in Chapter 5.3.3.3, all three participants had experienced traumatic events in their lives, to a greater or lesser extent. Some of these consisted of personal experience of threatened death, or witnessing significant others being threatened with serious injury or death. While one of the participants had also been confronted with an event that involved the actual death of a loved one some of the participants did not personally recall these events as they were either too young or perhaps too frightened to do so. Another study linking post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to being bullied following a severe hurricane was done by Terranova et al. (2009).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-V™ places emphasis on the magnitude of the stressor, which according to Scaer (2005) and
Levine and Kline (2006), does not define trauma fully. For example, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder for Children 6 years and younger, Criterion A states that “…exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways:” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 272) and Criterion A for Posttraumatic Stress disorder for adults, adolescents, and children older than 6 years it is stated, “Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271). According to Peter Levine, “Trauma is trauma, no matter what caused it, because the critical factor is the perception of threat and the ability to deal with it” (Levine, 2008, p. 11). Trauma may be defined as any experience that overwhelms an individual and leaves them feeling utterly helpless and hopeless (Levine & Kline, 2006; Levine, 2008; Scaer, 2005). Children are especially susceptible to becoming overwhelmed (Levine, 2008). Levine and Kline (2006, p. 4) explain that “trauma is not in the event itself; rather trauma resides in the nervous system.” These authors clarify that trauma is the antithesis of empowerment, because it involves an experience (a real or perceived threat, conscious or unconscious), which overwhelms an individual, leaving him or her helpless and hopeless. This was elaborated upon in Chapter 5.3.4.

Scaer (2005) explains that individuals exposed to sequential, multiple traumas become progressively sensitive to minor stressors and are often labelled as hypochondriacs. It is not surprising, therefore, that each of the participants presented with symptoms of trauma, as trauma expresses itself through a variety of universal symptoms, in both children and adults (Levine & Kline, 2006). These included avoidance of places or talking about the event; new fears, such as developing a fear of the police, as these triggered those traumatic memories; dissociation, which on the surface appears as a form of denial but is a disconnection from memory, feelings, thoughts and reality; somatic symptoms, such as stomach aches, headaches, vomiting; feelings of helplessness; withdrawal; rage; depression and flashbacks. Symptoms of trauma arise from the unused energy aroused from the initial threatening event which becomes frozen in the body “…when there isn’t enough time, strength, speed, or size to overpower the forces against us” (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 74). From a social constructionism perspective, these symptoms may
be viewed as a form of language that emerges from a relational process as well as influencing social interaction.

In contrast, Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model sees these symptoms as personal dispositions which would contribute towards being bullied. Scaer (2005) also points out that the symptoms of trauma may worsen with the passage of time. He explains that a traumatised individual continues to respond to daily life experience in a “…stereotyped, repetitive and counterproductive…” manner, and therefore reciprocates to “…new events, relations and challenges as if he were responding to the old threat” (Scaer, 2005, p. 68). This seems to explain why children such as Martin tend to ‘rage.’ In other words this may be seen as a symptom of trauma rather than a form of conscious retaliation, which seems to perpetuate the cycle of being bullied. Levine and Kline (2006) explain how a traumatised brain reacts differently from a non-traumatised one. According to these authors, the survival brain is tuned to “high alert” and is sensitive to the tiniest trigger: “A child’s sense of safety becomes highly distorted, causing a perception of danger when there is none” (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 73). In Levine and Kline’s words, “…this sends a cascade of unneeded chemicals, marching like soldiers to the battleground (to the most primitive parts of the brain), to fight a war that doesn’t exist” (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 74). This perhaps also explains why there are mixed findings surrounding the demand characteristics and being bullied, such as gender, age and race. Further research needs to investigate whether the role of trauma rather than demand characteristics determines such findings.

7.7.3 Experiences of innocent versus wicked

This superordinate theme pertains to the experiences of being bullied. The words ‘innocent’ and ‘wicked’, used to describe this theme, were utilised by one of the participants when talking of his experiences of being bullied. Bronfenbrenner’s first proposition refers to these as subjective experiences which are emotionally and motivationally charged, with the polarities of these emotions existing at the same time, but in differing degrees (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).
In summary the findings from this superordinate theme in this study confirm the following findings (see Table 7.1), in the various contexts of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, surrounding the literature on bullying.

**Table 7.1: Confirmation of findings in the literature related to ‘Experiences of innocent versus wicked’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Existing literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Individual | • Children who are continually bullied are at high risk developing problems as a consequence of being bullied (Craig and Pepler, 2003).  
• Certain negative personality characteristics have been detected among children for being bullied (Rigby, 2002). I argue that these negative personality characteristics are largely due to symptoms of a traumatised brain.  
• Research also indicates that children who are bullied tend to be seen as relatively weak and vulnerable (Rigby, 2002), and exhibit poor psychosocial functioning (Cook et al., 2010; Veenstra et al., 2005).  
• Personality traits such as being withdrawn, quiet, physically less powerful, anxious, depressed, isolated, insecure or objects of group prejudice have been associated with being bullied (Rigby, 2002; Veenstra et al., 2005).  
• Negative cognitions about the self, have also been found to be a predictor of being bullied, whereas negative attitudes or thoughts of others have been rated to be a predictor of bullying (Cook et al., 2010). |
| Family | • Not all parents are aware of their children being bullied (Sawyer et al., 2011).  
• Sibling bullying can easily be mistaken for sibling rivalry (Gottesman, 2013).  
• In families, one sibling has the capacity to bully the other as they are rarely equal in terms of age, size and strength (Monks et al., 2009).  
• Assaults by siblings peaked for the 6-9-year olds, with a
significant decline as a consequence of spending less time together at older ages (Finkelhor et al., 2009b).

| Peers | The social role of bullying by the peer group (Rigby, 2003b; Salmivalli, 2010) is significant and should never be overlooked. |
| | Reasons found for peers conforming to the bullying behaviour include pressure within the friendship group to maintain the friendship (Burns et al., 2008), to keep their position in a perceived popular peer group (Witvliet et al., 2010), and as a desire to be accepted by the group (Oltorf & Goossens, 2008), because peers give reputational support to some aggressive children (Rodkin et al., 2006). |
| | There are different types of ‘bullies’ (Ball et al., 2008; Farmer et al., 2010; Holt & Espelage, 2007; Peeters et al., 2010; Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). |
| | Friendships can serve as both protective and risk factors within the relationship, as they are also known to bully (Craig & Pepler, 2003; Daniels et al., 2010; Mishna et al., 2008; Wei & Jonson-Reid, 2011). |
| | Peers influence retaliation or revenge (Frey et al., 2015). |

| School | Relational bullying was experienced by all three boys, so it is not a type of bullying only experienced by girls (Felix and McMahon, 2007). |
| | Cyberbullying is not a common form of bullying that occurs among middle childhood children (Louw, 2011). |
| | Verbal and physical bullying were the most commonly experienced forms of bullying among middle childhood children (Greeff & Grobler, 2008). |
| | The attitudes teachers display towards bullying affects children’s actions (Veenstra et al., 2014). |

In contrast, the following findings from this study negate certain arguments found in the bullying literature. Firstly, in this study, positive characteristics or bioecological resources, such as good cricket skills and affective, but not cognitive empathy, were found among children who are bullied. This finding negates Rigby’s argument that...
positive characteristics as identified by Tim Field have been found to be lacking in children who are bullied (Rigby, 2002). In the bullying literature it was found that children who had experienced sibling bullying in the previous year for both mild and severe forms of bullying presented with significantly worse mental health (Jenkins Tucker et al., 2013). The findings in this study cannot verify this. Wolke and Skew (2013) found that sibling bullying remained stable over time, but this study did not. I also propose that the concept of retaliation or reactive aggression as a form of revenge (Frey et al., 2015) by a person who is being bullied continuously, should be viewed differently, as it does not explain the participants' aggressive reactions appropriately. I argue that such reactions are not conscious decisions to retaliate, but rather unconscious, irrational and spontaneous reactions triggered by provocative behaviours, which may appear harmless to the onlooker or perpetrator but which the perpetrator purposefully provokes to get this reaction. I claim that such reactions are the responses of a traumatised brain, which for Levine and Kline (2006) has a distinctly different physiology from a non-traumatised one, as it responds to the slightest threat and is sensitive to the tiniest trigger. Levine and Kline (2006) describe how the higher neocortical brain, responsible for thought and reason lies dormant, while the amygdala or survival brain awakens when triggered, thereby rendering the individual incapable of reasoning away the fear and instead acts out with extreme emotion.

As mentioned earlier, this study found that the literature about bullying by teachers, cousins (extended family) and siblings (Hoetger, Hazen, & Brank, 2015; Jenkins Tucker et al., 2013; Skinner & Kowalski, 2013) is sparse and leaves a wide gap to be filled. It also perhaps highlights how the extended family should be incorporated into Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model in the microsystem.

### 7.7.4 Experiences of supportive relationships

Six relationships emanated from the findings, which either were supportive or destructive with regard to being bullied, namely, friendships, grandparents, the family, the self, the school and the community. These all form part of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (2005) discussed in Chapter 2.3. In summary the findings from this superordinate theme in this study confirm the following findings
(see Table 7.2) surrounding the literature on bullying in the various contexts of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model.

**Table 7.2: Confirmation of findings in the literature related to ‘Experiences of supportive relationships’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Existing literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Individual | - A reputation for being bullied makes it difficult to acquire friends because becoming friends with such a person increases one’s chance of also being bullied (Boulton, 2013) as was also found in this study.  
- The participants in this study were able to report bullying incidents regarding their peers but not themselves. Hunter et al. (2004) discovered that children who were bullied longer than four weeks used less social support than those who had had been bullied for fewer than four weeks.  
- The participants in this study primarily declined to talk to their parents or teachers about their experiences of being bullied. Matsunaga (2009) established that parents of children who are bullied do not always know about it, confirming Oliver and Candappa (2007) reports of children’s reluctance to tell adults, especially teachers about being bullied. Matsunaga (2010) also found that in individualistic cultures, individuals refrain from telling others about their bullying experiences based on negative self-consequences.  
- All the participants were better able to tell their friends about their bullying experiences. Oliver and Candappa (2007) reasoned that telling friends about bullying experiences is perceived as less risky than telling adults because adult responses are perceived as ineffective, or insensitive, or influenced by a culture that discouraged ‘telling tales.’  
- Regarding emotional intelligence, the participants confirmed Kokkinos and Kipritsi’s (2012) notion of affective empathy, in that they could tell what other children were feeling when they were bullied, but showed that they lacked cognitive empathy when two of the participants indicated their need to force a friendship when it was obvious that neither friend wanted it. |
| Family | The family emerged as a central relationship in all three participants’ lives, both as a protective and risk factor in being bullied. The context of the family is viewed as both a protective (Murray-Harvey & Slee, 2010; Ttofi et al., 2014) and risk factor (Rigby, 2013) with regard to being bullied.  
- Overprotective mothering and maternal depression were both found to be positively related to the child being bullied (Georgiou, 2008) as was found in this study.  
- Increased parental monitoring, as in controlling versus supportive parenting, was associated with being bullied more (Boel-Studt & Renner, 2013; Mann et al., 2015; Moroni et al., 2015; Reavis et al., 2010).  
- Mothers working overtime (Christie-Mizell, Keil, Laske, & Stewart, 2011; Malone, Lansford, Castellino, Berlin, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004) and children from single parent families (Jankauskiene, Kardelis, Sukys, & Kardeliene, 2008; Rigby, 1993) have also been associated with being bullied.  
- This study also found that siblings serve a beneficial as well as hurtful role, confirming what Greer, Campione-Barr and Lindell (2015, p. 1567) describe as a “love-hate relationship.” |
| Peers | The role of friends and best friends emerged as the most important factor in empowering or disempowering the participants (Bollmer et al., 2005; Hodges et al., 1999; Malcolm et al., 2006; Mann et al., 2015; McAuley et al., 2012; 2015; Rodkin, 2004).  
- This study found that friends were an important source of validating the sense of self. Reciprocal or unilateral friendships raises the friendship self-efficacy of the person being bullied, thereby decreasing the individual’s symptoms of anxiety, depression and social withdrawal, which attract bullying behaviour (Fitzpatrick & Bussey, 2014; Hodges et al., 1999).  
- Poor quality friends are the ones who possibly bully and would not protect a child from being bullied (Malcolm et al., 2006), as was found to be the case in two of the participant’s lives in this study. |
| School | The findings revealed that the teachers failed to see the cumulative effects of bullying incidents and tended to ignore them. This may be due to lack of understanding or a denial of the problem. Crothers and |
Kolbert (2010) stress that teachers are an important part of the solution to bullying problems and can undermine bullying prevention and intervention if they are uninformed.

- The findings also revealed that teachers unwittingly encouraged bullying behaviour by reinforcing behaviours such as crying, which attract teasing and bullying in their classrooms. Saarento et al. (2015) point out that it is not only the reactions of peers that encourage bullying but also teachers, who may or may not intervene.

- A lack of knowledge and hence poor management of bullying also emerged in the findings. Nordahl et al. (2008) claim that because teachers are in close proximity to bullying incidents it is critical that they be equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to deal with this phenomenon.

- A lack of supervision in the classroom and on the playground also contributed to experiences of being bullied. Less adult monitoring at school was associated with more bullying behaviour, as it would help protect children from being bullied (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009; Wienke Totura et al., 2009).

- The role of a psychologist at the school also emerged as a positive aspect regarding bullying at the school. Danby et al. (2011) highlight that telling a teacher about a bullying situation, particularly one involving indirect bullying, can make things worse for a child, but that in contrast, trained counsellors take children's concerns of bullying seriously and empower them instead. Twemlow and Sacco (2013) also point out the important role of counsellors at schools because according to them, at affluent schools, there is a tendency to overlook the psychological impact of pressure on developing children at the expense of academic performance, while at disadvantaged schools learners are likely to support their peers and hate their teachers who represent an authority system.

A lack of communication between parents, child and school surrounding bullying also arose from the findings. Constant communication between parents and teachers is an effective approach to dealing with bullying (Christenson & Carlson, 2005; DiBasilio, 2008).
The following findings from this study contradict certain arguments in the bullying literature. The role of a girlfriend in middle childhood in this study was found to be both a protective and risk factor for being bullied, rather than just “… a good source of help and security for boys when they are victimised by their peers” (Underwood, 2007, p. 524). In contrast to McAuley et al.’s (2012) finding that many children viewed their grandparents as part of their family and as their closest relationships, figures in whom they could confide or turn to when worried, this study found that different grandparents played different roles in the participant’s lives (Krauss Whitbourne, 2010).

This superordinate theme also highlighted certain gaps in the literature about being bullied, suggesting further research in these areas. The role of grandparents emerged as an important element in a supportive and discouraging way. No evidence of the role of grandparents with regard to bullying was found in the literature indicating another gap. In addition, the role of the domestic worker also played an important supportive part in two of the participants’ lives. No literature could be found surrounding this topic, but in light of Yeung and Leadbeater’s (2010) research indicating how adults can make a difference in the lives of adolescents who are bullied, it is reasonable to generalise this finding to caring domestics in the South African context. On the other hand, the role of a domestic worker could also pose as a risk factor in view of the video that was screened on the television programme, Carte Blanche, on the 11 January 2015, concerning a Ugandan nanny viciously abusing a toddler at the end of 2014 (Sparkes & Mazarakis, 2015). Furthermore, the role of the community in preventing and intervening with bullying was not found to be very effective in preventing bullying. Likewise, Mann et al. (2015) state that from a bioecological perspective that this has been neglected and suggested further research in this area. In this study it became apparent how violent crime emerged in all of the participant’s lives. Finkelhor (1995), Finkelhor et al. (2007a, 2009a, 2009b) refer to the concept of ‘Polyvictimisation,’ i.e., exposure to multiple forms of victimization (Finkelhor et al., 2011). This suggests a link between being bullied and community crime, which indicates a need for this to be explored further, keeping in mind the high levels of violence in South Africa.
7.8 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study contributed towards Babbie and Mouton's (2009) three worlds’ framework, not unique to South Africa but also internationally applicable.

7.8.1 Everyday life (pragmatic interest) of World 3

This study contributed to everyday life knowledge in several of Bronfenbrenner's ecological environments, which have an influence on the development of the child, including the individual. Firstly, this study contributed to the individual wellbeing of the participants because they now have an understanding of why they continue to be bullied and what can be done to alleviate this situation. At the microsystem level, middle childhood, those who continue to be bullied will have opportunities at schools to heal as a consequence of the development of the board game HEROES. Moreover, therapists at schools will be equipped with better knowledge as how to better manage children who continue to be bullied, firstly by undertaking a thorough history of trauma then integrating therapies that heal trauma. This study also highlighted the importance of stress-free pregnancies for the wellbeing of the development of their children. In view of Bronfenbrenner's propositions1-5, pre and postnatal classes for mothers are vital here. Such knowledge should be included in the training of nurses, doctors and midwives. Clinics may benefit from this research in helping educate pregnant mothers of the consequences of stress on their unborn babies. At the exosystem level, the government, more specifically the DoE84, can incorporate the element of trauma into their policy on bullying in schools and its prevention and management.

7.8.2 The world of science (the epistemic interest) of World 2

The findings suggest that it would be useful for researchers to develop a questionnaire/survey surrounding Levine's definition of trauma, pertaining to an overwhelmed nervous system, rather than seeing trauma as being related to the magnitude of the event, that can be used by therapists at schools, and or

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paediatricians or doctors. Such questionnaires or surveys would capture traumatic events such as experiencing maternal stress in utero (Essex, Klein, Cho, & Kalin, 2002; Scaer, 2005), falling off bicycles (Levine & Kline, 2006), accidents and falls as a toddler (Levine & Kline, 2006), medical and surgical procedures (Levine & Kline, 2006), violent acts and attacks (Levine & Kline, 2006), loss (Levine & Kline, 2006) and environmental stressors (Levine & Kline, 2006), as indicated in Table 7.3. Moreover, such questionnaires or surveys need also to take into account the age of when the trauma occurred and number of traumas encountered up to the age of two years, as indicated in the following quote:

What happens from the foetal period until two years of age creates the blueprint that influences every system in the body from immunity to the expression and regulation of emotion to nervous system resilience, communication, intelligence and self-regulatory mechanisms for such basics as body temperature and hormone production. (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 34)

The findings also indicated that it would be useful for quantitative researchers to investigate the link between early traumas commencing in utero up until the age of two years and the involvement in being continually bullied. Building on this it would be highly beneficial for researchers to investigate the link between using trauma therapies such as Eye Movement Integration, Energy Psychology, and Somatic Experiencing to end the cycle of being bullied continuously and to empower the helpless child.

Table 7.3: Situations that can traumatise children (Levine & Kline, 2006, pp. 23-26)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Specific examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accidents and falls</td>
<td>• Falls (stairs, beds, and high chairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sports injuries (from team sports, falls from bicycles, skateboards, skis, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Car accidents (even at slow speeds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Near drowning and near suffocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and surgical procedures</td>
<td>• Surgery and medical procedures (stitches, needles, IV’s exploratory exams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dental procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Life threatening illnesses and high fevers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prolonged immobilisation (casting, splinting, traction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poisoning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Medical and surgical procedures
- Foetal distress and birth complications (cord around neck, anaesthesia, drugs and alcohol)

### Violent acts/attacks
- Bullying (school, neighbourhood, siblings)
- Animal attacks (dog, snakebite)
- Family violence
- Witnessing violence (live and vicariously through video games and TV)
- Physical and sexual abuse and neglect
- War, displacement and its intergenerational effects
- Threat of terrorist attack
- Kidnapping
- Armed robberies and car hijackings

### Loss
- Divorce
- Death of a loved one or pet
- Separation
- Being lost (at the mall or in a strange neighbourhood)
- Possessions (home and other belongings following a disaster or theft)

### Environmental stressors
- Exposure to extremes of temperature
- Natural disasters (fires, earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, volcanoes and tsunamis)
- Sudden loud noises for babies and young children (arguments, violence, thunder—especially if left alone)

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### 7.8.3 The world of metascience (the critical interest) of World 1

This study has contributed to two theories. Firstly, it has contributed to the theory of bullying in two respects. One, it seems that trauma could be added to one of the criteria for defining bullying, which Rigby (2014a, para.11) argues has several necessary but, on their own, insufficient criteria to be conceptualised as bullying (Rigby, 2012). I argue that this is necessary because these findings have firstly indicated that having a history of trauma that commences in utero or within the first two years of life predisposes a developing child to being bullied continuously. Furthermore, two symptoms of trauma, namely the experience of shame, and a low

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85 This is very relevant to the South African context
emotional intelligence have also been identified as a precursor to being bullied. Moreover, recognising bullying behaviour as having the potential to be traumatic, depending on the traumatic history of the individual is important too, because the findings suggest that such children are susceptible to being further traumatised through the act of bullying. This finding seems to explain why some children escape being bullied whilst others continue to be bullied. It also explains why children respond to different forms of bullying differently. In addition, it clarifies why children who are bullied have limited resources to deal with bullying behaviours even when they are given social skills to manage it. Poor mental health, and/or a lack of emotional intelligence, which I argue, may be described as being symptomatic of trauma, would also explain why many therapeutic treatments have been unsuccessful with certain individuals who continue to be bullied, rendering them susceptible to both the short-term and long-term consequences of being bullied (Krige, Pettipher, Squelch, & Swart, 2000). The second input with regard to the theory of bullying relates to the therapeutic board game I have designed and developed from the findings of this study.

The second contribution to theory relates to Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model. The mother’s womb needs to be included as a context for child development, but as pointed out in 2.4.1.6, Bronfenbrenner has overlooked this as a context to investigate in the fused and dynamic relation of the foetus with the mother. He confirms this in Proposition 1, as highlighted in 2.4.1.1, when he states that a critical element of the bioecological model is experience which commences in infancy, negating the gestational period of development.

7.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In this section I acknowledge seven limitations of this study.

7.9.1 Use of purposive/purposeful sampling

It has been reiterated throughout this thesis that generalisability from the sample to the target population is limited when purposive sampling is used. This is because in purposive sampling, the sample is selected based on the research question and is
chosen because they meet pre-established criteria (Saumure & Given, 2008). In this thesis, my sample was chosen based on a specific age group (middle childhood) and being continually bullied over an extended period of time. The objective of qualitative research is not to claim that “…knowledge from one context will necessarily have relevance for other contexts or for the same context in another time frame” (Babbie & Mouton, 2009, p. 277). Rather, the aim of qualitative research is to ensure that through transferability, the reader is able to generalise these findings to their own contexts and one way to do this is through the strategy of purposeful sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2009).

7.9.2 Male participants only

The fact that this study included only boys and no girls is a substantial limitation, as no gender effects or differences could be determined. This limitation occurred because firstly, no girls were accessible to me whilst working at a boy’s school. Secondly, despite, working in a private practice, where I was exposed to girls, no girls, identified as being continually bullied, were prepared to be part of the study because of the sensitivity surrounding this complex phenomenon. However, as mentioned in Appendix 5, it was because of my experiences of working with children who were continually bullied (both boys and girls), that I noticed a pattern of trauma among these children and hence embarked in this study.

7.9.3 Small number of participants

I only used three participants in this study so the results may be less likely to be taken seriously, as it is rightfully argued that these findings cannot be generalised to the larger population, such as other researchers and policymakers in government. However, the findings do provide deep insight and clues for other researchers to investigate this phenomenon further by including many more participants.
7.9.4 Self-reported data

As mentioned in Chapter 4.2.2.1, I also recorded unplanned conversations in my journal by hand, as at times I needed to supplement information that had been given to me by my research participants, without breaching confidentiality. Such data cannot be independently verified and could contain potential sources of bias, such as, selective memory, telescoping, attribution and exaggeration (University of Southern California, 2016). I wrote down these notes as soon as possible to eliminate these biases.

7.9.5 Issues of anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality is an area of grave concern. Although I assigned pseudonyms to the participants and their families it was difficult to conceal the identity of the school because I work there. I have not used photographs of the school and have avoided giving rich, thick description of it. As a consequence of this vulnerable area I have had to leave out certain pieces of information that potentially might have disclosed the identity of the participants. My supervisors have also been very helpful here in drawing such information to my attention.

7.9.6 Dual role of researcher-psychologist

Although Yanos and Ziedonis (2006) note that psychology-researcher roles can serve as effective “bridgers” between research and communities, they also point out the ethical and role conflicts.

A number of ethical issues presented themselves as potential dilemmas both before the research study was under way and during it. Fortunately, Hammick’s (1996) research ethics wheel as cited by Whiting and Vickers (2010) forewarned me of these conflicts of interests between being an educational psychologist and then a researcher.

Firstly, that I had been working in the school for many years in a therapeutic role as an educational psychologist might have confused participants when my goal as researcher no longer included the goal of therapy, but rather scientific rigour. A
contract (Appendix 8.4) was drawn up prior to the commencement of the research study, informing participants and their parents of this conflict of interest. One set of parents refused to allow their child to be part of the research process because of this. Only one of the three participants needed to be referred to another psychologist during this study.

Another dilemma involved dealing with particularly vulnerable participants. Whilst interviewing Kade about his sand tray, he collapsed with a headache and stomach ache and rushed to the bathroom to vomit. According to Whiting and Vickers (2010), when a child becomes distressed the interview should be stopped and the child referred for counselling. I prepared to end the interview and called Kade’s mother, as she was waiting for him to complete his interview. Kade, however, wished to continue with the interview when he returned from the bathroom and did not want to go home. I self-regulated and grounded myself, then focused on the research question and aim of the research study to get me back into researcher’s mode of thinking following this incident. Mertens (2010) also talks a lot about social justice, fairness and human rights, saying that researchers working with children need to emerge first as a social person and secondly as a professional with a distinctive and genuine purpose. Mertens (2010) also states that the researcher should choose to play the role of an older sibling or protector. Besides using my research questions and aim of the study to adhere to this role, I also made use of Mertens’s (2010) three ethical principles she ascribes to, which include:

- Maximising good outcomes and avoiding risk, harm or wrong
- Respecting those that aren’t autonomous
- And ensuring those who bear the risk in the research are the ones who benefit from it

7.9.7 Researcher bias

Working from a qualitative, social constructionist perspective, it was possible that my personal biases and idiosyncrasies might influence the outcome of the findings because of the subjective nature of research. In addition, because it was my first research topic, and my having commenced this research journey because of what I had observed as an educational psychologist among children who were continually
bullied, there could be bias and influence on my research study. There were a number of precautions I took to avoid this. Firstly, I reflected and acknowledged my assumptions and beliefs about my research topic (Appendix 5) prior to commencing the study. I continuously referred to and reflected upon my research question and aim, whilst collecting and analysing the data. In addition, I used different methods to collect my data and made use of purposeful sampling, open-ended questions for in-depth interviewing and constructed an interview schedule when I was planning to use a semi-structured interview, thereby eliminating the use of structured questions.

7.10 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the research findings, the following recommendations are made in the various contexts of the child’s development according to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model.

7.10.1 Recommendations for the individual

If a child is exposed to trauma, particularly in utero and in the first two years of his/her life (Refer to Table 7.3), but not excluding other traumas, it is recommended that parents of the child and family should seek therapeutic assistance before the child commences school, in order to prevent the child from being bullied.

It is recommended that a careful history is taken, of a child who is being bullied continuously, in order for a psychologist to determine appropriate therapeutic interventions. For example, it would not be appropriate for a therapist to commence therapy with teaching a child social skills, if they have been subjected to trauma.

If the individual who is continually being bullied finds that he/she is being bullied by his/her own friends it is important that this is not ignored and that help through a therapist is sought. Such children are not in a position to confront their friend on a one-to-one basis in an assertive manner because of feelings of helplessness.
7.10.2 Recommendations for the family

Psycho-education is recommended for mothers in order to plan for a stress-free pregnancy. Stress on a pregnant mother has been found to have a profound effect on the foetus’s wellbeing. “The foetal period is a time of enormous neurological changes and thus experiences during this period can dramatically influence development” (Davis & Thompson, 2014, p. 6). Research has indicated that “the ‘social brain’ is shaped and an individual’s emotional style and resources are established during pregnancy and in the first two years of life” (Gerhardt, 2004, pp. 18-19). Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner’s propositions 1-4 highlight the importance of the mother’s role in human development. This has significance when talking about being bullied, because as pointed out in Chapter 3.3, bullying should be looked at within a social context as it involves more than just the personal characteristics of an individual. Lupien et al. (2009) claim that the root of early life stress is the family home and state that, “Disturbances in child development (both neurological and cognitive) and behaviour have been associated with maternal stress” during pregnancy (Lupien et al., 2009, p. 435). Of significance is that it is not just toxic stress responsible for this, but problems such as relationship strain (Glover, 2011b), and high job strain. The mothers working more than 32 hours per week (Vrijkotte, Wal, Eijsden, & Bonsel, 2009) have also been found to affect the developing foetus.

It is also recommended that the quality of parent-child interactions, marked by supportive care, especially during the postnatal period and toddler period take precedence. Bronfenbrenner also stresses the importance of this in his propositions 1-5. Lupien et al. (2009) state that toddlers who attend full-day, out-of-home day care centres have an increased risk of behaviour problems compared to preschool-aged children. In addition to this finding, the authors also highlight the effect of depressed mothers regarding diminished empathy and other behavioural problems among preschool-aged children (Lupien et al., 2009). Rigby (2013) also draws our attention to the quality of relations between parents and children as risk factors for being bullied. The factors that predispose a child to being bullied within the family context were presented in Chapter 2, Table 2.5.
Families also need to monitor negative interactions between their children and discern sibling rivalry from sibling bullying, as the latter can easily be mistaken for the former (Gottesman, 2013). Menesini et al. (2010) state that especially if older sons are involved, parents need to mediate and reduce high levels of conflict. This is important because, according to Skinner and Kowalski (2013, p. 1733), “Bullying of one’s siblings is not only accepted, but expected,” as it is viewed as normal behaviour. It was found that being bullied at home increased chances of being bullied at school (Menesini et al., 2010). In addition, children who are bullied at home and at school have been found to have up to 14 times more behavioural and emotional difficulties than just being bullied in one context (Wolke & Skew, 2011).

In light of the findings that relatives too can bully, family members need to become aware of this and intervene, rather than view it as normative behaviour.

7.10.3 Recommendations for schools

Psycho-education for teachers surrounding their influence on relationships is recommended. My findings revealed that teachers failed to see the cumulative effects of bullying incidents. It has been argued that teachers are instrumental in influencing relationships (Smith, Ananiaidou, & Cowie, 2003) and creating a positive classroom climate (Pryce & Frederickson, 2013). A climate of care and co-operation, in which the values of tolerance, respect and responsibility are modelled, sends an anti-bullying message (Shore, 2009). Teachers are an important part of the solution to bullying problems and can undermine bullying prevention and intervention if uninformed (Crothers & Kolbert, 2010). It is in this light that it is apparent that teachers will need to receive training not just about the nature of bullying but also to receive basic training in bullying as trauma, so that they become aware of the cumulative effects of bullying in vulnerable children.

In light of the findings that teachers too can bully and traumatised vulnerable children, as also found by Twemlow, Fonagy and Sacco (2005), Twemlow et al. (2006) as well as Twemlow and Sacco (2013), it is highly recommended that when teachers are interviewed that they undergo some form of psychometric testing or evaluation to
prevent the sadistic bully type from becoming a teacher, as according to Twemlow et al. (2006), this type of teacher is known to be vicious, unlikely to be retrained and so not suited to the teacher profession.

As the findings also indicated that there are teachers who bully children, but also have been bullied as identified by Twemlow et al. (2006) and de Wet (2007), support for such teachers is highly recommended.

It is recommended that schools have a survey/checklist to identify vulnerable children at the outset of their education. It is recommended that a history of trauma according to Peter Levine’s criteria, presented in Table 7.3, be taken into account when children present with a history of being bullied and/or are reported for tending to be bullied continually. This is important, because the negative and positive personal dispositions that were listed in Table 2.2, and discussed in 2.3.2.1 may be attributed to symptoms/effects of trauma. When the correct therapies are put in place, these negative and positive dispositions associated with being bullied are likely to be replaced over time with positive dispositions that are not associated with being bullied.

It is recommended that schools have whole school anti-bullying policies in place that also include and address different procedures for children who continue to be bullied. For example, the following findings emanated from this research study: That social skills development will not be appropriate to commence with when dealing with a child who is traumatised; rage outbursts need to be viewed as trauma rather than as retaliating or reacting to being bullied and bullying back; that the perceived ‘odd’ or strange behaviour of the child who is being bullied regularly, is symptomatic of trauma, rather than being viewed as a personality disposition.

The role of friends and peers is a strong theme that emerged from this research study in serving as both a protective and risk factor. Friends and peers know much more than teachers or parents about bullying behaviours, as also found by (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005). It is recommended that peers be utilised as a form of a reporting system within schools.
A values-based education is advocated to nurture a culture of respect and care in order to combat the disrespect. According to (Values Based Education (VbE), n.d.) VbE (n.d., para. 1.) “Values are principles that drive and influence behaviour. They influence our actions and attitudes, and become our framework for living. They influence our relationship with ourselves and others.” This is important because there seems to be a fine line between bullying and violence as discussed in Chapter 3.3 and because South Africa is marked by a culture of violence, it is imperative that schools as places of learning, model values that encourage positive values such as respect, tolerance, peace, co-operation, compassion, and fairness.

Subjects like Life Orientation can also address bullying by using screening tests developed by the department of education to identify children who have been subjected to trauma.

It is also advocated that life orientation teachers collect miniatures toys such as: wild animals; farm animals; dinosaurs; sea animals; fish; transport vehicles; objects of nature (trees, flowers, etc.); buildings; reptiles; amphibians; people (soldiers, mermaids, etc.); etc., to allow their learners to convey their stories of being bullied or a world without bullying, as symbols are more effective in communicating traumatic experiences such as being bullied, than words.

It is highly recommended that schools purchase the board game HEROES to be used by therapists in their schools as a therapeutic intervention for children who are bullied.

It is commended that teachers make use of metaphors as a technique in life orientation to educate children about the effect that bullying has on already traumatised children in order to bypass the conscious mind (to overcome resistance) and to effect change in their unconscious. Metaphors such as: Nails in the fence; The magnet; The elephant rope, The use of a bruised apple to show the invisible scars of bullying; etc.
7.10.4 Recommendations for educational psychologists

It is recommended that a history of trauma according to Peter Levine’s criteria, mentioned in Chapter 7.7.2, in addition to maternal stress during pregnancy, be taken when children present with a history of being bullied and/or are reported for tending to be bullied continually. This is important, because the negative and positive personal dispositions that were listed in Table 2, and discussed in 2.3.2.1 may be attributed to symptoms/effects of trauma. When the correct therapies are put in place, these negative and positive dispositions associated with being bullied, are likely to be replaced over time with positive dispositions that aren’t associated with being bullied.

It is recommended that trauma therapies such as Eye Movement Integration, Somatic Experiencing, Hypnotherapy, Ego State Therapy, and Energy Psychology be administered to children who continue to be bullied, prior to social skills and other therapies, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. This is important because children who are bullied frequently have been found to suffer from a variety of psychosomatic problems such as “tiredness, nervousness, sleeping problems and dizziness” (Gini & Pozzoli, 2009, p. 494) as well as “…high levels of social anxiety, loneliness, fear of negative evaluation, avoidance of social situations and social skill deficits” (Gini & Pozzoli, 2009, p. 495), which may be regarded as symptoms of trauma (Levine & Kline, 2006). In this study, traumatic symptoms of dissociation, depression, rage or anger outbursts, somatic symptoms (stomach aches, headaches, vomiting), withdrawal and avoidance and flashbacks were prevalent among the participants.

It is recommended that therapies such as Solution Focused Therapy be used to empower children following the therapy for trauma, as well as Narrative therapy to find an alternative story. This is important in order to change the neurological pattern from “victim” to survivor. In addition, to this, positive affirmations, mantras or guided visualisation may also be utilised to facilitate positive thinking.

It is recommended that measures be put into place in order to enhance the support roles children have in their lives as resources by building a solution focused future.
Social support has been found to be an important factor for children who are bullied (Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Holt & Espelage, 2007; Kendrick, Jutengren, & Stattin, 2012).

It is highly recommended that psychologists use the board game HEROES as a therapeutic intervention to assist with bullying issues. This is a wonderful intervention to be used for group therapy at a school or in a private practice.

7.10.5 Recommendations for doctors, nurses, midwives and clinics

It is recommended that clinics educate pregnant mothers through posters, booklets and conversations about the short and long-term effects of stress on their unborn child.

7.10.6 Recommendations for the Education Department

The following recommendations are proposed:

That the DoE integrate the role of trauma into their bullying policies, plans and practices. For example, refer to Figure 3.1. (definition of bullying). In light of the levels of violence in South Africa, this is particularly important for education departments.

Develop training programmes for teachers in identifying vulnerable children and understanding bullying as trauma.

Develop checklists/surveys/questionnaires for schools to use in order to identify vulnerable children according to Levine’s criteria for trauma (Table7.3), and in particular, not forgetting the role of maternal stress in utero and in the first two years after birth.

Utilise the board game HEROES and distribute this to schools to use as a therapeutic tool to heal trauma in light of the violence in South Africa.
7.10.7 Recommendations for future research

The following recommendations are proposed for further research:

This study has highlighted gaps in the research on bullying. Firstly, there is little research on teachers bullying children and the roles siblings play in bullying.

The findings of this study have also indicated a need for quantitative research to investigate the correlation between being continually bullied and early trauma commencing in utero up until the age of two years. It is important that the criteria listed by Peter Levine in Table 7.3 be utilised to do this.

This study focused on children who are bullied. It is recommended that future research also consider the impact of using trauma therapies such as somatic experiencing, eye movement integration, hypnosis, ego state therapy, and energy psychology, in the treatment of children who are bullied continuously.

It is also recommended that a questionnaire/checklist/survey be constructed surrounding maternal stress when pregnant, to be used as instruments to forewarn mothers, by clinics, gynaecologists, paediatricians and/or antenatal teachers, of the effect their stress may have on their unborn child and the long-term consequences of such stress.

It is recommended that research investigate a link between being bullied and levels of community crime, especially in light of the violence in South Africa.

Considering the gaps in the literature from a bioecological perspective, it is recommended that community interventions which protect children from being bullied are researched.

To evaluate the board game that was developed in this study.
7.11 CONCLUSION

This study focused on the life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied. The theories of social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model assisted me in identifying and describing the significant life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to be bullied, from conception to the present moment, in order to develop an intervention for healing.

The board game, Heroes, aims to make a valuable contribution to children who continue to be bullied, as it utilised the superordinate and sub-themes that emerged from the trustworthy and rigorous data analysis, to guide me as to how to therapeutically intervene in order to facilitate change at the individual level, but in social interaction with others. The first superordinate theme that emerged was experiences of maternal stress. The findings revealed how maternal stress is internalised into the participant’s lives, and was used to devise cards to assist children in not internalising their mother’s stress. The second superordinate theme that surfaced from the analysis was experiences of trauma. The results of the research indicate how each participant was first subjected to traumatic stress in utero and have a history of multiple traumas, including being bullied. The aim here was to devise cards to facilitate social connectedness, to change the trauma pattern which exists in the nervous system, in order to get out of the mind and into the body. The third superordinate theme that emanated from the analysis was their experiences of being bullied. The aim here was to develop cards to change the neurological pattern from that of being a “victim” to one of survivor in order to empower the individuals by giving them opportunities to take charge and be in control. The fourth superordinate theme that materialised from the analysis entailed experiences of supportive relationships. The aim here is to enhance the supportive roles the children have in their lives as resources, by building a solution focused future.

It is envisaged that this study will be of great value to the theory of bullying as it provides a missing link to understanding the complex phenomenon of bullying, thereby having a positive ripple effect across and between all contexts of
Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. It has been an enlightening and creative experience.
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APPENDIX 1: Newspaper reports of bullying in South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE AND NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF ARTICLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 October 2015 ioLnews</td>
<td>Bullied girl, 17, hangs herself</td>
<td>A teenager committed suicide because she was being viciously bullied at school by a group of girls. Her mother found her still alive, hanging by a rope in the toilet, but the ambulance that arrived to help her had no equipment due to being robbed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 September 2015 news24</td>
<td>School principal takes to social media as bullying video goes viral</td>
<td>A school principal responded to a bullying incident on facebook which involved a video of a 12 year old boy being beaten by a group of boys. The video was posted on social media by the boy’s aunt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 July 2015 fin24</td>
<td>Errol Musk: “Elon was beaten so badly that I couldn’t recognise him.”</td>
<td>A Bryanston high school boy was beaten so badly that he spent 2 weeks in hospital recovering. His father was told by the police that he couldn’t lay a charge of assault because this was just a matter of schoolboy high jinks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 February 2015 Times Live</td>
<td>Two bullies who violently attacked pupil expelled from KZN boarding school</td>
<td>Two girls were expelled a year later after a physical bullying incident involving slapping and shoving a girl while confronting her about a rumour she had allegedly spread, was leaked on social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 August 2014 Mail &amp; Guardian</td>
<td>Sharp rise in classroom homophobia</td>
<td>South Africa’s schools are a hostile environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex pupils. LGBTI pupils who do not conform to prescribed male and female gender roles get assaulted and bullied. A fifth have attempted suicide and a fifth have been raped or sexually assaulted, according to research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Aug 2013 ioLnews</td>
<td>Deadly menace of bullying continues</td>
<td>Retha Kruger highlights various incidents of bullying that have occurred over the past few months nationally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 July 2013 ioLnews</td>
<td>Bullies break boy’s back</td>
<td>A Grade 11 pupil faces the prospect of being paralysed from the waist down after being attacked 3 times by two renowned school bullies. In the last attack he was subjected to a wrestling move, known as the “Tombstone Piledriver”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 April 2013 ioLnews</td>
<td>“Bullying statistics in SA school is shocking”</td>
<td>Reveals statistics from Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), that South Africa has the highest rate of bullying for the Grade 4 age group world wide. An estimated 55% are bullied regularly.</td>
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86 Kwazulu Natal
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<th>DATE AND NEWSPAPER</th>
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<tr>
<td>24 Jan 2013 Times Live</td>
<td>57% of SA children claim to have been bullied at school</td>
<td>A recent survey revealed that at least 57% of school children have been bullied at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Nov 2012 The Star</td>
<td>'Bullied' teen in court over pupil’s killing</td>
<td>A bullied child shot and killed the alleged bully the day after he was bullied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Oct 2012 Sunday Times</td>
<td>Stopping bullies in their tracks</td>
<td>A pilot programme aimed at teaching young children how their behaviour can harm others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Oct 2012 Sunday Times</td>
<td>Thousands of children not in school</td>
<td>Reasons for not being at school vary from bullying, to access and poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Aug 2012 iolnews</td>
<td>Beating the big, bad, bully</td>
<td>General research facts on bullying in Gauteng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Aug 2012 Times Live</td>
<td>Cyber-bully scourge</td>
<td>An alarming increase in bullying at Gauteng schools have prompted the department of education to formulate a strategy to improve pupil safety, following 2 pupils committing suicide in the first half of this year and 7 pupils being expelled for bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Aug 2012 The Star</td>
<td>Beating the big, bad bully off the playground</td>
<td>The Zinto Activation Group perform at a school in Orlando West to highlight the issue of bullying and sexual violence in Gauteng.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Aug 2012 Beeld</td>
<td>Bullebakke gепos</td>
<td>Seven learners have been expelled from school Gauteng schools this year for bullying. Four learners were expelled for this last year and five in 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Aug 2012 All Africa</td>
<td>South Africa: Gauteng seeks measures to curb bullying in schools</td>
<td>A study conducted by Unisa’s Bureau of Market Research, through its Youth Research Unit, shows that nearly 35% of learners in Gauteng schools have been bullied in the past two years, with 42% of this group being Grade 8 learners and a third having experienced bullying throughout their secondary school lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 July 2012 IOL Lifestyle</td>
<td>3 in 10 SA pupils bullied - study</td>
<td>3371 pupils from Gauteng schools, between grades 8 and 12 participated in this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 May 2012 Weekend Post</td>
<td>Cyber Bullying scourge</td>
<td>Eastern Cape children terrorized by bullies using cellphones and social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Mar 2012 Daily News</td>
<td>Cyberbullying a cause for concern</td>
<td>According to latest research by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP), one in three youngsters said they were victims of cyberbullying at school while 42 percent experienced cyberbullying outside of school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DATE AND NEWSPAPER</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 Feb 2012 IOLnews</td>
<td>Bullied schoolboy hangs himself</td>
<td>A 16 year old boy killed himself to avoid the bullies. He was beaten and called names.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Feb 2012 IOLnews</td>
<td>Bullied pupil feeling scared, scarred</td>
<td>A girl in Grade 10, from Krugersdorp High School had a bottle smashed over her head, taunted about being fat and had diet pills thrown at her while being videoed for face book.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Feb 2012 The Star</td>
<td>Girl attacked after cyberbully ordeal</td>
<td>After being taunted on facebook and bbm chat service, a 15 year old girl was videoed whilst being hit over the head with a glass bottle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 March 2011 The Star</td>
<td>Teachers demand danger pay – spate of attacks by schoolchildren prompt call for action</td>
<td>The secretary of Sadtu’s Gauteng central region claims that issues of safety for teachers is a concern because they can do little to discipline pupils of schools, as weapons are brought to schools by the pupils. In the same article he supports a principal of a school who is facing charges for assaulting a learner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 March 2011 The Star</td>
<td>Insulted for being black</td>
<td>A black 12 year old schoolgirl became traumatized after racial abuse from a black teacher. The teacher said to the girl, “your mind is black like you,” after dropping a pile of papers for the second time. This comment apparently is commonly used to insult black people suggesting they are stupid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 January 2010 Natal Witness</td>
<td>Top Paddlers bullying teen</td>
<td>A budding 15 year old canoeist has been the victim of a vicious cyber-bullying campaign by top members of KwaZulu-Natal’s elite canoeing fraternity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 June 2009 iOLnews</td>
<td>Bullied boy tried suicide, says mother</td>
<td>A boy tried to commit suicide after being dangled from a balcony by bullies who found out he was gay.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: South African research related to bullying

- Research related to children who bully (22)
- Research related to children/adults who are bullied (19)
- Research related to children who are bullied and who bully (9)

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<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
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<td>Adam, F.</td>
<td>The development of an anti-bullying intervention process at a primary school in Gauteng</td>
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<td>Bredekamp &amp; Swart</td>
<td>Non-physical bullying: exploring the perspectives of Grade 5 girls</td>
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<td>Burton, P &amp; Mutongwizo, T</td>
<td>Centre for Justice and Crime cyber violence pilot study</td>
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<td>Chabalala, O.R.</td>
<td>The nature and extent of bullying at Hwiti and Mountain View Secondary Schools, Limpopo Province</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
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<td>Cluver, L.; Bowes, L. &amp; Gardner, F.</td>
<td>Risk and protective factors for bullying victimization among Aids-affected and vulnerable children in South Africa</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
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<td>Darney, C.; Howcroft, G. &amp; Stroud, L.</td>
<td>The impact that bullying at school has on an individual’s self-esteem during young adulthood</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>De Lange, M. &amp; van Solms, R.</td>
<td>An e-safety educational framework in South Africa</td>
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<td>De Wet, C</td>
<td>Educators’ understanding of workplace bullying</td>
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<td>Investigating educators’ perspectives and strategies for reducing bullying</td>
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<td>Victims of educator targeted bullying</td>
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<td>De Wet, C.</td>
<td>The Reasons for and the Impact of Principal-on-Teacher Bullying on the Victims’ Private and Professional Lives</td>
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<td>De Wet, C.</td>
<td>School principal’s bullying behaviour</td>
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<td>Newspapers portrayal of school violence in South Africa</td>
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<td>Educators as perpetrators and victims of school violence</td>
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<td>De Wet, C.</td>
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<td>Greef &amp; Van den Berg</td>
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<td>Greeff &amp; Grobler</td>
<td>Bullying during the intermediate school phase: A South African study</td>
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<td>Jacobs,R.</td>
<td>The experience of adolescence girls regarding verbal bullying in secondary school</td>
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<td>Krige, H.; Pettipher, R.; Squelch, J. &amp; Swart, E.</td>
<td>A Teacher's guide and parent's guide to bullying</td>
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<td>Krüger, L.</td>
<td>Incidence and gender differences in bullying behaviour in a South African high school</td>
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<td>Kruger, M.M.</td>
<td>Bullying in secondary schools: Teachers' perspectives and experiences</td>
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<td>Liang, Flisher &amp; Lombard</td>
<td>Bullying, violence and risk behaviour in South African school students</td>
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<td>Macdonald, H.</td>
<td>The culture of bullying in a primary school</td>
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<td>Macdonald, H &amp; Swart, E</td>
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<td>Maree, K &amp; Maree J.G</td>
<td>Bending the neck to the yoke or getting up on one's hind legs? Getting to grips with bullying</td>
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<td>Memoh, C.N.</td>
<td>An investigation of the different forms of bullying amongst grade 10 learners in South African schools: a case study of three schools in the Western Cape</td>
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<td>Mlisa, L.N.; Ward, C.L., Flisher, A.J. &amp; Lombard, C.J.</td>
<td>Bullying at rural high schools in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa: prevalence and risk and protective factors at the school and the family</td>
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<td>Moholola, F.M.</td>
<td>Intergroup attitudes of black learners attending a multiracial school and black learners attending a single race school</td>
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<td>Mollo, N.T.</td>
<td>A legal perspective on the establishment of anti-bullying policies in public schools</td>
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<td>Morgan, B.I.</td>
<td>Teachers' attitudes with regard to bullying at a high school in the Cape metropole</td>
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<td>Neser,J.</td>
<td>The interface between school connectedness and peer victimisation-an exploratory study</td>
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<td>Neser, J, Ladikos A &amp; Prinsloo, J</td>
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<td>Neser, J, Ovens, M, van der Merwe, E, Morodi, R &amp; Ladikos, A.</td>
<td>Bullying in schools: A general overview</td>
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<td>Ojedokun, O. &amp; Idemudia, E.S.</td>
<td>The Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence between PEN Personality Factors and Cyberbullying in a Student Population</td>
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<td>Penning, Bhagwanjee &amp; Govender</td>
<td>Bullying boys: the traumatic effects of bullying in male adolescent learners</td>
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<td>Pillay, C.L.</td>
<td>Behavioural and psychosocial factors associated with cyberbullying</td>
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<td>Richter, L, Palmary, I &amp; de Wet, D</td>
<td>The transmission of violence in schools: Birth to ten children's experiences of bullying</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>Schaffner, S.</td>
<td>An exploratory/correlational study on the prevalence of bullying amongst learners in a public high school in Pretoria</td>
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<td>Smit, E</td>
<td>The bully victim problem in South African Primary Schools</td>
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<td>Smit, E</td>
<td>School violence: Tough problems demand smart answers</td>
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<td>Timm, V.M &amp; Eskell-Blokland, L</td>
<td>A construction of bullying in a primary school in an underprivileged community: an ecological case study</td>
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<td>Townsend, L, Flisher, A.J, Chikobvu, P, Lombard, C &amp; King, G</td>
<td>The relationship between bullying behaviors and high school dropout in Cape Town, South Africa</td>
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<td>van der Westhuizen, C.N &amp; Maree, J.G.</td>
<td>The scope of violence in a number of Gauteng schools</td>
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<td>van Solms, S &amp; van Solms, R</td>
<td>Towards cyber safety education in primary schools in Africa</td>
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<td>Venter, E</td>
<td>Bullying: A whole school approach</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
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<td>Vorster, A.C</td>
<td>Bullying in South African schools: Guidelines for developing an anti-bullying intervention programme</td>
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### APPENDIX 3: Literature review on research studies concerning the experiences of children who are bullied

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<td>Kvarme, Helseth, Sæteren and Natvig</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>School children’s experiences of being bullied and how they envisaged their dream day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willis and Griffith</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Middle school boys’ personal accounts and meanings of being bullied and their healing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunt, Peters and Rapee</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Development of a measure of the experience of being bullied in youth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lund, Ertesvåg and Roland</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Examined shy adolescents’ experiences of being bullied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horrevorts, Monshouwer, Wigman and Vollebergh</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Found that the psychotic experiences of children who are bullied enhanced the risk of their becoming ensnared in bullying experiences while also making them vulnerable to its effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterson and Ray</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Explored the lived experience among gifted Grade 8 learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frisén and Bjarnelind</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Found that to be involved in bullying, both as a bully and bully/victim was related to experiences of physical and emotional difficulties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetingham and Waller</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Found that the experience of teasing/bullying did not differ according to race, physical maturity or height, but was more likely among children who were less physically attractive, overweight, had a disability such as sight, hearing or speech problem, and/or performed poorly at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Loore et al.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Suggest that experiences of victimisation and trauma, including life events, sexual abuse and bullying, may contribute to the risk of sub-clinical psychotic symptoms two years later.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Görzig and Frumkin</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Examined the differences between being cyberbullied online and on mobile devices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornberg, Halldin and Bolmsjo</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Investigated how individuals who had been victims of school bullying perceived the experiences and how these had affected them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holfeld and Grabe</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Explored the nature and extent of middle school students experiences of cyberbullying.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Platt, Proyer and Ruch</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Relate experiences of being bullied to the fear of being laughed at (gelotophobia).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
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<td>Topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Siebecker</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Examined the experience of being repeatedly bullied among individuals who were frequently bullied and among individuals who were less frequently bullied.</td>
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<td>Brown</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Researched understanding parents’ experiences in discovering, reporting and living through the aftermath of their child being bullied.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bowles and Lesperance</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Researched adolescents’ experiences of being bullied.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mah</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Examined the experience of being bullied in childhood and adolescence.</td>
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The life experiences of children in middle childhood who continue to be bullied

APPENDIX 4: Turnitin originality report

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<th>Publications</th>
<th>Student Papers</th>
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**Primary Sources**

1. www.diva-portal.org
   - Internet Source
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2. www.usd.edu
   - Internet Source
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3. iedsu.hk
   - Internet Source
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4. Submitted to Walden University
   - Student Paper
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5. Submitted to University of Johannesburg
   - Student Paper
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6. Submitted to 76830
   - Student Paper
   - <1%

7. Submitted to Curtin University of Technology
   - Student Paper
   - <1%

8. eprints.vu.edu.au
   - Internet Source
   - <1%

9. learning.media.mit.edu
   - Internet Source
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APPENDIX 5: Reflexive bracketing

I used the following questions to guide my reflections (Roller, 2014):

Broad:

1. What do I think I know from these participants?

   I think that because these participants have a history of being bullied, there most probably are negative experiences or traumas in their lives that have contributed to them being bullied. I also think that bullying has been traumatic to them because of it continuing in their lives.

2. How do I think I know?

   I think I know this because as an educational psychologist I have firstly had an avid interest in the topic of bullying as I studied this for my masters degree. Furthermore, I specialised in therapies relating to trauma (Eye movement integration, Ericksonian Hypnosis, Ego-State Therapy, Energy Psychology, and Somatic Experiencing). In addition, I have worked in a school, albeit on a part-time basis since 2004 and have dealt with countless case of children who are bullied. As a consequence of my experience and knowledge, it came to my attention that I noticed a pattern of trauma in children who were being continuously bullied.

   It is also important to point out that I thought I knew this because my view of the definition of trauma, differed from the one based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This also correlates with Social constructionism, one of the theories I used for this research study, as there is no single truth. It is through my experience and through ongoing and updated training, that I have come to realise how the definition of trauma is changing and is very different to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-V™. For example, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder for Children 6 years and younger, Criterion A states that “…exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways:” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 272) and Criterion A for Posttraumatic Stress disorder for adults, adolescents, and children older than 6 years it is stated, “Exposure to actual or threatened
death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271). This criterion, highlights that emphasis is placed on the magnitude of the stressor, which does not define trauma fully (Levine & Kline, 2006; Scaer, 2005). According to Peter Levine, “Trauma is trauma, no matter what caused it, because the critical factor is the perception of threat and the ability to deal with it” (Levine, 2008, p. 11). Trauma may be defined as any experience that overwhelms an individual and leaves them feeling utterly helpless and hopeless (Levine & Kline, 2006; Levine, 2008; Scaer, 2005). Children are especially susceptible to becoming overwhelmed (Levine, 2008). Until recently, treating trauma was seen as irreversible, because of the consequence of focusing on the nature of the event that induced the trauma, rather than seeing it as physiological (Beaulieu, 2003; Levine & Kline, 2006). Humans, like animals, have a reptilian brain which instinctively utilise the defence mechanism of fight, flight or freeze when exposed to a threatening situation, great or small. It is the freeze response that is responsible for trauma. Humans, unlike animals, are however unable to discharge the pent-up energy induced by a freeze because the neocortex perceives the freeze response as a death threat and overrides the instinctual cycle. This energy remains trapped in the nervous system, contributing to the maintenance of trauma even when there is no threat (Levine & Frederick, 1997).

3. Will this knowledge change the course of the research, in terms of objectives, methods, line of inquiry; and if so how?

The knowledge I have about trauma and the experience I have gained as a psychologist, will not change the course of the research, in terms of objectives, methods or line of inquiry. Besides choosing theories that allowed me to explore the life experiences of middle childhood children, my research question and objectives became my focus and guided me every step of the way.

Specific reflections on the experience:

Assumptions:

- What assumptions did I make about the participants?
I assume that these three boys all have life negative life experiences which contributed to their history of being bullied. Furthermore, I assumed the repetitive bullying they experienced also served to traumatise them further.

- **What assumptions did I make about comments/responses to my questions?**
  I assumed that comments and responses to my questions all related to the participants' significant life experiences in all the various systems, including the good and the bad life experiences, as well as their experiences of being bullied.

- **How did these assumptions affect or shape: the questions I asked, the interjections I made, my listening skills, and/or my behaviour?**
  I used my research question, namely, “What are the life experiences of children, in middle childhood, who continue to be bullied?” to direct and guide me in the interviews with the children. Furthermore, the participant’s creative art expressions (drawings, collage, book, sand trays) based on the research question, were used as tools to guide me in the questions I asked, the interjections I made, the listening skills I used and my behaviour. For example, many questions were based on the “what” and “how” questions of the participants' life experiences, rather than the question of “why” to give voice to the participants' experiences and to make visible the unknown experiences, which are important features of social constructionism (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008).

**Values, beliefs, life story, social/economic status:**

- **How did my personal values, beliefs, life story, and/or social/economic status affect or shape the questions I asked, the interjections I made, my listening skills, and/or my behaviour?**
  My personal values in life are based on mutual respect regardless of age, social/economic status, position held, gender, race, etc. This underlies why I am so intolerant of bullying behaviour because besides being based on disrespect, it destroys the soul. I care about this world and the people in it and I want to make a difference to this world by contributing something positive that enhances caring relationships. This is another reason why this research study was important for me to carry through. I want to understand how the cycle of bullying perpetuates in certain individuals' lives, in order to interrupt or
break the pattern of behaviour that creates hurt and pain. Perhaps this is based on my own life experiences in the various different contexts of my life, following the death of my mother at an early stage of my life (12 years) and feeling helpless to assist my youngest sister who was 3 months old at the time of her death when she was subjected to physical and emotional abuse after my father remarried. I am an optimist and believe that there is no such thing as impossible. This is what has motivated me to continue this study despite the many hardships that presented themselves along the way. These values and beliefs I believe guided my actions throughout every phase of this research study which too was greatly influenced by the different contexts in which I worked as a researcher.

**Emotional connection with the participants:**

- **To what degree did my emotions or feelings for the participants affect or shape the questions I asked, the interjections I made, my listening skills, and/or my behaviour?**

From the outset I was cautious of the participants’ emotions due to the sensitivity of the subject. This is why I made use of creative expressive arts techniques through which to interview them. The artefacts were useful in generating discussions about their experiences. However, I had to distinguish myself as a researcher and not as a psychologist whilst interacting with them. Mertens (2010) talks a lot about social justice, fairness and human rights, saying that researchers working with children need to emerge first as a social person and secondly as a professional with a distinctive and genuine purpose. Mertens (2010) also states that the researcher should choose to play the role of an older sibling or protector. Besides using my research questions and aim of the study to adhere to this role, I also made use of Mertens’s (2010) three ethical principles she ascribes to, which include:

- Maximising good outcomes and avoiding risk, harm or wrong
- Respecting those that aren’t autonomous
- And ensuring those who bear the risk in the research are the ones who benefit from it

My aim was to evoke their life experiences without overwhelming their nervous systems. I was respectful of this, even when the one participant had
to rush to the bathroom to be ill when talking about a bullying experience. His mother was waiting for him to complete his interview, so I called her while he was being ill in the bathroom. I was prepared to stop the interview, at the time, but the participant assured me and his mother that he wanted to continue. He assured me that his head and stomach were no longer sore and his shaking had stopped. This participant also told me later that he had enjoyed the experiences and that it had been a nice opportunity for him to get out of his house as this took place during the school holidays and his parents were still working.

- How will my emotions or feelings for the participants affect the analytical process and my ability to draw valid interpretations from the data?

Again I used my research question and the aim of the study to guide the analytical process. I did this to differentiate my role as a researcher from the role of psychologist. In conjunction with a software programme, ATLAS.ti and Johny Saldaña’s Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, I was able to draw valid interpretations from the data, which also can be traced. Furthermore, from a social constructionist perspective, there is no single truth and I argue that no other researcher will get exactly the same findings because they have not conducted my research. I relied instead on intracoder reliability, as advocated by van den Hoonaard (2008), which pertains to the consistent manner in which I coded the data, by using ATLAS.ti 7.5 in conjunction with Saldaña’s Coding Manual for qualitative researchers.

Physical environment and logistics:

- How did the physical setting of the location of the research event alter how I related to the participants and how the participants related to me?

The first interviews were done in the participants’ homes, an environment of safety and care. I felt comfortable about this as the participants were relaxed. The second interviews were done at my private practice which none of them had ever been to before. However, they knew and trusted me and the room I use at the practice has an air of safety and security. The school I work at and the role I play at the school, provided an ideal setting for the participants to be
interviewed informally, to be observed, and to interview their peers, without
drawing attention to them and harming them in any way. The participants
related well to me and I to them.

- **How did the physical setting/location impact data collection?**
  The collection of data at the participants’ homes and at my practice proved to
  both ideal setting for the interviews. The school setting was an ideal setting to
  see how the participants naturally interacted with their peers during break and
  at interhouse rugby matches. Moreover, it provided a natural platform to have
  informal interviews with their peers and teachers when necessary.

- **What were the logistical issues (e.g., in gaining access) that contributed to the
  success or weakness of the outcomes?**
  Gaining access to the research site was easy because I work at the school.
  This also facilitated with purposeful sampling because I could identify and
  then approach potential participants for the research study. However,
  because of the sensitive nature of being bullied, not all identified children
  participated in the study. Some children even commenced the study and then
  opted to pull out. This was time consuming.

**References**


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York: The Guilford Press.


## APPENDIX 6: South African newspaper/TV reports reflecting bullying and its relationship to violence

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30-09-2015</td>
<td>The Star</td>
<td>Gangster Paradise</td>
<td>An increase in figures for violent crime has increased countrywide in the last 3 years. A sharp increase in all contact crimes such as murder, robberies, residential robberies, business robberies, carjacking and truck hijacking have been noted for 2015. Disturbing news is that children between the ages of 10 and 17 committed 47 murders in Gauteng.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-02-14</td>
<td>eNCA</td>
<td>Investigations underway following alleged bullying death</td>
<td>An 8 year old girl died after a week of being kicked and beaten by three 8 year old boys during break time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-01-2014</td>
<td>eNCA</td>
<td>Pupil injured in knife fight outside school.</td>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal Education department is worried about inadequate security features implemented by some of the schools in the province. The concern follows a stabbing incident at Hillview Secondary school that resulted in a grade 11 pupil being rushed to Albert Luthuli Hospital’s intensive care unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-12-2013</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>SA Families are in crisis</td>
<td>When a family is in crisis, children do not get the guidance and transfer of values they require for socialisation. This contributes to the culture of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-11-2013</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>He said he’d kill the baby.</td>
<td>The shocking crime highlights the increase in rapes of infants and toddlers in Northern Cape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-11-13</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>A rape question in a matric exam is not a problem; rape is</td>
<td>This article reflects the high levels of rape in this country. The rape question was taken from a play the matrics had studied. It is argued that we cannot turn a blind eye to the high rate of rape in our country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11-2013</td>
<td>eNCA</td>
<td>Boy’s body found in Diepsloot</td>
<td>A badly mutilated body of a 6 month baby was found in dead in his mother’s home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-10-2013</td>
<td>eNCA</td>
<td>Pupil stabbed to death in KZN</td>
<td>A pupil was stabbed to death on Monday during a fight at Isizimele High School in KwaZulu-Natal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>NEWSPAPER</td>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td>SUMMARY OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-10-2015</td>
<td>news24</td>
<td>Murdered toddlers ‘may have been raped.</td>
<td>Two toddlers, aged 2 and 3, whose bloodied bodies were found dead in a toilet cubicle in Diepsloot, north of Johannesburg, may have been raped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-10-13</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>How do we define a &quot;child&quot;? The UN Convention on the</td>
<td>Argues why South African children have been given many responsibilities of decision making before the age of 18, but are protected from violent criminal behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rights of the Child holds that a child is &quot;every human</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>being under the age of 18 years&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-10-13</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>Union condemns teacher attack by pupil</td>
<td>A 14 year old boy at a primary school punched his lady teacher in the face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-09-13</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>School assault disturbing: Motshagkg</td>
<td>Video footage of an assault by a learner on a male teacher at a high school was captured by a fellow learner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-09-2013</td>
<td>ioLnews</td>
<td>Shot Sasolburg teacher undergoes surgery</td>
<td>A 15 year old pulled out a pistol when stopped by a teacher for chasing other pupils. The teacher tried to disarm him and during the scuffle a shot went off, hitting the teacher in the lower leg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-09-2013</td>
<td>ioLnews</td>
<td>Pupil shoots teacher at Vereeniging school</td>
<td>A Grade 9 pupil shot a teacher in the leg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-02-2013</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>Dedicated sexual offences court coming: Radebe</td>
<td>Highlights how the rights of citizens are seriously violated and that the country's magistrate courts need to deal effectively with the high rates of rape committed against children and women following the incident of a 17 year old girl who was raped and disembowelled on 1 February, attracting international attention to the abuse and rape of women and girls in South Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-02-2013</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>Gauteng rapists get 1 047 years</td>
<td>Of the 1 047 years of jail time, Gauteng rapists convicted of crimes against children 17-years-old or younger were sentenced to 353 years. The remaining 694 years were for the rapes of women older than 18. These sentences were the product of 180 rape cases reported between 2003 and 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>NEWSPAPER</td>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td>SUMMARY OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-02-2013</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>An open letter to South Africans on sexual violence from Jay Naidoo: iLIVE</td>
<td>A letter pleading to men of South Africa to put an end to rape following the rape of a 17 year old girl, as every 4 minutes a person is raped in South Africa and one third of men rape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-09-2012</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>Violence isn't the solution - it's our biggest problem</td>
<td>Report reflecting how a 7 year old boy was beaten up by his schoolmates after he reported them to a teacher, as ordered, for being rowdy. The boy was beaten so badly that his liver and kidneys might have been injured. He is said to have suffered severe injuries to his spine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-03-2011</td>
<td>The Star</td>
<td>Insulted for being black</td>
<td>A black 12 year old schoolgirl became traumatized after racial abuse from a black teacher. The teacher said to the girl, “your mind is black like you,” after dropping a pile of papers for the second time. This comment apparently is commonly used to insult black people suggesting they are stupid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-03-2011</td>
<td>The Star</td>
<td>Teachers demand danger pay – spate of attacks by schoolchildren prompt call for action</td>
<td>The secretary of Sadtu’s Gauteng central region claims that issues of safety for teachers is a concern because they can do little to discipline pupils of schools, as weapons are brought to schools by the pupils. In the same article he supports a principal of a school who is facing charges for assaulting a learner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-03-2010</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>The Lord of the Flies’ Legions</td>
<td>An article describing learners as ‘A new generation of cold, callous, clinically dangerous youth’ in their response to a man called JubJub who killed four innocent children whilst drag racing. These learners refused to go to school and stood with posters outside the magistrate court, making it clear that they have come to kill JubJub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-03-2010</td>
<td>Star</td>
<td>Teacher beat pupil, says doctor</td>
<td>A teacher assaulted a Grade 4 pupil at the Johannesburg Muslim School in Fordsburg for throwing an eraser in class. The child was allegedly punched and kicked by the teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>NEWSPAPER</td>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td>SUMMARY OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-03-2010</td>
<td>Daily News</td>
<td>Moves to curb school violence</td>
<td>A pupil was stabbed for his cell phone at Sea Cow Lake Secondary School in KZN. Reports of drug pedalling and the carrying of illegal weapons have spurred the community to introduce security measures such as metal detectors, identity cards, parent patrols, and random searches in order combat violent incidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-02-2010</td>
<td>Daily News</td>
<td>One dead, 7 injured at KZN schools</td>
<td>In two separate incidents a 21 year old was stabbed by a 17 year old at Hlonona High School in Maphumulo and 6 pupils were injured when “an explosive device” went off in Verulam at Temple Secondary. Both these incidents come after the stabbing to death of a 16 year old pupil of New West Secondary School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-02-2010</td>
<td>Daily News</td>
<td>Boys arrested for taking gun to school</td>
<td>A 17 year old Grade 11 boy and his two friends aged 15 and 16 were arrested after they tried to attack a security guard at Westham Secondary School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-09-2009</td>
<td>Daily News</td>
<td>Boy badly burnt after school bullying.</td>
<td>A Wynberg Boys’ high school pupil in Grade 10 poured scalding coffee over a Grade 8 pupil’s back, causing second degree burns. The Grade 10 pupil will not be criminally prosecuted because it has been established that he reacted in this way, as a consequence of being regularly bullied by the boy in Grade 8 and his friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-10-2009</td>
<td>Star</td>
<td>Pupil’s mother traced as caller who made Kimber death threat.</td>
<td>A parent of a Grade 11 boy from Parktown North Boys’ High School has been identified after she has left many anonymous threatening phone calls to Penne Kimber, including death threats. These threats came after Penne Kimber opened a law suit against twelve matric boys at the school for violently initiating her son.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-07-09</td>
<td>Star</td>
<td>Pushed, teased, hit, raped: more shocking claims of bullying at this school</td>
<td>A 30kg asthmatic 14 year old boy from St Benedict’s College in Bedfordview, is suffering from post-traumatic stress and depression as a consequence of being bullied. Since this story broke, the Star’s SMS line has been inundated with other reports of bullying at this school and at other schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>NEWSPAPER</td>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td>SUMMARY OF ARTICLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-07-2009</td>
<td>Star</td>
<td>I’m afraid he may rape me: schoolboy driven to depression tells of torment at hands of bully.</td>
<td>This article describes how Jacob the 14 year old Grade 9 boy from St Benedict’s College was finally assaulted after being bullied by the same boy from Grade 6. A diagram indicating the extent of his injuries appears in the article. It also highlights how the bully’s father responds to the victim’s father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-06-2009</td>
<td>Star</td>
<td>School bullies are set to face criminal charges</td>
<td>Two different bullying incidents reported in this article: Kimber, the mother of a child from Parktown Boys’ High School laid charges of assault against the school. 12 Parktown Boy’s High School pupils were charged with assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm during an initiation ceremony. The initiation ceremony involved lining up boys against a wall and hitting them with hockey sticks, golf clubs, and cricket bats until their buttocks bled. Kimber Penne’s son also allegedly was made to rub Deep Heat on his genitals. Despite laying criminal charges against bullies from Pinetown Boys’ High School a pupil from the school continues to be bullied.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 7: BULLYING SURVEY FORM

BULLYING SURVEY

Grade: _________

Circle the most appropriate word

1. Have you been bullied at school this year?
2. How many times have you been bullied this year?
3. Were you bullied by one child or a group of children?
4. Have you seen anyone else being bullied at school this term?
5. How many times have you seen another child being bullied?
6. Was one child or a group of children doing the bullying?
7. Have you bullied anyone at school this term?
8. How many times have you bullied someone else?
9. Were you on your own or with a group?

10. How often have you been bullied by being:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Everyday</th>
<th>1 or 2 times a week</th>
<th>1 or 2 times a month</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Called hurtful names</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teased in an unkind way</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called sexually offensive names</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racially targeted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally offended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicked and hit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushed and shoved around</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened with harm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lied about in a spiteful way</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made to hand over money, lunch or belongings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded from taking part in activities on purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber: WhatsApp; Facebook; Twitter, Instagram, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: describe how</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Complete the following questions by circling the most appropriate number. Choose one only.

11. If you have been bullied, how do you feel when you are bullied?

| I am not bothered | 1 |
| I feel mostly angry | 2 |
| I feel mostly sad | 3 |
| I feel mostly ashamed | 4 |
12. How has bullying affected you?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I stay at home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get ill</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cannot sleep</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel anxious</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am afraid to go to school</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get headaches</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel stressful</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. How do you feel when you see other children being bullied?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel ashamed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel angry</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel upset</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It does not bother me</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. If you have been bullied, what happened after you told someone?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Things got better</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things got worse</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It stopped for a while</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing changed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. If you have been bullied who has tried to help you?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A friend</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother or father</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another adult</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My brother or sister</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. If you have been bullied what did you do that helped the most?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talked to a friend or an adult</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told them to stop</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ignored the person</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t listen to what others thought of me. My friends are more important</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I told a teacher</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I told my mom</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circle the appropriate numbers. You may choose more than one number.

17. Where have you been bullied?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the playground</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the bathrooms</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the classroom</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing in line</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Twitter/Flickr/Facebook/WhatsApp</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: describe where</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 8.1: Precis of the research project

Research Design

Please supply the relevant information.

1. Data Collection Types
   - Qualitative
   - Quantitative
   - Mixed Methods

2. Research Methodologies/Approaches
   - Biographical
   - Phenomenological
   - Grounded Theory
   - Ethnographical
   - Case Study
   - Design Experiment
   - Action Research
   - Survey
   - Other (please provide details)

3. Research Instruments/Methods
   - Document analyses
   - Questionnaires
   - Surveys
   - Individual interviews
   - Group interviews
   - Observations
   - Other (please provide details)

   Fieldnotes, checklists, reflective diaries, expressive art techniques

4. Sampling
   - Random
   - Targeted
   - Purposeful
   - Snowballing
   - Other (please provide details)

5. Sample size
   - < 11
   - 11-50
   - > 50
   - Other (please provide details)

6. Age of participants
   - < 14
   - 14-17
   - > 17

The participants do have parents who will provide consent along with participants assent.

Please provide the name and designation of an adult who will protect the rights of the child who has neither parent nor a guardian, or who is younger than 14 years of age.
Faculty of Education – Research/Education Project Information
The life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to get bullied.

Background to the study
Although there has been a lot of research done worldwide on bullying, it continues to be a major problem everywhere. Research shows that there has been less than 50% improvement in bullying. Up until now bullying has mainly been addressed by using various means to prevent it, by teaching children social skills and through the use of medication. As there don’t seem to be improving the situation drastically, I plan to explore the life experiences of children who continue to be bullied, in order to understand what life experiences perpetuate the cycle of bullying. To accomplish the research aims, I intend to inquire about your life experiences. Firstly, this will require talking to you. I also intend to get a background history of important events you have encountered in your life from your parents, as you may have been too young to shed information on your experiences of being bullied at school. Lastly, I may also interview some your friends if they too can shed light on some of your experiences of being bullied at school. As an educational psychologist I am not only concerned about what I know about children who get bullied, but also how I can come to better understand this in order to provide support for children in your situation.

Intentions of the project
Research associated with this project attempts to:
1. Explore how the life experiences in your life have contributed towards you getting bullied repeatedly.
2. More specifically, it plans to identify and describe the important events that you encountered from the time you were in your mother’s womb, to the current stage of your development in order to understand being bullied better. In addition, it intends to develop a framework for intervention for children who continue to get bullied. This can only be possible by using your real life experiences to develop such an intervention.

Procedures involved in the project
The information needed will be collected through individual interviews with your parents, concerning your personal important life experiences from the pre-natal stage of development up until the current moment. Some of your friends and school teachers may be interviewed individually if they can shed light on your experiences of being bullied. You will also be interviewed through different art therapy techniques of your choice, such as, drawings, painting, clay sculptures, etc. Interviews will take place at my private practice or at a location of your choice. The time of the interview will be at a time that is both suitable and convenient for you and your parents. I shall obtain permission from your friend’s parents to interview them at a time and place that is convenient to them too. Teachers who know you will also be interviewed at the school during a period in which they are not teaching and at a time that suits them. I shall share information obtained through these interviews with you to determine if the information is correct. I shall write down observations during the research process. I shall keep a diary during the research process in order to write down my thoughts and feelings about the research. All interviews will be audio recorded. Transcripts of all the audio-taped interviews will also be made. Finally, I shall look at your school reports and various school work books.

Potential Risks
You and your parents, may experience emotional reactions, such as depression, sadness, anger, anxiety, etc. as you share your experiences with me. As a qualified educational psychologist, I shall provide containment in the event of these unpleasant experiences, free of charge during the course of the research. Should in-depth therapy be required, I shall refer you or your parents to suitably qualified psychologists. In this latter case, your parents would have to pay the necessary fees to the relevant psychologist.

Potential Benefits
You and your parents will have a better understanding regarding your experiences of being bullied. Negative feelings may therefore be substituted with positive feelings of hope. An improved self concept and more self confidence will possibly emanate as a consequence of this understanding. This in turn will allow you to be more productive, in the classroom, as well as in your social interactions and general life.
Simultaneously your parents and also the teachers could subsequently respond differently to you, by rendering more support. This will undoubtedly lead to less stress in your family and in the classroom. Teachers and psychologists will feel empowered as they will have an intervention framework to assist them in determining the appropriate intervention for children who continue to get bullied.

Confidentiality for Research Projects
Every effort will be made to protect (guarantee) your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. However, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell. Furthermore, if information you have provided is requested by legal authorities then I may be required to reveal it. In addition, all data collected will be anonymous and only the researchers will have access to the collected data that will be securely stored for no longer than 2 years after publication of research reports, or papers. Thereafter, all collected data will be destroyed.

Confidentiality for Educational Projects
While your name will remain confidential, the information collected for educational purposes can be made available to third parties. The confidentiality and privacy of all other individuals, such as learners in a classroom, will be protected, through the distortion of any audio and video recording.

Participation and withdrawal
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent to participate in the project at any time during the project. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences for you. Your decision whether or not to participate in the study will not affect your continuing access to any services that might be part of this project.

Future interest and feedback
You may contact me (see below) at any time for additional information, or if you have questions related to the findings of the project.

Helen Margaret Macdonald
(084 800 7076)

15 March 2013
APPENDIX 8.2: Informed consent form

Informed Consent/Assent Form

Project Title
The life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to get bullied.

Investigator
Mrs. Helen Margaret Macdonald

Date
15 March 2013

I hereby:
- [ ] Agree to be involved in the above research/education project as a participant,
- [ ] Agree to be involved in the above research/education project as an observer to protect the rights of:
  - [ ] Children younger than 14 years of age;
  - [ ] Children younger than 18 years of age who might be vulnerable*; and/or
  - [ ] Children younger than 18 years of age that are part of a child-headed family.
- [ ] Agree that my child, [name], may participate in the above research/education project.
- [ ] Agree that my staff may be involved in the above research/education project as participants.

I have read the information sheet pertaining to this research/education project and understand the nature of the project and my role in it. In addition, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this project and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time.

- [ ] Please allow me to review the report prior to publication.

Name:

Phone or Cell number:
e-mail address:

Signature:

If applicable:
- [ ] I consent/assent to audio recording of my the participant’s contributions.
- [ ] I consent/assent to video recording of my the participant’s contributions.
- [ ] I consent to the use of audio and video recordings to be used for educational purposes under the proviso that I am the only one who can be identified in these recordings.

Signature:

* Vulnerable children refer to individuals at risk of exposure to harm (physical, mental, emotional and/or spiritual)

Auckland Park Kingsway Campus, 1 Col Kingsway, and University Road. Auckland Park
PO Box 524 Auckland Park, 2006 Johannesburg Republic of South Africa. Tel: +27 11 489 2911. www.up.ac.za
16 March 2013

To: Mrs Helen Macdonald

Dear Mrs Macdonald

Research on "The life experiences of middle childhood children who continue to get bullied"

This letter serves to confirm that we give permission for you to conduct your research at [School details]

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

Rector's signature  Headmaster's signature
APPENDIX 8.4: Contract between research participant and researcher

CONTRACT BETWEEN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT AND RESEARCHER

I understand that although Helen Macdonald is an educational psychologist, she cannot help me in this capacity whilst she is doing her research.

I do understand that Helen Macdonald will refer me to another psychologist should it be necessary.

Helen Macdonald will however be able to support me if I become tearful, sad or upset in any way whilst I am reliving or talking about my bullying experiences.

Name:___________________________________________
Date:____________________________________________
Signed:_________________________________________
Parent signature: _________________________________
### Exhibit 6.7: Students Bullied at School

**Reported by Students**

Students were scored according to their responses to how often they experienced six bullying behaviors on the Students Bullied at School scale. Students bullied **Almost Never** had a score on the scale of at least 10.1, which corresponds to “never” experiencing three of the six bullying behaviors and each of the other three behaviors “a few times a year,” on average. Students bullied **About Weekly** had a score no higher than 8.3, which corresponds to their experiencing each of the three of the six behaviors “once or twice a month” and each of the other three “a few times a year,” on average. All other students were bullied **About Monthly**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>About Monthly</th>
<th>About Weekly</th>
<th>Average Scale Score</th>
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<td>Percent of Students</td>
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**SOURCE**: IEA’s Progress in International Reading Literacy Study – PIRLS 2011
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<td>455 (4.4)</td>
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</table>

International Avg. 47 (0.2) 523 (0.5) 33 (0.1) 513 (0.5) 20 (0.1) 489 (0.7)

Centerpoint of scale set at 10.
(1) Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because of rounding some results may appear inconsistent.
### Exhibit 6.7: Students Bullied at School (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent of Students</td>
<td>Average Achievement</td>
<td>Percent of Students</td>
<td>Average Achievement</td>
<td>Percent of Students</td>
<td>Average Achievement</td>
<td>Average Scale Score</td>
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#### Sixth Grade Participants

#### Benchmarking Participants

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* Republic of South Africa (RSA) tested 5th grade students receiving instruction in English (ENG) or Afrikaans (Afr).
APPENDIX 10: Reflections concerning data collection

10:1: Time consumption in data collection
19 December 2013 Participant Y parental interview
20 December 2013 Participant X parental interview
16 February 2014 Participant Z parental interview

The above three interviews with the parents all took place on the mentioned dates. However, their children, potential participants, all withdrew for the following reasons. Participant Y was not motivated enough to follow through with the creative projects. Participant X had a serious motorbike accident in his garden and landed up in ICU and took a long time to recover from the accident. Participant Z felt that because of the pressure of his school work he did not have time to do the creative project which I requested in order to do the interview.

This is indeed a time consuming process, as each of the above interviews took 2 hours to do. Many children who are bullied continuously do not like talking about their experiences of being bullied and therefore do not want to participate in such a research project. I realised beforehand that the participants are vulnerable, but I didn’t realise to what extent they were vulnerable. This vulnerability also determined how I changed my approach to collecting data, because initially I wanted to interview the participant’s friends and teachers, but realised that this could put the research participants at risk in more ways than one.

First, I thought what if one of the friends broke confidentiality and told other boys about the research project and their involvement in it, what effect it could have on them emotionally. They may easily be bullied because of this and this would render the research study as harmful. Second, if confidentiality of their involvement in the study was broken, this in itself would be harmful for the participants and their families. Third, I decided not to involve the teachers, because they too may utter something about one of the boys in a public space that too could break confidentiality. Hence, I told each of the participants not to even let their friends know that they were part of a research project. I also told them, that I would be available at any time should they wish to come and share their experiences of being bullied with me at the school, but wouldn’t be in a position to help them from a psychological
perspective as we had agreed in the contract. There were two other psychologists at
the school who I could have referred them to if necessary. Only one of the
participants saw me twice at the school. Once on his own (Memo: informal
interview: 16 July 2014) and once with his friend (Memo: Kade: 11 July 2014).

10.2: Risks involved in interviewing peers and teachers

I was intending to interview the participant’s peers and teachers but have thought
about the risks versus benefits of the research process, despite getting permission to
do so. I have decided that the risks of involving others overtly, outweighs the benefits
of the research. I reflect on reasons for having made this decision.

1. I do not want anyone from the school to be able to identify the participants as
   sensitive information (also involving family members) has been revealed
   which is not privy to anyone.

2. This could potentially be a huge violation of confidentiality if I do this.

3. The participants do not feel good about being bullied, so I do not want to raise
   awareness about this more than I have to. In other words I shall not be
   approaching anyone to be interviewed. However, should anyone come to me
   with information which is relevant to the research, I shall record this in my
   diary by hand.

4. I am reluctant to even make use of the teachers as I do not want them to draw
   attention to the research participants, even unconsciously. It has also come to
   my attention that two teachers in the same grade of two of the boys have
   displayed some bullying behaviour towards other boys. For example, a new
   boy in the class has been picked on by both these teachers. The one teacher
   apparently said in front of the whole class, “This is not the ‘Brown’ show. The
   other teacher calls this same boy “red face” regularly and has also punished
   the whole class because of this boy’s behaviour. For example, he said.
   “Everyone out the class. Daniel is talking.” I therefore do not want to
   potentially encourage further bullying towards my research participants by
   divulging names.

5. I have read up on covert versus overt research. My research participants are
   the ones who have been informed and I have to protect them at all costs. My

---

87 Pseudonym for surname
88 Pseudonym for name
intuition tells me not to involve others if my research participants have to be identified. I have already obtained permission from the school to do the research and I do not believe that I am not abusing my dual role as researcher/psychologist at the school, because the research I am doing will not harm their peers or teachers. I won’t be approaching others for interviews. However, should they approach me with relevant information that will contribute towards the research, I shall make notes in my diary and use this instead. This is something I do anyway (as part of my job), so it will not draw any further attention.

It is important for me to stress that even though I did not disclose my identity as researcher to the participant’s peers or teachers’, this was not done out of deception or deceit, but rather to protect the research participants from potential harm. Observing the participants during the school day whilst interacting with others is not a form of covert observation because according to McKechnie (2010) covert observation is a type of participant observation in which the identity of the researcher, the nature of the research project and observation of the participants being studied are all concealed from those studied. The participants in this study knew about my research and so did the executive members of the school. However, by engaging in conversations with peers and teachers without telling them what the information was going to be used for may be construed as a form of covert research, which is frowned upon and viewed as “…an abuse of an investigators’ powerful position” (Lugosi, 2010. p.135).
APPENDIX 11: Reflexivity concerning the research process

What are the life experiences of children, in middle childhood, who continue to be bullied?

This question was composed after great deliberation between and among myself and my supervisors. My initial journey commenced a year prior to submitting the first research proposal in 2011 and then culminating in the final proposal with the above research question in December 2012. The following are the former research topics and questions indicating the process of this study:

2011: An educational psychological framework to addressing bullying as trauma
Research question: What role does trauma play in the cycle of bullying in middle childhood/early adolescence?

2012: A bullying intervention programme based on the phenomenological exploration of experiences of white, upper-class, middle childhood children who continue to be bullied.
Research question: What are the life experiences of children in middle childhood, who continue to be bullied?

This indeed illustrates that research is a process. Bourke (2014, p.1) highlights that “Research continues as we reflect: on the development of an idea; on data collection; on findings, and; on implications,” thus rendering it ongoing even when the findings have been publicized. This fits in with social constructionism which proclaims that there are no universal answers.

From the above, it is thus not surprising the changes that took place with regard to the research design. I commenced with a qualitative case study design before engaging with a qualitative phenomenological design.
APPENDIX 12: Behaviour observations

Notes from diary - 2 June 2014 - Telephone call from Mrs. Lee
Mrs. Lee told me that Craig is busy telling lies - evasive lies. For example she will ask him, “Where is your cap?” and he will replay, “It is in my bag.” Two weeks later he will then tell her that he has lost his cap. Mrs. Lee claims that he is lying to “cover my backside.”

Mrs. Lee said she told him that, “Your dad was a man of extreme integrity and I don’t think he’d want to see you grow up without integrity. Own up and take responsibility if you have done something wrong.”

7 August 2014 Observation during inter-house rugby matches
Martin played for his team but mostly stayed on the outskirts. Every now and then he gave gentle tugs. Martin fiddled with his gum guard most of the game. There was no change of expression on his face through the entire game. On the side line I did not see him engage with anyone, except for attending to one injured boy. He approached him, touched him and spoke to him, but the injured boy was too tearful to respond.

Kade did not play rugby. He chose to sit high up on the embankment away from the other boys, but his friend Aidan was with him. Kade spent his break in the classroom playing on his ipad.

Craig was absent on this day.

Observations - Playground - 10 September 2014
Craig Lee and Martin Carr
From above the playground, I saw Craig (who was on his own) suddenly run up to two boys and then push one boy down the embankment. It looked like a light push, but was hard enough for the boy to go down to the bottom of the embankment. I could not see the immediate reaction of these boys because they disappeared behind the pavilion. However, not long after this, the two boys seemed to turn their backs on Craig. He was following them, but they seemed to be ignoring him. He did not engage in conversation with them and they also did not communicate with him. Yet Craig continued to hover around them. Wherever the boys went, Craig followed. This went on for approximately 15 minutes. I then lost sight of all three boys.

I could not see Martin Carr on the playground. Found out that he was at a book talk, “Battle of the Books” during break.

4 August 2014 Observations on the playground and classroom
Martin Carr spent the entire break walking around the playground with his friend Richard Sawyer eating their lunch.

Aidan, Kade’s friend came up to me and said that he can understand why Kade says Evan Leach is mean because, I got my new school bag today and he said to me, “Why are you such a cheese boy?”
According to Kade’s teacher Kade was playing soccer with the Wannabees and not playing with the mmwc's (Main Manna wat counts). Erin Leach was playing soccer with the mmwc’s. This confirms that Kade is not Erin’s best friend.

I noticed Kade leaning on the male teacher in the technology classroom. He likes getting attention from teachers.

30 July 2014 Observation while walking around the school
I saw Kade walking back to class with Aidan his friend and Evan Leach even though he had reported him for bullying. This confirms his comment made that sometimes Evan can be nice to him but other times he is mean.

Observations - Classroom - 10 September
Craig
Craig was sitting at his own desk getting on with his own work quietly. I have never noticed Craig wandering around the classroom or engaging with other boys in the classroom. He always seems to keep to himself.

Observations - Playground - 19 September 2014
Kade Abbot
Kade came up to me at the end of break and told me that Leo (a Grade 6 boy), got him into a rage when they were playing soccer, because he kept on shouldering him.
APPENDIX 13: Field notes

Notes from diary 14 March 2014 - Kade Abbot

Kade came to see me today stating that “I sometimes wished that if my leg was off everyone would treat me a lot different”. People make me feel bad about myself. Since Grade 1. Some people think I’m not good enough for them. They say I suck and should be in the C team. Some people joke with me that I’m not good enough. Spoke about Alan's party and told me how he was on the wavy slides when his other friend came down the slide and his feet hit Kade. Kade fell off the slide and his neck hit the bricks. He sprained his ankle and hurt his toes. Alan stood on his ankle accidentally. Back at school Kade told Alan that he hated that part of his party and Alan told him that he started laughing when that happened.

Kade went on to tell me about several incidents regarding his cousin and his brother. His cousin took a pillow and pretended that his dog was a ball and smacked the dog with the pillow, but hard. Kade said, that he told him to stop, but he started laughing. Kade said that he then started to laugh too but doesn’t know why he did this. He also mentioned that his cousin squeezes his leg. He said it is sometimes sore and sometimes ticklish. Kade said his cousin does this a lot and thinks it is funny. Kade asks him to stop, but he starts laughing and does it again. He said that sometimes his cousin is fun, but at other times he is annoying.

Kade said his brother is turning 17 and is in Grade 11. He said he used to bully me when I was 4 and he was 13. He’d hurt me just like my cousin.

He said he has never told his mother about these incidents. He said he just wants to get over this, but his mom and dad don’t listen to him. They tell him to stop being a little woos when his brother hurts him but when he hurts his brother “we have this long conversation.”

Kade said his parents expect a lot more from his brother than him. He also stated that his parents think his brother is better than him in every single way, and let his brother do more than him. He said that his brother gets upset for no reason. Kade
said that his brother plays video/console games with his friends but not him and tells him that he is not good enough. But Kade said that he is better at playing Call of Duty-Black Ops than his brother. However, when they play Fifa 14, his brother always wins.

Kade said he likes talking to me because I listen to him. I asked him if he would like to be part of the research project after explaining what it was all about. He said he would like to but that he would tell me when it was the right time to phone his mom to request this, because she had just returned from an overseas trip and was tired and tense.

Notes from diary 11 July 2014

Kade Abbot and Aidan Chopra came to my room to see me and reported the following.

Kade: Kylen bullied me yesterday. We were playing soccer, Body weight [name of the soccer game]. I got to the ball before him and I tried to stop the ball but I couldn't because he was behind me kicking my legs. I just kicked the board away and follow because I couldn't do anything. After words he shouted, “body weight!” I said, “It's not body weight, you tried to trip me.” And then he said, “it is called balance.” Kylen then grabbed me with his left hand on the tie and punched me in the back and wrapped his right arm around my neck.

Aidan grabbed Kylen and Kade hit him with his elbow to get away. This was the first time he has done this to me but he verbally bullies others, by saying things like: “You are so dumb”, ”You don't know how to kick a ball” and “You're just depressed Aidan,” when he told someone something that he was supposed to keep secret, which is a matter of trust. Aidan reported that Kylen used to be his best friend.

Kade went on to explain that Leach (an old best friend and soul of friends), three months ago threw an acorn at him which hit Kade at the side of his eye. It was then stated that Leach, thinks he's the best,; he makes up every rule and you are not the boss.

I was told that Aidan and Kade became best friends at the end of last term when, “We were chatting about boarding school.”
Kade stated that he hates it when he is at his house with friends and gets left out. An example of this included a day when Ryan Stone and Ryan Leach were playing cricket with Kade. Kade said that he got a 4, and then they ganged up on me and said it wasn't a 4.

**Notes from diary 16 July 2014 Aidan Chopra**

This was a meeting with Aidan on his own without Kade Abbot regarding Evan Leach.

Aidan said that he likes to take control. For example, when Aidan invites it Evan to his home, he invited Philip Rey to also come. He told me, “Aidan, Philip is coming to your house.” Evan also takes control of the balls. For example, when Mr. T brings a ball, Evan will be like, “I am the boss of the ball. I am keep her, you are on that team, you are on that team.” Everyone listens to him because he is popular. I talked my board to school and he said, “lets play 'score you through'?” And I said, “I want to play 'Match.'” He said, “no.” I said, “Yes, it is my ball.” And then he says, “Fine then I am not playing.”

Evan Leach often says to Kade, “You’re so addicted to your ipad.” Kade chooses to play on his ipad in the last period whenever Mr. Williams takes us down to the field. Then Evan says, “You’re so addicted to your ipad, why don’t you come and play soccer with us?”

**Notes from diary 16 July 2014**

**Lindani Mandla reporting Evan Leach**

Lindani reported the following things about Evan Leach which confirms Kade’s perceptions.

1. He tells me that he'll do things but he doesn't do them. For example, I ask him for a sweet. The next day he had it in his hand, eight bits and talk.
2. He doesn't make me play with him anymore. Some of his friends don't let me play with him. Alan ignores me. Philip Rey also won't let me play with him.
Notes from Diary - 10 September 2014

I spoke with Martin Carr's Grade 6 teacher regarding his observations of Martin. He still seemed to think everything was fine with Martin and had not noticed any form of bullying towards him. (Mrs. Carr had approached the teacher and had asked him to keep an eye on Martin, so I was following up on this.)

Notes from diary: 10 September 2014

Craig Lee
After observing Craig on the playground, Craig approached me and started chatting about things in general. During our conversation, he mentioned that his father’s parents, his paternal grandparents help him a lot with the bullying because he can talk to them freely about this and they give him very good advice.

Notes from Diary - 22 October 2014

Following a telephone call from Martin’s mother stating that Martin’s friend’s (Richard Sawyer) mother was concerned about the bullying Richard was telling her about Martin.

Martin’s version
Jack has called me an Ebola rapist for the last two weeks. Jack has also said, “Hey Martin, your mom called me last night and said you had raped her.”
Jack keeps on telling me, “Dude, no one wants you here.”
Jack does not bully me when our parents are together. He just bullies me at school.

Jack’s version
Martin follows us around at break. He gets involved in our conversations. He landed up dissing my mom saying, “I’m shit and I live in a tin shack.” I’ve told my parents that I really can’t stand him. He tried hitting me with him a metal water bottle before. He has fits of rage when he loses it and I land up getting hurt-scratches and bites. He goes flipping mad-he tries to jump on me.
Kevin hates him with a passion.
Ian and Rogan like him 50/50
He gets under your skin and it is annoying. If stuff doesn't go his way he freaks out.
He calls me, “Fat boy, idiot, stupid.” He says that my, “mom lives in holes and at least my mom isn't gay.”
He doesn't have social skills. He gets under people's skin. There is no way to deal with it as it continues.

Martin’s version after telling him Jack's version
He tells me that no one likes me and I must go away. He takes my cap and chucks it away and says, “Go and get it!”
I have not called him those names and I have not scratched him.

3 November 2014

The following information became apparent following a bullying incident provoked by Jack

A conversation with Kevin [an old friend of Martin's]
At a party - Ian's party- Carr attacked Ian because Martin was it [the one that has to touch someone]. Martin had a meltdown. Rogan tackled Martin because he was trying to protect Ian.

A conversation with Rogan
Martin used to go crazy. We were playing a game of stingers and he was it, because the ball hit him. He ran to Ian and strangled him and then I tackled him. He always saves he has no recollection of that day

A conversation with Ian
I have known Martin for his long nails. He is known for getting into a rage. At my old house we had taken something from Martin. I had it. He got angry. He grabbed me by my throat. Rogan tackled him and he fell and hit his head on the ground and to this day has no recollection of it.
3 November 2014

**Kevin's version of Martin and Jack's bullying incident**

We were on the stands talking:
Jack, Kevin, Rogan, Bruce, Oliver, maybe David, Peter and Ian. Carr comes along with two guys. He was being annoying - he had an annoying laugh. We don't want him to be there. So Jack said, “Please go. No one wants you here.” Martin said, “My friends are here.” Jack replied, “No one is your friend here.” Jack then turned to every guy on the bench and asked each one in turn, “Are you his friend?” I had to agree with Jack, but the other guys disagreed with Jack. Jack then took Carr’s cap and started throwing it to the other guys. Carr went abro (very cross). He shouted, “Give me back my cap.” Jack said, “No!” Martin tried to get his cap back and scratched Jack accidentally with his long nails. Jack also kicked his lunch bag. Jack then called him an Ebola rapist and passed an insolent diss about his mother. I grabbed Carr because he looked like he was going to punch Jack. He was crying and shouting, “Fuckin dip shit and fucken hole.”

In grade 5 David called him a Satanist.
He ruins things.
Martin took my waterpolo ball and threw it out.

I took this opportunity to ask Lindani about members of the A cricket team which Evan Leach and Kade Abbot are both members. Lindani told me that everybody listens to Evan Leach. He reported that Kade Abbot can sometimes be a bit mean but really is nice. He said that Kade follows Evan and does exactly what he says. Lindani also mentioned that Evan Leach is fine when he is alone with him, but when in a crowd he sort of starts.

Lindani’s friend Paul Obrien said that Evan was being mean to Lindani. He states that that he wouldn't date for your play. He also mentioned that Evan is nice but sometimes can be mean. He says things like, “I've got a better idea.” Paul also stated that people are scared of Evan and won’t say he can't be there. He likes to be the boss. He is not physical. People allow him to be the boss. For example, Evan wanted to have a water slide party. At the party George Wills accidentally hurt Evan and then Evan wouldn’t let him play with him.
APPENDIX 14: Research diary reflecting gestalt of analysis

This is an example to illustrate how I eventually obtained my superordinate themes

Tables 14.1, 14.2 and 14.3 used for steps 1-4

1. I made use of Bronfenbrenner’s model of various contexts to list the various experiences. I added the womb as it was an obvious context that could not be overlooked.
2. I then entered the relevant codes next to the various contexts.
3. Next I looked for themes among the codes.
4. I highlighted similar themes in the same colour.

Table 14.1: Lee Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Craig's Experiences</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Womb</strong></td>
<td>The rude awakening of being pregnant</td>
<td>In utero trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitalised for pre-eclampsia</td>
<td>Maternal health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother's health was packing up</td>
<td>Maternal trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pregnancy triggers trauma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td>Dissociation</td>
<td>Symptoms of trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good versus bad memory</td>
<td>Multiple traumas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resilience of child</td>
<td>Supportive relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Series of traumatic incidents within 1 year</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Car accident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gun to head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symptoms of PTSD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little Lord of the mansion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wanting a dad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hates competitive sports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Screaming and crying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soulmate connection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Winning first Kung fu contest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New dad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting a sister</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flushed down the toilet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breathing shallowly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissociation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mad versus angry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig’s Experiences</td>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Family**          | Financial difficulties  
Previous 2 miscarriages  
“Severe trauma”  
Bullying in the household  
Taking back control  
Supportive husband  
Father’s death  
Mommy dies and then she wakes up again  
Surrogate mother  
Gang of sisters and brothers  
Fort Knox  
Taught one another new things  
Stressed mom | Financial difficulties  
Mom’s trauma  
Bullied by Domestic Trauma  
Maternal health  
Security  
Brothers and sisters  
Maternal stress |
| **Peers**           | Verbal and physical bullying  
T ook it to another level  
Like the tin guard in this reign of terror  
Squirt in the face  
Group bullying  
Physical and verbal bullying  
Snitching versus reporting  
Recognise but can’t name  
Cerberus is a very big bully  
Frogs  
Poisonous frogs  
Helpful friend strategies  
Family friend  
Bullying and dissociation  
Small snakes versus big snakes  
Pegasus | Bullying by peers  
Bullied by older children  
Bullying as trauma  
Bystanders  
Role of friends-positive and negative |
| **School**          | Tin guard strangled many  
Squirt in the face  
And those kids were bullied for 6 months  
Lack of support perpetuates the cycle of trauma  
Bullying by Grade 1 teacher  
Girls are better than boys  
Yummy Bubblegum versus Atilla the Hun  
Helpful versus non-helpful interventions  
scarecrow | Bullying as trauma  
Teacher bullying  
Lack of support around bullying  
Supportive role of teachers and non-supportive role  
Interventions-helpful and non-helpful |

89 Real code not used here to protect participant
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Craig’s Experiences</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Community**       | Hijackers put a gun to Craig’s head  
                       Play therapy like extra murals  
                       Doing shaolin | Trauma  
                       Play therapy  
                       Shaolin classes |

Table 14.2: Carr family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Martin’s Experiences</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Womb**             | Shocked and surprised  
                       We obviously weren’t expecting  
                       Shocked  
                       I didn’t hear from him  
                       Long and stressful birth  
                       Pregnancy not planned | Unplanned pregnancy  
                       In utero trauma  
                       Emotional mother |
| **Self**             | Colic  
                       Separation anxiety  
                       Not a doggy kind of person  
                       Screaming tantrums  
                       The boiling frog  
                       Deny and hide incidents  
                       Exhaustion  
                       Rage  
                       Depression  
                       Don’t have to talk about it all the time  
                       Triggers memories  
                       Doesn’t talk about it  
                       Strangling incident | Symptoms of trauma |
| **Family**           | Working mother  
                       Little time spent with baby  
                       Maternal work stress  
                       Studying was just a way of life  
                       Moving to the States  
                       Gran’s toughness versus domestic’s pampering  
                       Fire in home  
                       Chronically sick grandmother  
                       Travelling dad  
                       Fire  
                       Stresses and strains  
                       Distant relationship | Maternal stress  
                       Attachment issues  
                       Role of domestic  
                       Role of grandparents—good and bad  
                       Traumas |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Martin’s Experiences</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best friend</td>
<td></td>
<td>Best friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl friends versus boy friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>Girl friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent bully</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying by friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied by a variety of children</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bullied by family friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal bullying</td>
<td></td>
<td>Characteristics that attract bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teased for crying and temper tantrums</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’ll keep on trying</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of cognitive empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family friends versus won’t be associated with him</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teased</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing verbal bullying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective versus ineffective interventions</td>
<td></td>
<td>School interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School discipline</td>
<td></td>
<td>Poor management of bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brush bullying incidents under the carpet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers reinforce bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School hides incidents</td>
<td></td>
<td>Role of teacher-positive and negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older versus younger teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher connections important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa versus States</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We were at the hospital and we had a break in as well burglaries</td>
<td></td>
<td>Discipline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 14.3: Abbot family**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kade’s Experiences</th>
<th>Initial notes/Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Womb</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weren’t planning to have another baby</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unplanned pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing emotionally with the loss of Kirst</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maternal trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaria versus being pregnant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maternal anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spent a lot of time in the hospital</td>
<td></td>
<td>Poor maternal health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was very very nervous</td>
<td></td>
<td>In utero trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premature birth and light weight due to toxaemia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kade's Experiences</td>
<td>Initial notes/Codes</td>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Self**            | Changing schools is traumatic<br>Sunday nights a difficult night going to bed<br>Sleeping in our bed<br>I’m thinking about the dogs<br>Dissociation<br>Snowboarding accident<br>I don’t want to die<br>Shocking experience<br>Double check that we love him<br>Doesn’t want to disappoint us<br>Wanting attention<br>Shocking experience<br>Family<br>Loving cricket<br>Hating dogs

| **Family**          | Under pressure financially<br>Very difficult to go back to work<br>Maternal grieving<br>Death versus life<br>Nervous, paranoid for a reason<br>First year of life was stressful<br>Financial stress<br>History of toxaemia<br>Respect versus disrespect<br>No respect for me<br>Rigid regime versus laid back<br>Saw me break down literally into tiny pieces<br>Overprotective mother<br>Thick as thieves<br>Pirates<br>Buffalo’s head<br>Gentle versus rough |
|                     | Financial difficulties<br>Mother’s grief<br>Working mother<br>Guilt of mother<br>Maternal anxiety<br>Poor maternal health<br>Sibling bullying<br>Supportive role of domestic<br>Bullying by relatives<br>Attachment issues |

90 Changed word to protect identity
### Kade's Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peers</th>
<th>Initial notes/Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loud versus quiet Respect versus disrespect Saving friend Sporting versus non sporty friends Sporty versus academic friends You’re taking my mom’s attention away Grade 7’s versus Grade 2 Bullies like the dogs No respect for me Sleep overs Bad influence Older grade versus younger grade</td>
<td>Bullying by friends Bullying by older peers Bullying as trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clash with Grade 0 teacher Clash with teacher Love and support from the whole grade</td>
<td>Bullying by teachers Role of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Went missing in a shopping centre Saw me break down literally into tiny pieces Complexes versus houses</td>
<td>Traumas Security issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. In this step I put alike themes together and then established a superordinate theme from these. I then reduced the number of sub-themes.

### Table 14.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Superordinate Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal trauma</td>
<td>Experiences of maternal Stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother's grief</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working mother</td>
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<td>Guilt of mother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal anxiety</td>
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<td>Poor maternal health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unplanned pregnancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal trauma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Superordinate Theme</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of shame</td>
<td>Experiences of trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of cognitive empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bullying as trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symptoms of trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple traumas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor self-esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>In utero trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bullying by teachers</td>
<td>Experiences of innocent versus wicked</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers reinforce bullying</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bullying by friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bullied by family friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Characteristics that attract bullying</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bullying by older peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security issues</td>
<td>Experiences of supportive relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


APPENDIX 15: Interview extract regarding the breaking of news of Craig’s father’s death

Mother: ...That afternoon I went up, and I went to sleep, Craig, me we were dozing on the bed and I didn’t know what the time was and the accident happened at four and they came knocking at six. Knock knock knock on my door, knock knock knock on my door, “Ann!” “I’m coming!” I was half asleep, Craig has now woken up, I am now waking up. I go to the door and I open the door (33:51) and there is standing Silvia Contu, Hengie Gouws, Tanja Bacher, a paramedic in full paramedic gear and a nurse in her full outfit. Now obviously, when you open a door and you see that, you know that [a long silence] as they say in Afrikaans, “As jy weet van die kak, jyweet.......” Leonie was green, actually she was pale and green in the face and Kelly was keeping herself together, so when I opened that door, I just (demonstrates holding door open staring) looked, and I realized that something very very wrong had just happened and I said, “well I suppose you ladies had better come in then.” They hadn’t said a word to me, they weren’t able to say Ann, nothing. I mean, everyone always wants to go and tell the eight month pregnant lady that her husband has just died in a motorbike accident. (35:04). I mean everyone puts their hand up for that and of course being eight months and knowing that I did have a bit of an epileptic history, they had waited, till an ambulance there, a paramedic and a nurse, because they were convinced that I was going to go into labor on the spot and that they didn’t want to have to be dealing with that under the circumstances. So I was opening (face goes stiff) for a moment there was complete and utter silence (staring at people at door), and then I beckoned, “well I suppose you ladies had better come in then.” Then they kind of shuffled over the threshold, they would’ve preferred to have been any way on earth other than there. And I just looked at them and they wouldn’t say a word and Craig had woken up and he was looking at this very bizarre party that was happening in front of him because these were ladies that his mommy knows, lots of laughing and hugging, you know and now suddenly they all stood together like a clump, in the middle of the living room there. It was of the hotel room and me here by myself, heavily pregnant, he's watching this fairy circus and I am like (goes into a freeze position) and I just said, “Is he okay?” And Kelly, just nodded her head like this, she couldn't even speak. “My God, is he dead?” That is how it came out. And Leonie just nodded her head like that (eyes are full of tears). And Craig still remembers, I just gave this blood curdling scream (37:07). Apparently I just, people said it was terrible for them because everyone was now waiting, it was like a bombshell. Now you’ve got about 80 bikers, 60 or 80, it was a big group, sitting there, now they know my hotel room is just down there, now they know the ambulance is there, the paramedic has now arrived, now this is the elected group that have to now go and now they are just waiting to go and drop that ‘friken’ bomb. And they will all staying there, and it was absolutely deathly, deathly, deathly silence, and then of course the whole hotel just heard this blood curdling scream (hands go higher and higher) erupt from the room. I mean, It just sent shrills down their spine because they didn’t know if that was a signal that I now knew or if I had now gone into labor, and everyone said that they all started crying (she starts to cry)and crying, and crying, and crying big time. You
must understand there were more than 800 people at his funeral. You must understand we were hectic (?) at the funeral. (38:25). Craig has gone through that as well. Because in the Chinese tradition you **have to** go to the funeral. So here was this small boy, 4 1/2 years old who had to be at his dad's funeral and he had to watch his dad be put in the ground. I just let out this scream and I think I started having a seizure, but Hengie Gouws said that it was the most amazing thing she had ever witnessed, it was like somewhere from the deepest part of my body, I just felt that I wasn't going to do that, I don't know, somehow, I don't think I was reasonable at that time, but I just thought they were going to take me to some hospital, I am going to have to give natural birth, and Craig now has just found out that his dad is dead, he's now screaming and crying and he doesn't even know how to process this, he doesn't even know what death is, just understands that something very bad has just happened, and that his daddy is dead forever. (QU:6:93:75)
APPENDIX 16: Therapists manual for the board game

Please contact Helen Macdonald at helenmm@tiscali.co.za should you wish to view this.