UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

A social network analysis of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners

by
Jessie-Anne Bird

Submitted in partial fulfilment in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

in the subject

Educational Psychology

at the

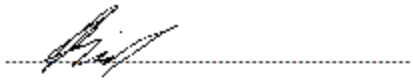
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

SUPERVISOR: PROF V. SCHERMAN

18 October 2016

Declaration

I, Jessie-Anne Bird, student number 27112536 hereby declare that this dissertation, "*A Social Network Analysis of Bullying: A Qualitative Approach to Bullying Experienced by Grade Four Learners,*" is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Magister Educationis degree at University of Pretoria, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. All sources cited or quoted in this research paper are indicated and acknowledged with a comprehensive list of references.



Jessie-Anne Bird

18 October 2016

Dedication

I dedicate this research to all those affected by bullying. May this study be one of many steps taken towards making our schools safer, healthier, and friendlier.

Ethical Clearance Certificate

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DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd A social network analysis of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners
INVESTIGATORS	Jessie-Anne Bird
DEPARTMENT	Educational Psychology
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	22 September 2015
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	17 October 2016

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people, without whom this would not have been possible:

- Professor Vanessa Scherman, research supervisor, for her unending patience, hours of dedication, and motivation from start to finish; without you, this project would not exist.
- Mom, for her love and support, and unwavering belief that I would complete this journey;
- Andy, for the thousands of cups of tea, endless love, and holding my hand through all of it. .

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to study the influence of strong and weak social network ties on the phenomenon of bullying by examining the social ties leading to, or preventing bullying. Social ties were examined in relation to bullying, to establish the risk and protective factors associated with the structures of existing social networks. The study answered the research question: How does the strength of social ties relate to the phenomenon of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners in a school environment? The secondary research questions addressed by the study were: What types of social ties are prevalent in bullies' and victims' networks? How do social ties act as protective factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies? How do social ties act as risk factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies? Social capital theory formed the basis of the theoretical framework. This study made use of an interpretivist paradigm, and employed a qualitative approach. This study was conducted using an exploratory, embedded case study design. One-on-one, semi-structured interviews, observations and reflexive journal were used to gather data. The data was analysed using thematic content analysis. Bullies were found to have more weak network ties than victims. Weak ties are largely necessary for the exchange of resources across networks, leading to greater diversity and variety of information, thus increasing access to social capital. Future research recommendations included a mixed-methods study, as well as an examination of the longevity of bullying and social network status. Recommendations included interventions aimed at reducing the incidences of bullying through addressing unrealised assets within social networks, and the wider social context, alongside teacher training.

Key Terms: Bullying, direct bullying, indirect bullying, weak ties, strong ties, social networks, risk factors, protective factors, social capital theory

Language editor

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08 OCTOBER 2016

To Whom It May Concern

RE: DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING FOR JESSIE-ANNE BIRD

I, Nikita Ramkissoon (ID No 840211 0129 08 7) hereby declare that I have edited the Masters dissertation of Jessie-Anne Bird for language, formatting and style. Unfortunately, I cannot accept responsibility for work that I did not edit, or for any changes made to my editing.

If you have any queries, please contact me on nikita.ramkissoon@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Nikita Ramkissoon

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Chapter 1:
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of strong and weak social network ties on the phenomenon of bullying. The long-lasting effects of bullying on the psychological and social functioning of affected children has been well documented (Kowalski, 2007; MacDonald & Swart, 2009; Moylan et al., 2010; Nansel, Haynie, & Simons-Morten, 2007). Bullying has become an enduring problem within South African schools, affecting the majority of South African learners during their primary school years (MacDonald & Swart, 2009). This phenomenon has largely been understood as occurring in response to the larger community and culture in which these schools have been placed (Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011), and bullying is viewed as a breakdown in the social functioning of the school environment.

Bullying does not take place in isolation, but is reliant on a structure of interactions and relationships that function to maintain the conditions necessary for maladaptive behaviour (Nansel et al., 2007). Social support offers some protection against bullying (Cluver, Bowes, & Gardner, 2010) and from a social perspective may also be viewed as an attempt to increase social status and power (Mouttapa, Valente, Gallaher, Rohrbach, & Unger, 2004; Thornberg, 2011). Therefore, by examining the social ties leading to, or preventing bullying, this study aims to give insight into the structural nature of the social functioning within schools that inhibit – or encourage – bullying behaviour. The formation of the participants' social networks could provide valuable insights into understanding bullying, as well as possible intervention strategies.

A social network is considered to be the network of social interactions and personal relationships of a group or individual (Burt, 2000). The relationships between actors within a social network are known as ties (Hawe, Webster, & Shiell, 2004), and are necessary for the exchange of ideas and resources. These ties represent both direct and indirect connections between actors (Zhang, Souitaris, Soh, & Wong, 2008). Tie strength describes the type of connections between actors (Anderson, 2008). Weak ties occur between those considered as acquaintances, with limited connections to the other actors within a social network (Burt, 2000).

1.2 Problem statement

The results of bullying on victimised[1] children may have long-lasting and pervasive effects on functioning across many different spheres of life (Greeff & Grobler, 2008; Paul & Cillessen, 2007; Summers, 2008; Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Increased psychological distress, social maladjustment, academic underachievement and behaviour problems have been associated with individuals subjected to bullying (Zins, Elias, & Maher, 2007), and these have been linked to difficulties in adult life (Cluver et al., 2010). Victimised children have been shown to display significantly more sleeping problems, bed-wetting incidents, headaches, and stomach-aches than others in their age group (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Children who are victimised may also develop a pattern of assumed inadequacy, attributed to little experience of success in dealing with the bully and lack of knowledge leading to resolution of the bullying.

[1] The researcher acknowledges the debate regarding the use of the word “survivor” as opposed to “victim” in various fields of research. However, this study makes use of victim and bully terminology, which is in line with current literature regarding bullying.

South African schools, have, historically, provided a lack of support for victims of bullying (Cluver et al., 2010), and this has been linked to future vulnerability, as victims of bullying are led to feeling discouraged in developing proactive and preventative behaviours (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Bullying, in South African schools, has been associated with childhood psychological problems of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress (Boyes, Bowes, Cluver, Ward, & Badcock, 2014; Cluver et al., 2010). This includes clinical-level internalising psychological disorders, which have been attributed to the rising levels of bullying within South African schools (Cluver et al., 2010).

Children who experience repeated incidences of bullying are often less popular than their peers (Cluver et al., 2010; Peeters, Cillessen, & Scholte, 2009), and may therefore have less access to social support. In terms of social functioning, two groups of bullies have been identified – which may be distinguished according to status and social intelligence (Peeters et al., 2009). High social status is often accompanied by social intelligence, where power and influence become the goals of bullying behaviour (Peeters et al., 2009). Bullying behaviour exhibited by less popular members of a group is assumed to be influenced by incompetence within social functioning, as hostile intent attribution may lead to excessive aggression in interpersonal interactions (Peeters et al., 2009). The behaviour of both bullies, and victims, may therefore be viewed as functions of existing social networks.

Evidence suggests that the number of social ties is negatively correlated with victimisation (Mouttapa et al., 2004), and that bullies are likely to have a higher number of strong social ties (Estell, Farmer, & Cairns, 2007; Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012), often reinforcing the bullying behaviour (Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012). Additionally, peer rejection has been identified as a risk factor for continued

victimisation, likely due to the reduced social support received in the school environment (Sapouna et al., 2012). Previous research has indicated that bullying prevention efforts should include the friendship networks of identified bullies (Mouttapa et al., 2004).

1.3 Rationale

The success of prevention and intervention strategies largely depends on input from teachers, learners, parents, and other members of the community (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). South African schools are largely viewed as part of a greater community, and therefore part of the wider context of a "violent South African context" (Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011, p.344). Therefore, intervention programmes need to be designed with knowledge of the social structure present within the school environment, with insight into the social networking of bullying affected learners. As bullying has been shown to be a result of group functioning, and not limited to only bullies and their victims, interventions should be group based, to include issues of social status and the use of social ties (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). Peer networks have been shown as better predictors of bullying behaviours than individual behaviours across a two-year period (Salmivalli, Lappalainen, & Lagerspetz, 1998). According to Huitsing and Veenstra (2012), a social network approach is necessary to further understand the roles played by different social groups in propagating bullying behaviour.

As peers are substantially involved in reinforcing the behaviour of bullies, effective interventions have been comprised of providing the peer group with strategies to intervene when bullying occurs, and withstand the group dynamics supporting bullying behaviours (O'Connel, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Whole school approaches are needed to successfully challenge the social conditions that lead to bullying (O'Connel et al., 1999). This emphasises a need for investigation into the

social structures, which provide the environment in which learners become bullies or victims. As these roles and behaviours may be seen as functions of the social structures, an in-depth understanding of the development and the maintenance of these structures is pertinent. Additionally, as social status and social intelligence may be viewed as factors contributing towards individuals becoming bullies, or victims (Peeters et al., 2009), it may be assumed that interventions designed to challenge these will be able to affect change within the existing social structures. As certain types of structures and social ties may be viewed as protective factors, it will also be important to gain an understanding of the patterns of behaviour and interaction which lead to pro-social acts within the social group.

Despite there being a large number of published articles on bullying within the South African context (Boyes et al., 2014; Cluver et al., 2010; Greeff & Grobler, 2008; Liang, Flisher, & Lombard, 2007; K Maree, 2005; Smit, 2003; Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011; Townsend, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard, & King, 2008), there has been a dearth of research approaching the phenomenon from a social network analysis approach, which would allow bullying to be examined as a social phenomenon (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Therefore, this study is relevant, as it aims to improve understandings of bullying within South African primary schools, as this phenomenon needs to be understood in order to facilitate change and the development of intervention programmes.

1.4 Research aims

Bullying is a phenomenon that is neither rare, nor new; however, recent research has neglected to examine the effects of social ties on bullying within the South African context. This study focused on identifying the social networks and social ties within the school, the systemic nature of bullying, and its effects on individuals and groups. The role and prevalence of strong and weak social ties are

examined, as to how these inhibit or maintain bullying behaviour. Social network ties are examined to establish both the risk and protective factors associated with the structure of the social network, and their contribution towards the development of social capital.

1.5 Research questions

1.5.1 Primary research question:

- How does the strength of social ties relate to the phenomenon of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners in a school environment?

1.5.2 Secondary research questions:

- What types of social ties are prevalent in bullies' and victims' networks?
- How do social ties act as protective factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies?
- How do social ties act as risk factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies?

1.6 Research design and methodology

This study made use of an interpretivist paradigm (Section 3.2.1), which posits that reality is understood through social constructions. The interpretivist paradigm makes use of various assumptions: The first of these states that human life can only be understood from within (Nieuwenhuis, 2012b; Ponterotto, 2005), and that one must attempt to gain information surrounding the way in which this phenomenon is socially constructed and maintained (Goldkuhl, 2012; Shaw, 2010). This paradigm also makes the assumption that lived experience is a product of human interaction (Goldkuhl, 2012; Nieuwenhuis, 2012b). Interpretivism views the human mind as the source of meaning attribution (Nieuwenhuis, 2012b; Ponterotto,

2005; Shaw, 2010), and believes that human behaviour is assumed as being affected by knowledge of the social world (Goldkuhl, 2012; Nieuwenhuis, 2012b),

The methodological paradigm chosen for this study was a qualitative approach (Section 3.2.2). The qualitative approach relies on the use of language to provide rich descriptions of social experiences, and is to understand phenomenon involving social processes and behaviour (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Nieuwenhuis, 2012b; Shenton, 2004). Within the qualitative approach, knowledge of reality is gained through exploring of the experiences of others (Sullivan, 2010).

The research method chosen for the study was an exploratory, embedded case study design (Section 3.2.3), which allowed for a study of bullying according to the experiences of the participants. Non-probability purposive sampling was used in the selection of the participants, who were selected according to their identified statuses as either bullies or victims (Section 3.2.4). One-on-one interviews were used to gather information regarding the nature and extent of bulling experienced by the participants (Section 3.2.5). These interviews were semi-structured, and made use of certain predetermined questions based on the Social Experience Questionnaire – Self Report (SEQ-S) (Section 3.2.6.1). The SEQ-S guided the interviewer in asking questions regarding the participants' experiences of victimisation and pro-social interaction. Observations were recorded in the form of notes, which documented the participants' behaviour both during and after the interviews. The researcher kept a reflexive journal as an additional data source, as well as to maintain credibility (Section 3.2.6.2).

Predominant themes were identified through the use of thematic content analysis (Section 3.3). This was done through the identification and analysis of reoccurring codes within the data. The generating of codes and themes was done

following the transcription of the recorded interviews. This followed a process of six steps: (1) familiarising oneself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes (6) writing the report.

Trustworthiness was maintained to the best of the researcher's ability throughout the study (Section 3.4). This process held to the standards of reflexivity, credibility, and dependability. In order to maintain reflexivity, the researcher made use of a research journal, which provided insight into the subjective nature of the research. Triangulation was used to ensure credibility, through the incorporation of multiple sources of data. Dependability was attained through the careful documentation of the research process, and the provision of an audit trail. The researcher documented the research process in the form of field notes, memos, and observations. Transparency was maintained at all points of the research, with special attention paid to the decisions made during the research process.

Ethical considerations were taken into account during all parts of the research process (Section 3.5). Informed consent required both informed assent on the part of the participants, and signed consent by the participant's parents (Section 3.5.1). The right to withdraw (Section 3.5.2) was maintained throughout the research process. The participant's identifying information was kept anonymous, in order to keep their identities confidential (Section 3.5.3). The risk of harm was assessed in order to prevent psychological distress or harm from occurring to the participants (Section 3.5.4).

1.7 Outline of this research project

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the research project (Section 1.1), and describes the problem statement (Section 1.2), as well as the rationale for the project (Section 1.3). The aims of the research study are outlined (Section 1.4). The

primary and secondary research questions are described in this chapter (Section 1.5). A brief overview of the research design and methodology is provided (Section 1.6), as well as the outline for the subsequent chapters (Section 1.7).

Chapter 2 examines the literature reviewed for the study. Relevant definitions relating to bullying (Section 2.2; Section 2.3) are described. An exploration of the literature regarding risk factors and consequences of bullying (Section 2.4), the background to the South African context (Section 2.5), prevention and intervention (Section 2.6), social connections as protective and risk factors (Section 2.7), and a description of Social Network Theory (Section 2.8) is provided. The theoretical framework – Social Capital Theory – is explained, and related to the relevant research (Section 2.10).

Chapter 3 provides an in depth explanation of the research design and methodology used in the study. A description of the interpretivist epistemological paradigm is provided (Section 3.2.1), as well as the chosen methodological paradigm – the qualitative approach (Section 3.2.2). The exploratory, embedded case study design is explained (Section 3.2.3), as is the use of non-probability purposive sampling in the selection of participants (Section 3.2.4). A description of the use of interviews for data collection (Section 3.25), as well as instrumentation (Section 3.2.6), is given in this chapter. Data analysis and interpretation as thematic content analysis is explained (Section 3.3). Steps taken to ensure trustworthiness (Section 3.4), as well as the researcher's ethical considerations (Section 3.5) form part of this chapter.

Chapter 4 examines the findings of the research. Emerging themes are discussed according to the thematic content analysis (Section 4.2). The global themes were discussed according to their content; types of bullying experienced by

Grade 4 learners (Section 4.3), social ties and networks (Section 4.4), and risk and protective factors (Section 4.5). Relevant quotations from the data are included, as well as a discussion of the individual themes, and their relation to literature.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the results and recommendations of the research, limitations of the research. The research design and methodology is summarized (Section 5.2), and the results are discussed according to the research questions (Section 5.3). Reflections on the conceptual framework (Section 5.4), and on the research methodology (Section 5.5) are discussed in this chapter. The main conclusions drawn from the research are detailed (Section 5.6), and the strengths and limitations of the study are examined (Section 5.7). Recommendations regarding intervention and future research are discussed (Section 5.8).

1.8 Conclusion

The research aimed to provide an in-depth examination of the social network ties affecting learners identified as bullies and victims within a Grade 4 cohort. The long-term effects of bullying and victimisation have indicated a need for the identification of the social contexts in which bullying occurs. By gaining an in-depth understanding Through the use of relevant literature, the research intended to situate the results of the study within a South African context, and to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of bullying. The examination of the influence of strong and weak social ties on bullying allowed for a discussion of the social context in which bullying behaviours exist and are maintained. The researcher took care to maintain standards of trustworthiness, through steps taken to ensure credibility and dependability. Special attention was paid to ethical considerations, especially with regards to informed consent, right to withdraw, and confidentiality.

In the next chapter, the pertinent literature relating to the study will be discussed. This will include an explanation of relevant definitions of bullying (Section

2.1). Previous research regarding bullying within the South African context (Section 2.2). will be discussed. Risk and protective factors relating to bullying and victimization (Sections 2.5 and 2.6) will be delineated, as well as the effects of bullying and victimisation (Section 2.7). This chapter will provide an overview of Social network theory (Section 2.10). Chapter 2 will also contain the chosen theoretical framework for the research (Section 2.12).

Chapter 2:
Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

Bullying has been found to be a problem that affects schools on an international scale (Olweus, 1991). As bullying has been historically associated with typical schooling experiences, it has often been overlooked, or interpreted as a part of typical childhood development (Olweus, 1994; Zins et al., 2007). This may, in part, be due to the function served by bullying behaviour of increasing the social status of individuals who bully (Jones, Manstead, & Livingstone, 2011; Swearer & Cary, 2007). However, recent research has shown that bullying harms both victims and perpetrators, both within and beyond the school environment (Salmivalli et al., 1996, 1998; Swearer & Cary, 2007; Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Victim-blaming, justification of bullying behaviour and lack of reporting of aggression and intimidation have been identified as factors contributing to the on-going, pervasive nature of bulling within schools (Zins et al., 2007).

Multiple definitions of bullying have been used to guide research on bullying (Baron, Branscombe, & Byrne, 2008; Summers, 2008; Zins et al., 2007). Many of these definitions, however, appear to rely on the core premises that bullying consists of the following criteria (the criteria are discussed in more detail in the Section to follow):

1) A wilful intent to harm or cause distress to another individual;

2) A power imbalance between the bully and the victim; and

3) The repetition of the bullying behaviour over time (Horton, 2011; Olweus, 2013; Summers, 2008).

The first criterion – intentionality – is reliant on the concept that aggressive behaviour implies a desire to harm another (Olweus, 2013). The view that bullying

is a result of proactive aggression implies the inherently intentional nature of bullying, and has been incorporated in the majority of bullying-related research (Horton, 2011). However, Horton (2011) has questioned the centrality of this focus in bullying research, and claims that this has led to the neglect of social factors when examining the causes of bullying. Horton (2011, p. 269) therefore asks the question: "If school bullying is not about extraordinary, aggressive or deviant children but rather ordinary children, then it becomes necessary to ask not what is wrong with those children who bully, but rather why do those children do what they do?". This advocates for an approach to studying bullying that examines the context, and subsequent power relations that are socially created that lead to an environment supportive of bullying. Bullies are therefore not viewed as deviant, or exhibiting symptoms of pathology, but as reacting to circumstance and a social environment.

The second criterion addresses the imbalance of power between the bully and the victim. According to Olweus (1991), a learner is considered to be a victim of bullying after repeated exposure to negative actions by one or more learners, with an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim, in which the victim is seen as having less power. This criterion has been a central component of various bullying definitions. Bullying has been described as "unintentional and unprovoked aggression that involves disparity of power between victim and his or her perpetrator(s)" (Zins et al., 2007, p. 11), as well as "an imbalance of power between the bully and the target; the harassment occurs repeatedly over time; and wilful intent to cause distress to the target" (Summers, 2008, p. 13). Research examining perceptions and attitudes towards bullying has revealed that bullies are often perceived as having a higher social status than victims (Horton, 2011; Olweus, 2013; Swearer & Cary, 2007). Therefore, the definition of bullying that has been

chosen for this study is: “a pattern of behaviour in which one individual is chosen as the target of repeated aggression by one or more others; the target person generally has less power than those who engage in aggression” (Baron et al., 2008, p. 364). According to Olweus (2013), this criterion is especially important in differentiating between typical conflict between peers, and bullying, and further states that the description of the perceived power allocation should be gained from the victim of the bullying. Types of power, such as physical strength, social connectedness, and status may be viewed as related to the individual’s position within the social network within which they are found (Horton, 2011). The perceived imbalance of power is linked to the victim’s view of his or her ability to successfully defend him or herself, and often relates to differences in popularity between the victim and the bully (Olweus, 2013).

The final criterion describes the repetitive nature of bullying over time. This is regarded as one of the less important criteria, although assists in differentiating between unintentional and intentional acts of aggression (Olweus, 2013). Questions have also been raised regarding the suitability of this criteria for new forms of bullying, such as cyber bullying (Cheng, Chen, Ho, & Cheng, 2011; Cleemput & Grigg, 2010; Olweus, 2013). Additionally, it may become necessary to include other role players, such as bystanders, in this criteria in future definitions (Cheng et al., 2011; Cleemput & Grigg, 2010).

In this chapter, the literature on bullying and social networks is reviewed. This includes a review of both international and South African research on the causes, effects, and social nature of bullying. The role of social networks and social ties is also discussed in relation to bullying. This will be achieved by examining the literature according to the following Sections: background to the South African

context (Section 2.2), types of bullying (Section 2.3), bullies, bully-victims, and victims (Section 2.4), risk factors (Section 2.5), protective factors (Section 2.6), the consequences of bullying (Section 2.7) prevention and intervention (Section 2.8), social connections as protective and risk factors (Section 2.9), Social Network Theory (Section 2.10), and theoretical approaches to social networks (Section 2.11). The focus of this chapter will be on the phenomenon of bullying as experienced by school-aged children, along with an examination on the role of social ties and networks. This chapter also contains an exploration of the theoretical framework of the study (Section 2.10), which is based on Social Capital Theory. This theory is discussed in terms of its relevance to the aims of the research.

2.2 Background to the South African context

Education has been shown to be an effective tool in the fight against discrimination, as those with lower educational qualifications show the most prejudice against those they perceive as different (Ross & Deverell, 2005). This prejudice is influenced by the interaction of factors such as class, race and gender, as well as the world view of the persons concerned (Ross & Deverell, 2005). Furthermore, the older children get, the more likely they are to be victimised if they are perceived as different, for example, exhibiting depressive behaviours (Kochel, Ladd, & Rudolph, 2012). As a result of the increasing victimisation of older children, it would be appropriate to investigate the attitudes of school learners, as this is a young age group who would be more open to forming new opinions, and in an environment allowing for the correction of negative behaviours. In this Section the historical influences related to bullying in South Africa will be discussed (Section 2.2.1), as well as the right to education, and the associated impact of bullying (Section 2.2.2). The prevalence of bullying in South Africa will be delineated, and discussed according to the effects on bullying-affected individuals (Section 2.2.3).

2.2.1 Historical influences

The historically entrenched educational divide and challenges linked to apartheid have been examined in depth, and subsequent, and persistent inequalities of resources, availability and educational outcomes are still present in many schools today (Bray, Gooskens, Kahn, Moses, & Seekings, 2010; Spaull, 2013; Spreen & Vally, 2006; Timæus, Simelane, & Letsoalo, 2012). On an international level, it has been shown that schools with greater socio-economic inequality amongst their learners experience increased risk of bullying, and that schools in countries with large economic gaps experience more bullying (Due et al., 2009). It has been hypothesised that this is due to the increased acceptance of hierarchies in countries and schools experiencing status differences amongst the population (Due et al., 2009). This pattern is maintained by the increasing income gap in South Africa, where the level of income inequality increased between 1993 and 2008 (Leibbrandt, Woolard, Finn, & Argent, 2010). This inequality has resulted in the perpetuation of two distinct educational contexts – the affluent and well-resourced schools, and the others lacking the resources needed for basic literacy (Lam, Ardington, & Leibbrandt, 2011; Spaull, 2013; Timæus et al., 2012). The pervasive effect on education, (and subsequent inequality) has been described as one of the most damaging legacies of apartheid (Bray et al., 2010).

Despite the long standing differences between educational contexts, South African schools have been described as the platforms for change, due to the integration and interaction of learners from differing racial and socio-economic groups (Bray et al., 2010). Opportunities are provided to school leaders to challenge existing social structures (Cambron-McCabe, 2005; Spaull, 2013). However, despite these opportunities to challenge social structures, the current situation in

some schools reinforces inequalities, through policies policing both language, as well as culturally held perceptions, and racial labelling (Bray et al., 2010).

2.2.2 The right to education

According to the South African Constitution, as stated by Section 29 of the Constitution, everyone has the right to both basic education (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Therefore, all South African citizens should be provided with educational resources. However, this, when read in conjunction with Section 28 of the Bill of Rights, it is made clear that the State is not only responsible for providing education, but doing to in a way that ensures the safety of all children while at school. According to this Section, every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation, as well as the right to an environment that is not harmful to health or wellbeing, as described in Section 24 (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Therefore, in order to safeguard the right to education effectively, it is paramount that all factors that may prevent this, such as risks to personal safety, be understood in their potential effects on the education of the learner.

Despite this being clearly outlined, incidences of school-based violence remain high (Liang et al., 2007; Modisaotsile, 2012; Pedersen, 2012; SACE, 2011; Smit, 2003). Bullying, sexual violence, and discrimination based on race, sex and sexuality remain prevalent within the South African school context (SACE, 2011; SAHRC, 2008). These acts, however, are not limited to school learners, but often involve educators, both as bullies and victims (SACE, 2011). Abuse by educators and fellow learners are influential factors on school drop-out ratings (Modisaotsile, 2012; Townsend et al., 2008). Factors influencing the prevalence of negative influences on schooling are aggravated by the large numbers of under-qualified

educators, as well as resource constraints leading to over-crowded classrooms (Modisaotsile, 2012). Additionally, a lack of running water, electricity, and appropriate sanitation pose additional obstacles to effective learning within many impoverished schools (Townsend et al., 2008). The participation of school governing bodies, parents, educators and governmental departments has shown to be a powerful tool in negating the effects of obstacles towards the provision of safe schooling environments (Modisaotsile, 2012).

Access to education is still challenged by factors linked to poverty. The financial burden of transport, school uniforms and schools fees still excludes many South African learners, despite existing legislation aimed at preventing this (Townsend et al., 2008).

2.2.3 Bullying within South Africa

As bullying has been linked to risks experienced at various levels, the systemic nature of challenges experienced by South African school-goers provides many obstacles to interventions aimed at improving mental well-being (Boyes et al., 2014; Boyes & Cluver, 2015). This emphasises the need for understanding the phenomenon of bullying within the unique South African context.

South African school learners have reported varying levels of bullying across the country (Liang et al., 2007; Reddy et al., 2003; Tustin, Zulu, & Basson, 2014). As many as 34% of South African secondary school learners have reported being victimised by bullies (Tustin et al., 2014). In a study based in schools in Cape Town and Durban, over a third of students were involved in bullying behaviour. Of these learners, 8.2 % were described as bullies, 19.3 % identified as victims and 8.7 % as bully-victims (Liang et al., 2007), placing the number ofincidences of bullying above many Westernised countries (Boyes et al., 2014). Similar to international studies,

male learners were most at risk of being both bullies and victims (Dussich & Maekoya, 2007; Flisher et al., 2006; Townsend et al., 2008; Tustin et al., 2014), while younger male learners were more likely to be victimised (Liang et al., 2007). Male learners in the intermediate phase were also found to experience more physical victimisation than their female counterparts (Greeff & Grobler, 2008; Tustin et al., 2014). It was found that black children experienced more verbal bullying regarding ethnicity than children of other races within the same sample group (Greeff & Grobler, 2008). In a longitudinal study, Boyes et al. (2014) found that children and adolescents with greater levels of internalising symptoms and conduct problems were more likely to be victimised. In a national study, examining a demographically representative sample, Reddy et al., (2003), found that learners attending schools in Tshwane, Pretoria, reported the highest incidence of bullying, with 61% of learners being affected. Schools in Durban and Cape Town had 36.3% of learners who had experienced bullying, while rural schools in Mpumalanga had an 11.8% of bullying-affected learners. South African learners who had experienced bullying were found to be at greater risk for dropping out of school (Townsend et al., 2008), as well as displaying both internalising and externalising problems in later life (Boyes et al., 2014), including symptoms of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and posttraumatic stress (Boyes & Cluver, 2015; Cluver et al., 2010; Liang et al., 2007; Shields, Nadasen, & Pierce, 2009). Aggression and anti-social behaviours were found to be more common in bullies, victims, and bully-victims (Liang et al., 2007).

2.3 Types of Bullying

Bullying, as experienced by the victims, may take on various forms. These forms are differentiated according to the nature of the aggressions, as well as by the level of confrontation employed by the bully. These forms are described as direct,

or indirect bullying, and may be differentiated according to the overtness and visibility of the actions (Carbone-Lopez, Esbensen, & Brick, 2010; Yang & Salmivalli, 2013).

2.3.1 Direct bullying

Direct bullying refers to both physical and verbal confrontations (Zins et al., 2007). Verbal bullying is a form of direct bullying, and includes being made fun of, name-calling, and teasing in a hurtful way (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). Name calling is one of the most common forms of direct bullying (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). This type of verbal bullying has been related to racist (Horton, 2011), homophobic (Slaatten, Anderssen, & Hetland, 2014), and sexist (Garandeau, Wilson, & Rodkin, 2009) slurs. Gay-related name calling is a form of verbal bullying which makes use of terms such as “gay” or “homo” (Slaatten et al., 2014). This has been associated with an endorsement of male norms, and a rejection of individuals who deviate from expected gender roles (Slaatten et al., 2014).

Physical bullying is considered to be oriented towards actions taken against the victim, with the aim to cause physical pain. This occurs through actions such as hitting or kicking (Boyes et al., 2014; Cullerton-Sen & Crick, 2005; Summers, 2008; Wang et al., 2009). Although this form of bullying has a high prevalence across the board, male learners have been shown to be more likely to experience physical bullying in comparison to their female counterparts (Baldry, 2003; Greeff & Grobler, 2008; Perren, Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, Malti, & Hymel, 2012; Wang et al., 2009). Female learners, on the other hand, report more verbal bullying (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010). Physical bullying has been linked to parental violence, increasing both the risk of bullying and victimisation (Baldry, 2003), and is associated more highly with bully-victims than other types of bullies (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013).

2.3.2 Indirect bullying

Indirect bullying (sometimes referred to as relational bullying) consists of covert forms of bullying, in which the perpetrator is not always known to the victim. This has also been described as forms of bullying with less visibility, and includes social exclusion, isolation, gossip, spreading of rumours, sexual harassment and teasing (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Yang & Salmivalli, 2013; Zins et al., 2007).

Indirect bullying may take the form of verbal, psychological or physical acts (Nansel et al., 2007; Townsend et al., 2008). Despite the high prevalence of indirect bullying (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010), interventions are largely focused on preventing the overt forms of aggression, and may neglect the effects of indirect bullying (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). These forms of indirect bullying, although common in both genders, are perpetrated and reported more commonly by school-aged girls (Baldry, 2003; Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Wang et al., 2009). This is hypothesised as occurring due to the rapidity with which girls develop social and verbal skills in comparison to their male counterparts (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010).

2.4 Bullies, victims and bully-victims

Three different categories of bullying-affected learners have been identified, bullies, bully-victims, and victims. Although aggression is found among children who may not necessarily be considered bullies, a child may be considered a bully if they harass another child who does not possess the same social status or physical strength (Olweus, 1994). A child may be considered a victim of bullying if they are repeatedly targeted by individuals with greater status or strength than themselves (Salmivalli et al., 1996).

Bully-victims are described as children who both bully, who also experience victimisation (Olweus, 1991; Smit, 2003; Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). Although bully-

victims may not be as common as bullies, they are more likely to experience both internalising and externalising disorders (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). Bully-victims, however, employ higher levels of direct bullying – both verbal and physical (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013), and this is often related to the desire to "get even" (Swearer & Cary, 2007, p. 79). Bully-victims also experience more victimisation than pure victims, and this has been shown to be the case for both direct and indirect forms of bullying (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). This is attributed to the lack of social support often experienced by bully-victims, allowing them to become more vulnerable to attacks from others (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). Yang and Salmivilli (2013, p.734) stated: "Bully-victims might be more easily seen as 'deserving' their negative treatment, due to their own disturbing behaviour. Even teachers may be reluctant to intervene in harassment targeted at bully-victims." This trend is especially worrying, as this allows for an increase in unregulated bullying behaviour, with the potential for escalation of aggression.

2.5 Risk factors associated with bullying

The following Section will discuss the risk factors and consequences related to bullying. Identification of the influences on bullying behaviours is necessary to improve understanding of the impact of bullying (Bifulco, Schimmenti, Jacobs, Bunn, & Rusu, 2014). The key risk factors will be discussed according to the following subsections: personal characteristics increasing victimisation (Section 2.5.1), individual risk factors leading to bullying behaviour (Section 2.5.2), and socio-cultural risk factors (Section 2.5.3). Research has indicated links between bullying, victimisation, and later challenges with social and psychological functioning (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Holt, Chee, Ng, & Bossler, 2013; Liang et al., 2007; Nansel et al., 2007).

2.5.1 Personal characteristics increasing victimisation

Several characteristics have been identified which may make certain children more likely to become victims of bullying (Rose & Espelage, 2012). Primary school children who exhibit the following are at greater risk of being victimised: perceived low social competence, poor peer relations, internalizing and externalizing problems, and physical weakness (Paul & Cillessen, 2007; Rose & Espelage, 2012). Additionally, children who are considered unlikeable by their peers are more likely to be bullied (Sentse, Kiuru, Veenstra, & Salmivalli, 2014).This may be compounded by the fact that children who are bullied have a tendency to display traits of submission, passivity, and may repeat behaviours that place them risk for further victimisation (Zins et al., 2007). Gender has been shown to play a role in increasing risk for bullying (Greeff & Grobler, 2008; Perren et al., 2012). In South Africa, HIV/AIDS associated stigma has led to increased cases of victimisation, both for HIV positive children, and those with HIV positive family members (Boyes & Cluver, 2015).

Both bullies and victims have identified physical weakness, clothing choices, being overweight, differences and academic success as possible reasons for individuals being bullied (Swearer & Cary, 2007). Primary school boys report more physical and direct bullying, whereas girls experience more indirect bullying (Greeff & Grobler, 2008). However, peer sociability has been shown to be an important protective factor against later victimisation (Sentse et al., 2014). The effects of peer sociability include both direct and indirect effects. Directly, the ability to appropriately respond to challenging social situations, and indirectly, social group affiliation, and friendship, serves as a buffer against victimisation (Paul & Cillessen, 2007). Within South African schools, Grade 4 learners appear to experience significantly more

bullying, with 70% of learners reporting having being bullied (Greeff & Grobler, 2008).

2.5.2 Individual risk factors leading to bullying behaviour

Although boys of a school going age have been shown to experience higher levels of victimisation than girls (Greeff & Grobler, 2008; Perren et al., 2012), they are also more likely to engage in bullying other children (Perren et al., 2012). Children who bully others have been described as needing to feel power, and a sense of control over others (K Maree, 2005; Smit, 2003). Bullying has been attributed to occurring in response to changes in children's lives, such as divorce (Eisenberg et al., 2005). Those who feel humiliated, insecure, or inadequate may resort to bullying others in an effort to alleviate these feelings (K Maree, 2005; Smit, 2003; Swearer & Cary, 2007). Morally responsible reasoning has been shown to be negatively correlated with bullying (Perren et al., 2012), and may indicate a link between moral understanding and bullying behaviour. Additionally, bullies have shown higher levels of amoral justifications for bullying behaviours in comparison to non-bullies (Perren et al., 2012). Research has found links between bullying, and behavioural challenges (Ttofi, Farrington, & Lösel, 2012); indifferent family backgrounds (K Maree, 2005; Smit, 2003) aggression (Nansel et al., 2007). Bullying also increases when the behaviour is experienced as an effective means of reaching the individual's instrumental goals (Eisenberg et al., 2005). Bully-victims may also be more likely to engage in bullying behaviour due to lowered levels of empathy, hypothesised to be due to their own experiences of victimisation (Perren et al., 2012).

2.5.3 Socio-cultural risk factors

Within the South African context, many additional challenges are faced which may predispose children to becoming victims of bullying. These include: living in a household with domestic violence, being the victim of physical or sexual abuse at home, living in a high-violence community, and food insecurity (K Maree, 2005). Inter-parental violence has also been linked to increased incidences of bullying (Baldry, 2003). Additionally, factors such as inadequate supervision, and single parent families were shown to increase the risk of victimisation (Bifulco et al., 2014). Children living on the streets, as well as those with caregivers with chronic illness were also associated with an increased likelihood of being a victim of bullying. HIV/AIDS-related stigma has also been strongly linked to an increase chance of being bullied (Cluver et al., 2010). Race, however, does not appear to be a predictor of being victimised by bullying, as various races appear to be equally effected within the same context (Greeff & Grobler, 2008).

Bullying has been reported as occurring most often on the playground, in class (without a supervising educator), as well as in hallways and stairwells (Greeff & Grobler, 2008). This implies a need for greater adult presence in the prevention of bullying. However, difficulties faced by many schools in South Africa make providing the necessary resources to adequately prevent bullying challenging. This has been attributed to less resourced school facing issues such a poverty, long distances between home and school, the effects of health, HIV/AIDS, and child-headed households, and these factors are worsened by a lack of knowledge of rights, policies and services (Chikoko, 2008; Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012; Nyambedha & Aagaard-Hansen, 2007). These challenges have been linked to increased incidence of violence and aggression in school learners (Cluver et al.,

2010). School environments that may be classified as risky, due to the above mentioned social factors, increase learners' vulnerability and likelihood of being victimised (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).The subsequent effects of violence and other delinquent behaviours impacts the willingness of educators to continue at these schools, and may lead to increased absenteeism, relocation, and poor motivation within the classroom (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).

The values and beliefs held by school learners are often influenced by the schools they attend (Cambron-McCabe, 2005). The school environment can largely affect the perceptions held by learners, including the negative effects of low socio-economic status, language and cultural barriers (MacDonald & Swart, 2009; Summers, 2008). Additionally, individually held perceptions of the schooling experience have been shown to influence the likelihood of being both a bully and victim, as negative perceptions of the school has been consistently linked to bullying, victimisation, and being a bully-victim (Harel-Fisch et al., 2011). Teacher attitudes towards bullying have been shown to influence the frequency of victimisation (Saarento, Kärnä, Hodges, & Salmivalli, 2013). It has also been shown that perceptions of a supportive school environment effect the willingness of bullying-affected learners to seek support and help from school staff (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010).

2.6 Protective factors associated with bullying

Despite the risks associated with bullying, and the risk factors linked to increases in victimisation, several elements have been identified which serve to prevent bullying and victimisation, or to mediate the effects thereof. The following Sections serve to discuss these factors, as they relate to both bullies and victims. Sections 2.6.1 and 2.6.2 will discuss personal protective factors associated with

bullying and victimisation respectively, while socio-cultural factors will be examined in Section 2.6.2.

2.6.1 Personal protective factors associated with bullying

Although one cannot ignore the social context within which bullying occurs, evidence suggests that individual characteristics may place certain children at greater risk of engaging in bullying behaviour than others (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). Many of these characteristics are linked to the way in which children interact with, and understand, the actions of others. Children who possess higher levels of empathy towards others have been shown to be less likely to engage in bullying behaviour (Horton, 2011; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012; Perren et al., 2012). This has been indicated as one of the differences between children who are victimised, and those who go on to become bully-victims, possibly due to their sensitisation to bullying (Cook et al., 2010; Perren et al., 2012). Children who are better able to understand the impact of bullying behaviour on others are less likely engage in antisocial acts towards their peers (Lomas, Stough, Hansen, & Downey, 2012). Interpersonal problem solving skill development is viewed as a protective factor, as adequate social skills provide alternative solutions when faced with peer related challenges (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). Additionally, positive peer status in pre-adolescents is negatively associated with later bullying (Cook et al., 2010).

Children who perceive themselves positively, with higher levels of self-esteem have a reduced likelihood of engaging in bullying behaviour (Gendron, Williams, & Guerra, 2011; O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001). This is especially true when the school is perceived as supportive by the children (Gendron et al., 2011). Positive experiences at school, such as improved academic achievement, occur more commonly in children who do not bully others (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). This has

also been linked to perceptions of self-efficacy and competence (Gendron et al., 2011; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012).

2.6.2 Personal protective factors associated with victimisation

Several personal factors have been identified which reduce the risk and incidence of victimisation by bullies. Factors such as positive social self-perception and a positive self-image appear to reduce the likelihood of victimisation in school aged children (Boulton, Smith, & Cowie, 2010; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012). Although children who are considered to be physically attractive have been shown to be less victimised (Sweeting & West, 2001), this may be influenced by the protective factors of positive self-esteem and self-worth (Boulton et al., 2010; Fox & Farrow, 2009). Evidence suggests that a positive self-image and perception of physical appearance may lessen experiences of verbal bullying, even in children considered overweight (Fox & Farrow, 2009). Gender appears to play apart in the frequency of direct bullying experienced by school-aged children, with female learners being subjected to lower levels of physical and verbal bullying (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012; Paquett & Underwood, 1999; Von Marees & Petermann, 2010). Gender roles may cause female learners to be more likely to ask for assistance than male learners (Eliot et al., 2010; Slaatten et al., 2014).

Various forms of competence have been linked to a reduced risk of being victimised while at school, such as skill and ability displayed in physical activities (Sweeting & West, 2001). Academic achievement is also associated with reduced victimisation, however, it is unclear whether this is due to the harmful impact of victimisation on school performance (Hammig & Jozkowski, 2013). Overall self-efficacy and emotional intelligence is negatively correlated with victimisation

(Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012), as is increased social competence and empathy (Cook et al., 2010).

2.6.3 Socio-cultural protective factors

Although many challenges are faced by children within schools where bullying is prevalent, several factors have been identified which lessen the incidence and severity of bullying. Engagement in bullying behaviours has been negatively associated with increased levels of parental support (Wang et al., 2009), with children of supportive, two-parent households being less likely to bully others, or be victimised themselves (Bifulco et al., 2014). The educational level of parents has also been linked to bullying behaviour, with children of parents with higher levels of education being less likely to bully others (Von Marees & Petermann, 2010). Parental communication and involvement are important protective elements when preventing multiple forms of bullying (Fanti, Demetriou, & Hawa, 2012; Shetgiri, Lin, & Flores, 2013). The family has been shown to be a valuable source of support, with sibling support decreasing the chances of experiencing bullying at school (Cluver et al., 2010). The concept of likeability has been explored as a protective factor related to bullying and victimisation. Likeability is understood to be the level to which an individual is liked by others (Sentse et al., 2014). Although peer support and social acceptance decreases cases of victimisation, (Boulton et al., 2010; Cluver et al., 2010), parental familiarity with the peer group increases the protective effects of social support experienced by children (Shetgiri et al., 2013). Various forms of support from teachers and parents are important factors in the reduction of bullying behaviours and associated consequences. Teachers may play a pivotal role in reducing the negative effects of victimisation, specifically in the prevention of lowered academic performance (Strøm, Thoresen, Wentzel-Larsen, & Dyb, 2013).

School environments which are perceived as supportive are linked to help seeking behaviour in attempts to limit experiences of victimisation, especially when teachers were viewed as caring and interested in learner well-being (Eliot et al., 2010).

2.7 The consequences of bullying

The results of victimisation may have long-lasting and pervasive effects on the individual, affecting their functioning within multiple contexts and domains. Increased psychological distress, social maladjustment, academic underachievement and behaviour problems have been associated with individuals subjected to bullying (Cluver et al., 2010; Strøm et al., 2013; Zins et al., 2007). Victimized children have been shown to display significantly more sleeping problems, bed-wetting incidents, headaches, and stomach aches than others in their age group. Children who are victimized may also develop a pattern of assumed inadequacy, attributed to little experience of success in dealing with the bully and lack of knowledge leading to resolution of the bullying. A lack of external support may lead to future vulnerability, as they feel discouraged in developing proactive behaviours (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). According to research conducted within resource-constricted South African schools, bullying has been associated with childhood psychological problems of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress (Cluver et al., 2010). The increased prevalence of clinical-level internalising psychological disorders among children has been attributed to the rising levels of bullying within schools, and has shown to be a strong predictor of later mental health challenges (Bifulco et al., 2014; Cluver et al., 2010). Additionally, bullying has been linked to truancy, often as an effort to prevent further victimisation (Holt et al., 2013). This has also been associated with increased risk of leaving school before completion (Sapouna et al., 2012).

Social isolation, prior to the onset of bullying, has been associated with greater levels of externalising, as well as internalizing difficulties (Holt & Espelage, 2007; Saarento et al., 2013; Zins et al., 2007). This is compounded by the fact that poor social skills are a strong predictor of victimisation (Saarento et al., 2013; Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Victims of bullying are also likely to have been subjected to exposure to multiple types of victimisation (Holt & Espelage, 2007) such as maltreatment, physical assault, and witnessing community and family level violence (Cluver et al., 2010; Holt & Espelage, 2007). This has been identified as a key predictor of exposure to other types of victimisation, particularly by peers (Cluver et al., 2010). Retaliatory aggression may also manifest in response to bullying, with individuals perpetuating bullying behaviour often having been victimised themselves (Summers, 2008; Yang & Salmivalli, 2013; Zins et al., 2007). Bullies, themselves, may face challenging long term consequences, such as increased risk of delinquency and criminality (Swearer & Cary, 2007).

2.8 Prevention and intervention

Prevention and intervention strategies have had varying levels of success, and largely depend on input from teachers, learners, parents, and other members of the community. South African schools are largely viewed as part of a greater community, and therefore part of the violence found within the wider context of South Africa (Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011). Therefore, any intervention programme needs to take the discourses of violence and abuse into account, in order to ensure multi-level efficacy (Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011). Early intervention is advocated, as younger children are more susceptible to parental and teacher influence (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Programmes aimed at primary school children show longer lasting results than those aimed at adolescents (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). School competence and academic self-efficacy may reduce the

potential for victimisation through their relation to the development of more self-confidence (Paul & Cillessen, 2007). Several protective factors have been identified which may prevent children from being bullied. Support from close friends and siblings, improved self-confidence and self-efficacy have been shown to reduce the potential for being bullied, although these are only effective within environments with lower levels of violence and abuse (Cluver et al., 2010). Bullying interventions within high risk communities have shown to be particularly effective when targeting social relationships, however, have not succeeded in reducing AIDS-related bullying affected stigma (Cluver et al., 2010).

Several challenges have been identified, which prevent the successful implementation of interventions against bullying. These include; disciplinary problems related to the lack of engagement by parents, who have been reported as not supporting teachers and schools in reducing incidences of bullying behaviour (Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011). As increasing levels of bullying are associated with increasing levels of psychological disorders, reducing incidences and extent of bullying should lead to improvements in mental health outcomes (Cluver et al., 2010). Interventions, such as the use of narrative therapy, have been advocated as means through which alternate strategies can be developed within families and schools affected by bullying, allowing all involved individuals to discover assets and strengths available to them (Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011). Strategies which have been shown to be most effective in preventing and reducing bullying include reaching out to victims, enforcing clear consequences for bullying, supervising learners during breaks and in hallways, engaging classes in discussions and activities related to bullying, and creating community action teams, involving learners, parents and teachers (Yerger & Gehret, 2011).

2.9 Social connections as protective and risk factors

Through developing an explanation of the nature of social ties found in children's social groups, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the structural nature of these groups. As social connections and friendships have been mentioned as protective factors against victimisation (Cluver et al., 2010; Paul & Cillessen, 2007; Wang et al., 2009; Zins et al., 2007) it can be assumed that differences in the strengths of these connections will have an effect on the level of protectiveness offered by these relationships. Additionally, different forms of social connections will also be discussed in terms of their role in encouraging or maintaining bullying behaviour. Weak ties are understood as those which occur between acquaintances, who have no direct ties to one another beyond, but may interact while involved in similar activities (Granovetter, 1983; Hawe et al., 2004). Strong ties are characterised by stronger friendships, and increased frequency of interaction (Easley & Kleinberg, 2010; Granovetter, 1983).

As strong bonding social networks may affect health through the provision emotional support, increasing the development of self-efficacy and reducing stress (Ferlander, 2007), the nature of the social ties should be examined in order to establish their effectiveness as potential assets. Social ties may be used as a means of gaining access to resources, both directly and indirectly, through the development of personal links (Jack, 2005). Gender segregation in children's social network groups and friendships has been found to be more prominent than racial segregation, with female groups containing greater diversity than male groups (Lee, Howes, & Chamberlain, 2007). This is hypothesised as occurring due to the greater importance placed on gender by children in developing their own identity constructs (Kowalski, 2007). Boys are often seen as having larger friendship groups, whereas girls experience greater closeness (Lee et al., 2007). Group membership, according

to race and gender, remains stable, due to the permanence of these identifiers. Therefore, the knowledge of this permanence contributes towards the importance placed on these categories by young children, and this continues throughout their development (Kowalski, 2007).

Although group membership may contribute towards protection of the members within the group, it may also provide the structures which allow for bullying behaviours to occur between individuals attempting to gain status within the group, and those viewed as outsiders (Peeters et al., 2009). The strength and number of social connections differ between bullies and victims. Children who engage in bullying have been shown to be part of larger social networks, with wider circles of friends (Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012). In comparison, children who are victimised often have smaller social networks, with fewer friends (Mouttapa et al., 2004), and are placed at higher risk of victimisation due to this (Ahn, Garandeau, & Rodkin, 2010). It is thought that unpopular peers are targeted by bullies, in order to protect their popular standing amongst their social network (Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012).

Gender stereotypes perpetuated by children are usually found to mimic those of the adults around them (Kowalski, 2007), emphasising the importance of providing environments which stimulate tolerance of diversity. As children use learned information about group characteristics and behaviour to make decisions regarding social interaction (Kowalski, 2007), it is important that this learned behaviour represent pro-social interactions, in order to avoid the continuation of behavioural patterns which may lead to the continuation of bullying. Children will behave in ways which are congruent with their perceived identity (Kowalski, 2007), and this implies the need for bullying interventions that challenge stereotypes which encourage violent or aggressive behaviour as part of conforming to a particular role

or ideal. Young children have also been found to negatively evaluate those who do not fit the norm which they are accustomed to, prompting derogatory behaviour (Kowalski, 2007), which may form the basis for bullying. Children who do not fit these norms, will therefore have less access to the protection afforded by social relationships, and may be viewed as having less social capital.

2.10 Social network theory

Granovetter (1983) is largely credited with pioneering the social network approach, from which social network theory originates. Social network theory examines interactions between people, organisations and groups within their networks (Berkowitz, 1982; Merchant, 2012; Scott, 1991). The social network approach examines the patterns of networks, individuals, and dyads (Slotte-Kock & Coviello, 2010). The following Sections will discuss the definitions of social networks (Section 2.10.1), the structural property of social networks (Section 2.10.2), the relational property of social networks (Section 2.10.3), and the transactional content of social networks (Section 2.10.4). Social capital within social networks will be described in Section 2.10.5.

2.10.1 Definitions of social networks

The term social network has been defined as the relationships between individuals, objects and organisations (McCarthy, Pitt, Campbell, Merwe, & Salehi-Sangeri, 2007), in which social networks are described as the channels that allow resources to flow between actors (Slotte-Kock & Coviello, 2010). A social network is described as a flexible system through which actors are able to interact with one other (Potgieter, April, Cooke, & Lockett, 2006). The term social network therefore provides a way to describe the patterns of daily social interaction between varying groups of people (Merchant, 2012). Networks are considered the conduits through

which individuals gain access to resources (McCarthy et al., 2007). The movement of resources may be described as occurring due to the three properties of social networks: structural property, relational property, and transactional content (Tichy, Tushman, & Fombrun, 1979).

2.10.2 Structural property of social networks

Structural property relates to the organisation of the various parts of the social network. The structure of a social network is described in terms of its composite parts (Hawe et al., 2004; Hernandez-Wolfe & McDowell, 2013; Scott, 2000). Individuals are referred to as actors, points, or nodes, and are described according to their influence on the flow of communication and resources through groupings, friendships, and actions within the network (Merchant, 2012; Scott, 2000). The social network approach to network studies therefore places emphasis on the identification and measurement of the characteristics which influence the structure of the network (Slotte-Kock & Coviello, 2010).

Membership within a social network has been shown to influence behavioural choices (Cattell, 2001; Cikara, Botvinick, & Fiske, 2011; Shalizi & Thomas, 2011). Homogeneity between members is a common characteristic of social networks (Lewis, Gonzalez, & Kaufman, 2012; Shalizi & Thomas, 2011). This is described as occurring through two methods – homophily – which is the tendency for similar individuals to form relationships, and contagion – which leads to actors within a network developing similarities due to peer influence over time (Lewis et al., 2012; Shalizi & Thomas, 2011). Therefore, correlations in behaviour of group members are common, although the causal reasons for this often requires in-depth investigation (Shalizi & Thomas, 2011).

2.10.3 Relational property of social networks

The relationships between actors within a social network are known as ties (Hawe et al., 2004), and are necessary for the exchange of ideas and resources. These ties represent both direct and indirect connections between actors (Zhang et al., 2008). Social network theory assumes ability on behalf of the actors within a network to intentionally manage the formation of social ties (Slotte-Kock & Coviello, 2010), thus allowing for active participation in the formation of a network.

Tie strength describes the type of connections between actors (Anderson, 2008). Weak ties occur between those considered as acquaintances, with limited connections to the other actors within a social network (Burt, 2000). Weak ties, however, are largely necessary for the exchange of resources across networks, leading to greater diversity and variety of information (Anderson, 2008; Slotte-Kock & Coviello, 2010). Changes in the use of technology within social interaction have impacted the patterns of interaction within social networks, as well as the formation and maintenance of social ties (Merchant, 2012).

2.10.4 Transactional content of social networks

The type of resources exchanged across social networks vary according to the needs of the network, and may include information, affection, social support, new opportunities and influence (Slotte-Kock & Coviello, 2010; Tichy et al., 1979). The nature of the ties will determine the access to these resources, as well as the availability to various individuals (Granovetter, 1983; Zhang et al., 2008). The transactional behaviour within a social network is influenced by the political, economic and technological characteristics of the context – affecting both individual and relational elements (Granovetter, 1985; Slotte-Kock & Coviello, 2010). However, social networks are not neutral entities, and are reflective of social

divisions and inequalities present in the environment, and may therefore propagate inequity of resource distribution (Merchant, 2012).

2.10.5 Social capital within social networks

The development of social capital, while considered to be a result of social ties, is not guaranteed by membership within a particular network (Anderson, 2008). The generation of social capital requires motivation to make use of the opportunities within the network (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Anderson, 2008). Adler and Kwon (2002) have proposed three elements that are required before the benefits of social capital may be realised. The features of opportunity, ability and motivation are viewed as essential to the development of social capital within a social network.

Opportunities for social capital development are linked to the structural characteristics of a social network (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 2000). This includes the types of connections (such as strong or weak ties) within the network, as these ties allow for access to various resources and knowledge (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 2000), thus promoting new opportunities. The types of ties will determine the ease with which these resources flow through the network (Cattell, 2001)

Despite the availability of these resources within a social network, the realisation of social capital depends on an ability to create value from opportunity – referred to as human capital (Burt, 1997). This ability is viewed as a cognitive dimension (Anderson, 2008; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), and includes skills, resources and beliefs (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

Motivation is the third element required for social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Anderson, 2008). Motivation increases an actor's access to resources as well as desire to engage with other members of the network (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004). Motivation is gained through the desire to generate

value from social networks, the level of care in relationships, as well as the sense of affiliation within a network (Oh et al., 2004).

2.11 Theoretical approaches to social networks

The relationships between interacting units within a system form the basis of social network analysis (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Scott, 2000; Wasserman & Faust, 2009). Actors within a social network are viewed as interdependent, and resources move between these actors through relational ties, and these ties, along with the actors form the basis of investigation within social network analysis (Wasserman & Faust, 2009) Relational ties are capable of providing both opportunities as well as risk factors to the actors (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Granovetter, 1983; Scott, 2000). Multiple theories exist which attempt to explain the nature of these ties, as well as their contribution to the availability of resources to the actors within a given context.

Social support is widely understood to be the exchange of resources between individuals – in which the resources are viewed as being intended for the enhancement of the well-being of the recipients (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984; Williams, Barclay, & Schmied, 2004). Social support theory is viewed as comprising of three perspectives: stress and coping; social constructionism; and the nature of the relationship (Lakey & Cohen, 2000). Both the availability of social support, as well as the belief in the availability of this support, have been shown to reduce the effects of stressful situations (Lakey & Cohen, 2000; Williams et al., 2004). Social situations may also be perceived as less threatening when the individual anticipates that they will be able to receive social support (Lakey & Cohen, 2000; Malecki & Demaray, 2004). However, assumptions cannot be made regarding the subjective experience of this support. Therefore, social support theory incorporates elements of constructivism within its conceptualisation (Lakey & Cohen, 2000; Williams et al.,

2004). This will also have an effect on how an individual views their ability to both give, and receive support, as well as the effectiveness of existing social support resources (Lakey & Cohen, 2000). Within this perspective, the measurement of social support is inextricable from the subjective perception of the support (Williams et al., 2004). The third perspective present in social support theory posits that support cannot be understood separately from the nature of the relationships which allow for the provision of social support (Lakey & Cohen, 2000; Williams et al., 2004). However, these social ties may also have a negative effect on social support – through the input of criticism, negativity and disapproval (Lakey & Cohen, 2000).

Social comparison occurs when individuals compare themselves with other individuals within the same social context in order to gain an impression of their perceived worth (Festinger, 1954; Mueller, Pearson, Muller, Frank, & Turner, 2010). Social comparison theory posits that individuals will be more likely to behave according to the norms modelled by those with whom they compare themselves (Festinger, 1954; Mueller et al., 2010). This theory views the need for accurate self-assessment as the driver behind social comparison (Festinger, 1954) – which implies that group behaviours may be motivated by an attempt to improve the levels of similarity between group members, and thus improve individual standing within the group. Therefore, this theory may allow for explanations of bystander behaviour in bullying situations – as bystanders may be more likely to compare themselves with the individual with perceived higher status (Malecki & Demaray, 2004).

Social identity theory developed as an attempt to explain the psychological basis of discrimination between groups (Haslam, 2004). Social identity theory states that the self-concept of an individual develops according to the association with social groups (Haslam, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity is defined as

being the part of a person's sense of self, or self-concept, that is formed through association with internalised group membership (Haslam, 2004). Social groups to which an individual belongs are known as in-groups, whereas others are out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory claims that because of this process of identification, individuals will attempt to view in-groups positively, through favourable comparisons with outgroups (Jones et al., 2011). Differing groups are often demarcated by sets of attitudes and accepted behaviours of their members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This relates to the process of bullying, in that acceptance or rejection of bullying behaviours by a group of individuals will depend on the norms of that particular group (Jones et al., 2011). Additionally, it also will influence the level of support available to the victims of bullying, as members of the peer group may become uninvolved in an attempt to avoid identifying with less favoured classmates (Malecki & Demaray, 2004). Identification with the role of the bully may also prevent peers from disagreeing with the bullying behaviour (Malecki & Demaray, 2004). It has also been found that the level of identification with a group will influence the level of adherence to the group norms – even if these include bullying behaviours (Jones et al., 2011).

Social exchange theory attempts to explain the evolution of relationships over time, through the description of various rules of exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange theory posits that social behaviour results from engaging in exchange processes (Cook, Cheshire, Rice, & Nakagawa, 2013). Social exchange allows actors to maximise benefits, while attempting to minimise risks through a process of negotiation (Cook et al., 2013; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When the cost of a relationship out-weighs the rewards, the relationship is likely to be discontinued (Cook et al., 2013). Six types of resources have been identified in this

theory: love, status, information, money, goods, and services. These exchanges lead to the formation of mutual commitments, loyalty and trust between actors within a network (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Costs, or risks, are viewed as elements that have a negative influence on the individual, such as investing time, money, or effort into a relationship (Cook et al., 2013). Reciprocity is viewed as the most widely recognised rule of exchange, and consists of three parts: transactional reciprocity, reciprocity as a cultural expectation, and reciprocity as a moral norm (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Positive relationships are therefore relationships in which the benefits are greater than the costs of continuing the relationship (Cook et al., 2013). Social exchange theory also describes negotiated agreements, in which duties and obligations are explicitly outlined, and understood by the varies individuals (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

2.12 Conceptual framework

The chosen conceptual framework for this research project is social capital theory, in which social capital is defined as “a function of social structure producing advantage” (Granovetter, 1983, p.348). Social capital theory therefore relies on the tenet that individuals who are better connected, are better able to make exchanges, receive support, trust others, and therefore have better access to assets provided by social networks. Therefore, individuals with less social capital may be more likely to be bullied, or more likely to bully others, in search of developing greater social capital. As social connections and friendships have been mentioned as protective factors against bullying (Cluver et al., 2010; Paul & Cillessen, 2007; Zins et al., 2007), it can be assumed that differences in the strengths of these connections will have an effect on the level of protection offered by these relationships. The theory of social capital has been summarised as:

> People who do better are somehow better connected. Certain people or certain groups are connected to certain others, trusting certain others, obligated to support certain others, dependent on exchange with certain others. Holding a certain position in the structure of these exchanges can be an asset in its own (Burt, 2001, p.32).

Although multiple definitions of social capital theory exist, these largely agree that there are three elements of the theory: social networks, norms of reciprocity, and trust (Ferlander, 2007). Social networks are the structural elements of social capital, and their strength will determine the strength and quality of a relationship (Granovetter, 1983). An individual's behavioural traits will determine their participation in the network (. Norms of reciprocity and trust characterize values or attitudes on a cognitive level and refer to the exchange of social support). Trust, in terms of social capital, refers to having confidence in other people. This approach allows for the understanding of collective social capital, which may be used to benefit larger groups of people, as opposed to selected individuals. Social networks may be differentiated by the direction of their ties and their levels of formality, strength and diversity, creating multiple variations of connections, with overlapping features (Ferlander, 2007).

Therefore, as this study aims to examine the nature and quality of social ties prevalent in the Grade 4 cohort, and how these ties effect bullying, placing this research within the framework of social capital theory will ensure that the structural nature of social network ties is understood within the context of the school environment. Identifying the protective and risk factors inherent in these social ties will create the opportunity to understand the influence of strong and weak social

network ties on bullying within schools, and therefore, the effect of social capital on the phenomenon of bullying.

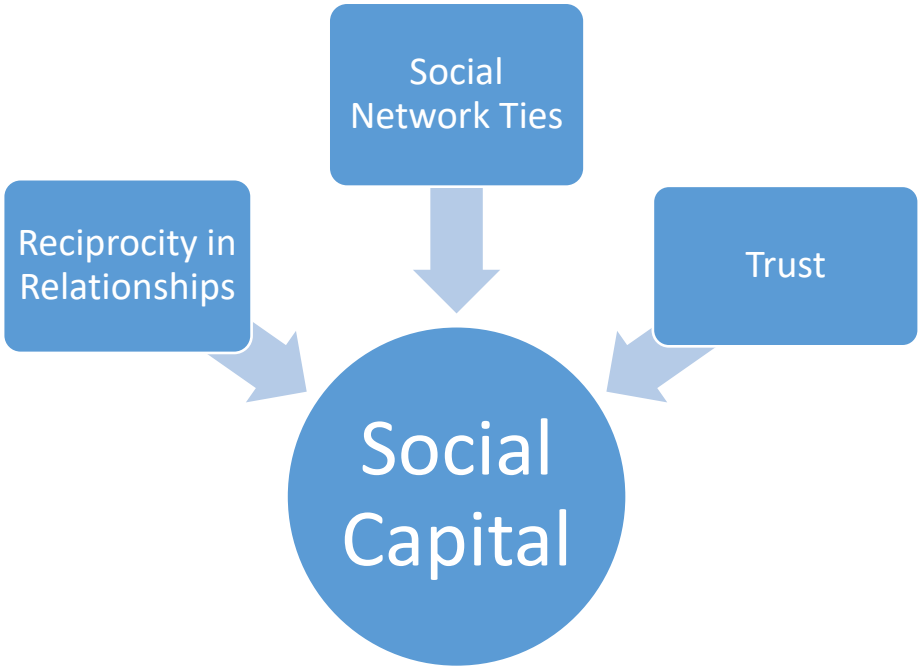

Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework used to underpin the study

2.13 Conclusion

Bullying is a phenomenon that has far reaching implications, both in South Africa (Section 2.2), and on a larger scale (Section 2.7) for bullies, victims, and bully-victims (Section 2.4). However, bullying, as a result of social interaction, cannot be viewed as separate from the social context in which it occurs – with risk factors found within the personal characteristics, as well as on various systemic levels (Section 2.6). This context, although dependent on social actors, is also reliant on the influence of experiences held outside of the school environment. Parents, communities, and personal characteristics act as risk or protective factors, and may serve to worsen, or lessen, the long-term effects of bullying. In order to develop an understanding of the various factors of bullying, it is necessary to view bullying as it occurs within context. Therefore, an examination of the social structures is necessary. In order to do this, the social lives of bully participants will need to be

viewed according to their network ties, and the strength of these ties (Section 2.10). In order to understand the influence of social network ties on bullying, through of the incorporation the framework of Social Capital Theory (Section 2.12), bullying may be seen as embedded in the formation of the social networks in which bullying-affected children are found. Because of this, it is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the types of social network ties held by those experiencing bullying.

Chapter 3 will delineate the research methodology employed in the research (Section 3.2). The use of the interpretivist paradigm (Section 3.2.1), as well as the selection of an exploratory, embedded case design will be discussed (Section 3.2.3). The process of non-probability purposive sampling will be addressed (Section 3.2.4), as well as the data collection through the use of semi-structured interviews (Section 3.2.6). Chapter 3 will also outline the data analysis, through the use of thematic content analysis (Section 3.3). Trustworthiness (Section 3.4) and ethical considerations (Section 3.5) will be identified and discussed in relation to the research.

Chapter 3:
Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology selected for the study. The research made use of an interpretivist epistemological paradigm, in which a qualitative approach was employed. A case study design was employed (discussed in Section 3.2.3) in which the following research question was addressed:

- How does the strength of social ties relate to the phenomenon of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners in a school environment?

Additionally, the research aimed to gain insight into the following secondary research questions:

- What types of social ties are prevalent in bullies' and victims' networks?;
- How do social ties act as protective factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies?; and
- How do social ties act as risk factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies?

The research questions were addressed through the examination of the data, which led to an in-depth look at the participants' experiences of bullying and victimisation in relation to their social networks. The study addressed questions about social networks within the schooling context, and discussed friendships according to the strength of the ties and frequency of interactions.

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the chapter. As indicated, the research made use of an interpretivist paradigm, in which the subjective experiences of the participants were explored. The methodological paradigm utilised in the study was

the qualitative approach, which allowed for rich descriptions of the data. A case study design was applied to the study. A small sample of four participants was selected through non-probability sampling. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. The data was analysed using thematic content analysis. The steps taken to ensure trustworthiness, as well as the ethical considerations of the researcher will be delineated in this chapter.

Table 3.1 Overview of the chapter

3.1	Introduction		
3.2	Research design and methodology	3.2.1 Interpretivism as the underpinning paradigm	
		3.2.2 Methodological paradigm	
		3.2.3 Research method	
		3.2.4 Selection of participants and sampling procedures	3.2.4.1 Non-probability purposive sampling
			3.2.4.2 Selection of participants
		3.2.5 Instrumentation	3.2.5.1 Semi-structured interviews
			3.2.5.2 Observations
		3.2.6 Data collection	3.2.6.1 Semi-structured interviews
			3.2.6.2 Research journal
3.3	Data analysis and interpretation		
3.4	Trustworthiness		
3.5	Ethical considerations	3.5.1 Informed consent	
		3.5.2 Right to withdraw	
		3.5.3 Confidentiality	
		3.5.4 Assessing risk of harm	
3.6	Conclusion		

3.2 Research design and methodology

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the research design and methodology employed in this study, which will be further discussed under Section 3.2. The diagram lists the epistemological paradigm, methodological paradigm, research method, instrumentation, and data collection selected for the research.

3.2.1 Interpretivism as the underpinning paradigm

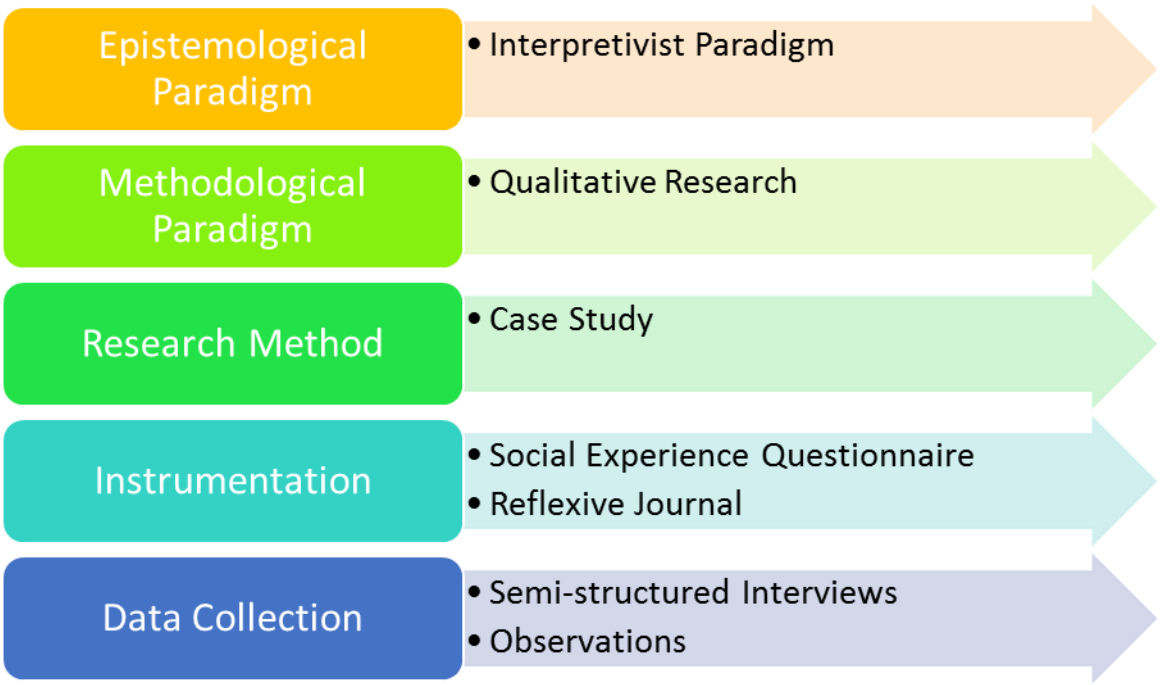

Figure 3.1 Research design and methodology

This study made use of an interpretivist paradigm. This may be understood through the core tenet of interpretivism, which is defined as “an epistemological position that is predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Grix, 2002, p.178). The interpretivist paradigm posits that reality may only be accessed through social constructions (Nieuwenhuis, 2012b; Ponterotto, 2005). Language is viewed as a shaper of thoughts and the medium through which we are able to understand the world (Sullivan, 2010), and this emphasises the importance of the

qualitative approach in studying the effects of social networks on bullying through the use of interviews. This allowed the researcher to gain insight into the participants' experiences of bullying, through their interactions, and their descriptions of the meanings attributed to the behaviours associated with the bullying phenomenon.

Interpretivism relies on the premise that knowledge of the world is gained from the interpretation of the direct experience of people, and therefore that it can never be understood objectively (Mack, 2010; Ponterotto, 2005). As this research project aimed to gain an understanding of the social experiences surrounding bullying, as well as the associated social structures, a constructive approach, which allowed for multiple interpretations of the same events, was appropriate for furthering knowledge on the effects and causes of bullying.

Interpretivist approaches to research rely on several assumptions. The first of these assumptions states that human life can only be understood from within (Nieuwenhuis, 2012b; Ponterotto, 2005). This view that, in order to gain an understanding of a social phenomenon, such as bullying, one must attempt to gain

information surrounding the way in which this phenomenon is socially constructed and maintained (Goldkuhl, 2012; Shaw, 2010). As this study aimed to explore the experiences of social interactions, various interpretations of bullying and victimisation were used to create a deeper understanding of the multiple effects of the phenomenon. This paradigm also makes the assumption that lived experience is a product of human interaction (Goldkuhl, 2012; Nieuwenhuis, 2012b). Therefore, through using interactions as a source of information, this was used to gain a thorough understanding of the perceptions of bullying, and how social constructions of these perceptions lead to the social environments that inhibit or discourage

bullying behaviours. It would not be possible to gain a representative view of these perceptions through positivist measures, as subjective human experience cannot be always be quantified (Goldkuhl, 2012; Mack, 2010). Examining the nature of bullying through an interpretivist lens allows for the construction of knowledge within the context of the chosen cohort, and does not make prescriptive assumptions which would limit the trustworthiness of the research. Interpretivism views the human mind as the source of meaning (Nieuwenhuis, 2012b; Ponterotto, 2005; Shaw, 2010). As this study aimed to gain in-depth information of the social network structures and their influences on bullying, it is essential that the social context within where the phenomena originates is understood in terms of the meanings created by the participants. As human behaviour is assumed as being affected by knowledge of the social world (Goldkuhl, 2012; Nieuwenhuis, 2012b), examining participants' experience of this world through interviews will provide insight into the behavioural choices that are made in response to social functioning. Therefore, the meaning given to the reality experienced by the participants is considered to be constructed by the participants (Ponterotto, 2005). Through the use of interviews, the research uncovered individual interpretations of knowledge of their social world, and how this influences bullying within a school environment.

The challenges associated with this epistemological paradigm largely revolve around the subjective nature of knowledge, which limits the generalizability of the results of the research, as these may be limited to the context in which they were produced. Two implications of the interpretivist paradigm have been identified: individuals interpret observations and construct theories in line with prevailing social values and needs, and this ambiguous nature of knowledge allows for the development of researcher bias (Whitley, 2002). Alternative explanations of the

examined phenomena should be included within the interpretivist paradigm (Whitley, 2002). It was required that the researcher remained conscious of the influence that one's own interpretations had on the research, as these could not be assumed to exist independently of one's own socially constructed knowledge. However, as the interpretivist approach disputes the ability of any research to be entirely without bias, this may not necessarily be viewed as a challenge, but rather as a strength of the approach, as it provides the framework for steps to be taken to ensure reflexivity, enhancing the overall trustworthiness of the research.

3.2.2 Methodological paradigm

The research utilised a qualitative approach, which is used in the exploration and understanding social processes, contexts, and behaviour (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Nieuwenhuis, 2012b; Shenton, 2004). This is particularly important for the study of bullying within primary schools, as this is assumed to be a product of social structures and interactions. Therefore these social structures and interactions will be investigated through the verbal accounts of the participants. As qualitative research is concerned with the use of language, it will allow for rich descriptions of multiple social experiences. Qualitative research "is concerned with non-numerical information, such as descriptions of behaviour or the content of people's responses to interview questions" (Whitley, 2002, pp.32–33). This approach assumes that knowledge of reality is gained through the exploration of the experiences of others (Sullivan, 2010). By examining the social experiences of the participants, the research hoped to gain a descriptive account of the factors contributing, or inhibiting, the practice of bullying behaviours. Qualitative research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings attributed to the experience of the examined phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Nieuwenhuis, 2012b). As it was expected that

the research participants would provide unique accounts of social experiences, the qualitative approach allowed for these experiences to be represented within the research.

This approach deviates from the traditional view of the researcher as an objective outsider, who is able to practice value-free research (Macleod, 2004). The advantage of this approach lies in its ability to extract in depth information about a given subject. This is especially relevant when examining the factors relating to bullying, which is an inherently social phenomenon, likely to be experienced differently by different people. Therefore, objective accounts of bullying and related behaviours are unlikely. As the nature of social capital positions it within interpretations of social reality, using qualitative methods to address the relationship between social functioning and bullying, allowed for multiple descriptions, representing different perspectives and voices. The use of qualitative methods to describe social networks creates an in-depth exploration of networking activities (Jack, 2005). These networking activities are expected to have an effect on the development of bullying behaviours, and will be incorporated into the descriptions of bullying and victimisation.

As the qualitative approach emphasizes the human influence in the construction of reality, it assumes that researcher objectivity is not possible within social research, and instead, requires researcher reflexivity. This acknowledges the effects of the researcher on the data collected, allowing for an enrichment of the research, as well as an understanding of the positioning of the researcher within the research (Macleod, 2004). Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the results of this research project are generalisable to the population, as this research project acknowledges the limitations of the qualitative approach. A further limitation of the

qualitative approach is the effect of the researcher on the research (Mack, 2010). The investigator effect (the influence of the researcher on the data) (Macleod, 2004) was reduced through the use of a reflective diary, which assisted in the development of transparency and trustworthiness throughout the research process (Shaw, 2010).

3.2.3 Research method

This study was conducted using a case study design. Following the interpretivist perspective, a case study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of bullying from the perspectives and perceptions of the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2012c; Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2003), a case study is appropriate when the context in which the phenomenon is found is considered to be an integral part of the phenomenon. This is especially relevant when the boundaries between the context and the phenomenon cannot be easily distinguished (Yin, 2003). This occurred through the descriptions of influence of the interactions and relations on the meanings attributed to the phenomenon under study (Nieuwenhuis, 2012c; Yin, 2009). The type of case study design was selected according to the aims and objectives of the research as discussed in Chapter 1. In order to attain these goals, an exploratory case study was conducted. An exploratory case study is used to increase understanding of the conditions necessary for a phenomenon to occur (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014), and allows for the description of the phenomenon from various perspectives (Yin, 2009). As the experiences and social networks of multiple participants were explored in the study, the research took the form of a single embedded case study design (Yin, 2003). Therefore, the research method within this study is referred to as an exploratory, embedded case study design.

By using an exploratory, embedded case study design, this research was able to reach a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the relationships between

the various factors of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Yin, 2009), which resulted in a description of the relationship between experiences of bullying and victimisation, and social network ties. The purpose of case study research is not to generalise the findings, but rather to increase understanding of a phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2012c). This provided an opportunity to research the reality of bullying as experienced by the participants, while preserving the meaning attributed to the phenomenon by the affected individuals (Yin, 2009).

The advantages of the case study research design lie in its ability to attain rich, in-depth descriptions of experiences, within individual constructions of the social world (Nieuwenhuis, 2012b; Yin, 2009). A case study research design does not make assumptions of the objectivity of either the participants, or researcher (Sullivan, 2010; Yin, 2009), and allows for potential contribution to the development of new theories (Shaw, 2010; Yin, 2009), which will be of value to future studies of bullying. Therefore, this allowed the research to gain information surrounding the lived experiences of those involved in bullying. This design also encourages reflexivity on the behalf of the researcher, and allowed for exploration of the influence the researcher may have had on the findings of the research.

Limitations of this design lie in the lack of potential for the generalisation of results (Fossey et al., 2002; Sullivan, 2010). This design is considered to be time consuming, due to the high levels of detail required by the research. The involvement of the researcher throughout the process creates the potential for researcher bias (Sullivan, 2010). Although this design posits that subjectivity cannot be avoided entirely, potential bias was addressed throughout the study (Sullivan, 2010; Yin, 2009) Due to the qualitative nature of the research, the soundness of the

research could not be determined using the concepts of reliability and validity (Noble & Smith, 2015), and instead took steps to ensure trustworthiness, as discussed in Section 3.4. Due to the nature of the researcher's involvement in the research process, objectivity could not assumed (Babbie, 2008; Ponterotto, 2005).

These limitations were addressed through the use of reflexivity. This was maintained through the systemic keeping of memos (Crowly, 2010). As this research design is based within the interpretivist paradigm, it does not aim for objectivity, but rather, for the use of methods which allow for the development of insight into bullying behaviours, and requires the use of bracketing on the behalf of the researcher, in order to suspend their own preconceptions and beliefs (Groenewald, 2004; Sullivan, 2010).

3.2.4 Selection of participants and sampling procedures

The following Sections will describe the sampling procedure used to select the participants for the study. Non-probability purposive sampling is discussed in Section 3.2.4.1, according to the suitability for the research. Section 3.2.4.2 will outline the process used in the non-probability purposive sampling, in which both the school and the participants were chosen.

3.2.4.1 Non-probability purposive sampling

Purposive sampling, as a form of non-probability sampling, is used when the participants for a research study are selected in order to fulfil a specific purpose (Maree & Pietersen, 2012). In this form of sampling, participants are selected according to their usefulness to the research (Babbie, 2008). This form of sampling was deemed appropriate for the study due to the requirement of participants who would be able to provide specific types of data (Babbie, 2008; Maree & Pietersen, 2012). The participants are therefore selected according to particular criteria, in

order to fulfil a purpose (Babbie, 2008; Maree & Pietersen, 2012; Nieuwenhuis, 2012b). Purposive sampling is regarded as appropriate for research studies that do not aim to generalise to a larger population (Maree & Pietersen, 2012). Therefore, as this study required participants with knowledge of specific experiences regarding bullying and victimisation, non-probability purposive sampling was selected as the sampling process, in which both the school and the participants were selected.

3.2.4.2 Selection of participants

Four Grade 4 learners were selected from one primary school which forms the pilot school for a larger research project. The selected school is an English medium, co-educational public school within an urban context. This school was selected based on their indication that bullying was a challenge faced by the school, as well as their need for intervention. Four of the learners were selected to participate in the interviews based on their identification as either bullies or victims by their educators. The learners were identified as bullies based on their repetitive aggression towards other children – both physical and verbal. The victims were selected according to their repetitive victimisation at the hands of other learners (not necessarily the other participants). The participants were not selected based on gender or race. Although gender was not part of the selection criteria, valuable insights regarding gender could be made from the inclusion of both male and female participants. From the Grade 4 group, two children were selected based on their identification as bullies, and two children were selected based on their identification as victims. These identifications were based on the educator's observations and interactions with the children. As this study aims for an in-depth exploration of the social structures surrounding bullying, it is important that the participants were selected according to criteria, which would provide the most pertinent data for the

research. The process of gaining informed consent from the parents and guardians influenced the selection of participants, as this excluded some children from the selection process. A conversation was held with the Grade 4 educators, who indicated that several of the proposed participants had not been given consent to participate in the research, and were therefore excluded. However, the participants identified as bullies were described as exhibiting physically and verbally bullying other learners in the school. The teachers described the two participants identified as victims as being both physically and verbally bullied, however, not necessarily by the other two participants.

Table 3.2 Description of participants

Participants	Description	Status
Participant A	Female	Victim
Participant B	Male	Victim
Participant C	Female	Bully
Participant D	Male	Bully

3.2.5 Instrumentation

The instrumentation used for data collection will be discussed in the following Sections. The research made use of a semi-structured interview schedule (Section 3.2.5.1), as well as a research journal (Section 3.2.5.2) to guide the collection of data.

3.2.5.1 Semi-structured interview schedule

Semi-structured interviews allowed for other questions to be asked during the course of the interview, to elicit additional information, and creates the opportunity for participants to give elaborate accounts of their experiences (Hugh-Jones, 2011). Through the use of open-ended questions, the participants were able to freely describe their experiences, using their own words (Kvale, 2008). This also allowed

the researcher to further explore responses, based on the information provided by the participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

The interview schedule (Appendix D) was based on the Social Experience Questionnaire – Self Report (SEQ-S) (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Crothers & Levinson, 2004). The Social Experience Questionnaire - Self Report (SEQ-S):

> Measures children's reports of relational victimization, overt victimisation, and receipt of prosocial acts. The SEQ-S measures the frequency with which peers attempt or threaten to harm their peer relationships, other children attempt or threaten to harm their physical well-being, and they are the targets of peers' caring acts (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996, p. 367).

The SEQ has been shown to have favourable reliability and validity when working with juvenile samples, and as an effective assessment tool in terms of its ease of use, as well as rapidity (Storch, Crisp, Roberti, Bagner, & Masia-Warner, 2005). The SEQ has been used successfully in multiple studies of school-based bullying, exploring differences in experiences across genders and age groups (Cullerton-Sen & Crick, 2005; Paquett & Underwood, 1999).

Each interview was approximately thirty minutes. Social networks were examined through the identification of strong and weak ties using qualitative methods to describe the nature and quality of social interactions of the participants. While the SEQ-S was used to obtain background information regarding the bullying experiences of the participants, the primary aim of the interviews was to explore the nature of the social ties. These social ties were discussed according to their inhibition as well as promotion of bullying behaviours. Therefore, both protective and risk factors were identified through the interview process. As the research focused

on learners from diverse backgrounds, with differing levels of literacy, it was necessary to collect responses in such a way that they formed accurate representations of the social interactions and dynamics at play.

The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder, and observations were recorded using handwritten notes. These were then transcribed for analysis. Both memos, as well as a reflexive journal, were used with the transcribed interviews, in order to facilitate the analysis, as well as the researcher's reflections throughout the process.

3.2.5.2 Observations

Observations are considered to be an important form of data collection (Foster, 1996), as they provide the researcher with additional information – gained within different settings (Mulhall, 2003; Nieuwenhuis, 2012c). Observations were used in addition to the interviews as a source of data. Within qualitative research, observations are described as the generation of information as it is presented to the researcher (Foster, 1996). This allows the research to include information regarding the context of the research, as well as the influence of the physical environment (Mulhall, 2003). This requires the researcher to record information received from the environment, which must then be interpreted (Foster, 1996). This should then be integrated with information gained through other sources, such as interviews, in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Foster, 1996; Mulhall, 2003).

3.2.5.3 Research journal

A research journal was used to maintain reflexivity (Appendix E), and provided an additional data source. A reflexive diary is defined as a diary "kept by the researcher throughout the research process" (Shaw, 2010, p. 182). This aided

the development and maintenance of transparency and trustworthiness throughout the research (Fossey et al., 2002; Shaw, 2010). This allowed the researcher to engage with the effects of her interaction with the research process. and to question the credibility of the research (Jootun, McGhee, & Marland, 2009; Shaw, 2010). Through this, the researcher was able to understand her role as inseparable from that of the participants' experience of the research (Jootun et al., 2009).

3.2.6 Data collection

Following the use of the single case study design, interviews were used to gather information regarding the nature and extent of bulling experienced by the participants. A research journal was kept for the duration of the research process, and formed an additional source of data.

3.2.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

The data was collected using one-on one interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, and made use of certain predetermined questions to guide the direction of the interview (Babbie, 2008). The interviews focussed on the experiences of bullying and victimisation held by the clients. Additionally, the interviews aimed to elicit information regarding the social networks in which the participants were situated. These questions included peer nominations, and were aimed at gaining information regarding peers with whom the participants do, and do not, enjoy spending time. The questions included items aimed towards gaining in-depth knowledge of the types of social ties present in these relationships. The interviews were conducted in November 2015. The interviews took place during school hours, in a designated room at the school as arranged with the school. The interviews were approximately thirty minutes in length, and were recorded by the researcher. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher flexibility

to probe into areas relating to the research as they arose (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Hugh-Jones, 2011). The use of open-ended questions also allowed for the probing and clarification of ambiguous and otherwise unclear responses. This was beneficial, regarding the ages and potential language barriers of the participants.

3.2.6.2 Research journal

The reflexive journal was initially used to record observations in and around the school – in an effort to gain understanding of the context in which the research took place. Initial impressions and assumptions regarding to the school setting, as well as the participants, were written down by hand. This process was continued throughout the data collection, analysis, and write up, and served as a tool by which the researcher was able. The researcher was also careful to clarify personal thoughts and feelings regarding the participants and their interactions with the researcher.

3.2.6.3 Observations

Observations were taken during the data collection process, and were compiled using hand-written notes. The researcher observed the participants during break time on the day of the interviews, as well as outside of their classrooms before class. Observed interactions between the participants and their peers were noted, as were the non-verbal responses during the interviews. This allowed the researcher to develop greater insight into the social functioning of the participants.

3.3 Data analysis and interpretation

In order to establish the predominant themes of the qualitative information, a thematic content analysis was used. This method identified and analysed reoccurring patterns within the data, whilst allowing for a rich description of the information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis occurs through condensation of data, which allows for the content to be grouped into themes (Henning, Van

Rensburg, & Smit, 2004). This was done through repeated examination of the data, which aimed to lead to the breaking down of the data into the themes, and the identification of additional sub-themes (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Thematic content analysis provided an in-depth understanding of prevalent trends within the qualitative data gained from the interviews. The themes were identified and utilised as guided by the research questions (Neuendorf, 2002). These themes incorporated aspects of both bullying, as well as the quality and strength of the social network ties experienced by the participants. Two approaches can be identified within thematic analysis: a deductive and inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), both of which were used during the data analysis, specifically, within the identification of the themes. The data was then analysed according to a systematic process of identifying the themes within the responses (Neuendorf, 2002) and finding links between the themes. This was done according to the guidelines as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), which were followed recursively, according to the requirements of the research process. These are listed as: (1) familiarising oneself with the data, (2) generating initial codes**,** (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes (6) writing the report.

The recorded interviews were transcribed to assist with the data analysis. This allowed for additional interpretation and manipulation of the data, and created the opportunity for the researcher to immerse herself in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and aided familiarisation. This first step required the researcher to read through the transcribed interviews, while identifying units of meaning within the transcription. This was done with the inclusion of as much contextual information as possible (Henning et al., 2004). The identified units of meaning were labelled, in the form of open codes. Open coding is the process of labelling and defining concepts,

and placing them within categories according to their properties (Gordon-Finlayson, 2010).Open coding was used to label units of data, and was followed by the use of focused coding – the process of selecting the most relevant open codes and applying them to larger chunks of data (Gordon-Finlayson, 2010). Coding refers to the assignment of labels or key words to text segments, to aid later identification (Kvale, 2008). The initial codes were generated both inductively and deductively. Deductive coding was used to garner information regarding the social network and social ties of the participants, as well as specific experiences of bullying and victimisation – as guided by the research questions. Inductive coding was used to generate codes as guided by the data. In this case, related codes were grouped to form categories, which were then named inductively – as guided by the data (Henning et al., 2004), through the process of axial coding. Step three of the process involved the initial search for themes, using axial coding. Axial coding is described as the process where focused codes are related to each other as elements of conceptual categories (Gordon-Finlayson, 2010). These categories were used to identify the themes. Step four of the analysis included the reviewing of the themes. This phase refocused the analysis at a broader level, as relevant codes were collated within these categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The subthemes were identified inductively, after an in-depth examination of the transcribed data (Neuendorf, 2002). The themes were tabulated with the relevant parts of the data, which allowed for the grouping of relevant thematic representations. Through this, the researcher was able to refine the sub-themes, and identify emerging links between the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Step five of the data analysis involved the naming of the themes. The themes were named either deductively, or

inductively, according to the decisions made during the coding process. The themes named deductively were done so according to the research questions.

The reflexive journal aided the process of data analysis. This was achieved through the incorporation of excerpts from the journal alongside the interpretation of the themes. This ensured that the researcher was able to accurately identify her influence on the research process. The researcher was also able to record potential biases she may have had when working through the raw data, impacted by her personal reactions to the content.

Thematic content analysis is considered to be time consuming, and due to the nature of the information collected, may lead to multiple interpretations and understandings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Crowly, 2010). Additionally, the need for the researcher to immerse oneself in the data requires that much of the work, such as transcription, be completed, or checked, by the researcher, further impacting time constraints (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is also unlikely that multiple individuals would reproduce the same themes or subthemes, or use the same codes, when working independently, making this type of data analysis challenging to reproduce (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Henning et al., 2004). This creates the need for steps to be taken that will assist in establishing credibility within the research (Fossey et al., 2002).

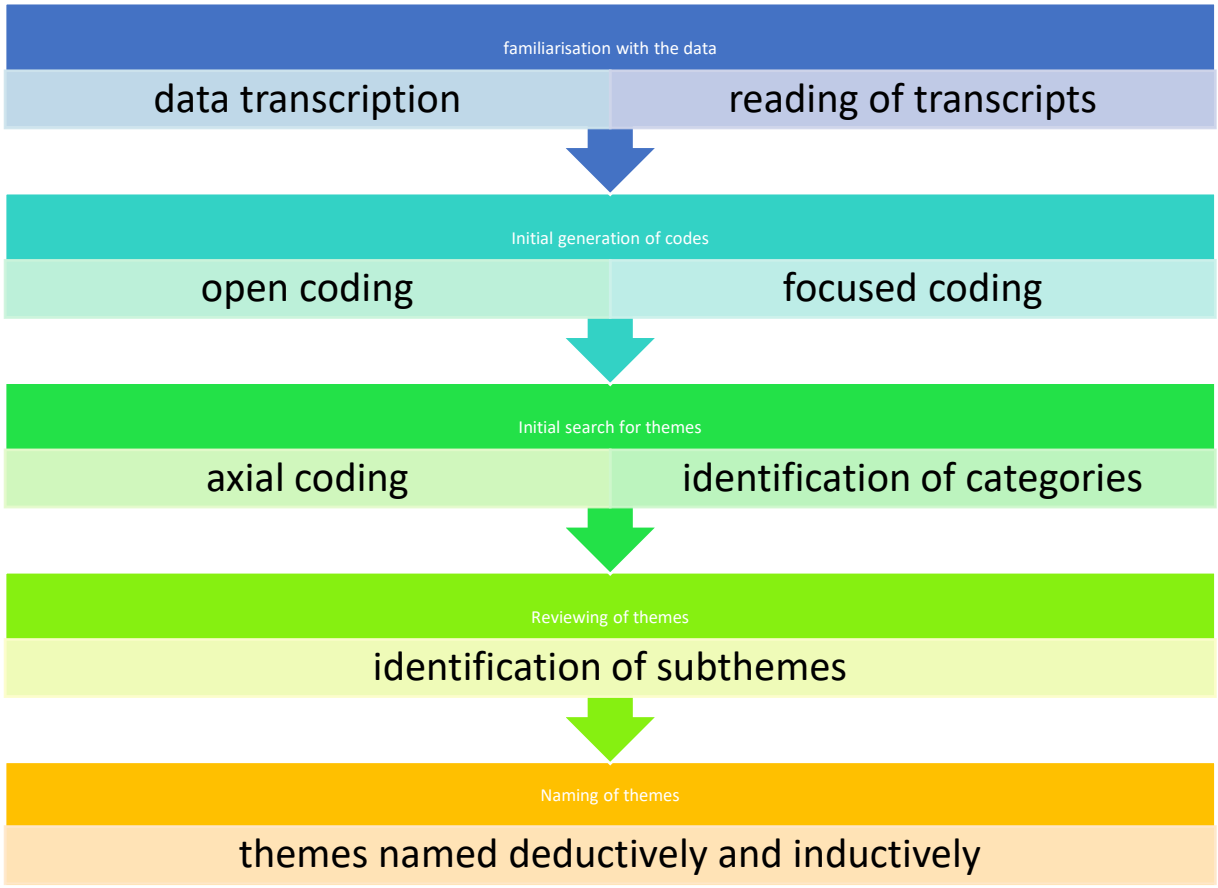

Figure 3.2 Thematic content analysis

3.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers the ability of the research to persuade the readers of the value of the findings of the research (Nieuwenhuis, 2012a; Shaw, 2010). The researcher made use of the outlined strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the research throughout the research process, including during the stage of data analysis (Fossey et al., 2002; Patton, 1990).

Reflexivity is the continuous examination and explanation of the researchers influence on a research project (Dowling, 2008). In order to maintain reflexivity the research process itself became a focus of inquiry, which analysed the interviewer's role in knowledge production (Sullivan, 2010). A reflexive journal was used to document the researcher's experiences, and possible influence on the responses of the research participants. This journal aimed to provide greater insight into the

subjective nature of the research, while providing information on the impact of the researcher on the credibility of the research (Shaw, 2010).

Credibility is the methodological procedures used to establish a high level of congruence between the participants' expressions and the researchers interpretations of these expressions (Jensen, 2008a). Triangulation was used as a strategy to improve credibility (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000), through the incorporation of various data sources, such as interviews, observations, reflexive journal and memos collected during data collection. These assisted in the avoidance of researcher bias in the interpretation and analysis of the data (Shaw, 2010). The researcher made use of observations collected through the data collection process in order to augment the information gained through the interviews. This was especially useful regarding the peer network relations described by the participants as they related to the social network formation. The reflexive journal provided additional information regarding the influence of the researcher on the research process.

Dependability is the recognition of the variability of the context in which the research takes place, and the efforts of the researcher to account for these changes, and the description of how these changes impacted on the research process (Jensen, 2008b). In order to attain an acceptable level of dependability, the researcher documented the research process in the form of field notes, memos, and observations. Transparency is viewed as an important indicator of the trustworthiness of the quality of research (Shaw, 2010) and was maintained at all points of the research, with special attention paid to the decisions made during the research process. This allowed for the provision of an audit trail, which demonstrated how the findings of the research were obtained throughout the

interpretation and analysis of the data (Shaw, 2010), and ensured that the interpretations were based within the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2012a).

3.5 Ethical considerations

Research ethics are understood to refer to all choices made in line with moral deliberation, responsibility, and accountability on the part of the researcher throughout the research process (Duncan, Drew, Hodgson, & Sawyer, 2009; King, 2012). Special attention was paid to the following ethical principles:

3.5.1 Informed consent

This principle requires that participants only take part in research in which they are fully aware of their participation, as well as the nature of the research (King, 2012). However, as children may have more difficulty anticipating the effects of participating in research (Duncan et al., 2009), additional care was taken to ensure the participants' understanding before embarking on the interviews (Spratling, Coke, & Minick, 2012). As the participants of the study were minors, they were asked to give informed assent (Appendix C) before participating in the research, and signed consent (Appendix B) was needed from their parents or legal guardians.

3.5.2 Right to withdraw

Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without being expected to justify or explain their decision, and without facing any consequences for the withdrawal (King, 2012). They also had the right to request that their data be withdrawn from the study (Duncan et al., 2009; King, 2012). The process for withdrawal was explained using age appropriate language, to assist in the participants' understanding of the voluntary nature of inclusion in the research project (Spratling et al., 2012), as the age of the participant's may have impacted on

their ability to make assertive decisions regarding their continued participation (Duncan et al., 2009).

3.5.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the disclosure of personal information (King, 2012). Although parental consent was necessary for participation, the limits of confidentiality excluded the parents from receiving information regarding their children's responses (Duncan et al., 2009). Participants' identifying information was anonymised, in order to prevent the identification of the participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the participants and their peers. Only information relevant to the study was recorded. Exceptional circumstances, such as reports of serious and imminent danger, may require a breach of participant confidentiality (Duncan et al., 2009). Participants, as well as their parents and guardians, were informed of this before the onset of the interviews. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any point during the research.

3.5.4 Assessing risk of harm

The researcher had the responsibility to assess the participants' risk of harm from participating in the research (Duncan et al., 2009; King, 2012). The researcher aimed to prevent psychological distress or harm from occurring, and would, if necessary, assist the participants with referrals to the appropriate professionals if they required debriefing during, or after, the research (Duncan et al., 2009).

3.6 Conclusion

The interpretivist paradigm was discussed as the epistemological choice used for this research study. This chapter elaborated on the reasoning for the selection of the qualitative approach to improve understanding of the bullying phenomenon within context. This was followed by a discussion on the use of an

exploratory, embedded case study design. This chapter delineated the selection of participants through the use of non-probability purposive sampling, according to specific criteria. An explanation of the data collection through the use of semi-structured, one-on one interviews was provided. Importance was placed on understanding the role of the researcher on the study, and therefore a research journal was used to maintain reflexivity. This provided an additional data source to strengthen inferences drawn from the analysis of the interview data.

A thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data, following the transcription of the interviews. Reflexivity, credibility, and dependability formed the basis of trustworthiness throughout the study. Triangulation was used to ensure credibility, through the incorporation of multiple sources of data, and to avoid unintentional researcher bias. Dependability was attained through the careful documentation of the research process, and the provision of an audit trail. Transparency was maintained at all points of the research, with special attention paid to the decisions made during the research process.

The following chapter will examine the findings of the research, including a discussion of the emerging themes according to the thematic content analysis (Section 4.2). The global themes will be discussed according to their content (Sections 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5). Relevant quotations from the data are included, as well as a discussion of the individual themes, and their relation to literature.

Chapter 4:
Presentation of Findings

4.1 Chapter overview

A thematic analysis was conducted according to the steps outlined in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3). Thematic content analysis was used to establish the predominant themes within the data set. Relevant quotations were included in the presentation of the findings. In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants and their peers, pseudonyms have been used throughout the chapter. As discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 the main research question identified for this study is (Neuendorf, 2002):

Primary research question:

- How does the strength of social ties relate to the phenomenon of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners in a school environment?

Three secondary questions have been posed to address the main research question:

Secondary research questions:

- What types of social ties are prevalent in bullies' and victims' networks?;
- How do social ties act as protective factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies?; and
- How do social ties act as risk factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies?

The data was analysed according to a systematic process of identifying the themes within the responses (Neuendorf, 2002) and finding links between the themes. The following guidelines (Braun & Clarke, 2006) were followed: (1) familiarising oneself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the report. The researcher first read through the transcribed interviews, while identifying units of meaning within

the transcription. The identified units of meaning were labelled, in the form of open codes. Open coding was used to label units of data, and was followed by focused coding. Axial coding was used to inductively name the grouped codes and form categories (Appendix F). The themes were identified through the use of these categories (Appendix G). Links between themes were identified through the grouping of thematic representations.

The findings of the research will be discussed in this chapter according to the relevant themes, as determined by the analysis. This chapter contains a discussion of the prevalent themes and subthemes. This chapter will also serve to discuss the process used to answer the research questions described in Chapter 1.

Section 4.2 will discuss the emerging themes, and outline the criteria used for the inclusion and exclusion of quotes used during the process of coding. The global theme of *types of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners* will be explored in Section 4.3. *Social ties and networks* will be discussed as a global theme in Section 4.4, and *risk and protective factors* in Section 4.5. Section 4.5.1 will discuss the risk factors linked to teacher supervision and popularity, while Section 4.5.2 describe the role parents, teachers, and friends as protective factors. This chapter will be concluded in Section 4.6.

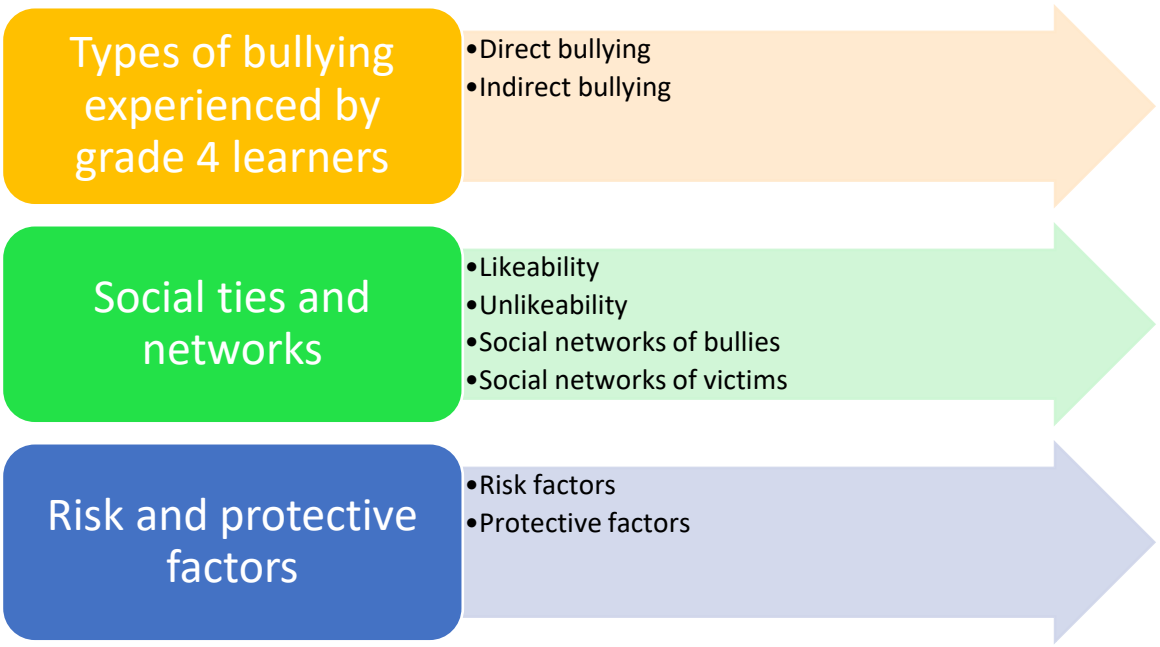

Figure 4.1 Emerging themes

4.2 Emerging Themes

The data set was formed using the transcribed interviews held with four Grade 4 learners in November of 2015. Additional data was gained through the incorporation of observations during the data collection period. The following table outlines the criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of quotes coded during the analysis process:

Table 4.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1. **Any referral to interactions that related to bullying**	1. Referral to interactions and incidences not related to the school context.
2. **Any referral to social networks within the school context**	2. Discussion of risk factors not related to bullying or being unpopular unpopularity
3. **Discussion of supportive relationships relating to the school context**	3. Discussion of protective/supportive factors not linked to bullying/likeability
4. **Discussion of risk factors linked to bullying**	

A number of codes, such as teasing, friendship, and unpopularity, were generated following the transcription and initial examination of the data. A large number of codes were collapsed to form the following global themes:

- *Types of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners*. This theme consists of data collected relating to the direct and indirect bullying experienced and perpetrated by the participants. This will be discussed in Section 4.3.
- *Social ties and networks*. Friendships and frequency of interactions described by the participants were used to identify the strength of the social ties, as indicated in Section 4.4.
- *Risk and protective factors*. These were identified according to their role in either preventing or increasing bullying and victimisation – both observed and experienced by the participants (Section 4.5).

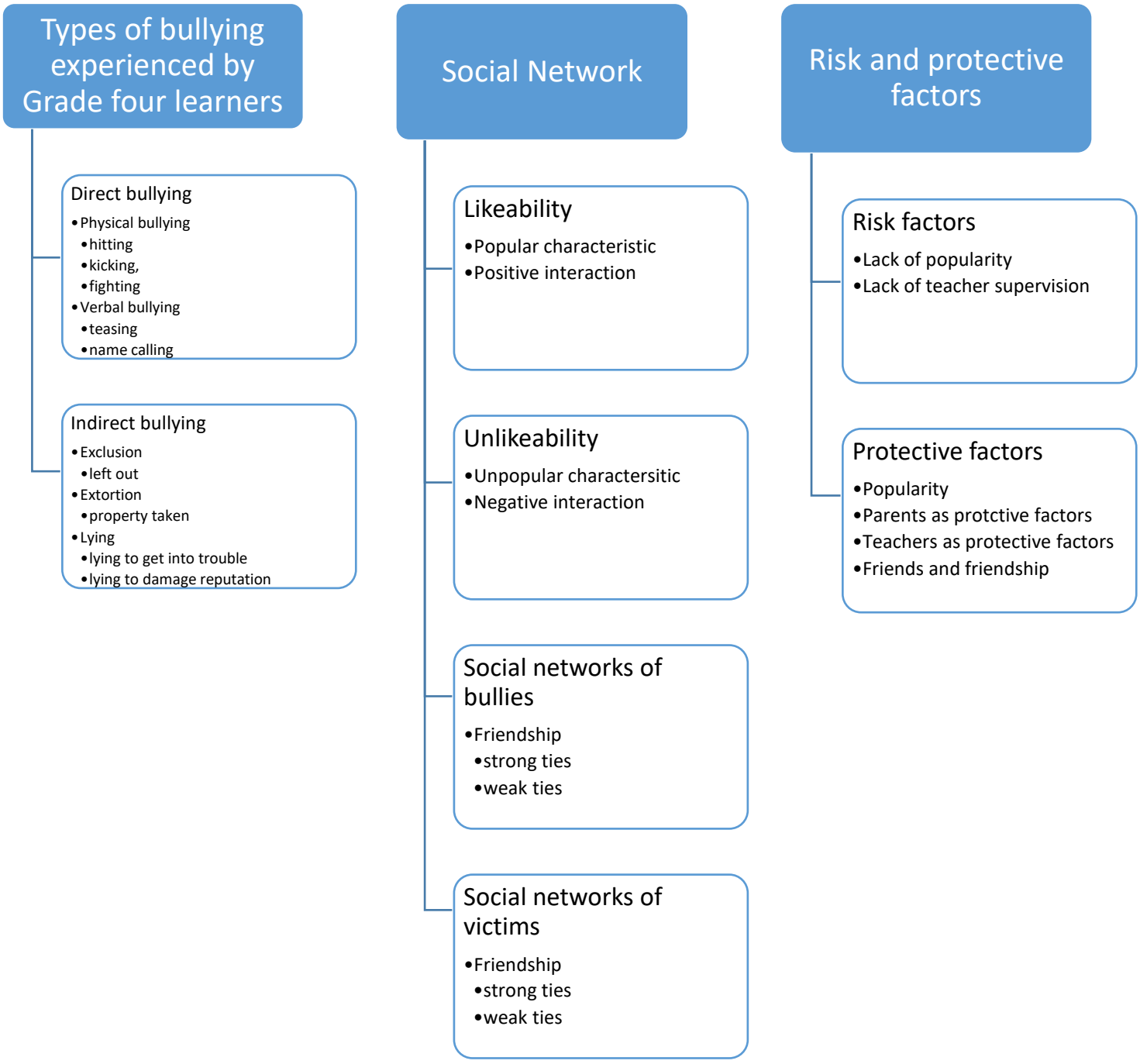

Figure 4.2 Thematic content analysis for the study

4.3 Global theme 1: Types of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners

The criteria used to identify bullying, as described in Chapter 2, was referred to in the identification of relevant quotations:

1) A wilful intent to harm or cause distress to another individual;

2) A power imbalance between the bully and the victim; and

3) The repetition of the bullying behaviour over time (Horton, 2011; Olweus, 2013; Summers, 2008).

4.3.1 Direct bullying

The types of bullying reported by the participants led to the sub-theme of direct bullying, especially with regards to physical bullying. All four participants indicated that they had either been involved in the direct bullying of another child, been directly bullied by another child, or had witnessed the direct bullying of another child.

Physical bullying was the most commonly described form of direct bullying. Participants A and B, who were identified as victims, described incidences of being hit by other learners. This is illustrated by the following example, where Participant A discussed her experience of physical bullying:

> Because sometimes Thabo[2] will hit me sore! Like here (shows bruise on arm) (Participant A, interview, 13 November 2015).

Participant C, who was identified as a bully in the sample, discussed his role as part of a previously existing “bullying group”:

> I forced to beat up a person, but when I beat him up, I was not hurting him. When they said I must fist him I just slapped him (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2013).

[2] Pseudonyms have been used to protect the confidentiality of the participants

The same participant later described his retaliation when annoyed by his classmates, as shown in the following quote:

> I'll get angry. If they don't want to bring it back I'll slap them (Participant C, interview, 13 November, 2015).

I am beginning to understand that the bullies don't seem to view their own behaviour as bullying. This has been quite difficult to accept, and I am left wondering if this is not an area where intervention should be focused
- Reflexive Journal 17 January 2016

In reference to verbal bullying, participants discussed incidences of teasing, name calling, and verbal threats. Participant B said that he had been teased and called names by several of his classmates, and had been sworn at by one boy in particular:

> He was swearing to me. Don't matter what I do (Participant B, interview, 2015).

Verbal threats referred to both threats of physical violence, as well as threats to lie to teachers about bad behaviour. Participant D, identified as a bully within the study, said that she often referred to people as:

> Idiots, stupid idiots (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015).

Other incidences of verbal bullying included being called 'gay' for playing with girls, being sworn at by other learners, and shouting at other learners. Participants C and D described being teased about their appearance, which at the time of the interviews, appeared to cause them distress:

> He says I have big ears and that I don't even know (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015)

> She tease my lips (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015)

I can't help but feel that it is a pity that the words on a page cannot convey the tone, and sadness, portrayed during the interviews.
- Reflexive Journal 28 March 2016

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.1), physical and verbal confrontations are both considered forms of direct bullying (Zins et al., 2007). Actions aimed at causing physical pain were described in the form of physical bullying (Boyes et al., 2014; Summers, 2008). The participants' descriptions of hitting and kicking indicated that these experiences were linked to feelings of distress on behalf of the victims. Teasing and name calling described in the interviews related to forms of verbal bullying (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). According to the literature explored in Chapter 2, male children are more likely to experience physical bullying, whereas female learners report more verbal bullying (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010). However, in the current study, there did not appear to be a discrepancy in types of bullying experienced according to the sex of the participants. Both the male and female bullies reported engaging in verbal aggression, while the male and female victims both reported verbal and physical victimization. However, the male participant identified as a bully described engaging in more physical altercations with peers.

4.3.2 Indirect bullying

Indirect bullying was included as a subtheme to allow for the differentiation of types of bullying experienced by the participants. Exclusion was the most commonly referred to type of indirect bullying by the participants, however, none of the participants discussed it as personal experience, but rather as observations of experiences of others, or as the perpetrators of the exclusion. Participant D rationalized the ignoring of another child due to the following:

> Because she likes asking you something and annoying you and sometimes she like she gets angry (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015).

The same participant described an example of an act of exclusion as:

> If she wants to skip, they will tell her to go skipping somewhere else. Then if you tell her no she gets angry… because she gets stuck up and she don't understand herself why she did it (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015).

Participant C described ignoring others when they were irritating, or annoying. However, this was described as occurring during fights between friends:

> They always get over it and stop talking about it, but in that time they stop being friends (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

When asked about the reason a classmate was ignored, and bullied, Participant D described his distress at not knowing how to help, and his role in the exclusion of the child:

> I don't know. Some people hate Bonolo[1]. I don't like it. I feel ashamed. And I feel like I'm ashamed of myself. Instead of helping another child… It's something she's saying. She's always angry. If they just staring at the wall and day dreaming she say can you please rate your work and she just shout and shout and I feel like I'm ashamed (Participant D, interview, 13 November, 2015).

The account of feeling ashamed by one of the participants has reverberated within me. This is where change happens – where children are seen as people, with feelings, and not as targets for aggression. The complexity of emotions related to bullying – even in children as young as these – strengthens the argument that bullying cannot be viewed as part of normal childhood experience, that it must be seen as an impediment to the enjoyment of childhood.

- Reflexive Journal 27 May 2016

Lying was discussed as a form of indirect bullying in the form of spreading rumours about others. A learner identified as a bully by Participants A and D was described as lying about children being “in love” with other children:

> He said that he loves somebody, ya, and then that got spread around all the Grade 4s (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015)

This experience was also described as distressing by Participant C:

> He says you love Neo[1] but she doesn’t love you (Participant C, interview, 2015)

Several of the participants described frustration at being lied about to teachers, as in the case of Participant B:

> I bumped her by mistake and she was telling lies that I was hitting her (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015).

This was shown in the interview with Participant C:

> She would say I’m tuning other people’s mothers. I didn’t and then her friend she was telling me she will tell ma’am, and then she started like threatening she’s gonna tell ma’am this thing and that (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

Participant C discussed a classmate being forced to lie about another by her friends, to avoid exclusion:

> They tune it, so they say “let’s lie about it”, and then they say “no”, and then they say “you never going to be in our team” (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

The participants discussed extortion and theft of property. Participant A stated that a classmate had taken her stationery, and they would then refuse to return it.

> In Afrikaans, Mpho[1] take my things. I say stop it and Mpho cheat me (Participant A, interview, 13 November 2015).

Participant C claimed that he would have lost his money had he not listened to his peers when told to hit another child:

> They gonna take my money, cos I was a guy that had a lot of pocket money. Cos my father used to spoil me. But I told them “don’t spoil me” (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

Additionally, Participant C (who had been identified as a bully), stated that he used food to prevent victimisation:

> Sometimes I have good, nice food, like today. And I say you bully me a lot I'm not going to give you. And then I give them a small piece. And then they say "I'm being nice to you" (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

This same participant described his reaction to having his stationary taken in class:

> When they take my things I tell them they gonna get that angry face. Cos nobody in my class get it. So that's how I do it. So they must not take my things… I'll get angry. If they don't want to bring it back, I'll slap them (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

The forms of indirect bullying described by the participants were in common with well-known forms of bullying with less visibility, which included social exclusion, spreading rumours, and teasing (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Yang & Salmivalli, 2013; Zins et al., 2007), and appeared to be in line with the definitions explored in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.2). The prevalence of indirect victimisation as experienced or perpetrated by the participants has been shown in previous studies (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

4.4 Global theme 2: Social ties and networks

The global theme of social ties and networks resulted from an examination of participant responses regarding their friendship groups, perceptions of popularity and unpopularity, and definitions of friendship. Previous research indicates that social connections and friendships function as protective factors against victimisation (Cluver et al., 2010; Paul & Cillessen, 2007; Wang et al., 2009; Zins et al., 2007). Within this theme, social ties were identified according to the strength of the connection. Weak ties were classified as those occurring between acquaintances, who may interact while involved in similar activities, but lack frequent direct interaction (Granovetter, 1983; Hawe et al., 2004). Strong ties were identified according to stronger friendships, and increased frequency of interaction (Easley &

Kleinberg, 2010; Granovetter, 1983). The social networks of the participants are illustrated through diagrams, which were generated after the interviews, based on the representations as understood by the researcher. In order to allow for the pariticpants and their peers to remain anonymous, numbers were used to identify the actors within the social networks. The participants identified as victims were labelled PV1 (participant victim one), and PV2 (participant victim two). The participants identified as bullies were labelled PB1 and PB2 respectively.

4.4.1 Likeability

The subtheme of Likeability was derived from the participant's responses detailing aspects about classmates and friends they regarded as favourable. Likeability is established through identifying which children are liked by other children (Sentse et al., 2014). Questions were asked of the participants regarding who they regarded as popular, as well as what made these individuals likeable. As the existence of a language barrier was acknowledged, it was important to establish the participants' understanding of the word "popular". One such definition, as provided by Participant C, that appeared to encompass the general understanding of the word was as follows:

> It means a special child, that other people think are quite cool (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

Children that were identified as popular by the participants were often done so because of positive interactions with others:

> Because when I'm bored she cheers me up (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> Cos they are friendly and people want to play with them (Participant A, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> Everybody in my class likes to play with me and we always have conversations (Participant C, interview, November 2015)

> *I can't help but wonder how the descriptions of popularity relate to the idea that bullies have wider networks of friends – is it that they are able to make their friends happy while they bully others, or that there is a disconnect between what is considered prosocial, and the behaviours that actually garner popularity?*
> *- Reflexive Journal 9 June 2016*

Children who displayed skill in particular areas were also described as popular.

> Because she likes dancing. She can dance (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> Because when we are bored and the whole class is like quiet, she just makes something up and makes the whole class laugh (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015).

The two male participants (Participants B and C) both claimed to be the popular children in their classes.

> We are the most funnest people in the class. So we get along with other children (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015)

Positive interactions – in which the participants found enjoyment, or mutual benefit, were described as reasons for friendship:

> He's a very good friend, and we always switch our lunch. Say I have a packet of chips and he has a muffin, then I will switch the packet of chips for the muffin (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015).
>
> They always accept me for who I am and when somebody sad they always there to say sorry (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> They funny. And when we play with them we play like games but funny games. They also help me with my work because when we at math's I sit next to them and they help me (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

The factors influencing friendships and popularity are linked to the definitions discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.7). The development of social networks, and strong ties, allows the provision of emotional support (Ferlander, 2007), and unlikeability may be linked to increased victimisation (Sentse et al., 2014).

Likeability, as it is linked to the development of social ties, may therefore influence availability of resources, both social and emotional, as these will affect the development of personal links (Jack, 2005).

4.4.2 Unlikeability

Unlikeability was examined through the identification of quotes relating to unpopular characteristics and negative interactions. Unpopular characteristics were examined through the responses that referred to elements and characteristics that were considered unfavourable by the participants. Unpopularity was understood as not being liked, or not having friends:

> I don't see him with anyone… I don't see him playing with friends (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015)

Children who were excluded or ignored by their peers were described as "annoying", or "irritating":

> Because he is irritating (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015)

Other behaviours, such as becoming angry, or getting others into trouble, were also given as reasons for unpopularity:

> She will ask you for stuff and keep on asking you until the teacher shouts at you (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015)

Classmates who were often in trouble, or who misbehaved, were regarded as less popular than other classmates:

> Because he does not work, he sleeps (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015)

Being alone at break was understood as a sign of unlikeability:

> She doesn't smile or laugh at anyone. She has these moods… She stays away (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015)

> She doesn't like people to be with her. I don't know why. When I say can I play with you she always say "no some people control me". I can't (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

Children who were identified as being bullies by the participants were also described as unpopular, or as likely to be alone at breaks:

> They're hitting each other and their friends get angry (Participant A, interview, 13 November 2015)

The two male participants also described themselves and their friends as being the least liked children in their class:

> I think it's me and my friends. Cos we don't want to play soccer with them (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015).
>
> Also me and Thabo[1], some of my friends. The other class don't like them (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

A classmate was viewed as unpopular due to his friendship with younger children:

> He's childish… he always play with Grade 1s. I don't even like that. But if I'm playing with a Grade 1 the Grade 1 starts crying. The big ones play rough and then the small ones start crying just like that, and they actually like playing with him (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

Insults about being gay, and negative views about things like crying, and not being able to handle rough play could be considered attitudes that would promote bullying – sensitivity, and deviation from masculine norms lead to ostracising. It's a difficult truth to acknowledge.
- Reflexive Journal 24 June 2016

Negative evaluations of peers who do not conform to accepted social norms of behaviour is common among children, and may be linked to adverse behaviour (Kowalski, 2007). Additionally, characteristics which reduce the potential for pro-social interactions will limit the opportunities for the formation of social ties, increasing exclusion (Cattell, 2001; Olweus, 2013; Sentse et al., 2014) which may form the basis for bullying. The reasoning provided for exclusion by the participants is consistent with previous research, and indicates that exclusion, and other forms

of indirect bullying, are likely linked to likeability. However, likeability, as a social construct, is subject to the socio-cultural norms of the context, and may therefore reflect the prejudices and discriminations present within that context.

4.4.3 Social networks of victims

The two participants identified as victims both appeared to have limited social networks, consisting of mainly close network ties. Participant A stated she only had three friends at school with whom she interacted on a daily basis, and another three that she would play with on occasion. When asked why she played with these individuals every day, Participant A stated:

> Because they live close to me and they on the bus with me (Participant A, interview, 13 November 2015).

Participant A was observed spending break time in the company of one other child – a female learner. The pair separated themselves from the larger group of Grade 4 children at the beginning of break, and spoke quietly to one another. They appeared to be unnoticed by the rest of the children. However, when Participant A was collected from her class by the researcher, several classmates jeered and laughed at her.

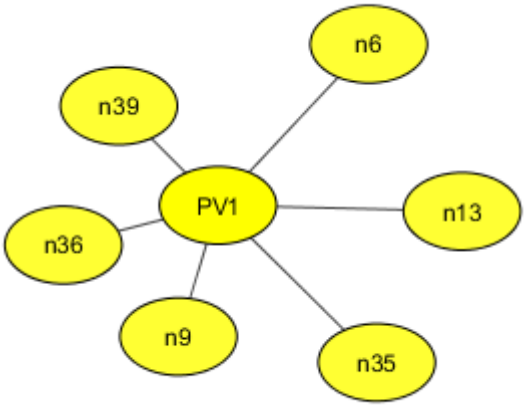

Figure 4.3 Social network of Participant A

‘

Participant B indicated that he only had three friends, with whom he interacted every day at school. He stated that he spent time with these children every day because:

> They always accept me for who I am, and when somebody sad, they always there to say sorry (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015).

During the break time observation, Participant B was observed walking with three individuals of the same age, who later joined a game of hand tennis. Participant B did not indicate that he had any social network links that could be described as acquaintances, or friends that he saw less often.

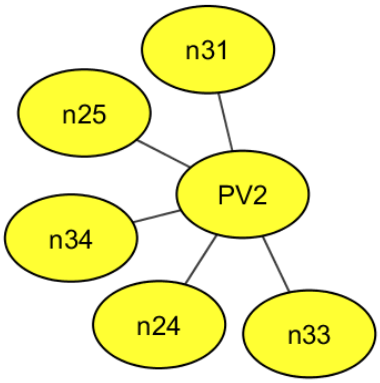

Figure 4.4 Social network of Participant B

The participants who were identified as victims (Participants A and B) appeared to have a dearth of weak ties in comparison to the participants identified as bullies (Participants C and D), as well as fewer strong ties in their social networks. This has been associated with a higher risk of victimization (Ahn et al., 2010; Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012; Sentse et al., 2014). Previous research has indicated that group membership contributes towards the protection of group members, with group sizes differing between bullies and victims (Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012; Mouttapa et al., 2004). However, the larger social networks of bullies may contribute towards bullying, due to the wider network structure (Peeters et al., 2009).

4.4.4 Social networks of bullies

The subtheme of social networks of bullies examines the social network ties held by the participants identified as bullies. Participants C and D both claimed to have a large number of friends with whom they spent time every day.

Participant C said that he was part of a group of seven children – which he referred to as a "skeem", indicating a closed group of friends. Four of the children in this group were interacted with on a daily basis, while others, although in the same group, were involved in less interaction:

> I hang out with them every day. They are the ones who are kind to me. I am kind to them also (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

This participant was observed during break time, where he was involved in a game of soccer with several other children. He appeared to become easily frustrated, and shouted at one of the other children in the group when the game did not go his way. This was met with disapproval from other members of the group, however, the game was not disrupted.

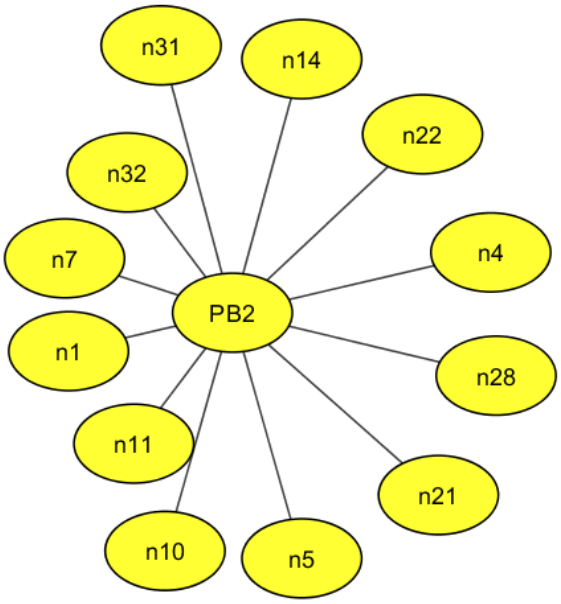

Figure 4.5 Social network of Participant C

Participant D stated that she was part of a group of thirteen children who interacted on a daily basis:

> Fun, we play together, no fighting at all… we play skipping, chase the boys, take their ball away (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015).

Participant D described an extended group of children, with whom she spent time with after school on Fridays, where they would drum together:

> We make beats, we make noise on the desks but sometimes the teacher comes and takes the dustbin and then when she turns her back they take the dustbin (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015).

The researcher observed this participant during break time, and in between classes, where she was surrounded by a large group of peers. Her interactions in these situations appeared to be characterised by loud, boisterous behaviour, which was echoed by her group of friends.

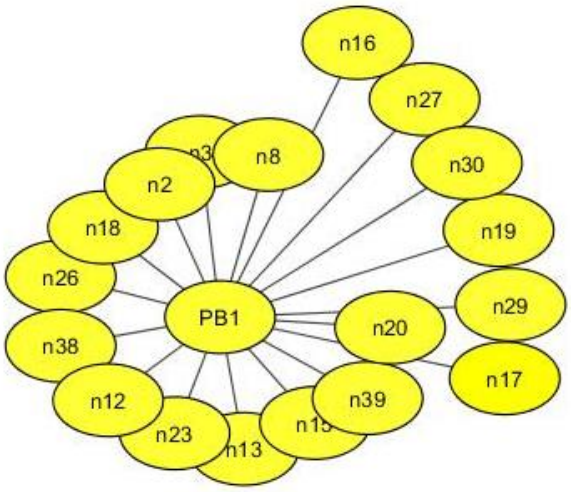

Figure 4.6 Social network of Participant D

The presence of both weak ties and strong ties within the social networks of the identified bullies indicated that they were likely to have greater access to resources and the development of social capital (Granovetter, 1983; Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012; Summers, 2008). The identification of friendship groups through commonalities such as shared interests and resources indicates the presence of

opportunities for development of social capital within these networks (Burt, 2000; Mobius & Rosenblat, 2004).

4.5 Global theme 3: Risk and protective factors

The global theme of risk and protective factors in relation to bullying emerged through the discussions regarding interactions between participants and their classmates. These were identified by the participants – both bullies and victims.

4.5.1 Risk factors

The risk factors for victimisation were identified through quotes describing the circumstances of the bullying behaviours outlined in the interviews. Previous research has shown that personal characteristics and socio-economic factors predispose certain individuals to increased levels of victimization (Bifulco et al., 2014; Rose & Espelage, 2012; Saarento et al., 2013). Unpopularity and lack of teacher supervision were identified as risk factors by the participants, and will be discussed in the following Sections.

4.5.1.1 Unpopularity

Several of the participants indicated that unpopularity, or being disliked by classmates, was a reason for being bullied, and was also seen as a justification for bullying behaviour. When asked why certain children were more likely to get hit than others, the following reason was provided:

> Because he irritates people and some people get angry (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015).

Additionally, behaviour that was viewed as undesirable was also provided as a reason for physical bullying:

> He acts stupid, but he's an intelligent guy. He makes himself like he can't fight back, but he can fight so people will carry on bullying him and bullying him (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

Verbal bullying, in the form of gay-related name calling, occurred when a male child did not conform to the expected gender norms:

> Janine[1] say people cry like a little child and they're gay… Because Sipho[1] (who is a male child) likes to play with girls (Participant A, interview, 13 November 2015)

Previous research indicates that submissive and passive behaviours may place children at greater risk of victimisation (Zins et al., 2007), and this was supported in the study, as illustrated by the above excerpts. Children with low perceived social competence, poor peer relations, internalizing and externalizing problems, and physical weakness may also find themselves experiencing increased victimisation (Paul & Cillessen, 2007). The participants' responses revealed that non-conformity and behaviour viewed as undesirable were both considered justifications for physical bullying, as well as verbal bullying.

4.5.1.2 Lack of teacher supervision

Many of the accounts of physical bullying appeared to be of times when the participants were not supervised by teachers. Examples of this were described as happening when children were outside of the classroom, or after school.

> I was standing outside, and he kicked me on the leg (Participant A, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> Because Thabo[1] will hit me sore… Last Thursday after school (Participant A, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> I was standing outside and he kicked me on my leg (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> And then he kicked me then at after school (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> One day he was just coming out by the corridor and they tripped him and then we hide ourselves and see what's going on (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

> *Teacher supervision is such an essential part of the school day. Hearing about instances of children being able to physically injure each other in a space where they should feel safe frustrates me.*
> *- Reflexive Journal 8 March 2016*

Prior research has indicated that bullying frequently happens in classrooms, the playground as well as in hallways and stairwells, when there is a lack of adult supervision (Greeff & Grobler, 2008). This was also found in the responses provided by the participants, and related specifically to physical bullying. Therefore, the results within this theme are supported by previous research.

4.5.2 Protective factors

Protective factors were identified according to the participants' accounts of interactions and elements that either assisted in the prevention or reduction of bullying behaviours. Protective factors were identified as characteristics and elements that reduced incidences and experiences of victimization and bullying (Cook et al., 2010). Factors such as involvement from parents, teachers, and friends were explored within this subtheme. While other protective factors such as interpersonal problem solving skills (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012) and family structure (Bifulco et al., 2014) are prominent in literature, these were not examined within the data.

4.5.2.1 Parents

All of the participants indicated that they could speak to their mothers when faced with difficulties related to bullying. Both participants A and B (who were identified as victims) indicated that their mothers had been involved in alerting the school to incidences of bullying, and attempting to prevent further victimisation:

> The last time my mother came and my mother was angry and she went to Mpho's mother (Participant A, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> I try to talk to my mother about things at school. And then she talks to the school (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015)

Parents were also discussed as having intervened with the school to stop bullying, as reported by one of the participants identified as a bully:

> No, I told my parents. They came to the principle. They phoned the department, then they came to talk to us and then I didn't want to do that anymore (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

Literature suggests that parental involvement is a necessary factor in the reduction of bullying and victimization. The involvement of parents in the prevention of bullying is a necessary step towards multi-level interventions aimed at supporting both bullies and victims (Timm & Eskell-Blokland, 2011), while a lack of parental support is linked to both increased bullying and victimisation (Bifulco et al., 2014). Although all the participants were involved in bullying, either as bullies, or victims, they all felt that parental involvement was an option to reduce victimisation. Therefore, the responses provided by the participants support previous research.

4.5.2.2 Teachers

Several of the participants spoke about the role teachers had in preventing and stopping bullying behaviours:

> My teacher talk with Thabo's mother (Participant A, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> When we see what's going on we go tell our teachers (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015)
>
> They talk to the people and tell them they must stop (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015)

Participant D, who was identified as a bully, described an incident where the teachers were involved disciplining the group following in a bullying incident in the class:

> he starts saying our class is mean to him and that our class is shouting at him and then the next day he comes he calls his parents his parents go to the office and then our class gets into trouble

One of the identified victims spoke of the influence a teacher had had on him with regards to fighting with other children:

> The teacher came and said that “big people talk and little children fight” (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015)

The participants’ perception of teachers as sources of support is indicative of the protective factors available through the school context. Teachers are viewed as playing an important role in the support of victims, and the implementation of successful interventions. These roles include supervising learners during breaks and in between classes, encouraging discussions and activities related to bullying, and involving learners, parents, and teachers (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). While this was not always the case, as illustrated by the participants’ responses, it does emphasise the need for teacher engagement in bullying prevention and intervention.

4.5.2.3 Friends

Friends were identified as helping to protect against bullying, and as being supportive. A definition of a friend provided by one of the participants was as follows:

> They always accept me for who I am, and when somebody sad they always there to say sorry (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015).

Friends were described as being a comfort when the participants had to deal with bullying, and have been helping to prevent fights and physical bullying from escalating.

> She would try and protect, because she’s very good friends (Participant D, interview, 13 November 2015)

> They help me and say that I should leave them alone and ignore them. That I shouldn’t listen to them (Participant B, interview, 13 November 2015).

> He stand in front of me and then I push them and then they come to the sides… he’s the one that helps me a lot. When I say he’s my friend, he’s must best friend. We

met just like two years ago, ya. He's the one that I like a lot (Participant C, interview, 13 November 2015).

(Participant C's) description of his best friend made me smile. I know what it is to have someone by your side, and the importance of that feeling when facing adversity. His quotes often seem to make me think about my own experiences.
- Reflexive Journal 29 June 2016

The importance placed on the support received through friendships by the participants allows for an understanding of the protective nature of these relationships. This supports findings of prior studies, which have shown that peer group membership increases the protection of group members against victimization by individuals outside of the group (Peeters et al., 2009). This is also viewed as a protective factor against later victimisation (Paul & Cillessen, 2007; Saarento et al., 2013). By belonging to a friendship group, the participants were afforded greater safety, as well as improved opportunities to receive support. This has been shown in other studies, where group affiliation allows the child to respond to bullying behaviours, while providing added protection against victimisation (Paul & Cillessen, 2007).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter described the three global themes identified in the data: Types of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners (Section 4.3), social ties and networks (Section 4.4), and risk and protective factors (Section 4.5). These themes were derived using multiple codes that were grouped according to their content and relevance to the study. The themes were described according to their content – which was composited of subthemes, linked to the codes assigned to the data.

According to the global theme of types of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners, both direct and indirect bullying were experienced by the participants. Both verbal and physical confrontations, in the form of direct bullying (Zins et al., 2007), were reported. Physical bullying – associated with the causing of physical pain (Boyes et al., 2014; Summers, 2008) was referred to on multiple occasions within the data, in the form hitting and kicking. Verbal bullying – such as teasing and name (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013), was also discussed as part of this theme. Both male and female participants experienced verbal and physical bullying, contrary to research stating that physical bullying was associated with male children, and verbal bullying with female children (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010). Incidences of social exclusion, lying, extortion, and theft, as described by the participants, were included under the description of indirect bullying. Indirect bullying was considered as any bullying behaviours considered covert, that did not cause direct physical pain to the victim (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Yang & Salmivalli, 2013; Zins et al., 2007). Indirect bullying – as perpetrated or experienced by the participants, is in line with the prevalence indicated in previous research (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

The global theme of social ties and networks explored the types of social ties present within the networks held by the participants. These were discussed according to the roles of either bullies or victims. The participants identified as bullies reported larger social networks, with a greater density of both strong and weak ties than the victims. This may be related to the provision of social and emotional support associated with social network development (Ferlander, 2007). The reduced popularity of the participants identified as victims is associated with increased experience of victimisation (Sentse et al., 2014). This, in turn, may reduce

opportunities to further develop social ties, affecting access to social and emotional resources (Jack, 2005). This is linked to a higher risk of victimisation (Ahn et al., 2010; Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012; Sentse et al., 2014).

Risk and protective factors formed the third global theme. These were identified according to their roles in either promoting or hindering bullying behaviours and victimisation. The subtheme of risk factors identified characteristics and situations that placed children at greater risk of victimisation. Behaviours identified as irritating, or annoying, were described as increasing risk of physical bullying or exclusion. This is comparative to literature which states that children with limited social competence, fewer friendships are at greater risk of victimisation (Paul & Cillessen, 2007). The frequency of physical bullying linked to unsupervised time at school as described by the participants is in line with research which links bullying with the absence of teacher supervision within classrooms, playgrounds and corridors (Greeff & Grobler, 2008).

Protective factors discussed by the participants included those which reduced incidences of bullying, or provided social and emotional support preventing or mitigating the effects bullying and victimisation. Teachers were viewed as playing a role in the support of victims, in conjunction with their parents. Research has indicated that teachers are an integral part of the implementation of successful interventions (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Parents – especially mothers – were viewed by the participants as a source of comfort and a resource in preventing bullying at school. Timm and Eskell-Blokland (2011) view the role of parents as an essential part of systemic interventions against bullying. The absence of this support may be associated with increased bullying behaviours within the school environment (Bifulco et al., 2014). Friendships with peers at school were described as factors

which prevented victimization, and provided support for those who had been victimised. Membership of a peer group is associated with decreased victimisation by members of the same peer group (Peeters et al., 2009), as well as protection against further victimisation (Paul & Cillessen, 2007; Saarento et al., 2013).

Chapter 5 will contain a discussion of the research design and method (Section 5.2). The research questions will be answered according to the results of the data analysis (Section 5.3), followed by a reflection of the conceptual framework (Section 5.4). The research methodology will be discussed according to the current study (Section 5.5), and the main conclusions of the research will be outlined (Section 5.6). Further recommendations regarding the findings of the study and further research will be discussed (Section 5.7).

Chapter 5:
Results and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of strong and weak social network ties on the phenomenon of bullying. The definition of bullying that was chosen for this study is: “a pattern of behaviour in which one individual is chosen as the target of repeated aggression by one or more others; the target person generally has less power than those who engage in aggression” (Baron et al., 2008, p.364). For the purpose of this research, social network was defined as the relationships between individuals, objects and organisations (McCarthy et al., 2007), within a flexible system through which actors are able to interact with one another (Potgieter et al., 2006). Social network ties describe the relationships between actors within a social network (Hawe et al., 2004). Weak ties occur between acquaintances, (Burt, 2000) and are largely necessary for the exchange of resources across networks (Anderson, 2008; Scott, 2000; Slotte-Kock & Coviello, 2010). Strong ties consist of frequent interaction, and the exchange of resources and information, within a relationship containing elements of trust, over an extended period of time (Granovetter, 1983; Jack, 2005; Shalizi & Thomas, 2011).

In Chapter 2 the theory and relevant literature pertaining to the study was discussed. Chapter 3 provided an overview of the chosen methodology for the research. In Chapter 4, the results of the research were described according to the data analysis. This chapter will detail the results and recommendations according to the study. The research design and method will be discussed in Section 5.2. The results of the data analysis will be examined according to the research questions in Section 5.3. The conceptual framework will be discussed in terms of the research in Section 5.4. Reflections on of the research methodology will be outlined in Section

5.5. The conclusion of the chapter (Section 5.6.) will provide the main conclusions drawn from the research. Section 5.7 will discuss recommendations of the research, as well as recommendations for further research. This chapter will be concluded in Section 5.8.

5.2 Summary of research design and methodology

An interpretivist paradigm was used for this research study (Section 3.4). This paradigm states that reality is understood through the social constructions of language (Nieuwenhuis, 2012c), and requires research strategies which allow for the understanding of subjective human experience (Mack, 2010; Nieuwenhuis, 2012c; Shaw, 2010). The research adopted a qualitative approach to better understand the context underlying the behavioural patterns of bullying (Nieuwenhuis, 2012c). The qualitative approach relies on the use of language to provide rich descriptions of social experiences (Crowly, 2010; Fossey et al., 2002; Henning et al., 2004).

The research was conducted using an exploratory, embedded case study design (Section 3.2.3). This aimed to investigate the meanings attributed to the social ties associated with bullying as described by the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2012c). Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the participants (Section 3.2.4). As the participants were selected according to specific criteria, random sampling was not possible, and therefore the results of the study could not be generalised to the population (K Maree & Pietersen, 2012). Four Grade 4 learners were chosen from one primary school, based on their identification as either bullies or victims by their teachers. Data collection occurred through the use of semi-structured, one-on one interviews, which consisted of certain predetermined questions to guide the direction of the interview, while allowing for other questions to be asked during the course of the interview (Babbie, 2008; Hugh-Jones, 2011)

(Section 3.2.5). The interviews were approximately thirty minutes long which is appropriate for the age of the participants. A research journal was used to maintain reflexivity, and provided an additional data source to strengthen inferences drawn from the analysis of the interview data (Section 3.2.6.2). The researcher recorded additional observations, such as their socialisation and play at break times, and interactions observed between classes. This allowed the researcher to triangulate the information gained through the interviews with an additional source. The interview schedule was based on the Social Experience Questionnaire – Self Report (SEQ-S) (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Crothers & Levinson, 2004) (Section 3.2.6.1). The interview questions allowed social networks to be examined through the identification of strong and weak ties using qualitative methods to describe the nature and quality of social interactions of the participants. The SEQ-S was used to obtain background information regarding the bullying experiences of the participants.

A thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data, following the transcription of the interviews (Section 3.3). Reoccurring codes within the data were identified analysed, and described (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The patterns were organised into themes and subthemes according to content (Henning et al., 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The research questions were used to guide the identification of the themes (Neuendorf, 2002).

Reflexivity, credibility, and dependability formed the basis of trustworthiness throughout the study (Section 3.4). The consistent examination and reflection of the researcher's influence on the research project is understood as reflexivity (Dowling, 2008). Reflexivity was maintained through the focus on the research process itself as a mode of inquiry (Sullivan, 2010). A reflexive journal was used gain

understanding of the subjectivity of the research (Shaw, 2010). Triangulation was used to ensure credibility, through the incorporation of multiple sources of data, and to avoid unintentional researcher bias (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Shaw, 2010) . Dependability was attained through the careful documentation of the research process, and the provision of an audit trail (Jensen, 2008b). Transparency was maintained at all points of the research, with special attention paid to the decisions made during the research process.

5.3 Results according to research questions

The research aimed to explore the following research question:

- How does the strength of social ties relate to the phenomenon of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners in a school environment?

The following secondary research questions were also addressed by the study:

- What types of social ties are prevalent in bullies' and victims' networks?;
- How do social ties act as protective factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies?; and
- How do social ties act as risk factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies?

5.3.1 Primary research question

5.3.1.1 "How does the strength of social ties relate to the phenomenon of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners in a school environment?"

The theme of *types of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners* utilized responses regarding the forms of bullying both perpetrated and experienced by the participants (Section 4.3). All participants described direct bullying in the form of physical and verbal bullying (Section 4.3.1). This is in line with research regarding the incidence and forms of bullying experienced within the age group of the sample

(Greeff & Grobler, 2008; Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). However, the frequency of physical bullying described by the female participant identified as a victim was contrary to research stating that girls were more likely to experience verbal bullying and indirect forms of bullying (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010). Incidences such as hitting and kicking were described in the data, which, according to research, occurs with the desire to cause physical pain (Summers, 2008). The participants identified as bullies used anger or annoyance as justifications for their behaviour. Verbal bullying was also viewed as retaliatory, or as part of normal social interaction. Egocentric reasoning strategies such as these were consistent with research.

School-aged bullies have been shown to have higher levels of morally disengaged reasoning than their peers (Perren et al., 2012). High levels of physical bullying appeared to be attributed to the absence of the supervision at school. Researchindicated that this is a common element associated with physical bullying (Greeff & Grobler, 2008).

Verbal bullying was discussed as being teased about factors such as personal appearance and sexual orientation. Research surrounding homosexual-related name-calling indicated that this is linked to an endorsement of male norms, and a rejection of individuals who deviate from expected gender roles (Slaatten et al., 2014). Exclusion and lying were described as forms of indirect bullying (Section 4.3.2). These were experienced by three of the participants, and did not appear to be linked to factors such as gender. This was also contrary to research examining differences in victimisation according to gender, which views male indirect bullying as uncommon (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Cheng et al., 2011). This was conveyed with emotional expressions relating to sadness, and distress.

Table 5.1 Summary of data

Global Theme	Subtheme	Codes
Types of bullying experienced by Grade 4 learners	•Direct bullying •Indirect bullying	•Hitting •Kicking •Fighting •Teasing •Verbal Bullying •Name calling •Exclusion •Extortion •Lying
Social network	•Likeability •Unlikeability •Social networks of bullies •Social networks of victims	•Popular characteristic •Unpopular characteristic •Weak ties •Strong ties •Friendship •Social interaction •Negative interaction •Positive Interaction
Risk and protective factors	•Risk factors •Protective factors	•Unpopularity •Popularity •Lack of teacher supervision •Parents as protective factors •Teachers as protective factors •Friends •Friendship

5.3.2 Secondary research questions

5.3.2.1 "What types of social ties are prevalent in bullies' and victims' networks?"

The data analysis revealed that both the strength and number of social ties differed between bullies and victims. The participants identified as bullies had more social connections, and a broader network of weak ties, as well as numerous strong ties (Section 4.4.4). This has been echoed in research examining the social constructions of bullying participant roles (Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012). The participants identified as victims had fewer ties, with most of their social ties being strong ties (Section 4.4.3). This was shown through the general theme of social ties and networks. Social ties in the data were examined according to the frequency of interaction described by the participants. Therefore it was found that the participants who identified as bullies had a larger network of both strong and weak ties, indicating that their social groups extended beyond those children whom they played with on a daily basis.

The participants identified as victims lacked weak ties, indicating that their social networks were limited to those whom they interacted with on a daily basis. This was consistent with research, which suggested that victims are likely to have fewer friends, and smaller social networks (Mouttapa et al., 2004). Additionally, it has been hypothesised that unpopular peers are targeted by bullies, in order to protect their popular standing among their social network (Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012). This may be attributed to the development of social capital associated with larger networks which make use of both weak and strong ties (Granovetter, 1983).

5.3.2.2 "How do social ties act as protective factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies?"

Risk and protective factors related to bullying were identified according to the descriptions provided by the participants (Section 4.5). The presence of weak ties appeared to decrease the risk of victimisation (Section 4.5.2), hypothesised due to their ability to connect the individual with multiple people outside their direct area of interaction (Jack, 2005). This is likely to be linked to the concept of social capital, which may be developed through the presence of both strong and weak ties (Burt, 2001; Gottfredson & DiPietro, 2011; Mobius & Rosenblat, 2004). The presence of multiple strong ties within a social network decreased the risk of victimisation through the formation of a group. However, this was only seen in the participants who had access to a number of weak ties in the same social group.

5.3.2.3 "How do social ties act as risk factors when regarding bullying for the Grade 4 victims and bullies?"

Risk factors were discussed in terms of unpopularity, and being disliked by classmates (Section 4.5.1). Individuals with characteristics perceived as unlikable were more likely to be victimised or excluded. Likeability is a factor that has been associated with bullying, with victims being less liked than their peers (Sentse et al., 2014). Prior research indicated that this was consistent across contexts (Garandeau et al., 2009; Perkins, Craig, & Perkins, 2011). This was found within the data collected from the interviews with the participants identified as bullies, and especially related to physical bullying.

The absence of weak ties within a social network appeared to be linked to a higher risk of victimisation. This was consistent with research examining aspects such as likeability and social status held by bullies and victims, which held that

victims of bullying were less likely to have access to the wider network of social peers, both as a result, and cause, of their victimisation (Ahn et al., 2010; Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012; Sentse et al., 2014). Although the presence of both weak ties and strong ties within a network reduced the risk of victimisation, these individuals were linked with more bullying behaviour. Therefore, both strong and weak ties were necessary for the propagation of bullying aimed at learners with fewer network ties. Therefore, the presence of strong and weak ties simultaneously appeared to have an influence on the likelihood of the individual engaging in bullying behaviour.

5.4 Reflections on conceptual framework

The conceptual framework, as discussed in Chapter 2, described the relationship between bullying, social networks, and social capital. 'Social capital occurs within social networks, as a combination of social ties, trust, and mutually beneficial reciprocity (Granovetter, 1983).

This framework was used to explain the use of social capital within social networks as a resource that either hindered or supported bullying behaviour. The movement of resources across social ties is considered a form of social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 2001). Within the context of the school, this could be viewed as a risk or a protective factor in relation to the experiences of the participants. Social capital, when understood in terms of the social networks of the bullies, appears to be a necessary component of the social conditions in which bullying is maintained. This may be understood according to the factors of trust and reciprocity found within the definition of social capital (Ferlander, 2007).

Those experiencing lower levels of social capital within their networks are less likely to receive the support and protection of their peers. Those experiencing higher levels of acceptance across a wider network are less likely to have their social status negatively affected through the victimisation of lower status peers (Sentse et

al., 2014). As the size of a social network is related to the potential social capital held by an individual in that network (Burt, 2001; Klein, 2006), it can be understood that the participants identified as victims held less social capital than the bullies. The discussion of the necessity of weak ties in the production of social capital is therefore relevant in the understanding of the data produced in this study.

Although the Social Capital as a conceptual framework was appropriate to this study, additional understanding may have been possible through the incorporation of the concept of resilience. Resilience has been defined as "the process of using protective factors in order to withstand or 'bounce back' from developmental risks or difficulties" (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010, p.8). Resilience is not considered to be a rare phenomenon, but rather, a result of adaptational and coping systems. However, in order for these systems to remain functional, it is necessary that they develop within a protective environment, or risk impairment when faced with adversity over a long period of time (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010; Masten, 2001; Ungar, 2008). In light of the mediating effects of social networks, the conceptualisation of bullying according to the framework of resilience may allow for further understanding in terms of intervention development.

5.5 Reflections on research methodology

The chosen research methodology allowed for an examination of the influence of social networks on bullying. As the research made use of a qualitative approach, an in depth look at the themes present in the data was possible. The selection of the participants allowed the researcher to gain valuable insight into the lived experiences of bullies and victims. As the sample included both male and female bullies and victims, the researcher was able to reflect on the role of gender in the experiences of bullying and victimisation. Social networks were described qualitatively by the participants, which provided greater detail on the experiences of

the relationships and interactions within these networks. By allowing the participants to respond to open ended questions, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of their views, according to their understanding and vocabulary. Break time observations were used to triangulate the information gained from the interviews, specifically with regards to social interactions and network ties. Thematic content analysis allowed for the identification of the themes according to both the research questions, as well as the data provided by the participants. This allowed the responses to be coded and grouped in such a way that prevalent themes were discovered through repeated engagement with the data.

An exploratory, embedded case study design meant that the researcher was able to elicit meaningful data about the subjective experiences of the participants. This design, however, was associated with several limitations. The strengths of the investigation lay in the qualitative nature of the data gathered, which allowed for an in-depth understanding of the experiences and behaviours of the participants. However, the presence of the researcher during the interviews may have led some of the participants to withhold information for fear of repercussions, despite reassurances from the researcher. Additionally, several of the participants appeared to have difficulty accurately describing the social networks of those not directly linked to their daily interactions, and their responses may have been influenced by their subjectivity.

The limited number of participants allowed for interviews to be used for data collection. However, due to the small nature of the group, and non-representative sample, these results cannot be assumed to be representative of the population. Non-probability sampling allowed for the identification of specific participants with knowledge and experiences that related directly to the research questions.

However, the sample could only be drawn from children who had the informed consent of their parents. This meant that several individuals who were identified as either bullies or victims by their educators could not be included in the study.

The qualitative approach allowed for the collection of detailed data relevant to experiences of the participants. However, additional information gained from the use of a mixed methods approach would have allowed for greater application of the social network analysis, which could then have been used for the purpose of illustrating the social network on a larger scale. A mixed methods approach would have included both quantitative as well as qualitative data, allowing the research problem to be understood on a more comprehensive level (Creswell, 2007).

5.6 Main conclusions drawn from the research

The social network analysis of bullying as experienced by Grade 4 learners indicated that qualitative differences exist between the social networks of bullies and victims. This echoed previous research indicating structural differences within the networks of bullies and victims (Huitsing & Veenstra, 2012; Mouttapa et al., 2004; Sapouna et al., 2012). When explored in terms of social capital theory (Burt, 2001; Gottfredson & DiPietro, 2011), it appears that the existence of both strong and weak ties in the social networks of bullies may serve to maintain the context in which bullying occurs. The absence of weak ties in the social networks in victims may assist in reducing the development of social capital, thus rendering them less able to prevent being bullied. This was established through the use of thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Neuendorf, 2002), which allowed for the description of the experiences of bullying held by the participants. Physical bullying appeared to be of the largest concern, however, experiences of extortion and exclusion were also noted.

5.7 Recommendations

Following the research study, the following recommendations have been identified:

5.7.1 Intervention and prevention recommendations

Recommendations regarding interventions aimed at both preventing and reducing bullying are as follows:

- **Identifying unrealised assets within the social network:** As shown in the study, victims of bullying do not experience as much interaction with a wider social network. This may limit the availability in support, needed to reduce instances of bullying, and to mediate its effects. Therefore, intervention efforts may need to focus on identifying unrealised assets within the social network, to assist in the building of social capital.
- **Addressing bullying within the wider social context:** The role of weak ties in the social networks of bullies indicates that the wider social network may be involved in the maintenance of social structures that allow bullying. Therefore, the roles of children not directly affected by bullying may need to be addressed in preventing on going bullying behaviour.
- **Training and education of teachers on bullying prevention and intervention:** As many of the accounts of physical bullying appeared to occur with limited or no teacher supervision, additional training and resources should be offered to teachers to prevent further victimisation.

5.7.2 Research recommendations

The following recommendations regarding future research are explored:

- **Additional research on social networks and bullying:** Further research is needed on the areas discussed in this study. This should include research

focusing on variables such as socio-economic status, age, race, and sex, and their influence on bullying within social networks.

- **Exploration of the long term stability of social networks, and influence on bullying:** More information is required regarding the social capital and networks held by bullies and victims within the South African context. This is especially relevant when examining the longevity of the status of either bully or victim.
- **Quantitative approach to the influence of social networks on bullying:** Quantitative information is needed to further understand the influence of social network ties on bullying, and to allow for the generalisability of the research to be established.
- **Additional research examining protective factors reducing incidences of bullying and victimization:** Further examination of protective factors linked to bullying and likeability is necessary to expand knowledge of the bullying phenomenon in South Africa.

5.8 Conclusion

Bullying is a phenomenon that affects not only those who are victimised, but appears to have far reaching implications within social groups. Therefore, the understanding of both bullying and victimisation requires investigation into the context in which these behaviours occur. The social networks of bullying affected Grade 4 learners are an important component of their status as either bullies or victims. The isolation of victims creates additional risk factors, which may have long lasting impacts on their lives. The aim of this study was to identify the types of social network ties held by bullies and victims, and the associated experiences of bullying. The data for this research was gained from interviews held with the participants, and was used to explore bullying from the perspective of social capital. This has assisted

in identifying future directions for investigating and intervention, specifically in the area of social functioning.

"'There are all kinds of courage' said Dumbledore, smiling. 'It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends'".

(Rowling, 1997, p.221)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Ethics Committee
22 September 2015

Dear Ms Bird,

REFERENCE: UP 14/08/03 SCHERMAN 15-002

Your application was considered by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and the final decision of the Ethics Committee is:

Your application is approved.

This letter serves as notification that you may continue with your fieldwork. Should any changes to the study occur after approval was given, it is your responsibility to notify the Ethics Committee immediately.

Please note that you have to fulfil the conditions specified in this letter from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. The conditions include;

1) *The ethics approval is conditional on the research being conducted as stipulated by the details of all documents submitted to the Committee. In the event that a further need arises to change who the investigators are, the methods or any other aspect, such changes must be submitted as an Amendment (Section E) for approval by the Committee.*
   - *Any amendments to this approved protocol need to be submitted to the Ethics Committee for review prior to data collection. Non-compliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void.*
   - *Final data collection protocols and supporting evidence (e.g.: questionnaires, interview schedules, observation schedules) have to be submitted to the Ethics Committee before they are used for data collection.*

2) *The researcher should please note that this decision covers the entire research process, until completion of the study report, and not only the days that data will be collected.*

3) *Should your research be conducted in schools, please note that you have to submit proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research.*

4) *The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.*

Please note that this is **not a clearance certificate.**
Upon completion of your research you need to submit the following documentation to the Ethics Committee:

- **Integrated Declarations Form (Form D08),**
- **Initial Ethics Approval letter and,**
- **Approval of Title.**

*On receipt of the above-mentioned documents you will be issued a clearance certificate. Please quote the reference number: **UP 14/08/03 SCHERMAN 15-002** in any communication with the Ethics Committee.*

Best wishes,

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn
Chair: Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

APPENDIX B: PARENT CONSENT LETTER

UNISA college of education

Faculty of Education

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am a student at the University of Pretoria with a keen interest in safe and orderly environments, of which the phenomenon of bullying is a key concern. Bullying is a reality in the daily lives of the many learners, the result of which has serious implications for both the victim and the bully in both the short and the long term. What is also essential is to understand the ambit of bullying and to come to grips with how various stakeholders define bullying. Furthermore, in order to prevent bullying it is essential to develop an effective assessment programme that will lead to better intervention programmes and hopefully a reduction in the prevalence of bullying behaviour. Thus it is crucial to have information on perceptions of bullying behaviour, the location of where bullying occurs, frequency of bullying but also what the response to bullying is. Without appropriate intervention, bullying behaviours tend to increase which negatively influences the school environment. The following research objectives have been identified:

1. To measure the core aspects of bullying accurately.
2. To explore the psychometric properties of both the instruments.
3. To explore the learners' response option preferences.
4. To compare the Likert scale and the Visual Analogue Scale, to see which the Grade 4 learners prefer.
5. To explore the social networks of children.

If you agree for your child to participate in this research project, he or she will be given a questionnaire to complete.

You do not have to agree for your child to participate in this research, your child will not be penalized in any way if you decide that your child should not take part. If you decide that your child should participate, but you change your mind later, your child may withdraw his or her participation at anytime.

Your name, your child's name and that of the school will remain confidential at all

times. When reporting results pseudonyms will be used and no other identifying information will be given. All data collected will be stored in accordance to the University of Pretoria's rules and regulations.

The questionnaire should take about 20 minutes to complete. The learners will complete the questionnaire during the life skills class so that their normal school work should not be disrupted. All data collected in this research may be made available in an open repository for public and scientific use. Children who did not participate in this research will be given the notes for the lesson that was supposed to be covered on that day. You child may also be asked to take part in an interview in which the his/her friendship circle is explored.

If you agree for your child to take part in this research, please fill in the consent form attached to this letter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Prof Vanessa Scherman (Supervisor)
Psychology of Education
University of South Africa
Cell phone: (083) 652 2057
scherv@unisa.ac.za

Katlego Nchoe (Student)
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Pretoria
Cell phone: (083) 283 3299
katlego.nchoe@yahoo.com

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT ASSENT LETTER

UNISA college of education

Faculty of Education

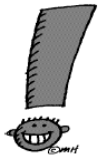
Research Assent Form

What is a research study?

Research studies help us learn new things. We can test new ideas. First, we ask a question, then we try to find the answer.

This paper talks about our research. You can choose if you want to take part in it or not. We want you to ask us any questions that you have. You can ask questions at any time.

Important things to know…



- You get to decide if you want to take part.
- You can say 'No' or you can say 'Yes'.
- No one will be upset if you say 'No'.
- If you say 'Yes', you can always say 'No' later.
- You can say 'No' at anytime.
- We would still take good care of you no matter what you decide.

Why are we doing this research?

We are doing this research to find out more aboutbullying at your school.

What would happen if I join this research?

If you decide to be in the research, we would ask you to do the following:

- Questions: We would ask you to complete a questionnaire
- Nominate: We will ask you to indicate on a class list 3 learners who you like and three learners who you do not like.
- Discussion: We may ask to participate in a discussion.

Could bad things happen if I join this research?

No, we would just like to know more about your experiences in the school.

You can say 'no' to what we ask you to do for the research at any time and we will stop.

Could the research help me?

We think being in this research may help you because the school will know more about your experiences so that if there are any problems they may be able to do something about them.

What else should I know about this research?

If you don't want to be in the study, you don't have to be.

It is also OK to say yes and change your mind later. You can stop being part of the research at any time. If you want to stop, please tell the researchers.

You can ask questions any time. You can talk to Vanessa at 012 429 4623. Ask any questions you have. Take the time you need to make your choice.

Is there anything else?

If you want to be in the research after we have talked, please write your name below. We will write our name too. This shows that we talked about the research and that you want to take part.

Name of Participant _____

(To be written by child/adolescent)

Printed Name of Researcher *Katlego Nchoe*	*Name of Supervisor* *Prof Vanessa Scherman*
Signature of Researcher	*Signature of Supervisor*
_____	_____
_____ *Date*	_____ *Time*

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Learner Semi-structured Interview Schedule

1) Who are the most popular learners?
2) Who are the least popular learners?
3) Who do you like to play with the most? Prompt why?
4) Who do you like to play with the least? Prompt why?
5) How many learners do you play with every day? Prompt why?
6) How many learners do you play with occasionally? Prompt why?
7) Who do you think gets into the most trouble? Prompt why?
8) Who gets along the best with other learners? Prompt why?
9) Who is most likely to be alone at break time? Prompt why?
10) Who gets left out of the group when one of their friends is mad at them?
11) Who gets hit a lot by other learners?
12) Who gets even by spreading rumours or mean lies about someone when they are mad?
13) Who gets ignored by other learners when someone is mad at them?
14) Have learners that teased you or call you names? Prompt who are these learners likely to be?
15) Have other learners taken your things? How often does this happen?
16) Have other learners tried to hurt you or fight with you? Prompt who are these learners likely to be? Prompt how often does this happen?
17) Is there anybody that tries to help or protect you when this happens? Prompt who this is likely to be?
18) Do you ever feel left out by your friends?
19) Who do you talk to when these things happen? Prompt who?
20) Do you ever make fun of, or tease other learners? Prompt why?
21) Do you ever fight with other learners? Prompt why?

APPENDIX E: EXERPTS FROM REFLEXIVE JOURNAL

Semi-structured Interviews	
17 October 2015	Preparation for the interviews has started. I am beginning to feel concerned about my role as a researcher. After thinking back to my own experiences primary school, I am wondering about the openness of the participants, and how my presence may influence their willingness to discuss their experiences. This is especially in the case of the bullies. I am hoping I can find a way to make them feel comfortable enough to share their stories with me.
13 November 2015	The interviews have been completed. It was bit of a challenge with some of the children, I had not anticipated having to deal with the language barrier with one of the children. Fortunately, through careful probing, I was able to gain sufficient information. It was interesting to experience the different levels of confidence from the bullies and victims. The bullies seemed far happier to speak to me. My earlier concerns now seem unfounded.
Transcription	
13 January 2016	After having left my research for so long, it's been difficult to get back into it. The transcription process has been slow. Listening to my own voice has required me to reflect on my role on a researcher, and the influence I had on the process. I feel that I may have intimidated one of the participants, and because of this, received less information from her. I also wonder how many of the responses may have been influenced by the participants' desire to impress me?
2 April 2016	Although I have not quite finished transcribing, I am beginning to get an idea of the codes that will be used in the identification and generation of the themes. It's difficult to decide how much of this to do inductively

	versus deductively – I need to answer my research questions, but I also want the data to speak for itself. I am also becoming aware of how my own interpretations will dictate the direction the coding will take. This will require careful documentation and reflection on my part to acknowledge the subjectivity of the process.
Bullies	
17 February 2016	The justifications the participants have used for their bullying behaviour are difficult to listen to at times. I am beginning to understand that the bullies don't seem to view their own behaviour as bullying. This has been quite difficult to accept, and I am left wondering if this is not an area where intervention should be focused. The account of one of the participants, who views his aggressive actions as preventing other people from bullying, has opened my eyes to new areas to explore regarding the motivations behind bullying behaviour. The idea that children don't view their actions as bad makes it far more difficult to address those actions.
27 May 2016	The account of feeling ashamed by one of the participants has reverberated within me. This is where change happens – where children are seen as people, with feelings, and not as targets for aggression. The complexity of emotions related to bullying – even in children as young as these – strengthens the argument that bullying cannot be viewed as part of normal childhood experience, that it must be seen as an impediment to the enjoyment of childhood.
Victims	
28 March 2016	After transcribing, reading, and re-reading the transcriptions, I am beginning to feel like I can better understand the emotional pain that the participants have experienced. I can't help but feel that it is a pity that the

	words on a page cannot convey the tone, and sadness, portrayed during the interviews. It is difficult to avoid favouring one story over another – and to adequately represent the voices of both the bullies and the victims.
3 June 2016	Describing the social networks of the victims has reminded me of what it was like to be a Grade 4 learner. Although I had a group of friends, I remember peers in the same class who often seemed to be alone, and who were often teased mercilessly. I am left wondering about whether their lives would have been different if this research had happened in time to intervene. It's interesting that how, in under two decades, the understanding of bullying has shifted, and that now there appears to be a greater preparedness from teachers and parents to prevent the victimisation of children by other children.

APPENDIX F: THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS: Example of coding

Participant D	Marabe	Direct bullying interaction type
Researcher	And what sort of things does she call	verbal bullying
Participant D	She tease my lips	
Researcher	But is it like friendly teasing or is it mean?	Direct bullying interaction type
Participant D	Mean	verbal bullying
Researcher	Alright and anyone else	
Participant D	(name removed)	
Researcher	And what happens when she does that	
Participant D	She says she'll beat me	bully-victim Direct bullying
Researcher	So what do you do then	threat unpopular characteristics
Participant D	Nah, just leave her. Nothing, but one day...	verbal bullying
Researcher	So you just waiting for that. Do you think you will get ba	k at her or
Participant D	Someone is going to get back	

APPENDIX G: THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS: Example of initial generation of themes

Report: 17 quotation(s) for 1 code

HU: Thematic analysis
File: [C:\Users\Jessie-Anne\Dropbox\Jess Laptop files\MEd\Research\Atlas analyses\Thematic analysis.hpr7]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 2016-08-23 12:47:38

Mode: quotation list names and references

Quotation-Filter: All

physical bullying

P 1: Participant D - 1:67 (463:471) (Super)
Codes: [Direct bullying] [physical bullying] [risk factor] [social network] [unpopular characteristics] [victim]
No memos

Participant D	Mashudo.
Researcher	Ok why do you think Mashudo gets hit a lot
Participant D	Because he irritates people and some people get angry

P 2: Participant A - 2:20 [They hitting each other and th..] (304:304) (Super)
Codes: [Direct bullying] [physical bullying] [risk factor] [unpopular characteristics]
No memos

They hitting each other and then their friends get angry

P 2: Participant A - 2:21 [Ok that's alright. So who gets..] (316:324) (Super)
Codes: [bully-victim] [Direct bullying] [physical bullying] [risk factor] [victim]
No memos

Researcher	Ok that's alright. So who gets hit a lot by other children
Participant A	(L) and (T)

P 2: Participant A - 2:22 [Why do you think they get hit ..] (340:348) (Super)
Codes: [bully-victim] [Direct bullying] [physical bullying]
No memos

Researcher	Why do you think they get hit
Participant A	Because he is hitting other people

P 2: Participant A - 2:29 [Have other children tried to f..] (580:592) (Super)
Codes: [bully] [Direct bullying] [physical bullying] [victim]

P 4: Participant C - 4:28 (607:607) (Super)
Codes: [bully-victim] [Direct bullying] [fighting] [physical bullying] [risk factor]
No memos

(B), (D), so when they two started it, (D) started it last year and then I left him. This year it was like a week ago and I said (D) stop it and he kicked me then I at after school and he stared me and then I said (D) I'm not your age. I'll never be your age. Because he's younger than me. But because he's taller than me. But I said I'm not afraid of you. If you want to beat me I'll beat you back. But he just left. And also (B)
did that to me

P 4: Participant C - 4:37 [an't think, I forced to beat u..] (815:831) (Super)
Codes: [Direct bullying] [extortion] [group bullying] [indirect bullying] [physical bullying] [theft] [threat]
No memos

Participant C	Can't think, I forced to beat up a person, but when I beat him up, I was not hurting him. When they said I must fist him I just slapped him.
Researcher	So who was forcing
Participant C	A boy, he had a lot of .... He had to scare us. I can't remember his name
Researcher	And what would have happened if you hadn't listened?
Participant C	They gonna take my money, cos I was a guy that had a lot of pocket money. Cos my father used to spoil me. But I told them don't spoil me.

Codes: [bully] [Direct bullying] [group bullying] [physical bullying] [risk factor] [social network] [victim]
No memos

Participant C	He acts stupid but he is an intelligent guy. He makes himself like he can't fight back but he can fight so people will carry on bullying him and bullying him and then after like 2 weeks he bullies them back and they left him and that one.
Researcher	So hits (L)
Participant C	His friends
Researcher	And so how do they hit him?
Participant C	If he's alone they just come, like me and my skeem when they come I know it. One day he was just coming out by the corridor and they tripped him then we hide ourselves and see what's going one. When we see what's going on we go tell our teachers, also the problem.

APPENDIX H: DATA:

See attached DVDs