

## Contemporary Voices: First Year Male Residence Students Experiencing Senior Male Students' Aggression

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### Abstract

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South Africa is viewed as a country where aggression and violence are rife in all sectors of society. Literature has drawn particular attention to the anti-social or destructive behavior of senior male students at universities in South Africa. This paper deals with first year male students' experiences of senior male students' aggression in campus residences with hierarchical structures of power. Fourteen first year male students who live in residences on a South African university campus voluntarily participated. A qualitative phenomenological design situated in an interpretive paradigm was used. Data collection was done in two phases: photo-narratives (written) and photo-narrative-elicitation-interviews. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the data. The findings indicate that first year male students associate their experience of senior male students' aggression in residences with negative feelings and emotions, ranging from indifference to negativity, which affected their emotional, physical and psychological well-being. Aggression is established practice in these university residences where the power structure allows seniors to behave aggressively and to entrench aggression. Aggression of this kind is detrimental to the well-being of first year male students as it affects them physically, emotionally and psychologically. This has a negative impact on their personal well-being and on their academic performance.

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**Keywords:** aggression; male-student; power; status; well-being

### 1 Introduction

Aggression has become a feature of South African society; it is seen as normal for individuals at every level of society to behave in ways which pose a serious threat to others (Botha, 2014; Botha, Myburgh, & Poggenpoel, 2012; Myburgh, Poggenpoel, & Du Plessis 2011; SACE, 2011).

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Aggressive behavior, an intent to deliberately hurt or harm another person (the victim) or an object (Botha, Myburgh, & Poggenpoel, 2013; Fiske, 2010), may be characterized as physical aggression *versus* verbal aggression; direct aggression *versus* indirect aggression; and active aggression *versus* passive aggression (Fiske, 2010, p. 392). DeWall, Anderson, and Bushman (2013) contend that aggressive behavior has three key characteristics: the behavior is not an emotion or a thought but it is action; it is not accidental but intentional; and the victim is able to show that he or she has to take action to avoid the intentional harm of the aggressor.

### 1.1 Aggression: A South African context

Du Plessis (2011) argues that South Africans have a history of aggressive and violent behavior and are seemingly among the most aggressive people in the world. This situation poses a threat to the well-being of many South Africans in that it inhibits their ability to function effectively and make a meaningful contribution to society (Botha, 2006). A great deal of research on aggression in South African schools indicates that aggression and violence spills over from families to communities with detrimental consequences for society (Botha, 2014). For instance, a study suggests that one in every five university students has experienced aggression and violence in various forms (Saewyc, Brown, Plane, Mundt, Zakletskaia, Wiegel, & Fleming, 2009). University male students' behavior is a special concern. There are many reports in South Africa of the aggressive and violent behavior of senior male students in residences at Higher Education Institutions in South Africa. Some attested instances from various universities are:

- First year male students were attacked and their residence room 'trashed' by senior students who assaulted them by bashing their heads against a wall (Serrao, 2008).
- Some senior students urinated in a room occupied by first year students (Serrao, 2008).
- Senior male students sat on first year male students, swearing and hitting them whilst they were videotaped by other senior male students (Du Plooy, 2008).

- Senior students hit first year students on the buttocks as a form of 'punishment' (Rademeyer, 2009). Wondergem and Victor (2011) described a similar incident. First year students were assaulted with hockey sticks and walking sticks (kierries). In this case, the house committee members who were guilty of initiation practices admitted that physical violence was used and attempts were made to break the spirit of first.
- Senior students who had consumed alcohol assaulted a first year student (Cilliers, 2012).
- Senior male students were expelled from two residences. They admitted engaging in banned initiation practices that included the beating of younger students with cricket bats and pipes (Kruger, 2013).
- A student sustained several injuries after being run over by a vehicle and attacked by two fellow students. Witnesses stated that they heard the perpetrators laughing and shouting derogatory racial remarks (Thakali, 2014).

This anti-social or destructive behavior is not confined to students at South African universities (Harris III, 2008). However, the incidents described above demonstrate the importance of investigating senior male students' aggressive practices in on-campus residences in South Africa.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the first year male students' experiences of senior male students' aggression in on-campus residences in the framework of *aggression* and *social learning theory*. Aggression is learned through observing the behavior of others (Fiske, 2010). Social learning "can develop via modelling (imitating the behaviour of another person) and via vicarious conditioning or observational learning (watching someone else get rewarded or punished)" (Fiske 2010, p. 405). Social learning theory also takes account of the impact of environmental factors on the development of aggressive behavior (Botha et al., 2013).

The central goal was to explore, describe and understand first year male students' experience of senior male students' aggression in on-campus residences. Two questions were posed: i) What is the nature of first year male students' experiences of senior male students' aggression in residences? and ii) What suggestions can be made to assist first year male students to cope with aggression in residences?

## 2. Research Design and Method

Since the researchers wanted to explore the 'essence of human experiences about a phenomenon' as described by the participants themselves (Creswell, 2009), a phenomenological method of inquiry was used. Bless, Higson-Smith, and Sithole (2013) posit that "natural phenomena have natural causes" (p. 4). This study therefore focuses on the lived experience of male students at particular residences on a university campus in South Africa.

### 2.1 Sample

Fourteen participants who were in residence on the campus of a South African university were purposefully selected as participants. The participants' ages ranged from 18 years to 21 years. They all took part voluntarily in this research. The selected participants met the requirement, namely first year male students living in residence on the campus of the selected South African university.

The necessary permission and ethical clearance were obtained from the Ethics Committee of the selected university and the Dean of Students. Formal consent was also obtained from all the participants. The wardens of the on-campus male residences, the Student Council Representative Chairperson (SRC) and the chairpersons of each of the residences were informed about the research. Scrupulous care was taken to protect the anonymity of the participants. This included the using pseudonyms for the participants and not identifying the residences in which they lived.

### 2.2 Data Collection Method

Data were collected by means of photo-narratives and photo-narrative-elicitation interviews. In the two respective phases of data generation the participants had to use their cell phone cameras to take three photographs of any object they felt depicted their personal experience of senior male students' aggression in the residence. The question that was posed to each participant was: 'Do you experience senior male students' aggression in your residence? If so, take three photographs that depict your experiences and write a narrative on your personal experiences.' After taking the photographs, they had to write a narrative about each of the three photographs. They were given three questions to help them frame their narratives. What is shown in the photograph? What does it mean to you?

What can we do about it? (This question was helpful when narrating possible ways of reducing senior male students' aggression in residences.) The photo-narrative was clarified orally by the researchers before the photo-narrative-elicitation-interview commenced. The questions asked in the interview included the following: (i) What are your experiences of senior male students' aggression in the residence where you live? (ii) What suggestions can you make to assist first year male students to cope with senior male students' aggression in residences? All interviews were audio recorded so transcriptions could be made (Creswell, 2009). Data saturation occurred after the fourteenth photo-narrative-elicitation-interview was conducted.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used for the inductive process of data analysis (Griffin & May, 2012). The two phases of data generation (photo-narratives and photo-narrative-elicitation-interviews) were merged when data analysis took place. The four stages of the IPA process helped the researcher to systematically make sense and interpret the experiences of the first year male students in their context (Griffin & May, 2012). The written narratives and the interview transcripts were used in stage one of data analysis which allowed the researchers to *look for themes*. These *themes were connected* and clustered together in the second stage of IPA analysis. Stage three entailed compiling a table of *coherent themes* which enabled the researcher to *write up* the final themes and sub-themes in stage four.

## 3. Findings and discussion

The findings of this research include verbatim quotations of the participants. Two major themes were identified after data analysis:

### 3.1 Theme One

First year male students experience senior male students' aggression as associated with feelings and emotions ranging from indifference to negativity. Yet they say that they have no problem with senior male students living in the same residence. They see themselves as able to gain academic and social knowledge from senior students:

"I have learned so many things from the seniors". (P A2).

"They are helpful ... I think we are more respectful, especially like ... to women ... they are also religiously as well ... they are quite strong with that stuff ... everyone comes down ... we like go and pray ... like for the hostel". (P B2).

"They help you a lot ... They teach you the campus secrets ... to get cheaper food and how to do well in class". (P D1).

Some participants also show some insight into the current dynamics of the residence in their acknowledgement that first year students need to gain acceptance from the senior students:

"Actually you are still outside [an outsider] and to be accepted as one of them you have a long way to go and they will certainly not make it easy for you". (P D1).

"Only when they[seniors]see us as part of the group will things perhaps change and we will feel more worthy". (P E1).

Participants perceive senior male students' indifference to them as taking the form of a lack of empathy and a lack of interest. Some participants indicate that, even if they as first year students greet the senior students courteously or participate in residence activities (i.e. behaving as the senior students want them to), the senior students do not show any real interest in them or acknowledge their efforts. The indifference of senior male students to first year male students has a negative effect on them, leaving them feeling drained and uncertain:

"If you greet him[senior student] then they would ask you, how are you? But then they do not stay to hear your answer ... that couldn't-care-less attitude ... they do not make any effort, we have to do everything". (P H1).

"Sometimes it feels as if these seniors trample on you so hard that I myself do not even know if I want to get up. I feel drained ... it's not nice ... does the fact that I play rugby mean nothing to them, the fact that I bear the residence's name and I really try to do it well mean nothing to them?" (P E1).

"They [the senior students] go out of their way to make your life hell". (P D1).

The participants express their sense of feeling unwelcome in the residence and being excluded from the group of senior residents:

“Sometimes it feels as if you do not belong there [in the residence] you feel left out and feel like a failure ... that is when I miss home and the people who really love me”. (P E1).

When first year male students do not feel welcome in a social setting such as a residence, they experience the feeling that they do not belong and are not valued. They also expressed feelings of being unworthy, repressed, helpless and hurt:

“Like you're just there ... it is more of an internal thing of you are not worthy here. (P I1).

You feel like a failure ... then you feel bad and it is not nice ... I mean it hurts ... it is hard ... you feel you are worth nothing”. (P E1).

“It means to me that my own place here on campus feel like a prison to me”. (P H2).

“You don't feel freedom ... you don't feel free ... when they tell you, you must not question, you must just say yes ... you don't feel comfortable with them around ... even if you have a problem ... you can't even talk to them freely ... you can't approach them ... even if you have your own personal problem, you can't talk to them ... and tell them your personal problem ... you don't even walk freely in die koshuis [residence]... that thing is little bit stressful for me”. (P F1).

Feelings of being unworthy, repressed, helpless and hurt are features of depression, which may have a negative impact on academic performance and hamper effective socialization.

Some first year male students refer to verbal and non-verbal intimidation by the senior male students, which makes them feel discouraged:

“I feel discouraged and like I said ... then I just want to take my stuff and leave”. (P E1).

They comment on the senior male students' use of crude language and facial expressions and other bodylanguage in order to intimidate them:

"They use words [obscurity]to intimidate you ... Then he smiles with that ... [obscurity] expression on his face". (P E1).

"They will always give you this maniacal smile". (P C1).

It is clear from the accounts of the participants that this kind of intimidation has a negative effect on them.They particularly mention theirdistaste for being shouted at in a demeaning way. Verbal aggression often includes yelling, shouting, the use of offensive language, swearing and name calling:

"Look it is not like physical aggression ... they use words to like break your spirit by yelling at you and trying to destroy you ... it's not nice when I get ... [obscurity]". (P H2).

"It [the shouting] was not nice". (P G1).

"This aggression of the seniors ... it is not good ... it is not pleasant ... you cannot even feel happy when you go to your res [residence], when you come from classes ... or when you come back from holidays ... when you come back ... you cannot feel happy ... I'm going to have fun ... no you can't have that happiness ... they don't talk well with you". (P F1).

The participants'comments reveal their experiencesof senior male students' treating them unfairlyand even belittlingor humiliatingthem:

"They will scream at you and belittle you ... why should I be so belittled?"(P E1).

"They[seniors]will treat you like a little child". (P F1).

Bullying, discrimination, harassment, victimization or malicious actionsare all examples of the way in which senior students abuse their power.They also behave inconsistently leaving the first year students confused and disillusioned:



"They are different the whole time ... they make us feel confused man". (P E1).

"You become confused because, two minutes these people[senior students]were like happy and two minutes again ... they are like this ... are they angry now ... you don't know ... where did I go wrong ... because you cannot understand them. Every day they change, today they ... he will be friendly with you ... tomorrow he is no longer that ... I don't know ... you no longer understand them". (P F1).

"You see ... everyone lives in the same ... everyone is supposed to act together as a unit but it doesn't happen ... or it does not happen as it should ... so if you as an outsider, just look at the hostel, it seems okay ... look the open day ... everyone comes in, everyone seems to be friends, but here in a corridor it happens ... this guy hits that guy... this is the problem, it is that you do not always know or see". (P I1).

"I heard of like ...[name of a residence]-res ... and I was excited, I thought we were going to bond and be friends but when you actually get here ... it gets too much". (P B1).

This experience of disillusionment is related to the participants' feeling of disappointment at the way the senior students' behave towards them and treat them. It also reflects their shattered expectations of the dynamics of the residence. What they believed residence life would be like is very different from what they have experienced; their hopes have been dashed by the behavior of the senior male students. One participant explained that:

"I did not expect that rude behavior of the seniors and stuff ... I just expected everything to be good ... to ... to live well with each other ... not that kind of behavior ... I thought I'm in a res[residence]... it will be a fun thing ... I will just study and enjoy the campus and enjoy the university but nah[no]... it's not that at the moment ... they just change that perspective ... you cannot recommend[that]a person to stay here ... you just make an excuse saying it [the residence]is full ... it must end this thing because some people are leaving the koshuis [residence]... even some people they ask you where you living... you cannot recommend a person to live with me and live here... you cannot tell a person come... they will say... why did you get me in this bad behavior ... look at this people how they treating me... You can't even recruit some other people... like me I am from the location...I cannot... when some of my other friends want to come to the res [residence]... I just tell them... no the res[residence]is full... next year maybe... no next year... they already got people they need for the hostel. I just think of a lame excuse just...for let them...just, just to not come into the koshuis[residence]". (P F1).

As a result of all of these negative feelings and emotions some first year male students voluntarily isolate themselves:

"I left the hostel early[in the morning]and told them[seniors]I must attend classes, just to be like away from the hostel and then I stayed away until the very end of the day [a set time given for the first year students to be back in the residence]and only then did I go back [to the residence]... people stayed in their rooms and did not come out ... people even leave[move out]the residence because it gets too much". (P H2).

"I think you try to avoid them[seniors], like ... you would rather go to class in the morning, you will not go back to the hostel, you hang around on campus the whole time until you have to go back [to the residence]tonight ... and it affects your life. (P G1)". "You rather keep your distance". (P A2).

Voluntary isolation occurs as the first year students withdraw themselves from the rest of the group, displaying a type of flightresponse. They use this strategy of avoidance to protect themselves.

The way senior male students treat the first year male students makes them become irritated and frustrated:

“I just feel like irritated and I don’t want to bump into any seniors”. (P B1)

“They [senior students] make you frustrated, because they don’t talk well with you”. (P F1).

Along with feeling frustrated and irritated, first year male students begin to feel angry that senior students treat them with so little respect:

“It makes us angry as well”.(P C1).

“People are just people and sometimes then you come to that point where everything gets too much and sometimes then I just feel like exploding”. (P E1).

“Some time or another that first year is going to get fed-up and is just going to lose it”. (P H1).It seems that these negative emotions could escalate into physical aggression.

### 3.2 Theme Two

In their responses participants provide some useful suggestions to assist first year male students to cope with aggression in residences:

Most of the participants see no likelihood of senior students’ aggression being curbed. They therefore suggest that first year male students should *focus on the purpose* of their coming to the university, which is to be successful students:

“They [the senior students] just made me realize once again that I am here for more important things. I am here to study; I am not here to make friends”. (P H1).

“They [first year students] must focus on why they came here rather than focusing on the seniors and their stuff”. (P F1).

The first year male students thus consider that their best way of remaining optimistic is to retain a sense of purpose.

Participants do not feel that they can use the current support systems at the university, such as the residence committee members and the wardens of the residences. They therefore suggest providing first year students with an independent confidant:

“The bodies inside the residence which should protect you [first year student] will choose the seniors' side regardless of what actually happened ... [it] means to me that we do not always have access to people or bodies to act as peacemakers”. (P I1).

“Even if you have a problem, you can't even talk to them [senior male students], because you don't know how to approach them ... you can't approach them ... even if you have your own personal problem, you can't talk to them ... and tell them your person problem”. (P F1).

Having an independent type of support system would offer the first year male students a sort of a 'protector' who would not be influenced by members of the existing support structures in which the participants have no trust.

One participant suggested that prospective first year male students should be informed about life in residences so they would be better prepared for what awaits them:

“I was prepared going into it [the residence] when we went to the ... [name of camp]. I think to go on that camp [preparatory camp] or another similar camp, just to know what to expect”. (P B2).

#### **4. Discussion**

It is evident that the findings indicate that aggression in residences has emotional, physical and psychological consequences for first year male students as newcomers to the university. The first year male students experience a variety of negative feelings and emotions both during and as a result of senior male students' aggressive behavior. Aggression that manifests itself verbally and physically stems from the license the senior students' status within the hierarchy gives them.

First year male students feel *unwelcome and excluded* from the group of senior students in the residence as a result of the seniors' aggressive behavior that makes them feel that they do not belong. House committee members create a false impression during their initial meeting with first year male students. They and the other senior male students change from being friendly and helpful to being uncaring and unfriendly. This experience of being misled and let down by senior students leaves first year students *confused, disappointed and discouraged*. Rice (2000) points to an inherent danger: discouragement, one of the most difficult feelings for an individual to overcome, can lead to depression. First year male students' sense of betrayal prevents them from being able to trust the senior male students. Their lack of confidence in the senior students as a result of this betrayal may fuel their feelings of anger, loneliness and rejection (Fitness, 2001). Fiske (2010) posits that belonging is a core social motive for survival in a group. *Exclusion or isolation* are common forms of social aggression which has the intent of doing social harm (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Botha, in press; Fiske, 2010; Steyn, Myburgh, & Poggenpoel, 2011). This is one of the ways in which the gap between the senior male students' and the first year male students' social status or social standing is emphasized. Exclusion or isolation may increase feelings of anxiety, despair, loneliness, rage, rejection and hurt (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Coie, Terry, Lenox, Lockman, & Hyman, 1995; McDonald & Leary, 2005).

The senior male students' destructive behavior increases the first year students' sense of physical and psychological discomfort (Keating, Pomerantz, Pommer, Ritt, Miller, & McCormick, 2005; van Harreveld, van der Pligt, & de Liver, 2009). In some instances, first year students opt to leave the residence or even the university when the stress becomes too great (DeWitz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009). Feeling *unworthy, repressed, helpless and hurt* are attributes of depression that can severely affect academic performance and overall well-being (Beck & Alford, 2009; De Kock, 2010). De Kock (2010) defines well-being "as the subjective appraisals that people make about the quality of their lives based on their experiences, relationships, feelings and overall functioning in life" (p. iv).

It is evident from the findings that verbal aggression is experienced more often than acts of physical aggression. This includes: swearing, shouting which senior male students use to intimidate or threaten the first year male students. This becomes an effective method for senior male students to signal their position of power within the hierarchy to the new comers in residences.

Dias and Sá (2014) add that rites of passage “involve a sense of demarcating the transition between two distinctive social statuses, with changes in status and identity” (p. 5). The senior male students use their super ordinate senior positions to scare or intimidate the first year male students into accepting their “subordinate” position in the residences (Lamontagne, 2010, p. 57). Keating et al. (2005, p. 105) underline that:

[T]hreatening initiation practices such as hazing rituals function to support and maintain groups in at least three ways: by promoting group-relevant [in-group] skills and attitudes, by reinforcing the group’s status hierarchy, and by stimulating cognitive, behavioral, and affective forms of social dependence in group members.

The first year male students are aware that the senior students are in a powerful position and can ‘make things difficult for them.’ In some cases the first year students resort to ‘accepting’ the attitudes and the social norms of the senior students. This acknowledgement reinforces the superior status and power of the group of senior students (Keating et al., 2005; Lamontagne, 2010). It seems that senior male students do not see the first year students as individuals. Their sole concern is to make the group of first years conform to group norms and outperform other residences in sports events. Senior male students’ may also foster ‘dependency.’ As Keating et al. (2005) emphasize, “behaviorally, the dependency fostered by maltreatment is likely to be expressed as compliance with group norms and attraction to group members” (p. 108). As De Kock (2010) warns, in many cases social initiation programs, specifically informal orientation programs of new comers, are of great concern as these programs include hazing rituals that encompass “racial discrimination, physical abuse and psychological bullying” (p. 3). Nuwer (2001) describes *hazing* as:

[A]n activity that a high-status member orders other members to engage in or suggests that they engage in that in some way humbles a newcomer who lacks the power to resist, because he or she wants to gain admission into a group (p. xxv).

Other types of threatening behavior include *belittling and humiliating* to which the first year male students respond by voluntarily isolating themselves. According to Berkowitz (1993), avoidance or escape is a defense mechanism that makes it possible for individuals to dissociate themselves from others.

This short-term strategy also serves as a way for individuals to cope with unwanted situations or to cope in undesirable environments (Carr, 2004). Other first year male students become frustrated and/or irritated with the senior male students' behavior towards them. Berkowitz (1993) refers to *frustration* as an "external condition that prevents a person from obtaining the pleasures he or she had expected to enjoy", holding "that frustrations produce aggressive inclinations" (p. 31). Unpleasant feelings breed both fight and flight tendencies (Berkowitz, 1993), thus inclining individuals to avoid unpleasant circumstances or even to respond with aggressive behavior (Botha, 2006).

In sum, first year male students experiencing negative feelings are frustrated and unhappy and this impacts negatively on their *emotional well-being*, which is associated with "positive feelings, subjective happiness and satisfaction with life" (De Kock, 2010, p. iv). This jeopardizes their ability to function well socially or academically.

Suggestions made by the first year male students are confined to *how to cope with* senior male students' aggressive behavior. Because they were not asked to do so, they do not provide any suggestions on how to question, challenge or end the current situation. At present, first year students are forced to accept the group identity imposed on them and to adapt to the social norms of the group. Unless ways are found of addressing the cycle of aggression, the negative environments that are created are likely to produce individuals that lack self-reliance and/or a lack of self-confidence. They may even cause posttraumatic stress and/or anxiety disorders (LeDoux & Phelps, 2008).

#### 4.1 The Way Forward in Breaking the Cycle of Aggression in Residences

Curbing aggressive behavior in male residences calls for decisive action both in dealing firmly with instances of undesirable behavior and in educating the residence community. In this regard, the university management team, the residence committee members and the house wardens are accountable for ensuring that the first year male students as well as the senior male students:

- recognize others' individuality;
- are aware of both the dynamics of group development and of the importance of human rights and diversity
- understand the various forms of aggression and their adverse implications
- develop and are able to improve their coping and self-efficacy skills, and
- know the value of establishing their own social support systems.

#### 4.1.1 The Dynamics of Group Development

Tuckman's model of the stages of small group development (as cited in Bonebright, 2010, p. 113) could be used to sensitize students to the stages of group development which most groups move through: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. If they understand and respect the uniqueness of individuals and understand the inherent danger in current traditions, seniors are unlikely to resort to aggressive behavior to coerce first year male students into adopting group values when establishing roles, responsibilities and articulating boundaries.

#### 4.1.2 Human Rights and Diversity

Many forms of aggression are violations of human rights. Loden's diversity wheel (Loden, 1996, p. 16), which emphasizes the value and uniqueness of every individual, could be used to raise awareness of human rights and sensitize students to diversity. The wheel includes factors that influence values, behaviors, ideas and interpretations of the 'self' and the 'other.' To help individuals become more aware of diversity, the list of common defining characteristics of difference provided by Tanner, Turner, Greenwald, Munoz, and Ricks (1996) could be used. These characteristics include: sexual orientation, racial/cultural/ethnic identification and class, age, spiritual/religious identification, physical appearance and attributes, geographic area of origin, caretaker/family composition, illness and disability, gender, psychological/social influences, language, immigration status, political views, position of power or privilege, place in society and level of acculturation. The following three questions could be used in relation to any of the above differentiators in order to make individuals more aware of diversity (Tanner et al., 1996): "What are my ... significant experiences, beliefs and emotional attachments in this area?; How do they affect how I ... view the world and how I ... interact with others?"



And “In what ways might these experiences, beliefs, and emotional attachments play an unconscious role in how I ... perceive others?” (p. 2).

#### 4.1.3 Recognize the Various forms of Aggression and Their Implications

Students should be made aware of the various forms of aggressive behavior, specifically the way social aggression manifests itself, and the negative effects it has on the well-being of both perpetrators and victims.

#### 4.1.4 Develop and Improve Coping and Self-Efficacy Skills

By developing and strengthening their coping and self-efficacy skills, students can gain the confidence to be proactive agents who are able to shape their own life circumstances and respond in confident ways to the aggressive behavior of others (Singh & Bussey, 2009). Having to face an aggressive situation or behavior will be less distressing for them. They will also be able to voice their disapproval in an assertive way.

#### 4.1.5 The Value of Establishing Their Own Social Support Systems

Students should have their own social support systems which give them access to trusted individuals, independent of the residences. The ability to share any of the challenges that they face as students will enable first-year students to cope better with negative peer interaction and aggressive behavior (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002).

## 5 Conclusions

Most universities strive to provide a space that is safe and conducive to successful academic activity. However, these findings indicate that forms of aggression in the residences violate the human rights of the first year male students in them and seriously undermine academic and social success. We call for urgent intervention to prevent aggressive behavior that is socially modeled by senior male students and learned by the first year students. When they become senior students they continue the cycle of aggression.

If this cycle of aggression and the hierarchical power structure that makes it possible are not challenged, first year male students will continue to face aggression that negatively affects their social development and academic performance.

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