

**A Qualitative Analysis of the Social
Regulation of Violence in a Cornish
School 1999-2003.**

Carrie Anne Myers

**London School of Economics and
Political Science**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis demonstrates the day-to-day experiences of victimisation and opinions about crime as they were encountered by a group of pupils in a rural school at one particular point in time.

A number of key themes are addressed, the first being the notion of the adolescent as a victim of crime. This thesis considers what 'crime' means to the pupils at this school and documents their views of crime in the wider community. The next area addressed is the victimisation of adolescents by fellow adolescents; here the focus is on incidents of bullying that occurred on and off the school premises. Thirdly, boys as victims is an under-researched subject matter, this is regarded and the question of masculine identities is included. Furthermore, the roles the female students play are investigated, paying particular attention to their involvement in acts of violence and bullying. The fourth area explore the limits of moral conduct and how this particular age group makes decisions about the unwritten moral codes and boundaries affecting the display of violence. This in turn invites the question of how teenagers made sense of larger moral problems and problems of living inside a school interpreted as a form of institution with a distinctive 'underlife'. These themes are addressed within an analysis of the larger social organisation of childhood and adolescence. Criminologists have long recognised the importance of peer group influence in the development of offending behaviour, but the research took into account the rural context of that setting, the final analytical lens through which it is focussed.

This thesis demonstrates that the intricate patterns of violence and bullying are a process whereby status and power reinforce an established hierarchy of pupil's informal relations. The importance of the peer group emerged as the key to understanding interactions between the pupils at the school researched. The power of the peer group would have to be taken into consideration in any strategies devised to curtail bullying.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: A Qualitative Analysis of the Social Regulation of Violence in a Cornish School 1999-2003

Introduction

This chapter will lay the foundations for the research carried out for this thesis; document the specific aim of the thesis and the research questions investigated; highlight the key theoretical and substantive literature used, and conclude with an overview of the thesis.

The Foundations of the Research Problem

“As adults, we under-estimate and diminish the extent and impact of crime upon young people’s everyday lives or even ignore it altogether...Such attitudes are constituent parts of a ‘grown-ups know best’ culture in which children are rarely listened to and seldom trusted to tell the truth. As a consequence, young people are often left to deal with problems in their own ways” (Anderson et al., 1994, p.30-1).

When the words ‘youth’ and ‘crime’ are connected, the general image is of the young person as an offender. Given the recurrence and prevalence of offending by young people this is not surprising. Nevertheless, young people frequently become victims of crime, largely as a result of crime being committed by like on like, and young people themselves being offenders. Outside those studies that have concentrated specifically on child abuse, child abduction and domestic violence, most criminological studies of victimisation have paid insufficient and somewhat limited attention to young people’s experiences as *victims* of crime. This thesis tries to redress that balance and considers the adolescent as a victim by and of teenage peers, addressing the notion of the adolescent as an offender and focussing on what controls, if any, are in place to regulate that violent offending.

The dominant trend within the social sciences is to look at children ‘from the outside’. They are traditionally ‘objects’ rather than ‘subjects’ of study and occupy a ‘non-person’ status within society (Blitzer, 1991). However, there are many problems that affect children as much as they do adults, and one example is crime. We have all been

through childhood, many of us have experienced some level of crime in childhood, so why is there a propensity to ignore it? The victimisation of young people is for some reason trivialised, as if it were of less consequence. It is almost a denial of our own past; events that happen early on in life can and do have an effect in later life, yet there is a reluctance to acknowledge this. This thesis gives the adolescents 'a voice' and the individuals who contributed to it were treated as 'subjects' rather than 'objects'.

Although a number of authors (Blitzer, 1991; Anderson et al., 1994; Hartless et al., 1995; Goodey, 1996) have expressed a need to examine childhood and adolescence in order to understand the fear of crime and victimisation, the topics have still not been examined thoroughly. This thesis attempts to understand experiences of victimisation and opinions about crime as they were encountered by a group of teenagers in a rural school at one particular point in time.

A number of important objectives can be reached if research is extended into childhood and adolescence. Research into bullying and violence amongst school pupils might help to reduce the problem, and I shall argue that schools facing the problems studied in this thesis could potentially benefit from its findings.

It would have been preferable to compare a rural school with an urban one. However, mine was a labour intensive project in which it was necessary to build trust with the subjects and gain an intimate knowledge of the area. Such a comparison was not feasible within the practical constraints of a PhD. At the same time, I was mindful that there is an extensive body of secondary literature on urban delinquency and schooling to draw comparisons with and I shall make use of it where appropriate.

I focussed on violence between adolescents, considering a number of general questions throughout: how is it that adolescent victimisation is nullified through recategorisation?; what, in the absence of conventional formal controls, regulates and shapes such victimisation; how – if at all – and in what forms – does it come before the adult gaze; how is it interpreted; what consequences flow from it?; and what are the relations between violence and bullying? I shall now explain how these ideas were formulated into key concepts and research questions.

Conceptual Paradigms – The Aims and Objectives of the Research

Although a number of concepts were addressed and examined, the expanse of the subject and limitations of length made it difficult to conduct a ‘traditional’ literature review. The process of fieldwork for this thesis began rather slowly and I shall expand on this in the methods chapter. Nonetheless, for the purpose of clarification with regard to the literature consulted for this research it is an important point which must be borne in mind.

I was interested in a number of key areas within criminology and whilst deciding exactly what I wanted to research I read widely. I found myself increasingly interested in rural sociology, victimology, juvenile delinquency, the sociology of education, gender, masculinity, violence, bullying and sub-cultural theory. I knew I wanted to study something which could possibly encompass all of these elements, but I was unsure as to what this should be. Consequently I was becoming influenced and inspired by a number of key texts, from a variety of academic disciplines, which I used to inform the thesis. This did result in an ongoing problem with theoretical eclecticism, which I am mindful of. Nonetheless, if the reader takes this into account then hopefully they will understand the difficulties I had in focussing this work, a matter that I will address later on in the thesis.

Once I was in the field the focus of the research emerged. I soon found that the literature was actually thin in a number of the key areas I now wanted to consider. As the research developed and the main conceptual focus of the thesis emerged it became apparent that a number of key arguments, raised through the process of the interviews, were largely unexplored within existing literature. Thus, I wanted to fuse such areas together within the thesis. Consequently I will highlight pivotal texts from which I drew comparisons and formed concrete aims and objectives.

I propose to discuss a number of the most important theoretical and substantive texts in order to illuminate the conceptual framework applied in this research: they include the role of the community in a rural context; the workings of social class; the character of the school as an institution; bullying; the adolescent as a victim; men and boys as victims; the limits of moral conduct and the regulation of violence; the social

organisation of adolescent groups; the importance of peers and the significance of gender.

I will now present a general tour of this previous research in these key areas and highlight a number of pivotal studies that illuminated aspects I found for writing up the thesis. Other relevant literature will be referred to and documented throughout the thesis as it progresses, whereby I shall expand on the pivotal texts to demonstrate further how I formed my arguments.

The Role of Community – A Rural Context

The first theoretical lens through which the research was focussed is the rural context and its omission from previous criminological research, as Moody (1999) argues:

“The criminological tradition has offered little of theoretical significance in its analysis of crime in rural areas. Attempts to explain the distinctions in crime rates and also in rural residents’ perceptions of crime have fallen back on global explanations and have failed to present a more incisive view which is attuned to rural/urban differences. While problems persist in defining the rural and in describing the variety of rural domains, much more could be done by criminologists to illuminate this forgotten terrain...rurality has something of significance to offer criminology. Sadly, however, criminology has offered little in return.” (p. 23-4)

Nonetheless, eleven million people, over a fifth of the population of England, live and work in rural areas. Despite some of the stereotypes associated with rural life, twenty five per cent of those people live in or on the margins of poverty (ACRE, 2004). Unemployment, low wages, housing shortages and substance misuse are common. Yet it is on urban issues that academics and policy makers tend to concentrate, and the history of criminology is itself rooted in the city:

“The interpretation of youthful misbehaviour and law-breaking as a serious threat to the social order can be traced to the moral panic about juvenile gangs in the early nineteenth century. As a result of abandonment, unemployment and the excitement of the city, an increasing number of children spent much of their time on the streets” (Muncie, 1984, p.34).

Cities are synonymous with criminality, anonymity and freedom of movement. They are, in short, regarded as criminogenic, and violent crime is seldom researched in a rural location. The setting for this thesis is a small town in Cornwall. One could argue that a town is an urban space and this research was conducted in an urban space in a rural

setting, but I will demonstrate how the relevance of the special location of the school and its surrounding community emerged as a key variable.

Because the social and economic reality of rural life has been somewhat neglected, a number of erroneous assumptions about rural England have crept into the literature:

“It would be misleading to say that rural England has undergone no social change at all, but it is nevertheless true that over a long period of years change has been slow, and has failed to alter the essential social structure...In other words, speaking generally, we may say that rural society has been characterized by a low degree of social change whilst modern urban society has undergone a high degree of social change.” (Mitchell, 1950, p. 81)

I would argue that this observation is still valid in the town I studied. Traditional values and family and kinship networks remain highly influential.

The very problem of defining rurality has also helped to confound analysis. In his research of rural Scotland, Anderson (1999) demonstrates how a seemingly straightforward concept can become difficult to define once the boundaries between urban and rural are explored:

“Areas can be defined as rural in a number of ways- for example, on the basis of settlements below a certain size, population density or employment in ‘rural’ activities such as agriculture” (p. 46)

Population density is probably the most widely used measure of rurality (Martin et al, 2000) which, in addition to distinguishing urban from rural areas can be used to discriminate between different types of rural areas. In an attempt to clarify definitions of what is ‘rural’, the Countryside Agency (2004) commissioned a consultation and concluded that the definition of rural should apply to any settlement with a population of less than 10,000. It then proposed yet further sub-classifications based on population density. I do not myself wish to enter into debates concerning such definitions of the urban and the rural. The town in this study had a population of 7,500, and it was an urban space. However, its size fell under the Countryside Agency’s definition of ‘rural’ and such small places have not fully been studied in the past. There are quite good reasons to argue that my site had a rural dimension, and it was certainly the case that describing it in this fashion aided analysis in a very practical manner.

The research for this thesis was inspired by the techniques of the Chicago School. Studies including Suttles’ (1968) *The Social Order of the Slum* and Whyte’s (1993)

Street Corner Society, along with other classic urban sociological studies, advocated that a concentrated observation of small societies would lead to a better analysis of community. Focussing on the school within the town for this research enabled an understanding of the wider community and how its views permeate the boundaries of the school. This thesis applies the principles of the Chicago School methodology to the analysis of rural sociology But I also had a personal stake in the thesis, having grown up in the countryside and having an interest in rural issues. I could exploit my own biographical knowledge and competences to explore the role a small town community has in influencing relationships and networks

The importance of the wider community in forming opinions is documented in existing research for example in *Code of the Street*, Anderson (1999) argues:

“For whether a certain child gets picked on may well depend not just on the reputation of the child but, equally important, on how “bad” the child’s family is known to be. How many people the child can gather together for the purposes of defense or revenge often emerges as a critical issue. Thus social relations can become practical matters of personal defense.” (p. 42)

His research was conducted in an urban setting in the United States of America but I wanted to consider whether such observations permeate rural areas, especially in a town of seven thousand people where everyone knows everyone else. Did a child get bullied at school because of some perceived reputation within the surrounding community?

Another key text was Elias and Scotson’s (1994) *The Established and the Outsiders* which invited me to try partially to replicate their work but also to gain an adolescent’s perspective on events. Elias and Scotson state in their work:

“Children learned the summary rejection of Estate people from their parents and being more outspoken and ruthless in such matters used it as a weapon against Estate children at school. Rejecting gossip and discrimination which at first may have been confined to adults hardened as one generation followed the other because children learned the discriminating attitudes and beliefs early in life. The relative “oldness” of the tradition, the fact that it was handed on from parents to children and again to their children when they grew up strengthened and deepened the effect which their communal character had on rejecting gossip, group prejudice, group discrimination and the beliefs which they embodied; it increased their rigidity, their axiomatic character and their imperviousness to counter- arguments based on factual evidence.”
(1994, p. 97)

In this study behaviour was learned from the families and the wider community, and I wanted to see if younger generations expressed ‘learned’ opinions from adults in a

similar vein, and indeed, this thesis will show that many of the views the pupils expressed had been learned from their parents.

Elias and Scotson (1994) describe how the families in the community they studied operated a 'ranking' system:

"The "ranking of families" in Winston Parva...played a central part in every department of the community life. It had an influence on the membership of religious and political associations. It played a part in the grouping of people in pubs and clubs. It affected the grouping of adolescents and penetrated the schools. In fact "ranking of families" and "status order" are perhaps rather too narrow expressions for what one actually observed. They can easily make us forget that higher status requires for its maintenance higher resources of power as well as distinction of conduct and belief which can be handed on, and that it has often to be fought for; they make us forget that lower status, to put it bluntly, can go hand in hand with degradation and suffering. Differences in status and ranking are often demonstrated as facts but rarely explained."
(Elias and Scotson, 1994, p.148)

I shall expand on these findings, and demonstrate the ranking and status systems in operation within a small rural comprehensive school, arguing that the maintenance of the resulting hierarchy is the most important element within that particular school. Those systems were also influenced by the wider community and echo other observations made by Elias and Scotson:

"Community held beliefs are often impervious to any evidence which contradicts them or to arguments which puts them in the wrong simply because they are shared by many people with whom one is in close communication. Their communal character makes it appear that they must be true particularly if one has been brought up with them from early childhood in a closely knit group where the belief is taken for granted and even more so if one's parents and grandparents too have been brought up with it. In that case the feeling that the belief is true may become almost ineradicable; it may persist as a strong feeling even if one has come to the conclusion, on a more rational level, that the belief is wrong and has come to reject it." (1994, p.98)

Tönnies' distinction between the ideal types of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) played a part. Human history, he said, was a movement from community to association:

"*Gemeinschaft* is old; *Gesellschaft* is new as a name as well as a phenomenon. All praise of rural life has pointed out that the *Gemeinschaft* among people is stronger there and more alive, it is the lasting and genuine form of living together. In contrast to *Gemeinschaft*, *Gesellschaft* is transitory and superficial. Accordingly, *Gemeinschaft* should be understood as a mechanical aggregate and artefact." (Tönnies, 1974, p. 8)

He argues that the demise and loss of community result from the effects of industrialisation, urbanisation and the growth of capitalism. *'Gemeinschaft'* and *'Gesellschaft'* are on a continuum, both can co-exist to a certain degree at the same time, and both were to be discovered in this thesis. For example, during the summer months the town studied was very much a tourist attraction that was influenced by visitors from the wider society. Yet, the original, core community remains and still upholds its values and traditions.

Further thought on the problem of ignoring the 'phenomenon' of the rural was prompted by Arensberg and Kimball's (1974) work on Ireland:

"Great centralised bureaucracies have grown up in each country – even in one so small as Ireland. If they are to be effective, they must know the societies they serve. For them an understanding of local scenes and local social organisations, so remote from bureaucratic headquarters and national capitals, becomes more and more essential." (p. 54)

I shall show that 'bullying' was endemic even though the school had installed all the government's recommended anti-bullying policies, I would argue that the size and location of the community in which the school was located had a fundamental impact on this. All of the pupils interviewed could recite the 'tell all' policy which was in operation at the school after the DfES¹ made it a legal requirement to have a written anti-bullying policy in place at every school in England in Wales in 1999 (Ananiadou and Smith, 2002). Nonetheless, incidents that occurred at the school would often get 'pushed out' or dispersed geographically into the wider community and away from the school itself, complicating the job of policing acts of violence and bullying by and against pupils. I would hold that there is a strong argument to be made that the wider impact of crime in small, rural communities merits criminological attention.

Apart from local county council crime surveys and statistics from the Devon and Cornwall police service about the general area, the extent of violent crime within this town has not been mapped. This thesis provides an analysis of the localised crime problem through the eyes of the adolescents who took part in the research and goes a little way to remedying that problem.

¹ The Department for Education and Skills

Class

The class dimension emerged as a key variable that was of particular interest in relation to the rural setting of the research. As I have remarked, the majority of previous research on crime has been centred on urban contexts where it is seen in part as a problem of 'local incivilities' such as dilapidation, street gangs and other signals of a hostile environment (Crawford, 1990), encapsulated in the 'broken windows' thesis (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). The 'broken windows' thesis suggests that poor street lighting, vandalism and boarded up buildings affect local perceptions of crime problems. But my research was conducted primarily in a rural location where matters are quite different. The setting for this research, as I shall demonstrate, was a picturesque seaside town. The residents were proud of the locality and made the effort to preserve the history and heritage of the area. This was an intervention that was carried out throughout the county of Cornwall.

In the 1990s, Cornwall was given 'Objective One' status and was awarded £339 million from the European Commission for the purpose of regeneration.² (www.cornwall.gov.uk) The county of Cornwall has paradoxical features. On the one hand, it is a 'rural idyll' with picturesque coastlines, moorlands and relatively unspoilt villages. On the other, it is acknowledged to be one of the poorest areas in the United Kingdom. Therefore, one could argue that the poverty in the area was not represented through 'local incivilities' such as boarded up buildings and poor street lighting. As I will demonstrate, the town used once to be a vital part in the development of the industrial revolution. Unlike other areas of the United Kingdom which once had thriving industries and have now become urban wastelands littered with 'local incivilities', it possesses a picturesque backdrop which obscured the poverty. As a result, subsequent regeneration in areas such as tourism and organic farming were relatively 'straightforward' and Cornwall was awarded a mid-term performance bonus of £17 million from the European Commission in recognition of the successful regeneration projects in March 2004 (www.cornwall.gov.uk). Thus even though it relies on a substantial grant to help to preserve the heritage of the county, due to the locality the economic plight of Cornwall is not immediately apparent to visitors to the

² Chapter 3 documents the history of the town and the subsequent recession of the County of Cornwall. Therefore, this history will not be explained here. Nonetheless, the reader must be made aware of the fact that Cornwall has been in economic decline for a number of years and the funding it has received for regeneration was necessary for the survival of the County financially.

area. Furthermore, the town in this study received approximately £5 million as part of a scheme to renovate 'priority buildings' which were deemed as essential to preserve. Poverty undoubtedly remained, but it was not quite the urban poverty familiar to sociologists and criminologists.

The school's pupils generally agreed that they felt safe in their home town. They did not think that there was a crime problem on any scale or that teenagers with 'nothing to do' were the biggest problem. Problems lay elsewhere and caution was expressed about what happened elsewhere, beyond the town, 'up country'. All the students told me how they would not want to go to school in London because the schools there were viewed as too big, with huge bullying problems and a lot of violence and trouble. My research was conducted after the Damilola Taylor³ murder, a dramatic event that had concentrated the public mind, and the pupils were adamant that such a crime 'could never happen here'.

The town in which the school was located was not marked by 'local incivilities' or the fear of crime and it was interesting that the pupils believed that it was a haven, a belief that was consistent with Elias and Scotson's (1994) observation that communities may be marked by a 'them and us' mentality, 'us' being safe and respectable, 'them' being outsiders to the area who were viewed with suspicion. The majority of pupils took it that they would probably have to move away in order to go to university or to further their career prospects, but all of them spoke about returning to where they grew up. In these senses the rural was the safe, decent and 'established' and the urban was the dangerous and discredited 'outside'.

The importance of class has been pivotal to the sociology of education. Typical is the following remark:

"Many sociologists have commented on the tendency of predominantly middle class teachers to make a judgement on pupils from poor families based on their background and appearance rather than their behaviour, especially if siblings in the school have already caused trouble." (Devlin, 1995, p.76)

³ On 27th November 2000, Damilola Taylor was on his way home after finishing a computer class at the new Peckham Library in South East London when he was brutally attacked by a gang of youths. He died on the way to hospital from the stab wound he had received and was 10 years of age.

Social class was otherwise in this thesis. Divisions within the school studied were certainly constructed on a class basis, with the middle class children dominating the school, a situation in stark contrast to many of the inner city, highly urban schools which have been studied in the sociology of education (Burgess, 1986; Corrigan, 1979; Delamont, 1983; Hargreaves, et al., 1975; Woods, 1979).

Willis' (1977) *Learning to Labour* describes how 'working class boys get working class jobs', arguing that working-class sub-cultures are better explained as 'counter cultures' which evolve as cultures of opposition to the dominant middle-class values of 'academic success'. For males, these counter cultures, found in the school and the work place, are not able to replace the middle-class ethics, but they enable the working-class boy to survive. They emphasise masculinity, toughness, aggression and sexist attitudes. The school's central values are imported from outside the school and are inadvertently sustained within it. Willis found a specific deviant culture which involved opposition to teachers and school rules, to conformist pupils and to exams. Members subscribing to it placed high value on 'having a laugh' and were largely aimless, disruptive, frequently absent and always looking forward to the excitement gained outside school. Willis found that the shop floor culture they duly entered was similar to that of the school sub-culture of which they had been members, the school having unintentionally reproduced their work ethics. He concluded that it was not the school which promotes the deviant counter culture. Those who subscribe to it have absorbed specific ideas about the world of work from others. School was the preparation seen to be irrelevant to their futures as tough manual workers.

In the school studied for this thesis, however, 'the lads' and those from the working class did not 'win' and, if anything, were kept in line to conform to a hierarchy within the school. This particular school was neither anti-middle class nor anti-achievement. If anything, one had to be from the middle class and an achiever in order to 'win' socially within the informal world of the pupils. And that hierarchy was reinforced by the manner in which external and internal structures coalesced within a closed community. The world of the school and town took the form of '*Gemeinschaft*', in which people knew one another well, and where many teachers had taught current pupils' parents at the school. There was little evidence of a proletariat and properties of the wider community swamped the lesser class dynamics of the school.

The School as an Institution

“One often forgotten, though central, feature of schooling is that it is *compulsory*. While discussions of the development of compulsory education since 1870 are frequently couched in liberal and democratic arguments to do with the beneficial effects of the dissemination of literacy and knowledge, we should not forget that educational institutions also contain a real substratum of coercion. Today, although schooling generally operates with the consent of the pupils, if that consent is withdrawn, school can be experienced as a much more coercive and total institution” (Muncie, 1984, p.135).

The school itself had a distinctive ‘underlife’. It was as if it were a total institutional container where adolescents gathered to spend long periods of time, resonating aspects of Goffman’s work on *Asylums*. The pupils had to go to school every day, follow a set timetable, wear a uniform, conform to rules and regulations, have nominal equality of members of years and an unbridgeable gulf between staff and pupils. There were elaborate patterns and codes that the pupils followed to maintain elements of ‘self’ whilst being educated and I shall document these throughout the thesis.

But the school was not quite total. It was not a boarding establishment and the pupils were able to avoid surveillance and sanctions. For example, they knew where there were blind corners on the CCTV where they could smoke a cigarette. Additionally the justifications of fighting as ‘play’ resulted in few or no sanctions being administered, even if an ‘accident’ that required medical attention occurred. Accounts of how the pupils would adjust their dress, such as the tying of ties in an unconventional manner so they would appear to be different from the prescribed mode, were petty instances of licensed deviation that ‘bent’ the rules against the authority of the institution, and the justifications for this behaviour are laid out in the chapter on violence, along with the ‘rules’ one followed to allow such practices.

From a criminogenic and social control perspective, the school, like the family, was an important socialising institution in the prevention of delinquent behaviour. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that in comparison to the family, the school may be better equipped to provide social control. And others have stated that the school is the key site of successful socialisation. Humphries, for example, argues:

“The state schooling system was conceived as potentially the most powerful instrument with which to inculcate in successive generations of working-class

children values and reproduction and reinvigoration of an industrial-capitalist society. It was not designed to impart literacy, skills and knowledge as ends in themselves. Instead learning was conceived as a means to an end – it made the pupil more amenable to a socialisation process, through which his or her character and future lifestyle might be shaped” (1981, p.31).

Several researchers have found that poor educational achievement and school failure are strongly and consistently related to juvenile offending (Hirschi, 1969; West & Farrington, 1973; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Dishion, 1991; Devlin, 1997; Schreck, 2003). It might lead one to expect that those who fulfilled the above criteria would have perpetrated the violent acts committed within the school. But the contrary was the case. Confounding criminological orthodoxy, I shall show that the achievers and people of standing were the *bullies*.

Many incidents that occurred within the school were often grouped under the category of bullying or play, but could also be seen as criminal acts. A focus on violence helped to uncover what criminal activities received these labels. Of course, at stake was the issue of the defining audience. To a teacher the violent act could be ‘bullying’; to a police officer it could be ‘criminality’ and to the pupil it could be ‘play’. It was important to establish who was doing the defining on what occasions and to deconstruct the elaborate justifications for applying these labels.

Schools can, and have, been studied in order to uncover patterns of delinquency and victimisation. Tattum (1997) demonstrated how victimisation is one of the most common worries of children transferring from primary to secondary schools. Victimisation was rife in the school under study and the existing ‘tell all’ policy and anti-bullying interventions were well rehearsed but ineffective. It was just so in the American schools studied by Anderson and his colleagues:

“Observing the interactions of adolescents in school and talking with them reveal how important school authority is to young people, but too often the authority figures are viewed as alien and unreceptive. The teachers and administrators are concerned that their own authority be taken seriously, and claims to authority are always up for grabs – if not subject to out-and-out challenge.” (Anderson, 1999, p. 96)

Although Anderson’s work was carried out in an urban school in the United States, his findings can be applied both to the school I studied and to other institutions in the

United Kingdom. Rule observance, interpretation and enforcement became analytically salient, and I was guided in part by Hargreaves, who said that: .

“Unlike the rules in the criminological model, the rules in school are not for the most part written down in a carefully codified form. A few rules, such as ‘Pupils must not drop litter in the school’, are sometimes written down in a formal way and a list of such rules may be posted on the notice board in each classroom. These rules may also be reaffirmed verbally by the headteacher during assembly when the rule is being broken on a wide scale by the pupils. But these lists of rules are very brief and evidently contain only a minute portion of the rules governing conduct in school. Since most of the rules are not written down, our obvious next step was to ask the members, both teachers and pupils to tell us the rules.” (Hargreaves, 1975, p. 33)

I too wanted to know what rules the pupils governed themselves by and I sought to deconstruct the pupils’ terminology in use to try to understand the informal and formal, specific and general management of deviance:

“...schools contain some general rules, which we called institutional rules, which are in force for most of the time in most situations (assembly, corridors, playground, dining-hall, etc), obvious example being rules about clothing and appearance...other rules apply only in certain situations, such as the rule against eating sweets which applies in assembly and the classroom, but not in the playground.” (Hargreaves, 1975, p. 92)

This highlights the complexity of “rules” which everyone involved within the school setting knows, understands and complies with, without constant repetition. The pupils understood these “rules” just as much as did the teachers, and I believe that this thesis will expose, say, the contradictions surrounding the labelling of the ‘play’ fight.

The importance of ‘communities’ is well documented within the sociological and criminological literature. An example is provided here:

“...communities are boundary maintaining: each has a specific territory in the world as a whole, not only in the sense that it occupies a defined region of geographical space but also in the sense that it takes over a particular niche in what might be called cultural space and develops its own “ethos” or “way” within that compass. Both of these dimensions of group space, the geographical and the cultural, set the community apart as a special place and provide an important point of reference for its members.”
(Erikson, 1966, p. 9-10)

This thesis will use this argument presented by Erikson and demonstrate the role of the friendship groups within the “school community”. It will demonstrate the importance of the role of the school in the pupils’ lives and will consider the significance of its role in relation to acts of bullying and violence.

Bullying

Bullying research was pioneered by Olweus (1993). Subsequent studies have replicated versions of the bullying questionnaire he designed to measure its extent within schools. Studies in the UK have consistently found that a substantial number of primary and secondary school children are the victims of bullying. The first large-scale survey of bullying in English schools by Whitney and Smith (1993) involved over 6700 pupils, 2600 from primary schools and 4100 from secondary schools in Sheffield, and it confirmed that bullying was extensive. Twenty seven per cent of primary school pupils and ten per cent of secondary school pupils reported that they were being bullied "sometimes" or more frequently. Furthermore, ten per cent of primary school pupils and four per cent of secondary school pupils reported being bullied 'once a week' or more often. Although levels of bullying varied from school to school, they did not find any primary school where fewer than nineteen per cent of the population reported having been bullied at some time during the term, with name-calling, being physically hit and being threatened as the most common types of direct bullying, and being isolated, being left out of groups, and having rumours spread as the most common types of indirect bullying. Research has shown that children with special educational needs are substantially more at risk of being involved either as perpetrators or as victims (Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993).

More recent UK surveys confirm similar rates of severe and persistent bullying to those of the Sheffield study. Glover et al (2000), in a survey of 4,700 pupils in twenty five secondary schools, found that seventy five per cent of pupils reported that they had been bullied 'sometimes'; whilst more severe and repeated bullying was reported by approximately seven per cent of pupils. Through surveys and interviews carried out in 1996, 1998 and 2000 with over 7000 respondents aged between thirteen and eighteen years, Katz et al (2001) found that more than half of all respondents had been bullied at some time, with over ten per cent reporting that they had been bullied severely. Only about half the young people interviewed said that they believed their school's anti-bullying policy was 'working'. Additionally, these studies suggest variable clusters of bullying with less severe (but nevertheless distressing) bullying affecting a wider population of pupils. For example, Katz et al found that twenty per cent of respondents said that they had been bullied 'because they were good at their work'. Gill and

Hearnshaw (1997) said that eighty three per cent of teachers thought that violence was a 'serious threat' to staff morale and forty per cent considered that schools were no longer safe places in which to work. Finally, Neill (2001) noted the widespread incidence of what he termed 'unacceptable pupil behaviour', behaviour that included lower-level disruption of lessons through interruptions and refusals to work, as well as high-level disruption, such as drug dealing, threats of violence and possession of offensive weapons.

Bullying and violence have clearly become established problems within the education system of England and Wales. The majority of research in the area is quantitative in design and based on self-report, closed questionnaires. I thought it might be illuminating to take a different stance, and, rather than look at yet another set of numbers, discuss the embedded meanings of bullying. My focus on one school, from a qualitative perspective, provides a contrast to existing quantitative studies, and I believe it is justified methodologically by what Stacey said some time ago (1969):

“Statistical generalisations about the whole country are important to place the locality in a national pattern. A local study equally shows some of the limitations of such overall generalizations. Non-statistical national studies on particular topics are also needed to illuminate the local incidence. These methods of data collection and analysis are not alternatives. All are needed to inform each other.” (p.145)

The Adolescent as a Victim

Yet another aim of this thesis is to address the notion of the adolescent as a victim of crime. As a whole, adolescent victimisation is: “...an area of victimization that is remarkably ill-served by the official statistics.” (Anderson, et al., 1994, p.9). There has, to be sure, been a growing body of work on children as victims (Feyerham & Hindelang, 1974; Garofalo, 1979; Finkelhor, 1979; Morgan, 1988; Best, 1990; Morgan & Zedner, 1991; Walker, 1992; Abrahams, 1994; Anderson et al., 1994); but its focus has primarily been on issues of child abuse, incest and the victimisation of children in domestic and institutional settings. The categorisation of adolescents, in short, has often resulted in the belief that 'crime' was not a problem that affected the younger generations. The adolescent as a victim has tended to be an overlooked concept and becoming a victim at the hands of peers has been almost ignored. As Goodey (1997) argues:

“Rather than focus on adulthood, research should look at that period which is central to the formation of the individual’s social and sexual identity; childhood and, specifically, adolescence” (p.414)

I hope partially to rectify that lack. With conflicting views about childhood and adolescence, I decided that the only way to understand the extent of adolescent peer group victimization was to ask pupils in the eleven to sixteen age range if they had ever been a victim of crime at the hands of their peers.

There is another difficulty. Research into adolescence consistently discusses ‘adolescents’ as if they formed a distinctive group, underestimating generational differences. They are not so united. Indeed, I shall demonstrate not only the differences *between* the adolescent peer groups of the same age who were involved in this research but also generational differences *between* the year groups.

Crime is often carried out within the group: black men attacking black men (Stevens & Willis, 1979, Oliver, 1994, FitzGerald & Hale, 1996); males attacking males (Marsh, 1978; Archer, 1994; Polk, 1994; Graham, 2003); and poor people attacking other poor people. This study expands on that idea. Throughout the interviews it became apparent that an eleven year old had a very different concept of the moral rules surrounding violence from that of a sixteen year old.

I had initially wanted to focus on bullying, distinguishing between perpetrators and victims, but when bullying occurs it is actually often very difficult to establish quite who is or is not a victim. Bullying is a subject that pupils find difficult to talk about, especially if they are involved in it themselves. Yet student narratives of violence often led to the topic of bullying, and I was able subsequently to apply ideas of violent victimisation to bullying.

Men and Boys as Victims

Men as victims has been yet another rather under researched area, but boys as victims are even less well understood. Gender specific analyses have been developed by feminist criminologists like Stanko to explain women’s greater fear of crime, but the tendency to associate victimisation with vulnerability tends to obscure the fact that men

also suffer as victims and more commonly so than women. To illustrate this point it is again worth quoting Goodey:

“Newburn and Stanko (1994) suggest that male victimization is largely under-researched because of the belief that men are unwilling to admit their vulnerability and, in respect of this, research on male fear continues to be sidelined. Similarly, when men *do* reveal experiences of victimization and fear, these are often supplanted by attention to women’s experiences. One can readily understand the research focus on women in light of their heightened and pervasive experience of victimization and fear. However, to ignore the male experience is to deny an insight into male vulnerability and, correspondingly, excludes an innovative appraisal of men as ‘aggressors’” (Goodey, 1997, p.414, original emphasis).

It has been argued that expectations of how to perform masculinity inhibit men from expressing their reactions to victimisation. A central question must be addressed though, and that is, what are the sources of this conformity to masculine ideals and identity? Feminist criminologists talk of a gendered socialisation process but have a tendency to focus on the subordination of women within a patriarchal society. To redress the balance, adolescent boys needed to be considered and it has to be asked why they are not more fearful of crime, or in this case violent incidents, especially when they have the highest risk of actually being involved in such conflicts.

I shall show that boys perpetrated the majority of violent incidents between the pupils. I shall also show that the male pupils who admitted to being victims of bullying and/or violence often said that it was the first time they had spoken about their experiences in such detail. There are taboos to be explored, and I have exposed them a little.

The Limits of Moral Conduct and the Regulation of Violence –

The Rituals of the Fight

The analysis of victimisation, violence and bullying led straight to a consideration of the limits of moral conduct and how a particular age group, the eleven to sixteen year olds, made decisions about conflict. Of especial interest were the unwritten moral codes/boundaries that regulated violent confrontations within the school. When does ‘play’ become a ‘fight’? What is a ‘fair’ fight? What rules are followed? Who fights whom? Does anyone ever stop the fight? Does anyone ever tell? What age dimensions are there? Does fighting occur within or between year groups? Do girls and boys fight their own gender and/or each other? These are interesting questions which led in their

turn to an enhanced understanding of the severity, organisation, patterns, distribution and regulation of violence within the particular school studied in this thesis.

It has been argued that violence and fighting more often than not involve highly ritualistic patterns and social displays:

“By turning the whole conflict business into an aggressive ritual, fights become stylized games and displays...Most species have patterns of attack behaviour which are generally thought to be, at least in part, innate and don't have to be learned. What ritualization does is to maintain these responses but cut them short or modify them so that they become relatively harmless.”
(Marsh, 1978, p.34)

It was just so at the school centred in this thesis and the symbolic and contained dimensions of conflict extended to the use made of a designated fight venue, in the manner described by Marsh:

“Aggro doesn't actually require any element of territoriality at all. But where special kinds of territory can be established the ritualization of aggression in man can be made more easy to achieve.” (1978, p. 103)

The fight had symbolic 'power'. Feminist criminologists have commented on the links between masculinity and status, and their observation certainly highlights the character of gendered relations at the school:

“Aggression is a central attribute of masculinity and in a culture where male status is dependent on superiority and dominance, fighting prowess is crucial to that status.” (Lees, 1993, p. 227)

The 'rules' and social regulation of fighting have previously been documented in the criminological literature (for example, Coser, 1956, Patrick, 1973, Marsh, 1978), as have deviant subcultures and gangs, and the way in which members normalize and control behaviour (for example, Suttles, 1968, Whyte, 1993, Anderson, 1999). but the regulation of adolescent violence within schools has not been widely considered, and this is a gap I have tried to bridge, particularly in the context of how violence may grow.

Farrington states that:

“An important problem for criminological researchers is to investigate how, when and under what circumstances bullying escalates into criminal violence and to identify promising opportunities for intervention” (1993, p.385).

The Social Organisation of Adolescent Groups – The Importance of Rank, Status and Hierarchy

The importance of ranking and rating to gain prestige amongst peers is well established, (for example Anderson, 1999; Connell, 2000; Whyte, 1993). This thesis is itself lodged in just such an analysis of the social and subcultural organisation of adolescence. I have looked at the subcultures embedded in the school asking, for example, how one was to be identified as a member of the ‘in’ group or the ‘out’ group? What did one have to do to become a member? Can one change his or her status and social group or was it ascribed to him or her at the outset and remained fixed throughout one’s school career?

But sociologists have also attended to conflict as *functional*. Violence between groups may help to induce cohesion and structure:

“...social conflict helps to structure the larger social environment by assigning position to the various subgroups within the system and by helping them to define the power relations between them.” (Coser, after Simmel, 1956, p155).

Furthermore, research has shown that institutions like schools have a distinct culture which is upheld and maintained by its members:

“Most institutions also have an underlife, defining other forms of moral career with other occasions of hazard and other ways of rendering honour and marking reputation. In the underlife official values are denied.”
(Marsh, et al., 1978, p. 19)

Within this school an underlife and status hierarchy ran parallel to the official values. Such hierarchies have long been acknowledged in existing research and in the research of Coretta Phillips (2003) in particular. Her “Who’s Who in the Pecking Order?” documents the retrospective accounts of girls at a higher education college who recalled their experiences of violence and hierarchy whilst at school. This thesis expands on that research by considering in great detail and context the role of violence in the day-to-day lives of pupils. Fighting has traditionally been documented as a means of obtaining status:

“A desire for status- status of any kind, won at any price – was also noticeable among the gang boys.” (Patrick, 1973), p. 94)

This thesis supports that earlier work, but it also argues that the desire for status among boys and men was important for girls. That desire in effect engendered and confirmed patterns and processes of interaction and role-allocation, through the symbolic mechanisms described first by Parsons and Bales and then, later, by Erikson. Parsons and Bales said that:

“The result of interaction over time is the construction of a symbol system common to the participants. Each can manipulate certain symbols and behave in ways which give him more or less successful predictions of the way the other will manipulate them, and behave. They now have a common culture. The common culture then acts as a control on behaviour, and vice versa, just as in the individual case. But the common culture also requires maintenance, reconstruction, and so on – it requires overt interaction in real space and time, with all the physical constrictions so imposed, in order to be built, and in order to survive and grow.” (Parsons & Bales, 1955, p. 301)

And Kai Erikson’s (1966) study *Wayward Puritans* observed:

“If a community were able simply to lop off its most marginal people – banishing them to another part of the world, for instance, or executing them by the carload – it is unlikely that the volume of deviation in the community would really be reduced.” (p. 26)

The role of the school and the significance of the peer group will be analysed using these ideas. The power of the peer group has long been cited as a rationale for a plethora of adolescent problem behaviour, yet the true extent of the power of the peer group has not been uncovered. Some researchers have even highlighted the positive aspects of peer relations within schools. For example, Becker et al (1968) describe some of the positive aspects of the development of cultural values among students. He argues that sub-cultures develop best where a number of people are faced with a common problem and interest in the effort to find solutions. There is intensive interaction among students wondering what to learn; the worth of particular courses and how to deal with particular members of staff. The culture that arises amongst pupils provides them with a perspective and a pattern of responses; it provides a system of social support and patterns of shared understandings. Student culture is the corner stone of many of the difficulties with students; it is one of the facts of life to which teachers must make some accommodation. Thus, this thesis demonstrates the role of the peer group at one particular school at a particular point in time and demonstrates its significance. Social order rested on a distinction between insiders and outsiders, the central and the marginal, and it was enforced. Marginal people were labelled the year group victims, or the unpopular people. This group was always present at the school in

every year. It was in that sense that bullying and violence, were parts of a complicated process to maintain boundaries a status hierarchy amongst the pupils, on the one hand, and the solidarity of the school as an establishment, on the other.

The Importance of Peers

The role of the peer group has been well documented in criminology, as Matza (1964) observes:

“Peers are for the sociologist what families are for the personality theorist. They represent the intimate setting within which delinquent impulses are transmitted and generated.” (p.19)

And peer culture now exists in what is thought to be a media-saturated world:

“Peer culture is now closely linked with mass communication. Mass culture generates images and interpretations of masculinity which flow chaotically into school life and are reworked by the pupils through everyday conversation, ethnic tensions in the playground, sexual adventures and so on.”

(Connell, 2000, p.162)

Yet in the *Gemeinschaftlich* Cornish town that is at the centre of this thesis, the community and extended family relations were highly influential and in some instances were more influential. I am mindful of the fact that, whilst criminology has had a long history of research into deviant subcultures, members of the ‘deviant’ group concerned have themselves been rarely consulted. This is a point raised by Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995):

“...sociological research has tended to be overtly theoretical in its treatment of youth subcultures and that, consequently, there has been no significant attempt to incorporate into the research process accounts produced by members of subcultures themselves.” (p.3)

Accordingly, I shall follow the grain of the pupils’ own accounts to disclose how their world was constructed.

I shall show how, within every year group, there was a popular group of pupils and an unpopular group, and an intermediate group between. The pupils likened the groupings to gangs and elaborately detailed how one became a member of the groups. As with the incidents of violence, there were unspoken, observed rules in play. There was an importance placed on an individual’s status within the year groups. These networks were talked about by every student interviewed and were used in defence of, for

example, practising the code of silence. The complex interactions were enlightening, although there were divisions within the years, the year group would unite and provide divisions between the years. Year nine was often cited as the troublesome year and the dominant year within the playground. Its members were the only year to have designated playground space, 'year nine land', the fight venue. Yet year divisions were forgotten when it came to questions of the 'them and us' of pupils and teachers. This was verified through the patterns of violence and universal practice of the code of silence. Such alliances were quite difficult to permeate but they revealed that one could not, for example, talk simply about 'adolescence' or 'year nine', but had instead to map complicated and influential divisions, groupings and unions. As I shall argue, knowledge of these friendship hierarchies and rankings was paramount to understanding incidents of violence and bullying.

In sum, this thesis will show the power of the peer group and the role it has in establishing and maintaining hierarchy and structure in a small rural comprehensive school at a particular point in time.

The Significance of Gender

The last area of theoretical literature on which I draw is gender. I have remarked on the question of gender in relation to victimisation and masculinity but it requires amplification. Feminist criminologists used to argue that girls are absent from the majority of delinquent studies and that there is a gap in research acknowledging the presence and the role of women (Heidensohn, 1996). I will demonstrate that the ritualistic roles assumed in, for example acts of violence, were performed by both male and female pupils. Rather than split the genders, this research considers this particular adolescent population as a united group. I will show how, regardless of gender, all pupils were involved in violence, bullying and the maintenance of a hierarchy and, in doing so, I hope partially to rectify the position described by Lees:

“Research on violent behaviour is prolific, but little is known about sex differences in attitudes to violence or how sex differences in socialisation can lead to the approval of violence. Views of violence are contradictory: it is both condoned and deplored.” (Lees, 1993, p. 228)

“While bullying and fighting by boys are recognized phenomena, investigation of the extent of girls' involvement in such activities has yet to be seriously undertaken.” (Lees, 1993, p. 281)

Lees (1993) further argued that; "...the way masculinity and femininity are constituted changes in different historical periods." (p. 301). My own contention would be that pupils still behaved in 'traditional' masculine and feminine ways, but that they were not in opposition all of the time. We shall see that the genders would work together to uphold a hierarchy of status and power. A number of key feminist arguments were constructed over twenty years ago and I would hope that this research adds to that literature and presents an updated picture of female interactions. This is consistent with the argument offered by McRobbie and Garber (1976);

"The important question then, may not be the absence or presence of girls in the male sub-cultures, but the complementary ways in which girls interact among themselves and with each other to form a distinctive culture of their own." (p.219)

I would argue that this was indeed the case with the female pupils at this school. The girls were very much present at all levels of friendship group and would still engage in 'feminine' activities such as shopping and hanging out around town. However, I would argue that by splitting the genders research has been focussed inappropriately. It is no longer a case of girls *versus* boys but of an *interconnectedness* of the genders in all aspects of their day-to-day lives.

Finally I will attend to the school's part in creating 'gender roles'. Connell (2000) argues:

"Educational institutions are gendered in multiple ways. Male staff predominate in higher education and in school administration, women staff predominate in kindergarten and elementary teaching. The knowledge conveyed to children is legitimated by patriarchal institutions, and some parts of it...virtually segregate youth on gender lines. Most educational authority is masculinized, and so are parts of the non-academic curriculum, such as competitive team sports. Gender relations among the children are a constant preoccupation of peer group life, ranging from terms of casual playground abuse ('fag', 'wimp') to elaborate dating rituals. These relations are constantly re-negotiated in the changing arena provided by the school." (p. 29)

This thesis highlights the significance of violence and bullying and explains the gender aspects of those phenomena within the context of the school setting.

Consequently, these key areas are how I formulated the theoretical position of this thesis. As I mentioned I will bring in further relevant literature through the chapters. I will now present the research questions explored for this thesis.

Research Questions

Four broad categories of question were explored in this thesis:

- 1. PATTERNS OF VIOLENCE.** Who tended to be the victims and or the perpetrators of acts of violence? What role did gender play in shaping experience and accounts of experience and did boys in this age group have particular difficulties in admitting to being victims, especially in a violent conflict situation? To what extent did girls commit violent acts?
- 2. RULES OF VIOLENCE.** When did 'play' become a fight? What was the moral order of the pupils in the classroom and the playground? Were any discernible rules followed? How much did all the pupils participate?
- 3. EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE.** How was crime perceived and experienced by this age group? What was the significance of growing up in a rural location to the experience of crime?
- 4. THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN REGULATING VIOLENCE.** What was the role of the school as a formal organisation? What strategies and legitimations of control did the teachers use? What was the overlap between informal and formal forms of social control? Were violent acts within the school perceived as such or are they dealt with under the larger umbrella of, say, bullying? What implications followed? Were peer group networks and subsequent friendship ideals more important to the individuals than the rules set out by the school?

The reader has to be made aware that these questions emerged during the process of the fieldwork and I shall discuss this evolution in the methods chapter. Nonetheless, these questions materialised as the key areas for exploration, and I shall now proceed to address them.

Concluding Remarks

This research is intended to contribute to academic theories about adolescents in their roles as victims, offenders, bystanders, witnesses, mediators and adjudicators; the sociology of gender, the sociology of education, criminology and victimology. It should add not only to a general understanding of the genesis and impact of youth crime but, more particularly, to the processes involved in 'bullying'; and the cultural construction of adolescence, bullying and the schooling experience. Bullying is often

used as a justification for school exclusions. but bullying was not the only problem. If anything it was a blanket term under which a host of other phenomena was clustered

This, in short, is a thesis about the policing of peer groups. It is my conclusion that 'play violence', 'real violence' and 'bullying' were to be understood as a means of reinforcing hierarchy and status amongst the pupils, and that they cannot be deciphered outside the informal and formal structures of pupil life. Bullying was a coercive enforcement of the stratification system and frontiers of an adolescent world, conducted not by outsiders but by insiders who had a stake in demarcating the outlines of prestige, authority and power. I shall now proceed to demonstrate how I came to form this judgement.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The introduction laid the foundations of the theoretical and conceptual paradigms employed in this thesis. This chapter will now document the research methods used. It will begin by setting the scene for the research, move on to explain the methodological framework in which the research was focussed, and consider the problems associated with researching the familiar. I shall attempt to discuss and justify the research methods and processes of analysing the data which were used

The Research Setting

The research was conducted primarily in a small comprehensive school in Cornwall. The fieldwork was carried out over a four-year period and consisted of interviews and observations. I carried out interviews with members of the public, the local youth worker, the police and the town councillors. However, due to the limitations of time and space, I focussed my analysis on the school, the pupils and the staff, interviewing thirty-three pupils and six members of staff.

The tables below show the demographics of the school.⁴ The first details the number and gender split of the pupils on the school roll. The second shows the number of staff employed and the breakdown of the different occupations and positions in the school.

⁴ It is important to note that at the time of the research there was not a single pupil at the school from an ethnic minority. This applied to the teaching staff as well. Furthermore within the town there were approximately five families from an ethnic minority who had no secondary school aged children. Therefore, this research looks at an exclusively white population, which was broadly consistent with the area studied. Non-white groups are under-represented in the Council area (0.69%), as is the case with Cornwall generally (0.54%) when compared with the national figure (5.49%). These figures were obtained from the local census data.

Figure 1. Pupils

	Male	Female	Total
Number of pupils on the school roll	354	314	668

Figure 2. Staff

Position within the school	Full Time	Part Time	Total
Teaching Staff	37	4	41
Learning Support Staff	5	13	18
Administrative Staff	0	7	7
ICT Technician	0	2	2
D&T Technician	0	1	1
Science Technician	0	1	1
Library Manager	1	0	1
Welfare Officer	1	0	1
Site Staff	1	1	2
Lunchtime Supervisors	0	7	7
Totals	45	36	81

In total there were 81 adults and 600 children, a 1:15 ratio for teacher: children and a 1:7 ratio for staff: children. Although the pupil/staff ratios were not uncommon in the area where the school was located; one can appreciate the small size of the school in comparison with many inner city comprehensives.

The Methodological Framework

The original, principal aim of the research had been to find out how adolescents in a small, rural comprehensive go about their day-to-day school life. I wanted, as it were, to walk the reader through a day at this particular school. In time, however, the aim shifted to learning about the display and regulation of violence and how it influenced and was influenced by bullying. It is important to note that these latter issues appeared only after access had been gained and the first run of interviews had been completed. I shall explain this development later in the section on access.

The methodological position adopted for the research could loosely be described as informed by ethnomethodology, a position christened by Harold Garfinkel (1967):

“Ethnomethodological studies analyse everyday activities as members’ methods for making those same activities visibly-rational-and reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e. ‘accountable’, as organisations of commonplace everyday activities. The reflexivity of that phenomenon is a singular feature of practical actions, of practical circumstances, of common sense knowledge of social structures, and of practical sociological reasoning.” (1967, p.vii)

I sensed that ethnomethodology would helpfully allow me to ‘step inside’ the world of the adolescents. This is consistent with the idea that an ethnographic researcher should be involved in the ongoing, daily world of the individuals being studied (Field, 2001), a position advocated by Goffman:

“...any group of persons – prisoners, primitives, pilots or patients – develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable and normal once you get close to it, and...a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject.” (1961, p.ix-x)

It is argued that the ethnographer’s research involves becoming a part of the ‘natural setting’ (Fielding, 2001) thus a focus on a school and subsequent interaction with the pupils enabled me to do this. I came to want to find out how they dealt with the moral problems of school, in particular the social regulation of violence and the way in which incidents of bullying are perceived and dealt with. As these were sensitive issues for school children, I selected research methods which would enable me to be reflexive in the conduct of my research. Wolff observed;

“The fundamental starting point of an Ethnomethodological...proceeding is to regard any event as constituted through the production efforts of the members on the spot. This is the case not only for the actual facts in the interaction, as for example the unwinding of question-answer sequences, but also for realizing so-called macro-facts, like the institutional context of a conversation.”
(Wolff, S., et al, 1988, p.10, cited and translated in Flick, 1998, p.20)

Although the research was based within a school, I also wanted to consider how, if at all, the children would regulate incidents of violence and bullying outside the context of the school proper. Consequently, observations were carried out to try to uncover differences, if any, between the management of violence and/or bullying in different places, on and off the school premises.

It is worth mentioning that the majority of this thesis is based on the interviews I conducted. The observations did not in the event really add to the findings of the research. In hindsight this is probably due to my naivety: I had not really thought through the ‘reality’ of observing fights and conflicts in the playground. I had thought that I would be able easily to observe incidents of violence, but once I began to understand the intricate patterns of conduct in which the pupils were engaged, it was not really surprising that I did not witness such episodes! I discovered, when the pupils spoke to me about the rules of fighting, that conflict never took place in the company of adults, thus the presence of adults would have discouraged fighting. This is an example of the novice researcher undertaking their first major piece of work. I was consequently obliged to rely on other observations of other occurrences to tease out a description of my core themes. But the majority of observations were not generally data productive because they did not add materially to the findings obtained from the interviews.

Following the standard practices of participant observation, I tried to immerse myself in the school culture, uncovering everyday life at a particular school. It is a process that has been summarised by Hammersley and Atkinson:

“The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned.” (1995, p.2)

Accessing the School – Strangeness Vs Familiarity

I have already described the research problem and the various conceptual paradigms in use in the introduction. However, it is important to understand my motivations for carrying out the research. After reading a number of key texts across a variety of disciplines I decided that I wanted to carry out some form of community based research. I wanted to do this in a predominantly rural area as I grew up in a small village in Cornwall. Through reading criminological theories of delinquency and subcultural behaviour I could draw comparisons with my own experiences of growing up. I knew that these ‘traditional’ texts were not reflective of my own experience as an adolescent. Consequently, I believed that a focus on some aspect of contemporary youth culture, through a criminological focus in a rural location could potentially be of interest but I was unsure of how to centralise the work. A school can be viewed as a container where young people gather and spend the majority of their day. I thought that access to a

school would be an ideal starting point to contact a group of adolescents. Furthermore, most research carried out in the sociology of education had in the past been conducted in urban schools, and I wanted to see what a rural dimension would add to school based research. Thus, the original idea of the research had been to find out how adolescents in a small, rural comprehensive go about their day-to-day school life.

The first run of interviews could be regarded as informal conversations that enabled me to establish a general picture of the school as an institution and to consider wider sociometric issues such as the structure of friendship groups and the mobilisation of dominant characters within each year. This also gave me an insight into the terminology used by the pupils. I used the preliminary findings to build wider research questions for the remaining interviews and to formulate the principal ideas of the thesis. These pilot interviews meant that I could attempt to decipher their culture through its key terms and familiarise myself with youth culture at this particular school.

It is also important to note that I am not a stranger to this area: I grew up on its outskirts and was myself a pupil in the school in question. To all the current pupils, I may have been a stranger, but my links with the wider community proved to be advantageous and aided my access. I was aware of how difficult access to a school can be, and thought that working in an area where I was already known would help me to surmount barriers. Nevertheless, there are a number of potential problems that can be encountered when one is familiar to and with one's research surroundings.

'I ain't seen you for ages me 'ansome, what you doing back ere then?' – Researching the Familiar

A number of staff members whom had taught me were still in post. My mother also worked at the school and was useful in helping me cope with a number of difficulties that arose when, half way through the research; fundamental changes affected the school structure. Both contingencies proved to be tremendously fortunate for my access. Access is, after all, a major problem when conducting research:

“Negotiating access is a balancing act. Gains and losses now and later, as well as ethical and strategic considerations, must be traded off against one another in whatever manner is judged to be most appropriate, given the purposes of the research and the circumstances in which it is to be carried out.”

(Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.74)

My access proved initially to be fairly uneventful. My supervisor and I wrote to my former headmaster and requested permission for me to return to carry out investigations into the social lives of children in the twenty first century. (See Appendix 1 for the letters of access). As can be seen, the letters do not mention bullying and violence for purposes of access, but those research questions were not yet completely developed when first I went into the field. Indeed, the 'big idea' underpinning this thesis did not emerge until I was half way through the field work, and more succinct questions emerged only during the process of the research. Consequently, I was not really sure what I *was* researching when first I went into the field and it seemed appropriate to keep the definition of the research as broad as possible.

The fact that I was local to the area was an advantage, especially as the research is based in a small, rural community. The potential problems one encounters whilst investigating small rural communities were summarised by Howard Newby who had himself carried out research on Suffolk farm workers:

“My own personal experience and biography are clearly more relevant to the problems I encountered while participantly observing. Indeed throughout the period of the fieldwork the question I was most frequently asked was whether I came from a rural background – something which I judged to be indicative of the extent to which farmers and farm workers perceived themselves to be a distinctive breed, separate from the remainder of the population.” (1977, p.120)

All this was true of my own work. Being an 'insider', a 'local', not only gave me unique access, but also helped me when confronted with difficulties during the process of the interviews. For example, I was conducting an interview with a girl in year eight who was proving hard to interview. During the process of our chat, it emerged that I had been a pupil in the same year as her mother. Once this knowledge came to light, the interview lasted for nearly two hours and proved to be very informative. That particular interview would not have fared well if I had not had access to such an 'insider identity'. I was aware of the problems one may have when carrying out research, and particularly the difficulties one may have if one 'goes native' and cannot maintain an objective frame of mind. I would argue that I had to learn the opposite process: I was *native* and had to learn to 'go and do sociology'.

I discovered that being local to the area could also be problematic in my relationships with the teaching staff. I found it difficult to approach for interview the staff members

who had once known me as a pupil. Thus I did not interview as many members of staff as I would have chosen. My research on the teachers consequently had to be based on observations alone. Perhaps if I had been a stranger, the teachers would not have found it difficult to change roles and see me as an adult or student, rather than as an old pupil, especially when I was told that I had hardly changed in the ten or so years since I had left the school. It was all too easy to regress back to the role of 'pupil' rather than play the role of 'researcher'.

My Research Role

I necessarily assumed a particular role within the field, and that role was a valuable research tool:

“The advantage of taking a membership role over other forms of research involvement lies in members’ recognition of the researcher as a fellow member. This allows the researcher to participate in the routine practices of members, as one of them, to naturalistically experience the members’ world.”
(Adler and Adler, 1987, p.34)

I have explained that, because I was a member of this community, and that my family was well known, I could not just march in and say ‘right I’m a criminologist and I’m looking at violence at the school’. I had to explain my own presence within my own home town – the native ‘who’s gone sociological’. The majority of the town knew I was ‘up country, at Uni’ so why on earth would I be back at home so often? Friends I had had for the duration of my life were always pleased to see me, but were also very curious as to why I kept going home. The majority felt I was a bit homesick and I would often say that I had to get out of London just to clear my head and be able to write essays.

In this, I again followed the lead set by Howard Newby:

“...the method of obtaining the data is often valid sociological data in its own right...Thus the role that I quite consciously adopted was not that of researcher or investigator (which I believed ran the risk of inspiring either hostility or taciturnity), nor that of friend (which was patently inoperable), but rather that of student. I was not investigating rural society; I was studying it.” (1977, p.115)

Under my label of ‘student’ I was able in this sense to pursue research amongst friends and family. The pupils could identify with me as I was still ‘studying’; the teachers could identify with me as I was in an academic and educational setting professionally;

and the rest of the town thought simply that I lived the good life ‘dossing around on tax payers’ money’. Here, I have to acknowledge the support of my parents who would be questioned about their ‘layabout daughter’, one who ‘really should have a job by now’. They helped me to keep the nature of my investigation under wraps to an extent. I am aware that this could be regarded as a piece of covert research, but I did not want full knowledge of the project breaking out into the community. If the town had discovered I was looking at violence and bullying within the school, which became my eventual focus, then I could have had problems with interviewing. Previous research has considered the role of ‘gossip’ and hearsay within communities (Bell & Newby, 1974; Merry, 1981; Elias & Scotson, 1994) and I did not want the people of Rivers End to jeopardise my research by refusing to talk to me because they were offended by it. The particular town was small, everyone really did know everyone else, and I did not want to upset people who had known me all of my life. I have gone to great lengths to keep the exact area studied anonymous and I have no wish for anyone to be upset by the results. I do not think that individuals would be upset with the finished product, and members of the town to whom I have shown my work profess to be happy with it, indeed to be proud that someone has taken the time to study their community. However, they also declared that they are pleased that I have not disclosed the exact location and participants.

Methods of Research

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were most appropriate for this research. As some of the participants were only eleven years of age, I had to be careful that my questions should not appear too structured and organised. This was something that I quickly learnt whilst in the field. Some of the younger adolescents whom I interviewed were clearly intimidated by a list of questions, notebook, pen and tape recorder.

A list of topic areas and questions that shaped the process of the interviews may be seen in Appendix 2. At the same time, it was not imperative that the questions on that list appeared in a certain order. Rather they were simply an *aide memoire* that enabled me to impose a loose structure, especially if I could see that during the process of an interview the individual was finding certain topic areas difficult to deal with:

“The interviewer can and must decide during the interview when and in which sequence to ask which questions. Whether a question has perhaps been asked *en passant* and may be left out can only be decided *ad hoc*. The interviewer also faces the question of if and when to inquire in greater detail and to support the interviewee in roving far afield, or when to return to the interview guide when the interviewee is digressing.” (Flick, 1998, p.94)

I conducted thirty-three interviews with pupils from across the year groups. I managed to speak to a good enough and reasonably representative cross section of pupils stratified by age and gender. Had I been in a larger institution, I might have had to interview more pupils in order to obtain a better sample. A table demonstrating the age, sex and year group of each pupil is to be found in Appendix 3.

It was a condition of access that the pupils should volunteer to be interviewed. The head teacher asked for volunteers to come forward in assembly, and the school subsequently wrote home to obtain parental permission as a prerequisite before the pupil could be interviewed. The letter sent to the parents is presented in Appendix 4. I am aware that the initial letter did not mention what was eventually discussed during the research, that is bullying, violence and the like. Nonetheless it did state that I wanted to talk about the “social life of young people and their experiences/outlook on life” and I would argue that when one engages with the adolescent population and their experiences, the topic of bullying and violence will inevitably enter into conversation.

At the outset, the selection process of the pupils caused slight apprehension, as I sought to have a variety of pupils from different sociometric groups in order to paint a wide picture of school life. Yet I am well aware that research with children almost always involves an element of ‘gatekeeping’. Hood et al (1996) called this ‘the accepted hierarchy of gatekeeping’ in that parents, carers, teachers or youth workers can all assume a gatekeeping role. One can never directly gain access to children and, in the research for this thesis; I had to pass two sets of gatekeepers, namely the head teacher, and the parents. This too can pose problems because the gatekeeper may prohibit the pupil’s involvement during initial recruitment stages: Mauthner (1997) argues that; “Adults may see themselves as protecting children or may not see that children have rights...at all”. Thus, the voice of the young person may not be heard. I was concerned that those children I especially wanted to talk to, for example those who were bullied, or who were experiencing problems in the wider community, would not volunteer, or

might not even attend school regularly! Nevertheless, I believe that the pupils who did take part were from a cross section of the school and my initial worries were unfounded.

It is important to note that once permission to interview the pupil had gone through the gatekeeping process, consent had to be obtained from the individual as well, and that this had to be sought in person (MRS, 2000; SRA, 2003). Accordingly, I sought consent from every pupil at the beginning of every interview, an issue I will discuss further in the section on ethics.

I carried out interviews on four occasions. I had to wait for convenient times to be allowed access, for example when no exams were being sat. This resulted in my research being carried out on an *ad hoc* basis. Indeed, there were times when I had literally to drop what I was doing and go into the school. This was not really a major concern, as I was aware that to have someone disrupting the school routine was problematic. It is also worth reporting here that there was also a change of headship during the research and the access became far from ideal once the new and hitherto 'unknown' head came into power.

The third visit to the school occurred when the new head teacher had first taken up her position, and the interview selection process was the same as before. However, the final time I went to the school it had been forgotten that I was even coming to conduct interviews and I appeared expecting the children to have been selected. Unfortunately, no one had been granted permission, and the head had forgotten when I was coming into the school. As the journey between London and Cornwall was long I was rather taken aback! Nevertheless, the head was contrite and arranged for me to interview the members of the school council in pairs. This was not an ideal situation, as adolescents do not interview well in pairs. It helped me decide on rather pragmatic grounds that I had by then acquired enough information to exit the field. The presence of the new head teacher had resulted in the research taking on another dimension. I decided that it was time to leave the field. Furthermore, I was not learning anything new from the interviews. They were becoming repetitive and this aided my decision to stop gathering data.

Complementary interviews with teachers were carried out in order to ascertain what they believed might be occurring between pupils and whether their views on violence and bullying were co-extensive with those of the pupils. However, it was difficult to get teachers to talk to me. They were either 'too busy' or thought that they would not be able to tell me anything of much interest. As mentioned above, I think their reluctance was more to do with the fact that I was known at the school and a number of the current teaching staff had taught me. As a consequence they may not have wanted to discuss potentially compromising matters with me. There was also the fact that they worked with my mother and, even though I would have observed the ethic of confidentiality, they might have been apprehensive that I might have told my mother something untoward. Thus the interviews I was able to conduct were with 'new teachers' who had been in position for no longer than three years.

I also spoke to a member of the learning support staff and the school nurse in order to gain a greater breadth of adult opinion in my research. Six members of staff were interviewed on tape. The rest of the staff I spoke with in informal conversations. If, for example, I was having a break between interviews and I went to the canteen for a coffee, I would join other staff members and 'chat' with them. In these informal settings I could obtain information about the unofficial views of the staff. On one visit, for instance, a pupil was in the process of being excluded for behavioural problems and was about to be sent to a special school. A number of the teachers said that they were sad that he was going, as he was deemed to be 'a character'. Nonetheless he could not stay at Bayview School as he was disruptive during lessons and a number of the teachers believed that there was nothing he could gain from staying at the school.

Observations

In addition to the interviews, observations were carried out during recreation times and outside the school to explore the informal social structure of the school pupils, witness deviant episodes and the workings of informal social control.

I spent a number of lunch breaks in the staff room where the teachers would go in their free time to observe how they interacted with one another and to establish if I would be able to obtain any views on the pupils.

I attended the lunchtime homework clubs to gauge what sort of pupils would opt to spend their free time working and away from their peers. I did not walk around the playground too much as such an action could be confused with that of authority figures patrolling the grounds to control trouble or violence. I did not wish the pupils to think that I was either a member of staff or connected with authority. However, when I did have a presence in the playground, I did not observe any violent episodes. This is not surprising in hindsight, but I *was* able to grasp the symbolic relevance of year nine land, which will be explored later in the thesis.

Although I was disappointed initially by the lack of interviews carried out with members of staff, I believe that my observations in the staff room provided me with adequate evidence of the views that the teachers had about incidents of bullying, violence and the day-to-day experience of schooling at Bayview. For example, during the process of the fieldwork, I became aware of the teachers' concerns about recreational drug use. As I shall explain, this was not an area I proposed to cover. Nonetheless, the teachers would complain about having a particularly troublesome class, whom they believed had 'clearly taken something' during the morning break. This had brought it about that the pupils were deemed problematic to control. On this occasion at least, it appeared to be the case that teachers were not so much concerned with bullying and violence, but with the levels of narcotic consumption and that, in turn, was linked pragmatically to issues of classroom discipline – a matter directly affecting teaching staff.

Such observations are in direct contrast to the opinions expressed by the pupils who *did* worry about bullying within their school, yet who did not report having any concerns with recreational drug use.

Ethical Issues

I have explained that the process of recruiting interviewees was not only adult-centred but that I had also to obtain the informed consent of the pupils themselves before every interview. Previous research has documented the importance of establishing rapport when one interviews young people (Mauthner, 1997; Scott, 1997; Valentine, 1999). I had further to consider the unequal power dynamics that characterise adult-child relationships (Mauthner, 1997; Valentine, 1999). As a result, I explained exactly what

would happen before I began each interview. I introduced myself by saying that I was interested in a person's opinions and that I would not divulge any of the information given to me. I then asked for consent to tape the interviews. None of the pupils declined to have his or her interview taped. I also explained that if at any time he or she wanted to stop the tape, they could ask me to do so and that they could terminate the interview at any point. It has been suggested that giving young people a sense of power in a research situation improves the relationship between the researcher and the individual (Scott, 1997). I believed that the informal briefing at the beginning of each interview did help to establish this required balance.

I have not divulged the identity of the participants, the school in which the research took place, nor the exact area of Cornwall in which it is located. In order to help myself keep track of who was telling me which story, before each interview I asked the students to pick a name, and that is what they have been called in the interviews (see Appendix 3 for details of the interviewed students). It was a procedure that enabled me to recognise who the interviewees are but there is no way in which their identity could otherwise be uncovered. Furthermore, if the pupils named an individual during the process of their interview I invited them to rename that person and refer to him or her by means of a pseudonym. This stratagem ensured that pupils, staff, members of the wider community and so on were not identified. I trusted that this would add to the pupils' sense of power in the interview because they were naming and subsequently personalising their interviews. I have altered the details of the area and the school slightly to assure confidentiality. Finally, files and tapes from the research have been coded so that anonymity is maintained at all times.

I am aware that the participants shared intimate matters with me and that I had to keep in mind my role as researcher rather than 'big sister' to the pupils. The majority of pupils interviewed did not find the topics too stressful to discuss and I think that the guarantee of anonymity succeeded in affording them a sense of security. At the end of each interview I engaged in an informal chat with the pupil and asked him or her how he or she thought it had gone and if there was anything else he or she wanted to ask me. This enabled me to clarify if they had been affected by the interview in anyway. A number of pupils had become upset during the recollection of their bullying experiences, but they also told me it was a relief to share such incidents with an adult.

Indeed, the majority confessed that I was the only person whom they had told about such matters. I had about me the telephone numbers and website addresses of ChildLine, Kidscape and the NSPCC just in case any of the pupils said that they wanted to talk further to someone about their experiences. However, none of the pupils did ask for such information.

There was one child whom I interviewed that did upset me. He was being bullied at the time of the interviews and his story affected me. His bully had broken his hand but the story he had told friends, family and the school was that he had 'fallen off his skateboard'. The reality was his hand had been run over by the bully on his skateboard. However, I had promised not to tell anyone, and the boy in question was happy to know that someone at last knew the truth. It was to be our secret. I found his story distressing and had to talk about it with my supervisor, who told me that criminology is always built on 'dirty knowledge'. I had to be prepared to hear such stories due to the nature of the topic I was studying. Nevertheless, one is never fully prepared for such narratives. One can read all the methods books available, but one is never completely ready for how emotionally attached one can become to one's subjects.

Gathering the Data

All the interviews were tape-recorded. I have said that they were conducted in four phases and this was for a number of reasons. Firstly, it would not have been possible to conduct all of the research at once. As the majority of the research was carried out within a school, I had to wait until it was convenient for staff and pupils. Furthermore, I did not want to disrupt the school day of too many pupils at once, so I would go for a month at a time and conduct between two and three interviews per day. More might well have been too taxing. Secondly, after the first run of approximately ten interviews, I wanted to take stock and make sure that I was asking the right questions and to see if there were any gaps in my investigation. Finally, the fourth run of interviews was slightly different in that they contained for the first time questions that would enable me to unpack the narratives and the meanings of the local dialect. Once again, it is worth reiterating that I was no stranger to the area. If one were not from the West Country, some of the terminology in use would have been difficult to understand. However, I was also aware that being an insider could be something of a disadvantage because it was less easy to treat matters such as local dialect, as problematic. I proceeded by

inviting the adolescents to explain to me what they intended by the terms they used, and did my best to assume the role of researcher at all times.

Whilst in the field I kept field note diaries to complement the tape recorded interviews. All the interviews were transcribed. I undertook this task for the first twenty, but due to time limitations I had the others transcribed for me. In retrospect I do not think I should have done this as the West Country dialect of the children and the local terminology used was rather difficult for one who was not a native to understand. Moreover, I do not feel in some fashion as though these particular interviews were 'my work'. Yet getting the tapes transcribed was the only way I was going to be able to keep to my deadlines in terms of producing this thesis.

Analysing the Data

Preliminary analysis was carried out using a combination of methods. Transcripts were not only subjected to the NUDIST computer programme but also to my own, personal detailed thematic coding using coloured pens. I acknowledge that such packages are invaluable to a number of researchers, but I could better relate to my data once it was so marked up. I began to 'see' the themes rather than merely have them displayed as a branch of a computer code.

During the process of analysis, I made the decision to omit the interviews that had been carried out with members of the wider community. To have otherwise included them would have incurred the risk that the thesis would have significantly exceeded the permitted word count. I was annoyed to begin with, but then the practicalities of project management came into play. Along with the research carried out in the school, I had another twenty interviews that, although invaluable in their provision of a holistic view of the community, would have resulted in the accumulation of too many data to analyse within the remit of this thesis. Furthermore, I would not have been able to focus the research on the school and the children as a number of wider issues became apparent, for example, the sociology of rural communities, which is itself an interesting and under-researched topic, but one that would have pulled me away from my prime criminological focus. These omissions were not all loss. The data I neglected did form an unexplicated but necessary backdrop to the arguments laid out in the foreground.

Final Comments

This study does not and cannot claim to speak for a broad cross-section of British youth aged eleven to sixteen. It only represents the adolescent boys and girls of one school, in one place, at one time. There are, I acknowledge, important limitations in terms of its generalizability: the school, the pupils and the community I have documented no longer exist in exactly the same form. Research is always retrospective.

Nevertheless, studies surrounding school and the education system tend to focus on the system itself rather than on the adolescent's immediate educational experience. In addition, research that is conducted on bullying tends largely to be quantitative in methodology and set within urban schools. The research for this thesis was an opportunistic qualitative study that used what resources were available and focussed on giving pupils 'a voice' in research.

During any piece of social science fieldwork there is always a trade-off between the extensive (quantitative) and the intensive (qualitative) methods of research. For the purpose of this thesis I believe that the adoption of intensive, qualitative methods enabled me to understand and replicate the experience of the day-to-day life of a small comprehensive school. And they did succeed in unearthing new and interesting features which other methodologies might well have failed to discover.

Summary

This chapter has described the research methods used for this thesis. Qualitative methods were employed as the most appropriate approach for the theoretical remit I adopted. A variety of techniques allowed me to take the reader through everyday school life. The research was carried out over a four year period, enabling earlier stages to inform later stages. The result is an in-depth analysis of several key themes that will now be considered in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER THREE

GROWING UP AND HANGING OUT IN RIVERS END

Introduction

Growing up in what I shall call Rivers End is a varied experience. This chapter will both introduce the reader to the town and offer a brief history of its thriving industrial past.⁵ It will then document what life is like now in the town and show how modern living is interspersed with traces of the historical past. Finally, the town will be viewed through the eyes of the teenagers interviewed for this PhD.

Setting the Scene – A Brief History of Rivers End

“Rivers End”



The town of Rivers End is situated in Cornwall on the South West coast of England. Approximately 7,500 people lived there at the time I undertook research. Rivers End began life as an industrial town and played a key role in the industrial revolution.

The first industrial venture was a small copper smelter, set up near the lower end of Temple Creek in 1710. This was redundant by 1735 but paved the way for the establishment of Rivers End as one of Cornwall's foremost industrial centres. From 1740, local mines and traders increasingly used Rivers End for the importation of coal, rope, bricks and other essentials. This was primarily due to its unique position by the

⁵ I am aware that people might be able to identify the area from the pictures used for the thesis. I would like to inform the reader that publications stemming from the thesis will either omit pictures or have different pictures from different places.

ocean, as access to water eased transportation of goods. The locality can be seen in the photographs below.

“The Estuary”



“The Harbour”



In 1758 the Tin Mining Organisation (TMO) set up a copper smelter and by the 1780s the company had become successful with the area around the works comprising housing and amenities including shops, public houses and a chapel. This end of the town became known as “Tinner Terrace” and can be seen in the next picture.

“Tinner Terrace”



In 1819 the TMO ceased to smelt copper ore and closed the furnaces. Although the company still had the merchant trade and control of the majority of the quays, it needed to diversify in order to survive. The smelter buildings were converted into workshops and a new works was constructed which became the Tinner Foundry and Engineering Works. By the 1860s the foundry had few orders and was struggling to survive. Closure came in 1869.

In 1779 James Whitfield moved to Rivers End. He believed the Cornish mining industry would welcome and benefit from a county-based foundry and engineering works capable of supplying their needs. Gunpowder manufacture, fuse making, brick making, engineering and iron-founding all flourished with the great expansion of hard-rock mining as the century progressed.

He set up his business at the other end of the town and a thriving community had emerged by the 1850s that mirrored the development of “Tinner Terrace”. This end of the town became known as “Smithy Square”. ‘Whitfield’s’ became an international and respected firm whose reputation was built on the design and manufacture of Cornish

Beam Engines⁶ along with a great range of mining machinery and equipment. Furthermore, they monopolised the essential import and sale of coal, timber and building materials through the rapidly expanding port of Rivers End. This end of the town is presented here:

“Smithy Square”



Within the space of 120 years Rivers End, as it stands today, grew up around the harbour and the two great foundries. By 1900 the town plan and all the major buildings were in place.

The closure of Whitfield's Foundry was not only a blow to Rivers End but the whole of Cornwall, as it marked the beginning of the end of Cornish influence on a world-wide scale in the fields of engineering and hard rock mining. Although the firm of Whitfield's continued to trade as a builder's merchant, the foundry buildings were empty and became derelict. No major employer appeared in the twentieth century to replace what had been lost.

The development of tourism based on the popularity of the location and beaches has only partially succeeded in creating a new economic infrastructure. Many residents commute from Rivers End to work in the larger surrounding towns or Cornwall's

⁶ Such engines were built not only for mines in Cornwall, but many other metal and coal mines in Britain, Australia, South Africa, South America and Spain: Engines were also supplied to waterworks in Britain and Holland and to the Great western Railway to drain the Severn Tunnel.

capital, Truro. Like many Cornish small towns, Rivers End became a centre for living and shopping rather than industry.

Rivers End in the Twentieth Century

Rivers End was still divided into two main areas where the teenagers, known as the ‘Townies’ would congregate and ‘hang-out’. The significance of the different groups of friendship networks are discussed in the chapter “Popular Vs Non – Popular.”

These two areas are situated at the opposite ends of the town: “Smithy Square” and “Tinner Terrace” respectively.

“Smithy Square” had two key ‘hang out’ points – Fishpond Gardens and the local grocers shop under the viaduct. Fishpond Gardens was an enclosed area opened by the local council and the heritage project of the town. It was a picturesque park with picnic benches, swings, slides and a natural pool that was used to power the mill at this end of the town. The gardens were built within the granite ruins of the mill and surrounding outbuildings and can be seen below.

“Fishpond Gardens”



The other public space...
grocery shop and the...
market.

“Fishpond Gardens”



By day this was a popular tourist attraction within the town where visitors to the area could visit the old mill, enjoy a pasty in the gardens and go on historical walks. By night it became the territory of the teenagers who would ‘hang out down Fishponds’.

“Fishpond Gardens”



Directly opposite...
based on a...
ground...

The other public space frequented by the youths at this end of Rivers End was the grocers shop and the viaduct. This was where the railway station for the town was located. The youths used to hang around at the station, but the introduction of CCTV in Rivers End, which occurred during the process of this research, had resulted in certain blind spots, where the cameras could not 'see' being sought. One such area is under the viaduct next to the shop. The older pupils explained that this shop was where alcohol could be obtained. This would then be consumed in Fishpond Gardens.

"The Location of the Grocer's Shop"



The opposite end of Rivers End was called "Tinner Terrace". Here the key territories that the teenagers frequented were the Recreation ground, referred to as 'the Rec', outside the off-license and the car park of the local supermarket. The off-license was across the road from the supermarket. There were a small group of shops which comprised of a fish and chip shop, a pizza parlour, a café, a Chinese takeaway, a surf shop, a video hire shop and an off-license. The pavement in front of these outlets was wide and there were benches and hanging baskets. These benches are where the 'Townies' from this end of Rivers End gathered.

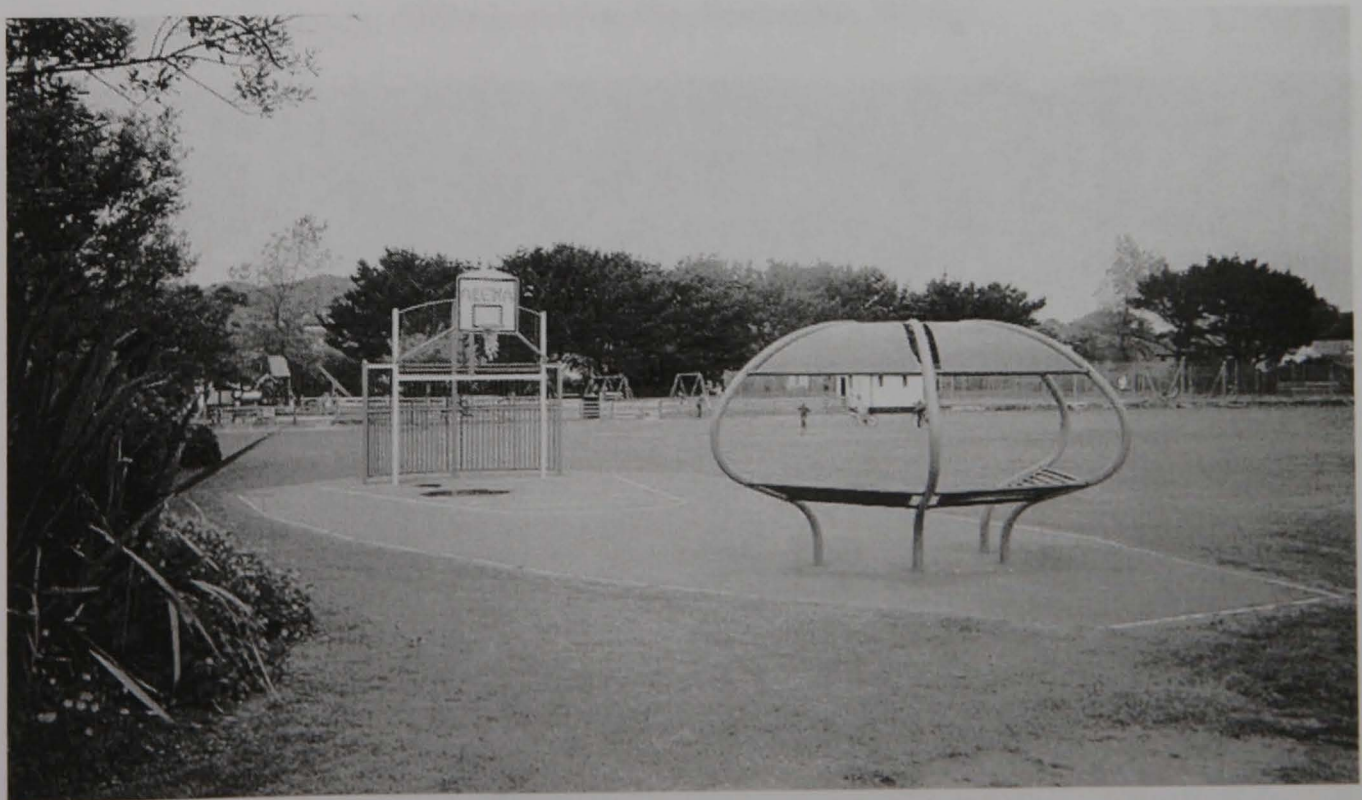
Before the installation of the CCTV, the teenagers used to consume alcohol purchased from the off-license on the street. Now they had to take their goods to the Rec. Directly opposite this area was the local supermarket. The car park of this shop was sloped on a significant gradient and was used by the 'Beachies/Skaters' as a skate ramp.

The pupils explained how they would purchase alcohol with fake ID and consume it on the Rec. The recreation ground was the main park of the town. There were swings, slides, climbing frames, four tennis courts, a football pitch and a pitch and putt green. The youngsters who hung out at the Rec would often congregate towards the back of the park, under the trees, out of sight of the CCTV.

“The Rec”



“The Rec”



Running the length of the town, the other side of the river was a memorial walk. This used to be a favourite spot for the teenagers, but once again the presence of the CCTV resulted in the teenagers abandoning this area as a place for entertainment.

“Memorial Walk”



The following picture shows an area the teenagers used to frequent in order to consume alcohol before the installation of CCTV.

“Hang-out on the Memorial Walk”



The final area the pupils went to regularly was the beach. The town was approximately two miles long and the three and a half miles of beach that ran along its coastline provided many areas and coves where the 'Beachies/Skaters' would hang out and hold beach parties.

"The Beach"



"The Beach"



This was the contemporary lay out of Rivers End. I will now outline the teenagers' opinions and views of the area. Furthermore, I will show how they viewed Rivers End

in comparison to 'up country' and how they presented their town as a place of safety in which to grow up and be a teenager.

Perceptions of the Town

The pupils were asked what they thought the best and worst things about growing up in Rivers End were. The consensus of opinion was that the town was 'boring' and there was 'nothing to do', yet the location and the beaches made the area a perfect place in which to grow up:

Q: "What is the best and worst thing about growing up in Rivers End?"

A: "Um, (laughs), the worst (laughs) sorry, the worst thing is like the lack of things there is for us to do definitely. 'Cos we just get like really bored in the evenings. And the best thing...erm, (laughs) probably going to the beach in the summer with your friends like yeah yeah growing up in like a rural environment, yeah."

("Rachel" - 16 years old)

Q: "What is the best and worst thing about growing up in Rivers End?"

A: "Yeah it's, it's good. It's quite quiet generally, um I mean you got the beach, the beach is brilliant. That's where I spend all my time...Um...I'd say...it's got a bit of character, it's so small...that um not really a lot happens but...when you live here you sort of think that a lot happens but I don't really think it does...Um, in my opinion I think, it sounds odd, but there's enough...if there was more then it would take some of Rivers End's character away. Which is not, not the side that it's boring, it's a boring place to live but it's sort of um, local....you always see people that you know. When you go out you always see somebody that you know, even sort of adults and people often speak to you. If you are polite."

("Raj" - 15 years old)

Q: "What is the best and worst thing about growing up in Rivers End?"

A: "Boring, (laughs) there's nothing to do and you walk around and it's just cold and especially like in Winter there's just nothing to do. And then when you're walking around a shop people oh yeah you're going to be shop lifting or something just 'cos you walk in. And there's a garage that there used to be the rule that only one 16 year old was allowed in at a time. Because, they thought that, under 16 year olds rather, they thought they was gonna be shoplifting or something like that. Um, the best things are probably the scenery; it's quite a pretty place. The worse things are there's nothing for teenagers to do, but in the summer it's lovely 'cos the beaches to go on, that's what I love. The Towans and the beaches and it's really good in the summer you get all your friends and you just go down and have a bar-b-q on the beach, it's just really nice. That's why I don't think I could move to London 'cos I'd miss it too much."

("Katie" - 15 years old)

There were generationally differentiated opinions about the town with the older pupils, those in years ten and eleven, demonstrating higher levels of dissatisfaction. Those

aged fifteen or above claimed that what the town had to offer was 'too young'. For example, the youth club and clubs such as the sea cadets, guides and scouts, catered for those aged eleven to fifteen. This was not an isolated view of the teenagers of Rivers End. Other studies, for example Corrigan's (1979) research into adolescent boys in Sunderland, demonstrated the 'nothing to do' element of teenagers' recreational patterns. However, I would argue that previous research into patterns of youth subcultures and 'hanging-out' has been conducted in locations with more to offer the teenagers than Rivers End.

An outsider to the town could easily sympathise with the view that Rivers End was boring. The cinema closed twenty-three years ago and one must travel to a bigger town in order to see a film. There were no high street stores in Rivers End, so again one must travel in order to shop for clothes or even to hang out around shopping centres, a documented pastime of teenagers who live in more urban settings. Rivers End was a sleepy seaside town. In order to experience entertainment, one had to pass for the age of eighteen to visit one of the ten pubs and the nightclub. Or one needed to have access to transport to travel further afield. The train seldom stopped in the local station and one could stand and wait all day for a bus to take one to another town. Therefore, there was a basic need to travel outside the town for all forms of entertainment and recreation. This in turn brought into question the cost and need for money to pay for travel and entertainment. If one does not have access to transport or money, then one can sympathise with comments that there was 'nothing to do' in the town. I needed to establish what the pupils did in their spare time: did they go out after school, or just on the weekends? Where did they go? What did they do? What was the significance of age and gender in these decisions?

Hanging Out After School Vs Hanging Out At Weekends

The pupils explained how they would sometimes go out after school but usually they would stay at home. Some of the teenagers had hobbies such as surf lifesaving club and Sea Cadets, Tennis Club, Swimming Club and playing instruments in Rivers End town band. Overall, 'hanging out' was saved for the weekend. This typically entailed going to the area where one's peer group met and engaging in the consumption of alcohol and drugs. Furthermore, the adolescents reported that they would try and meet up with member of the opposite sex in an attempt to 'get off' with them. This usually

involved kissing and is consistent with activities reported in Measer and Squires (2000) research. The different activities the peer groups took part in are discussed in the chapter on friendship groups in more detail.

The following accounts give examples of how teenagers in Rivers End spent their free time:

Q: "Yeah, so um OK, after school where do you like hang out, what do you do?"

A: "Um, if I'm not tied up with homework, (laughs) sometimes I go down, well I go down regularly to Rivers End town band I play down there in a brass band. Um sometimes I stay after school in the school band but that's like dropping off now since I'm leaving soon anyway. Erm sometimes I go, um, go to the beach, walking (laughs) where you can, um camping, that sort of thing. Swimming is another one."

Q: "So do you use the youth club up here at all, have you ever been there?"

A: "No I've never been there."

Q: "What about the um drop in centre, which nobody knows anything about it, do you know anything about it?"

A: "Um, we heard it was open, um I never actually went though because I was tied up at the time, um I think its got things like computers there like you get free coffee and drinks and stuff like that. It's almost like an internet café I think that sort of orientation but I don't have much interest in sitting in front of a computer all day (laughs) and going on the internet."

("Brian" - 15 years old)

Q: "So do you go out after school at all?"

A: "Um after school I usually go home and watch TV and if I haven't got much homework I might go out like up to my best friends house. Otherwise I might go to a boys house and play the playstation and things (laughs)."

Q: "What about weekends, what do you do on the weekends?"

A: "I work quite a lot, I work at like a restaurant and I waitress. But I do quite a few hours up there but I'm not sure if I'm meant to do that many (laughs) but the pay isn't very good down here. It was £2.50 an hour and that's gone up to £3.00 which is still really low wage but that's like all the work you can get round here."

("Rosie" - 16 years old)

Q: "So do you go out after school at all, do you hang out at all?"

A: "Yeah we go down to our local park, last night we was out until 7 o'clock I think it was just playing, it's a group of us about 16 of us in the park playing. And there's not much to do in the park its just swings but we make games and that up, and we play 40/40 (a game which is similar to 'tag' or 'it') and that in the bushes and that so...yeah I do go out if I get time. (laughs). After my homework."

Q: "What about at the weekends, what do you do?"

A: "Um we stay at my Nan's, um, we go to my Nan's on Friday come home on Saturday, we go back down on Saturday and come home on Sunday."

("Jamie" - 11 years old)

Q: "So do you go out after school at all. do you hang out at all?"
 A: "Um. recently it's been going out on mopeds, 'cos it's quite a new thing."
 Q: "Right. So did you get that for your birthday?"
 A: "Yeah. I got that, Saturday it's a new thing so I'm not quite got worn out with that yet. Usually, well before I got grounded for the week 'cos I got caught trying to go out too late at night. So I'm grounded."
 Q: "What, on a school night?"
 A: "Yeah."
 Q: "What did you do?"
 A: "Oh, I just jumped out my window to go out and see some friends and mum caught me. So I'm grounded during the week but I'm allowed out Friday and Saturday so that's okay. Before that I used to just go down, see friends, smoke and spend time skating really. I thought I was going to try surfing but it's too much hassle. I just, I never really got into that much. So we skate, smoke and just sit around and talk really."
 Q: "So is that what you do on the weekend then, go out?"
 A: "Yeah, how open am I allowed to be?"
 Q: "As open as you want to be. It's between you and me."
 A: "Oh usually it's just smoking weed, that's basically what we do at weekends, that's it."
 ("Jimbo" - 16 years old)

These examples document a number of the activities that the pupils of Bayview School engaged in. Even though the town was small and did not have a lot to offer the youth in Rivers End, there was clearly 'something to do'. Furthermore, there were no gender divisions with the after school activities. Previous research into patterns of hanging out amongst adolescent youth has focussed on either males and/or females but rarely have they been considered as a united group. However, as this research will demonstrate, a number of the pupils socialised in mixed gendered groups.

'Hanging Out' – Activities for Older Teenagers

I remarked that the older pupils were the least satisfied with living in Rivers End. They believed that those between the ages of fifteen and eighteen were the 'least catered for'. The following examples highlight this and document what the older pupils at Bayview School did to occupy their spare time:

Q: "You say there's not much for older kids to do, so what do you do?"
 A: "Quite a few people have got fake ID (laughs) but I haven't got any. I don't think I'd be able to get in. But um if we want to have a drink or something we go round to someone's house and like have a party. Like in the summer we have beach parties, which is good."
 Q: "Um so where do people get their fake ID's these days?" (laughs)

A: "Um in the back of magazines they've got articles I think you pay like £20 for pieces of ID and you get like a driving license or like a student card. They photocopy their birth certificates. put tip-ex (correction fluid) on it. change it then photocopy it again."

("Rosie" - 16 years old)

Q: "So you say you're allowed to smoke at your friend's house. You're allowed to smoke pot in his room or just smoke?"

A: "Yeah, well weed as well. Got his mum to score for us the other day. Yeah...so that's quite good."

Q: "I suppose at least you know where it has come from."

A: "Yeah, yeah, I think that's probably...I mean she hasn't got problems with weed. She doesn't see it as anything wrong just enough within reason. But she won't smoke; I suppose getting it for us is kinda making sure we don't get any like bad deals or anything."

Q: "Bad stuff, yeah. Where do you get it if she's not getting it for you?"

A: "Well I've got a few dealers around, just, if we can't score ourselves; just get our friends to do it. It's not really a problem...I'm not really, I'm not really a club and pub kind of person. I can't dance to save my life. But yeah, I want to go into pubs but I don't really want to push it, like get myself banned from going to pubs, going in underage really. I mean if I want to get drunk now, there's, get my mate, he's got an ID, he's really lucky. He's sent away for the thing and he got his license back saying he was 18, just by pure luck. So you know, he gets alcohol whenever he wants, whatever we want, so there's no problem if you want to get drunk."

("Jimbo" - 16 years old)

"Rosie" and "Jimbo's" accounts were representative of the responses given by pupils in years ten and eleven. Rivers End, regardless of its small rural idyllic setting, still had adolescents who wanted to experiment with the adult world. What is interesting was the fact that some of the parents allowed the under age drinking and drug use to occur in their homes. This was not peculiar to this particular group of individuals. In my own childhood, house parties and beach parties were held due to the absence of a suitable venue. Engaging in deviant acts in rural areas is an under-researched area. Thus, I have little to compare my findings with and cannot make generalisations about adolescent behaviour in rural locations. This argument is similar to previous research carried out in under researched rural areas:

"I soon discovered that the sociological literature on agricultural workers was virtually non-existent, apart from fleeting references in a few rural community studies." (Newby, 1977, p.110)

Nonetheless, it demonstrates to the reader what the pupils at this particular school at this particular point in time did when they were out of school hours.

Crime within the Town

I explored issues of risk, crime and safety in a rural setting and the pupils reported that Rivers End was a relatively safe, crime-free area in which to live:

Q: "Does Rivers End have a crime problem?"

A: "No it's not a lot but vandalism, like painting of walls and stuff. It's not like dangerous things. It's just stupid things."

Q: "Yeah. And do the crimes get reported? Like do people know who is doing it? Do they try and stop it?"

A: "No I don't think so 'cos like it's done at night time, but if people do see it I would've thought they'll call the police or something."

Q: "And do you think the police do a good job?"

A: "Yeah."

Q: "Are they around? Have they got a presence?"

A: "Yeah."

("Sarah" - 13 years old)

Q: "Does Rivers End have a crime problem?"

A: "Um, sometimes there is, like in the newspaper there will be bits about people smashing windows and yeah doing stupid things like that, and I don't think it's a major problem and I think it has actually decreased a bit and stuff in the last couple of years 'cos like there's CCTV been installed around Rivers End now, I think that helps."

("Rachel" - 16 years old)

Q: "Does Rivers End have a Crime Problem?"

A: "I wouldn't say I've noticed it that much there's not, I dunno, obviously there are some things that go on. There's a man in my village who was knocked off his bike the other day in my village and we didn't even think our village was like that but I think someone came in from outside the village."

Q: "Really?"

A: "Yeah."

Q: "Did they get the person?"

A: "No I don't know it was only a couple of days ago and my brother had his new car broken into."

Q: "Really?"

A: "Yeah, so and it was at college as well um, Cornwall College?"

Q: "Oh yeah."

A: "He just had it taken from there so, I don't know that there's much in Rivers End but I'm sure it does go on. And there's like sometimes vandalism probably as well. Just like the breaking of like a window or something on a car."

Q: "Yeah so um, but it's not you know particularly a high crime area. I mean apart from vandalism and things like that?"

A: "I wouldn't think it was a high crime area."

("Katie" - 15 years old)

The pupils believed that crime in Rivers End was predominantly of a petty nature and was not that prolific. It was fascinating to observe that they often referred to the crimes that occurred as 'stupid'. This is a word that is often used to neutralise petty crime and

rob it of its element of malice and, to an extent, of intent. Thus, 'stupid' is an interesting, mitigating word.

Furthermore, the perception of crime being petty and 'stupid' adds to the previously acknowledged perceptions of safety experienced by the pupils. They have documented that there is nothing to do in the town and that they prefer the Summer months, but in order to have more to do they would have to live in a more urban location and that did not appear to be a trade off the pupils were willing to engage in.

The following table in Figure 3 depicts the crime incidents in the locality studied for this thesis. It was constructed using data from the local Crime and Disorder Strategy (1999). Pentrepol⁷ Community Safety Partnership: Pentrepol District Council; Devon and Cornwall Constabulary; Cornwall County Council. It was not possible to obtain data just for Rivers End. Due to its small size the figures were combined with those of the neighbouring town, which has a population of approximately nine thousand residents. However, in presenting the 'official' figures one can obtain a picture of the 'crime problem' in this particular area of Cornwall.

Figure 3. A table to compare crime in Rivers End with the National average. Using the population of Rivers End as 7,500 and data from the Home Office Website

Offence	Offences per 1000 Rivers End Population 2002/3	Offences per 1000 England/Wales Population 2002/3
Burglary – from private homes (does not include theft from separate garages or garden sheds)	5.3	16.9
Criminal Damage – all offences resulting in damage to property (including arson and vandalism)	23.3	21.2
Drug offences – trafficking and possession	1.7	2.7
Vehicle offences (includes theft from vehicles, of Vehicles and taking vehicles without Consent)	44.3	45.2
Violence offences – all offences which involve Violence or the threat of violence (includes homicide or murder, all assaults, sexual offences and robbery)	6.1	18.8

⁷ This Council does not exist. Again the name has been changed to obscure the exact location of the research.

The accounts, which the pupils provided, are supported by the figures. It is interesting that the town was so small it did not have a breakdown of statistics available to record the crime situation in Rivers End itself.

A Question of Safety

The pupils regarded Rivers End as a haven, a safe community in which one could go about one's business with relatively little anxiety about possible dangers:

Q: "Does Rivers End have a crime problem?"

A: "I don't know whether it does, I mean you can still go out late at night, 'cos I know I've walked back from parties or whatever and you don't feel threatened as such. I mean it is quite dark but there's no one around basically, 'cos like everyone goes elsewhere um. I know in places like Portsand (a bigger town in the County with approximately 15,000 residents) crime is really bad and you have to you know you can't go in the park 'cos there's hypodermic needles everywhere and stuff like that, but I think down in Rivers End nothing happens, 'cos no one's here but they don't do anything."

Q: "No, so you know, so basically nothing happens and you're pretty safe around Rivers End yeah?"

A: "Yeah I think the only victims of any crime as such are objects on the street which can be vandalised. I think that that's about it, um unless you're being victimised like bullying I don't think there's anything outside of that. If you've got your group of friends or whatever, no problem." (laughs)

("Brian" - 15 years old)

Brian's observations are very significant. Where risks are generally slight, bullying acquires a greater salience and, as will be demonstrated, Brian suffered some of the most extreme victimisation both on and off the school premises. This obviously had an impact on his perception of safety within the town.

Q: "Does Rivers End have a crime problem?"

A: "I think the best thing is probably that everyone's really friendly and if you walk down the street like you're not likely to be beaten up or mugged or anything, or nothing's going to happen to you. And you don't have to worry about being out in the dark or anything."

("Tilly" - 13 years old)

Q: "Does Rivers End have a crime problem?"

A: "It's probably safer here so... There's more private areas you can just go to them rather than having to share with all the public. But you can't, I think we've probably got more, I don't know if independence is the right word, but it's kind of you can just like grow up how you want to grow up 'cos you've got more places where you can go by yourself. So those places don't have as many rules and regulations that you follow you kind of say how you want to grow up yourself I suppose, with certain restrictions of course! But overall everyone's just like really nice, it's like a really nice community here. Everyone's like looking out for each other and you wouldn't be afraid to walk down the street at

night. I mean I feel perfectly safe...I walk my little sister around but I think she'd feel safe by herself, I'm sure. There's not really any trouble. that kind of thing."

("Jimbo" - 16 years old)

Q: "What's the best and worst thing about living in Rivers End?"

A: "The worst thing, it's a bit boring, there isn't much to do for a kid...But the best thing is it's a nice town, it's easy and it's you know, it's very simple and safe. Not a lot of crime and things."

("James" - 12 years old)

The pupils had a universal perception that Rivers End was a crime-free, safe environment in which to grow up where everybody knows everyone else. There is not a lot of existing research which has considered crime in rural areas, but one can certainly build a contrast with existing research carried out in urban areas.

Merry (1981) carried out an intensive study of a neighbourhood in *Urban Danger*, finding that:

"...parts of a city that are undifferentiated, where it is easy to get lost, and where all streets are the same, are places people find unpleasant and dangerous. Dover Square appears this way to outsiders and perhaps even to those residents who are still unable to grasp its organisation. Robbers are quite aware of the advantages of the project's design, and frequently "vanish" into its maze after committing a robbery on its borders. The thieves believe that it is easy to lose the police in the project since there are so many corners to turn and alternative routes of escape." (p. 47-50)

Rivers End, in contrast, was an area that was open and where the residents knew each other on a number of levels. It could be argued that the community felt safe because of this openness and the fact that 'everyone knows' what was going on within the town.

Merry studied a housing area called Dover Square and she found that some residents did express perceptions of safety:

"A middle-aged woman said that she feels safe in Dover Square because she knows the majority of people who live there and is not afraid of those she knows. She has watched most of these youths grow up from little children and does not find them frightening. It is only people she has never seen before whom she fears." (p.140)

This observation highlights a relationship between having insider knowledge and 'knowing' one's community and surroundings which adds to one's perceptions about safety in the environment in which they live. The woman in Merry's study was not intimidated by the youths on the estate as she had knowledge about their background

and upbringing. Thus, in a town like Rivers End which consisted of families which go back generations, the oral histories that have been formed enabled the residents to make judgements about one another and this in turn affects perceptions of safety. Therefore, I asked the pupils what they thought it might be like to live and go to school in London as a comparison.

Views of 'Up Country' – Comparisons with London

The pupils generally agreed that they would not like to go to school in an inner city location. They offered a number of explanations as to the ways in which they thought that schools in London differed from Bayview School:

Q: "What do you think it would be like to be 13 and growing up in London?"

A: "I think you get a lot of bullying there."

Q: "In the schools there?"

A: "Yeah, it's more rough and like you'd expect to do a lot more like drink and like if you got in with the wrong crowd, you'd be smoking and taking drugs and stuff. So I wouldn't want to do that."

("Zoë" – 13 years old)

Q: "What do you think it would be like to be 11 and growing up in London?"

A: "Err, well it would be rougher it wouldn't be like Cornwall 'cos all the kids in Cornwall are friendly to each other and in London they go round in gangs and stuff and um you have to be rough. Like if I had to move up to London I'd have to change completely."

Q: "You think so?"

A: "Yeah"

Q: "What do you think you'd have to do?"

A: "Be tough, stick up for yourself, people call you names you have to call them back and the teachers up London they listen to you but they can't do much 'cos there's lots of kids there that are nasty."

Q: "So you wouldn't want to go there?"

A: "No...there's a lot of stuff to do, well there's more stuff to do in London but its not nice scenery. Like in Cornwall you can go surfing in the summer and the kids in London don't even know what a cow is."

("Chad" - 11 years old)

Q: "What do you think it would be like to be 15 and growing up in London?"

A: "It would be hellish."

Q: "Really?"

A: "I wouldn't, it's so um, it just all seems to be in one place, everything happens, whether you are on the outskirts there's still stuff, a lot happening, whether you are on the inside, just a lot happens."

Q: "And what do you think about the schools what do you think they would be like?"

A: "Big and not...not friendly, not personalised. Just um...one person couldn't sort of reign over or anything obviously."

("Raj" - 15 years old)

Q: "What do you think it would be like to be 16 and growing up in London?"

A: "Yeah, very scary I'd say. There's people there obviously going to be a lot rougher 'cos more things they have to stick up for by themselves rather than down here. And around here people are definitely more friendly in the country and just walking around places. There (in London) you probably have to look at the ground and walk away, walking around just so you don't find any trouble. But here everyone's friends with everyone. You just kind of assume they're your friends rather than assuming you're enemies."

("Jimbo" - 16 years old)

The ideas that the pupils had about London schools were universal. All pupils interviewed talked about 'up country' with an air of caution. They also explained that they had been informed by parents and other family members about the dangers of 'up country'. Such imaginations of London were just that and they served a symbolic purpose as a foil for descriptions of one's own town:

"Community held beliefs are often impervious to any evidence which contradicts them or to arguments which puts them in the wrong simply because they are shared by many people with whom one is in close communication. Their communal character makes it appear that they must be true particularly if one has been brought up with them from early childhood in a loosely knit group where the belief is taken for granted and even more so if one's parents and grandparents too have been brought up with it." (Elias and Scotson, 1994, p. 98)

The pupils viewed Rivers End as an established safe group and anyone from 'up country' as outsiders who should be viewed with circumspection. Interestingly, only two out of the thirty-five students interviewed had ever visited London. Thus, where had they obtained the 'facts' about life in London? Every pupil who had never been to London confessed that the media and gossip were the main sources of information:

Q: "What do you think your fantasy of London is, what do you think it would be like to go to school in London. Would you like that?"

A: "No I wouldn't. Because I think there would be too many troubles and stuff. Like what I've heard on the news and things. I wouldn't like it."

Q: "Like what, things like what?"

A: "Like bomb scares things like that. I wouldn't like it."

Q: "And you never think that would happen in Rivers End?"

A: "No. No, you're safe in Rivers End."

("Sarah" - 13 years old)

Q: “what do you think it would be like to be 13 and growing up in London?”

A: “I think that if you come from the countryside, you’re like certainly more laid back than in London. I know someone who goes up to London and they’ve lived there for like six years. seven years of their life. they grew up in secondary school there. And when they come back now they’re just like so different to what they used to be. They go out like in the countryside and they come back and like put make-up on before I even get out of bed and stuff. And they smoke as well. And they’re not old enough or anything. they just smoke...but I think there’s more pressure on you in places like London.”

(“Tilly” - 13 years old)

Q: “What do you think it would be like to be 13 and growing up in London?”

A: “I’ve got a lot of family up there and we often go and see them. But I still prefer to be in Rivers End ‘cos it’s crowded in London and dirty and you don’t really know anybody in the street. You know. in Rivers End you sort of say “hi”, you know a lot of people in the street by name but in London it’s not like that. There is a lot of things to do in London like theme parks and cinemas and shops and you know. some places you can go when you’re young but in Rivers End you go out, you can obviously you can go out but you can’t really go out sort of definite places.”

Q: “What do you think the schools’d be like in comparison to say here or do you know what the schools are like up there in comparison to here?”

A: “Much bigger, multi-racial as well.”

Q: “So what do you think the experience’d be like?”

A: “I get the impression they’re a bit tougher. Stories about London and how it’s quite rough, parts of it you can’t go at night and stuff. My family. my parents grew up in London and my family so but Cornwall’s always been my home.”

(“Bill” - 13 years old)

The pupils presented very stereotyped views about ‘up country’ which had been learned from the wider community. Their comments echoed observations made by Douglas (1966) in her work on moral boundaries and how the world within is contrasted with the world without:

“Culture, in the sense of the public standardised values of a community, mediates the experience of individuals. It provides in advance some basic categories, a positive pattern in which ideas and values are tidily ordered. And above all, it has authority, since each is induced to assent because of the assent of others. But its public character makes its categories more rigid. A private person may revise his pattern of assumptions or not. It is a private matter. But cultural categories are public matters. They cannot so easily be subject to revision.” (p 38-9)

Thus, a small town where the residents have an intimate knowledge of one another elicits feelings of safety within the boundaries of their space and community. Whilst the outside world, and in this case I used London as an example, was perceived to be

more volatile and dangerous. Such suspicions were often not formed through direct experience, but through the dialectic of the imagination.

Merry (1981) made similar observations about the residents of Dover Square:

“The less contact an individual has with members of other groups, the less accurately will he categorize these groups. Thus entire ethnic or age groups may be inaccurately categorized as dangerous, immoral or threatening. Furthermore, predictions of behaviour based on categories, even with accurate categories, are far less certain than predictions based on knowledge of the particular habits and propensities for an individual...Strangers thus are feared and considered dangerous because they are particularly difficult to predict or control.” (p.161)

The accounts which viewed ‘up-country’ as a hostile environment enabled the pupils to present Rivers End as a safe place to grow up in and go to school in. Lack of experience through never visiting London or ‘up country’, reinforced views that had been passed down through the generations. Furthermore, the pupils expressed a suspicion towards tourists when they ‘invaded’ the town during the summer months. Also worth mentioning is the fact that the housing estate close to the school was where a number of families from Liverpool had recently been rehoused. These residents tended to be blamed for troubles in Rivers End and added to the negative view held towards outsiders. The significance of this housing estate is analysed in the chapter on bullying. However, not all opinions about schooling in London were negative:

Q: “What do you think the schools in London would be like?”

A: “Um they’d probably be a lot more exciting ‘cos everything is so centralised in London, um they’ve probably got like youth clubs and nightclubs and anything really.”

Q: “Mmm and what about schooling experience, do you think that would be similar to yours?”

A: “Um, it would probably be, I reckon education would probably be better as well ‘cos that would probably be also centralised so. It’s a bit at a loose end down here ‘cos you’re at the bottom of the country.”

(“Jim” - 16 years old)

Q: “What do you think the schools in London would be like?”

A: “Um, I think it would have been...I think the schools would have been like bigger and there would have been loads of people and there wouldn’t have been closer relationships between the teachers and the pupils. Um...it probably, um like to get to school you’d have to like do probably quite a long journey like on the bus or tube or something? Yeah and probably have like you’d probably do different things in London like down here we haven’t got the resources to do some things. You might do I dunno Psychology or things up in London like as a GCSE rather than we don’t down here.”

(“Rachel” - 16 years old)

Such opinions were in the minority and the view of London and 'up-country' as a positive place to be was limited. The pupils had contradicting views. Rivers End was regarded as boring, yet the size and nature of the town resulted in it being viewed as safe and a perfect place to grow up in.

This was interesting as traditional subcultural theories of delinquency (Corrigan, 1978; Parker, 1992) demonstrate how boredom and having 'nothing to do' will often lead to delinquency. In Rivers End boredom resulted in non-delinquency to an extent. The surrounding area, the space and freedom of movement that the teenagers had in Rivers End resulted in them having not as much pressure to make 'something' out of their boredom. The adolescents in this research had almost accepted their situation and the setting in which they grew up and made the best out of it.

With an idea of the town and how these particular teenagers viewed Rivers End, I moved onto the subject of violence. Very negative, suspicious views of 'up country' had been narrated and I wanted to see if Rivers End was as picture perfect and rose tinted as had been presented. I was particularly interested in the pupil's interactions with one another and I wanted to see if Bayview School was the exemplar institution it had been documented in comparison to urban schools. I began with the incidents of violence.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LIMITS OF MORAL CONDUCT – POLICING THE PLAYGROUND

Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the location of the school, the area in which the children had grown up in and discussed their perceptions about life 'up country' and how it differed from growing up and being schooled in a rural area. It was now necessary to uncover the conduct of the pupils at Bayview School. There is a growing body of research, primarily American, concerning the growth of youth violence within schools (C. R. O'Donnell et al., 2001). The ESRC funded Violence Research Project (1998 – 2000) had research areas focussed on incidents of school violence. However, there is no comprehensive study that uncovers the extent, variability and reality of school violence within the British education system.

It was decided to talk to pupils about incidents of violence within their school. It should be noted that violence within the classroom was not covered, as during the interviews it emerged that on the whole, during contact time with teachers, few, if any 'fights' occurred. The exception to this was incidents of bullying, which will be explored in the next chapter.

The pupils were asked the following questions: when was the last time they had witnessed a fight? Who was the fight between? What did they do? What happened? Did anyone try to stop it? Should anyone have tried to stop it? What happens if someone tells? When was a fight 'right'? Are there any rules followed? Are weapons allowed? If someone is hurt is the fight stopped? Is it ever fair for others to take part? How do the pupils generally 'police' their playground territory? Through asking these relatively open-ended questions, the severity, incidence, patterns, distribution, regulation and organisation of violence within one particular school at a particular point in time were uncovered. A set of 'rules' emerged which would enable an outsider to the school to understand the moral conduct of the pupils with regards to issues of violence and fighting.

Boundaries of Play

Two main forms of violent interaction were disclosed, 'play' fighting and 'full on' fighting, hereafter referred to as 'real' fighting. These distinctions were made by the pupils and appeared to be universal labels in circulation at Bayview School. When asked 'when was the last time you saw a fight?' every response given asked 'play or full on?' These fights or acts of violence tended to happen primarily at recreation times. Play fighting was reported as the dominant form of conflict between pupils. This was the first unwritten rule of fighting: the differentiation between play fighting and real fighting. "Brian" summarized the distinction:

"Erm well pretend violence where people try to have fun or whatever, you see that more or less everyday, um but if you're talking about actual real violence as such, I haven't seen any certainly not in like the recent past, no I can't think."

This 'pretend violence' was a hard concept to define as no one could articulate what was meant by the term 'play fight'. It was universally understood as an everyday scenario that was not 'serious' in relation to the type of conflict; the outcome or the punishment received from members of authority and did not 'mean anything'.

A number of incidents were described as 'play fighting'; it always occurred between boys and was regarded as a form of 'rough and tumble'. There were no reports of girls 'play fighting'. The boys would engage in fake wrestling or 'scraps' which were both forms of contact but punches were not thrown and kicking was never allowed. Play fighting proved problematic for the pupils to categorise, but the most common definition offered was that people were 'having fun'.

Again the definitions of 'fun' needed deconstruction. It was where no injuries were inflicted; there was no vendetta, no threat to friendship groups and no need to get a teacher or member of authority involved. The fights were usually between friends and were also explained as a way of 'letting off steam' after being in the classroom. Such arguments defending 'play fighting' are very similar to those analysed by J. Huizinga (1949) who argues that play is 'older than culture' and has a fundamental role in the way we have developed into a civilised society. He states:

"...all play is a voluntary activity. Play to order is no longer play: it could at best be but a forcible imitation of it. By this quality of freedom alone, play marks itself off from the course of the natural process...play is not "ordinary" or "real" life. It is rather a stepping out of "real" life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own." (1949, p.7-8)

Play fighting, as described by the pupils, did have a spontaneous nature to it. It happened every break time between boys of all ages, eleven to sixteen in this case, and according to Huizinga could be regarded as 'pure play'. This does not mean to say that play is inconsequential. Very many forms of consequential activity have their inconsequential play form. The 'play fight' is one such form. Play is a recognised element of an individual's development. What should be considered here is the type of play. The pupils were not discussing playing 'Doctors and Nurses' or 'Hide and Seek', they were play *fighting*. If conflict situations are being acted out there is always the potential for the play to become confrontational. A definition or further understanding of what 'play' meant to these adolescents was required.

There was a tendency for some quite serious 'accidents', including minor injury, to occur as a consequence of acts of play fighting. Such damage often included dislocated limbs and sprains. As these injuries were the outcome of 'play' the pupils interpreted them as 'accidents', that is, not intended or malign. This is highlighted in the following story told by "Chad":

"A boy called JB, he hurt a kid, dunno, he um made all the muscles in his neck like dislocate, I can't remember what it was but he nearly broke his neck and he had to go to hospital and um about a month ago this kid fell on these bushes and he really hurt his back 'cos it (a tree stump) was like sticking out and he couldn't see and he got pushed onto it, but they've been taken away now. They (the teachers) said that um, we shouldn't play fight after what happened with JB they said um none of you should play fight 'cos JB was only play fighting and he nearly broke the kid's neck so you shouldn't play fight and if they see anyone play fighting then they tell them off."

Furthermore, one could argue that there might well have been a level of intentionality involved in such 'accidents', and that the explanations offered by the pupils were retrospective justifications for their actions. This dominated pupils' interpretations of not only violence but levels of bullying and popularity which will be covered in separate chapters.

Concepts of play and its boundaries clearly did not appear to have obvious distinctions. After all, to 'play' fight was not always easy. It may be that other elements were involved. As will be discussed, real fights tended to have a principle behind them such as a personal vendetta. However, play fighting was justified as a means of 'letting off steam' after the restrictions of the classroom environment. Furthermore, what to an

outsider would be deemed as 'serious' was still sometimes only regarded as 'play'. A predominant male view was that play fighting was 'boy's stuff' and a natural, almost necessary thing to do, a point articulated by "Raj":

"Well, I mean because when you're play fighting and even if you are just running around, you could get hurt but play fighting is a bit more...a bit more riskyish like, it's one of those things that you are not allowed to do really. But you know, it's just mucking around with your mates, I think it's taken a bit too seriously."

This view is similar to the argument of Huizinga (1949) that an essential feature of 'genuine play' is the 'consciousness' of 'only pretending'. Many of the boys interviewed echoed "Raj's" views that play fighting was taken too seriously, especially as all the boys who participated in play fighting understood that they were only playing.

According to the school's formal policy (see Appendix 5), play fighting was not condoned. Could it be the case that the students' informal justification of a violent situation as play 'allowed' it to happen? Here questions of who are defining and labelling the situation arise. Many of the pupils spoke about the fact that the boys were 'only' acting when they were play fighting and that it was usually something that happened between 'friends'. Those who were involved in play fighting obviously saw nothing wrong in what they were doing. This could also be a matter of tactical interpretation, as those involved not admitting publicly to seeing anything wrong. Nonchalance can be viewed as bravado. When questioned on the potential seriousness of play fighting all pupils agreed that there was 'nothing' to worry about, because it was not socially consequential and did not disrupt the fabric of informal relations. Play fighting was part of everyday school life and adult ignorance over the topic was laughed at. I received numerous raised eyebrows and sympathetic sighs at my inability to understand play. Through fear of either losing the pupils' interest, or them becoming suspicious of my role, I accepted their 'just so' explanations if necessary.

The notion of the 'play fight' can be understood as one of Sykes and Matza's "Techniques of Neutralization"; 'The Denial of Injury':

"For the delinquent...wrongfulness may turn on the question of whether or not anyone has clearly been hurt by his deviance, and this matter is open to a variety of interpretations...gang fighting may be seen as a private quarrel, an agreed duel between two willing parties, and thus of no concern to the community at large...we are arguing that the delinquent frequently, and in a hazy fashion, feels that his behaviour does not really cause any great harm despite the fact that it runs counter to the law." (1957, p.667-8)

It should be noted that play fighting was not illegal, but it was against school policy and thus contravened the rules of the school. Regarding fights and resulting injury as 'play' softened the impact of the actions and enabled the justifications that the pupils offered for their behaviour. Fighting was against school policy and carried severe punishment. In exceptional cases it could result in automatic exclusion, hence to apply a label like 'play' could be used to ward off such penalties. There were no reports of play fights receiving disciplinary proceedings. If a play fight did get out of hand, as in the case described earlier by "Chad", the matter would be discussed in front of the whole school in the morning assembly. The students would be reminded of the dangers of 'rough and tumble' play.

The retrospective justifications offered by the pupils did mean that 'play' was a label which diffused the situation, but physical harm could occur during incidents of play fighting and the boundaries surrounding definitions of 'play' and 'real' were very blurred. The point raised by "Raj" highlighting the 'riskyish' element of engaging in play fighting was just one example. Accounts of play fighting suggested that attempts to inflict pain could be disguised as 'play'. Marsh (1978) highlights similar patterns of diffusion in *Aggro. The Illusion of Violence*:

"Men fight each other – but a 'bit of aggro' is a fight in which the chances of serious injury are reduced to tiny proportions" (p.14)

Thus, a 'bit of aggro' between men could be viewed as a similar concept to 'play' between adolescents. The distinction between 'play' and 'real' needed further deconstruction, as they appeared sometimes to be much the same thing but with different labels.

The other form of violent conflict was the 'real' fight. This was a rare occurrence. A 'real' fight was started purposefully and all the students would be aware of the location and timing of the conflict if it were to take place on school premises, which suggests a formalised and ritual quality to the act. Whereas serious play fighting would be a 'fun' situation getting out of hand, real fights had a time, a place and were structured in the way that both parties knew what was going to happen. Such incidents appeared to have a ritualistic role, similar to the fights between gang members or 'bols' that Anderson

(1999) documents in *Code of the Street*. He argues that: "Physical prowess and ultimately respect itself are in large part the coin of the social order." (p 88)

Thus, one's ability to fight is an important element in order to gain respect from one's peers. He continues this observation by highlighting that:

"...an existential link has been created between the idea of manhood and one's self-esteem, so that it has become hard to say which is primary. For many inner-city youths, manhood and respect are two sides of the same coin; physical and psychological well-being are inseparable, and both require a sense of control, of being in charge." (p 91)

The real fight at Bayview School enabled the 'winner' to demonstrate his masculinity and role within the peer group, year group and, in certain cases, the whole school. This was exercised with the presence of an audience, a point which will be expanded later in the chapter. However, for purposes of clarification, a 'real' fight would occur in front of the whole school, whereby the pupils would congregate at the designated 'fight venue'.

Real fights also had a moralistic rationale, for example, a fight over a girl. Here "Katie" explained:

"It was probably...um...it was someone, it was about probably a couple of months ago it was this boy who thought that this girl had um, this other boy had been chatting up his girlfriend or something and he punched him. And I hate fights, they make me feel sick watching them...and he hit him and he went to the ground and then he kicked and he hit him again and I just couldn't stand watching it. And then um the head boy took him in to see if he was alright and everything and he was fine, it wasn't that bad he had a bit of a bruising and everything but I can't stand watching fights. I was listening to music at the time and I didn't realise and I could just see it like it was like slow motion. But I can't stand any fights; it was probably the last one I've seen."

Clearly the event described here is a form of reprisal; there is a concrete purpose. A pupil is defending his status and saving face by attacking the boy whom he regarded as 'chatting up' his girlfriend and thereby challenging his position. The pupils operated a ranking system by which they judged and evaluated one another. This is described in detail in a separate chapter. However, it must be noted that having a partner at Bayview School enabled one to score on this hidden scale of ranking. Consequently, an attempt to 'chat-up' an individual's girlfriend would be seen as an infringement on the boyfriend's status and the situation would have to be resolved.

Forms of violence, where men feel obliged to defend their honour, was observed by Polk (1994) in his research on the much greater offence of homicide in Australia, he noted that:

“...a theme of masculine competitiveness runs through homicide. It is males who feel compelled to compete for resources, for status, for dominance and control of sexual partners, and who are willing to employ violence against other males if called upon in order to assure successful competition.” (p188)

A number of observations were made by the pupils, especially the girls, about the violence that occurred between the boys over the female students. This will be discussed in detail later on in the chapter, but it could be another indicator of a real fight. If there was an issue of defending one's status in front of one's peers a real fight would ensue. It is worth mentioning again briefly the role of 'status': the pupils articulated in the interviews how one became a member of the 'in group' and the 'out group' within each year of the school. It is a fascinating categorisation process and one that is dealt with in detail a later chapter on peer group friendship networks. In order to understand status in relation to violence it is worth noting that there were a number of status elements on which all pupils measured one another, these ranged from what they called 'personality', for example, if one was considered to be outgoing and friendly; intelligence, appearance (in that one wore the latest fashions as part of the school uniform); relationships with a partner and/or peers, family status and the like. In this particular case, a pupil had high status if they had a boyfriend or a girlfriend: And an attempt to attract one's partner was a threat to one's peer status and an issue that needed to be defended. The result was that a real fight was necessary to maintain reputation. Real fights were universally recognised by the pupils as having a purpose and a meaning.

This particular fight was spoken about by a number of pupils, again possibly highlighting the incident as a real conflict. It was an event that took place in front of the majority of students in the designated fight area, a feature which will be explained in more detail later on. It also points to how rare violence actually was. However, violence at Bayview School was only rare if one took 'real fight' to equate to 'real violence'. A number of incidents which had been labelled 'play', did result in injury but were not deemed 'real'. These contradictions demonstrate the relevance of 'talk' about violence. Unwritten rules regulated conduct and ordered status. Incidents of violence were encompassed under a variety of umbrella terms including 'play fighting',

'bullying' and 'unpopular'. The pupils were employing their own techniques of neutralisation to disguise the 'realities' of violence.

Sometimes particular incidents took on an emblematic status and were used as a scale by which conduct was judged. The importance of talk about fights through playground folklore was once again an issue. There were three significant incidents, to be discussed throughout the chapter, that every single pupil interviewed recounted to me. They were similar to the accounts observed by Patrick (1973) in *A Glasgow Gang Observed*. In his research, the members of 'The Young Team' documented a number of 'legends' to him about their violent conquests as a gang. These oral stories played a crucial role in celebrating and creating myths and giving the 'gang' its symbolic organisation.

The events that took place at Bayview School had also become legendary and were the ultimate examples of 'real fights'. They had not only been acute but had also received harsh punishments. Any other real fight that happened was always evaluated on the scale of 'the big three'. Regardless of age or gender everyone knew what had happened, how and why. The narratives rarely conflicted apart from minor details, such as what colour the trainers of the victim were. Such events are not relayed as idle gossip. The 'big three' conflicts were all recent to the history of the school. They all occurred between the period of March 2001 and May 2002. It would be advantageous to see if every generation of students had its own fight mythology. Nonetheless, this was not possible within the remit of the research for this thesis.

Children are frequently prone to exaggeration and elements of fantasy, but the ability to reconstruct everything so acutely was rather impressive. The accounts were so graphic I began to believe I had been there myself. Nonetheless, I had to keep in mind that these stories could have been examples of oral myths well honed, as Patrick (1973) observed. When there has been a spectacular real fight it would appear to be the case that everybody within the school has to share exactly what happened. This could serve a number of purposes but, with 'the big three', deterrence was the main element. On the one hand, there was a fear of becoming a victim of such levels of violence. As will be documented, the victims of all of these fights received injuries that required medical attention. On the other, there were concerns over the severity of punishment received if one became involved in a real conflict. Two of the three fights resulted in exclusion for

the pupils who had committed the violent act, with one individual being charged and having to wear a juvenile tag for six months. The pupils universally agreed that they did not want to become involved in a situation which could achieve the status of the 'big three' conflicts.

Real fighting can be a consequence of an argument or of play fighting being taken too far, which adds to the obscurity of boundaries between the two forms of violence; "Rosie" explained this:

"There have been...a couple of weeks ago, two boys mucking around the classroom play fighting that turned into a serious fight and one of the boys had his head put through the like window, but it's not a glass window, it's that like you know the Elliot Huts (temporary teaching rooms)? He had a big black eye, that was like a couple of weeks ago, but I think he was punished for that (laughs)"

It was not completely clear as to how this play fight changed into a real fight but it appeared to be the case that one of the boys did not want to 'play' anymore. The boys in question had been 'scrapping' in the classroom before the teacher arrived and one of them decided he had had enough and wanted to get settled for class. The other boy did not want to stop and continued to engage in 'play fighting'. The boy who wanted to stop decided that to 'demonstrate he had had enough' he started a genuine fight and put the other boy's head through the window. Play turned into real. "Rosie" explained that everyone in the class was not entirely sure what was going on and did not really understand why one of them lost his temper so much. Apparently the boys are still very good friends and continue to 'play' fight! What is important is that the boundary between play and real violence had been crossed. This 'real' fight was not recorded as one of the 'big three'. It was a demonstration of one of the lesser forms of real violence that occurred at the school; it did not occur at the 'fight venue'; but it was not a 'play' fight. The intent to harm was there once the fight took on a 'real' element *but* it was viewed and recorded by the pupils as 'play gone too far' which defused and neutralised the fact that one of the boys involved had had his head put through a window. Rather than sustaining an injury from a fight it was viewed as an 'accident'. This particular fight demonstrates that elements of intention and malice were involved. Furthermore, the confusion demonstrated by the pupils highlights the fact that traversing such boundaries was difficult to define. All pupils could talk about 'play' and 'real', but when presented with a situation that involved both forms of conflict, those pupils in the immediate vicinity of the violence were unsure as to what their role should be. As will

be demonstrated, the students assumed a role of bystander in the case of real fights. When the category of violence was undetermined, the pupils did not know how to respond.

The difficulty in deconstructing real violence between friends was expressed by all of the pupils and is supported by Coser's (1956) statement, paraphrasing Simmel: "...intensity of conflict is related to the closeness of the relationship." (p. 65). When friends fall out and take play fights to the level of a real fight the interaction has a deeper meaning due to the relationship between the individuals engaged in the violence. This could explain the confusion fellow pupils had in explaining what happened when friends fall out and it also adds to the difficulties in distinguishing 'play' from 'real'.

Occasionally girls would fight. There were reports of only two major fights between girls but it appeared to be the case that when girl violence happened it was both deliberate and severe. Both cases resulted in injury and one of them was one of the 'big three'. "Katie" explained this episode:

"Yeah I saw one the other, I don't know when it was, it was two girls in year nine and they were having a bit of a scrap and swearing and like the teacher came running down, she's my form tutor, she came running down and stopped them...But that's probably one of the only girl sort of fights I've seen...I heard of one that was outside of school which I wasn't there at the time when a girl, I think she had to go to hospital...or something I'm not sure. But I've heard of girl fights but I've never seen that many."

It was generally agreed that violence between females was rare and any incidents of girls fighting were usually real fights as girls never engaged in play fighting. Girls did not use weapons in their conduct but they would punch and kick and induce injury. The gender question will be considered later in this chapter. However, it is worth noting that previous conventional thinking suggests that girls conform and conflict between them tends to be verbal. This was not entirely borne out in the accounts I received.

'Real' fights obviously had severe consequences, as "Raj" explained:

"If a punch has been thrown then you'll get dragged inside and then you know then you could be in trouble. You can get your parents phoned up."

The school meals assistants, teachers or prefects would be the individuals responsible for 'dragging' the pupils in after a fight. There was one break time at the school between 10.50am and 11.10am. During this time the responsibility for patrolling the

playground was left to the prefects. The role, selection and powers of the prefects are discussed later in the chapter. It is important here to acknowledge their presence. Many pupils reported that there were places where one would never see a prefect. Such places were the areas where the pupils engaged in rule breaking behaviour, for example, having a cigarette. Lunch break was between the hour of 12.45 and 1.45. During this time there were six school meals assistants employed to oversee the queuing into the canteen and the purchase of the lunches. The school meals assistants were all based in and around the canteen, none of them actually patrolled the playground. Again at lunchtime, the prefects would wander around the playground. Teachers always spent their break times and lunch hour in the staff room. There were four teachers on a rota system, who were on duty daily patrolling the school buildings and 'out of bound areas' such as car parks (these areas can be seen in Appendix 6 which is a detailed map of the layout of the school). They would also be around the entrances to the school after morning and lunch-breaks in order to ensure that pupils adhered to the one-way system, whereby movement around the main school building to and from classrooms was controlled. One could only go up the stairs at the front entrance and down the stairs at the back and one had to be also dressed appropriately to go back into class: for example, ties tied and shirts tucked in. Teachers did not patrol the school grounds. If a teacher was required at a fight, a prefect would fetch him or her. Teachers would only be requested if there was a casualty of some kind, for example a nosebleed.

All pupils reported that a real fight on school premises would never last more than a few minutes as those responsible for patrolling the playground would get to the fights and break them up. For the majority of fights this was a welcome constraint. Any form of real violence that happened on school premises would not have had a chance to develop into anything too confrontational. These observations are reminiscent of Peter Marsh's (1978) findings in *The Rules of Disorder*, where he discusses 'symbolic violence' which occurred between football fans and how the presence of the police enabled similar patterns of constraint. Furthermore, he argued in *Aggro* (1978):

"The territories which man creates can be seen both as precipitators of aggression and as instruments of aggression management. Violence may erupt when boundaries are disputed, but violence can become largely symbolic and non-injurious when boundaries serve to define arenas in which conflict can be socially contained. In addition, the lack of certain territories can result in an increase in violence because the social control of conflict relies heavily on the ability of people to see conflicts as being within their sphere of influence."
(p.108-9)

Thus, accounts of real fights were often reported as occurring off school premises, this will be explained in the next section.

With the potential for getting sanctioned, it was not surprising that many incidents that occurred within the school were repeatedly reported to the teachers as being 'play' fights. Play fighting was not strictly allowed but perhaps the neutralising justification of a scenario as play allowed it to happen. Otherwise the label of a 'full on' fight and thus a 'real' fight carried serious repercussions. The teachers were not fully aware of the distinction. In observations made during recreation times in the staffroom, teachers would talk about 'scrapping', play fighting etc, but they did not talk of incidents of violence which occurred at Bayview School in the same way as the pupils. It is an example of pupil self-regulation meshing with formal school regulation.

The boundaries of play proved almost impossible to deconstruct, but all pupils talked about the different forms of violence as if it were second nature to them. It also became apparent that there was no such thing as merely 'fights'; two distinct categories of fighting had emerged with complex rules surrounding their definition.

Play fighting was the more difficult concept to comprehend, as there were so many secondary rules attached. A variety of fights could qualify as play, but the most obvious forms to attempt to define it were boys 'letting off steam' and 'having a bit of fun': rough and tumble, nothing more, which happened everyday. It was a similar situation to when I was at school when the boys used to gather on the field for a game of British Bull Dog, which on reflection was a very dangerous game, yet we called it 'play'. Such games were banned from recreation times at Bayview School, but the boys expressed a desire and necessity to 'play fight'. What is interesting is that no girls ever engaged in play fighting or expressed a desire to. This gave play fighting a masculine pursuit status, which could parallel with the games played throughout my school life. At stake were issues of injury; intention; consequence; malice; ill-will; and the disruption of relations.

Perhaps 'play' and 'real' can be regarded as the 'Realistic' and 'Non-Realistic' conflicts that Coser (1956) distinguished, whereby 'Realistic conflicts' are a 'means toward a specific result' just as real fights had a purpose. 'Non-Realistic conflicts' are a 'tension

release' 'not directly related to a contentious issue and not oriented toward the attainment of specific results' (P 49), an interpretation similar to the accounts offered for the justifications of play and 'only having fun', i.e., inconsequentiality. There was thought to be some form of pre-existing tension to release and, as has been noted, this could be a reaction to the classroom environment that one has just left and to engage in 'play' fighting enables one to 'let off steam'. These definitions help us to begin to understand what 'play' and 'real' fighting meant to the pupils, but an understanding of the rituals surrounding the violence was needed. What was necessary to establish was where and under what circumstances the acts of violence were happening.

Issues of Space and Territory

It was reported by all pupils that fights and conflicts tended to happen in 'year nine land', that is, a part of the playground where the year nine boys played football and the year nine girls gathered to watch them play. Pupils in year nine were thirteen to fourteen years of age and were the middle year group at Bayview School. It was a recognized part of the playground in which to witness violence as documented by "Chad":

"Well it's (the fight venue) only like behind the canteen all the year nine's hang around there so like not many year nines say anything they'd just be watching."

"Year Nine Land"



The building on the left is the music and drama suite, the one on the right is the canteen. The fenced off area at the back is 'year nine land', a tennis court that extends behind the full length of the canteen. It is not an overlooked area and is out of the sight of the main school building and subsequently the gaze of authority.

The fact that there were designated areas in the playground supported existing research on how teenagers feel that it was important for them to be able to control and influence their recreational space (Skelton & Valentine, 1998). Walking around the playground I observed patterns of recreational socialisation. There were groups of girls, usually sitting in front of the canteen in the concreted area, chatting and reading magazines. Groups of boys gathered playing football and running around. 'Year Nine land' was situated behind all of this and there was usually a game of football taking place between the boys of year nine and a number of boys and girls gathered to watch. They would stand around the inside of the fences thus further obscuring one's ability to observe what happened within the space. I was regarded with suspicion unless someone I had interviewed spotted me. Then they would come over and talk, introduce me to friends as a student they had helped with a project, and ask me how my work was going. This helped me to become less obvious in the playground. There were clear patterns of social groupings and areas where specific pupils gathered. These patterns may be recognized as instances of 'territoriality' which commonly refers to a sense of property which leads to defensive postures.

Like narratives of the real fights, all pupils elaborately told me about the layout of the playground and the existence of 'year nine land'. Each consecutive year nine took over the territory and rarely was other pupils from other year groups present. Non-year nine students would only be in 'year nine land' if a fight took place. It was another unwritten rule that conflict happened in 'year nine land' and again it was part of the current folklore of this particular school's culture.

Even though there emerged a specified area for conflict, it became apparent that some of the more brutal incidents of violence, for example real fights that resulted in injury, tended to happen off the school's premises, altogether registering a further territorial marker of escalating violence. On reflection this is interesting, as space and control mirrored one another, physical distance from the core authority of the school being

matched by the scale of deviant behaviour. One particular account, and one of the 'big three' of real fight legend, is a tale of two girls fighting. "Rosie", who was in year eleven, described the episode. The girls in question were in year ten:

"Well, a couple of weeks ago one girl was walking down the road and a girl who has been expelled from our school stopped in the car that she was being driven in, got out, punched the girl, was kicking her and the girl came back into school and she had two black eyes. That's like out of school it happened. So the school can't do anything about it, 'cos the girl has been expelled and I think girls can be just as bad as boys."

This account of violence is important for two reasons. Firstly, as this event happened off the school premises and concerned a pupil who had been expelled, the school was relatively powerless to act on the incident independently. Secondly, it demonstrates that, although girl violence was relatively rare, when it did happen it had the potential to result in injury. In this particular case, the girl who was attacked went back to the school, reported the incident, and was then taken to hospital. The police and the parents of both parties were called. The victim decided to press charges and the offender went to court, was permanently excluded from school and received a juvenile tag for six months. The reason given for the conflict was that the girl who had been expelled had reason to believe the victim had been spreading defamatory news about herself and her family (it should be noted that she was an outsider to the town from Liverpool and lived on the housing estate, the significance of which will be discussed in the chapter on bullying). The offender subsequently decided to 'teach' the victim 'a lesson', by means of attacking her during the lunch break. The victim maintained that she had not spread malicious rumours to anyone about her attacker. This is interesting as it is generally maintained that girls engage in predominantly verbal attacks on one another. Yet, here is an example of women engaging in violence as a consequence of verbal attacks. As we shall see in the chapter on bullying this was usually the pattern of bullying and retaliation that male forms of victimisation took. It raises questions about the differences between the genders that will be pursued later on in the thesis.

This account is a demonstration of how accurate the narratives documented to me were and it was corroborated in conversation with a member of staff. This was the only reported case of violence having such severe consequences within this particular school and it underscores how relatively mild the outer limits of injury were in a rural school. Urban schools may well experience much higher levels of violence.

The dominant view within the criminological literature of girl violence is that it is not as brutal as violence between boys. However, a study carried out as part of the ESRC Violence Research Programme at Glasgow University found that girls are becoming more violent and 'recognised their own potential for using physical violence'. Furthermore, they would, in extreme circumstances, engage in physical violence as a 'last resort' (Burman, et al., 2001). The incident between the two girls at Bayview School demonstrated female willingness to use violence.

The account of female violence also validated the key territorial feature about the location of fights: what happened when they occurred off school premises. It could be that real fights took place off school grounds in order for punishment to be difficult to administer, constituting another 'rule' of fighting. If the conflict was taken away from the authority based in the school premises, the violence became a matter that could be dealt with diffusely by a number of authorities. Responsibility for administering the punishment became obscured.

The pupils told me about the popularity of rule breaking off school property. It did not just relate to violence. Again this flags the links between space, territoriality, control and violence or deviation. It was almost a sense of release; as soon as the students left the back gates they would smoke, have little fights or scraps, untuck uniforms and remove ties. It was a situation where the pupils controlled their lives and environments after being under the social control of the school all day. In relation to violence, play fighting would break out, as members of authority were not present to stop the conflict. The relevance of the school journey is discussed in the chapter on bullying and the events that happened in public space. Needless to say, it was usually the case that real fights based on a personal, private vendetta, such as the fight between the two girls, would occur off school premises. Real fights with ritualistic and moralistic lessons to be learnt, related to the status of pupils within the rank and hierarchy of the peer groups and year groups, took place in 'year nine land'.

A number of conflicts occurred over girls. For example, if a boy was talking to another boy's girlfriend, a fight would often break out if there was a suspicion that the former was 'making a move' on the latter's partner. The previous account given by "Katie"

demonstrated real fights with a moralistic rationale. Also of interest is the fact that the fight in question happened in 'year nine land', as "Katie" continued:

"It was in the older playground, so the boys all play football around that area, so it was just I don't think he should have been there actually I don't think he's in year nine and I think he was there."

This emphasises the importance of actual playground space. On reflection this fight could have been over two issues. Not only did the boy who was attacked 'chat up' another boy's girlfriend, he was where he should not have been. The pupils universally recognised the significance of year nine territory, an instance of a more general point discussed by Marsh (1978):

"...territories have a very special function...they are created in order to enable the social control of male aggression. This is in direct contrast with other animal territories which, as a by-product, serve to arouse aggression...In other words the social activities of many people, young men in particular, would have no meaning unless distinctive arenas existed in which they could take place. Because territories are behaviour facilitating, rather than behaviour restricting...they positively encourage the contemporary forms of social management of male conflicts. The conflicts, stemming from aggression which has nothing to do with territoriality in a direct sense, can be focussed around new and socially defined territories. Arenas and discrete 'stages' emerge. As a result, conflicts are contained and the means of safely dealing with aggression are given a healthy boost. The 'turf' areas don't causes aggression, although it might look that way sometimes. Their true function is to allow men and boys to act out their aggression in a safe and orderly way." (p 100)

Having a designated fighting space allowed 'real' fights to occur at Bayview School. The motivation for this particular boy to 'invade' and fight an older boy was desire to lay on a machismo display. This particular playground was the fight venue and it was known that fights were held there. However, the decision of a boy from a younger year to go and taunt a year nine boy on year nine territory was interesting. This was the only case where it was reported that a member of a younger year had challenged an individual from an older year group. The importance of the peer group in relation to age, status and one's year group are discussed in the chapter on friendship networks. Nonetheless, this was a brave attempt from the individual concerned as he had broken the 'rules' of year group conflict. Furthermore, it would suggest that individuals in the wrong space are read as aggressive. In this particular incident that was the case, it was challenging behaviour. The recreational space and designated areas were important to the pupils.

These findings are similar to observations made by Anderson (1990) in *Streetwise. Race, Class and Change in an Urban Community*. He described similar territorial defences that black youths engaged in on street corners in their respective neighbourhoods:

“By choosing to use or avoid a given street, one either claims it as safe or abandons it. Because boundaries are set through collective public action, they are not static; rather, they are created by social habit, situationally shaped and determined by those who share the space.” (p. 47).

He continues:

“If a stranger cannot pass safe inspection and be assessed as ‘safe’ (either by identity or purpose), the image of predator may arise...and trigger some form of defensive action” (p. 167)

Thus, there are similarities between the groups of individuals in this study and Anderson’s work. Irrespective of race, designated spaces are central issues in comprehending the ritualistic nature of violence and potential threats to one’s territory.

This finding is consistent with Lyman and Scott’s (1970) larger observations about territory and issues of space:

“Free territory is carved out of space and affords the opportunities for idiosyncrasy and identity. Central to the manifestation of these opportunities are boundary creation and enclosure. This is because activities that run counter to expected norms need seclusion or invisibility to permit unsanctioned performance, and because the peculiar identities are sometimes impossible to realise in the absence of the appropriate setting. Thus the opportunities for freedom and action – with respect to normatively discrepant behaviour and maintenance of specific identities – are intimately connected with the ability to attach boundaries to space and to command access to or exclusion from territories.” (Cited in Marsh et al., 1978, p 60)

At Bayview School, the younger boy lost and suffered the consequences. It was a risk for this individual to behave in this way and the importance of ‘year nine land’ to the pupils as a designated fight area and a place where the older boys played football was reinforced. Furthermore, it is evident that gender roles are developing here. There is existing research demonstrating the importance of forming a masculine identity and the need that some men have to be able to demonstrate their ability to defend their honour, especially in confrontational situations in public space (Messerschmidt (1993), Newburn and Stanko (1994) and Polk (1994)). Connell (2000) believes that the school as an institution helps in ‘constructing particular forms of gender’ and ‘negotiating relations between them’. He continues:

“The majority of boys learn to negotiate school discipline with only a little friction. A certain number, however, take the discipline system as a challenge, especially in peer networks which make a heavy investment in the ideas of toughness and confrontation.” (p.162-3)

The pupils are adolescents and were at a crucial developmental stage in their lives. The issues of territory, identity and masculinity were important for them. In this particular case, the younger boy could have been egged on by his peers and wanted to show them that he was not fearful in entering ‘year nine land’ to confront an older pupil. Furthermore, the older boy could neither refuse the contest nor be defeated in the subsequent conflict, as he was being challenged on his territory by a younger rival. This was the only reported incident that went against the ‘norm’ of violent confrontation within the school but the importance of gender in forming relations and as a cause of conflict was becoming apparent and will be discussed in further detail at a later stage.

Sometimes those involved with the conflict did not want to have an audience. “Izzy” recalls a scenario that began in the classroom:

“Um I think, I think they went out and they sort of like somehow went out of the room and I think one of the teachers walked past and stopped it.”

This fight had begun in the classroom and, whilst they were fighting, the two boys involved took it outside, away from their peers, an indication of the perceived severity of the conflict. In this case the fight was ‘real’ and was removed from sight. More concretely, it was a fight whose protagonists did not want to be circumscribed. This tended to happen in the context of ‘real’ fights as “Jamie” explained when asked if many fights happened within school time:

“Um...some do in the, like the toilets and that where no one sees it but you don’t see many fights in school.”

It appeared to be the case that real fights were generally ‘one-on-one’ and out of the sight of others. Without a crowd the fight could get very unruly, it also gave the violence a more personal and intimate angle. The violence was between the individuals involved in contrast to the huge ritualistic scenes, which will be discussed later, where the population of the whole playground gathered to watch an incident. By taking a fight into an undisclosed setting away from spectators the two who were fighting were controlling their surroundings and their territory and neutralised the social control of the school and their peers. It also made surveillance of the incident impossible. Teachers, pupils and prefects who might have had the ability to do something about the incident

could not intervene. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that the school is potentially more capable of providing social control than the family. It is there that pupils can more readily be monitored and punished for deviant behaviour. To take a fight out of sight and away from any audience makes such circumstances problematical to those who would control it. Another rule of fighting appeared: real fights could also be intimate affairs between those involved and no one else.

The rules surrounding the selection of a fight venue were becoming apparent. There were two forms of 'real' fight. The more important issues being fought over, such as the conflict between the two girls, would happen off school premises and not in a public forum. Or they could happen on school premises in the toilets as a one-on-one conflict. These acts of violence were usually over a personal vendetta of some kind, for example, a reaction to name calling or bullying. The second form of 'real' fight, such as the machismo conflict over a girlfriend to 'save face' in front of peers always occurred in 'year nine land'. These fights could influence the peer group and necessitated an audience. The ranking systems and hierarchies upheld by the pupils were often challenged in such incidents. Finally, a 'play' fight could happen anywhere and everywhere and usually every playtime or once school had finished, in one form or another. All of these assorted conflict locations indicate that differential exposure to regulation was a key factor with fighting, depending on the potential severity of the violent behaviour. Whatever the degree of the act of violence, how crucial was an individual's friendship network in determining outcomes and what role if any did friends play?

Importance of Peers

The role of peers played an important part in regulating the severity of conflict. "Zoë" said:

"They (the kids) watch everything. Some people will try to stop it if it's their friends, but most don't."

The interviews revealed that the girls were ostensibly well rehearsed in the 'tell all policy' of the school. They explained that one should help a friend if they were involved in a fight. The female students said that friends should stop fights and the teachers should be told. The countervailing *reality* was that no one helped in the incidents of violence discussed. All the pupils' commentary about the violent situations

highlighted that non-intervention was the way in which peers helped one another, and this was rather puzzling to understand. Furthermore, the boys did not think one should help at all. Gender differences emerged in the theories about what one *should* do for one's friends. This needed deconstruction.

The influence of peers is documented in the literature on adolescence:

“An increasing body of evidence indicates that the quality of the peer group is...influential. Particularly during adolescence, many of children's formative social experiences arise within the peer group.” (Rutter, 2001, p25)

There is also a literature emerging in America regarding carrying weapons to achieve peer status:

“An intriguing finding was that there are more students with no known risk factors carrying weapons to school than students who have high risk factors. Although high risk students are far more likely to carry a weapon (49.6% to 3.9%), there are greater numbers of no-risk students with a weapon (Furlong et al., 2001) This finding raises the question of whether we are missing other risk factors, whether some students, apparently well adjusted to school, feel sufficiently threatened to risk carrying a weapon, or whether they are engaging in peer performance in a school climate where weapon-carrying conveys peer status” (O'Donnell, 2001, p 410)

This quote highlights the 'cool' element that some pupils emulate in order to obtain a status amongst peers. It must be noted that none of the pupils reported carrying a weapon nor did they document any knowledge of peers carrying weapons. It also highlights the strong networks and alliances that students form, whether they involve carrying a gun or being able to skate or surf. The role of the school as an important factor in establishing status was observed by Anderson (1999):

“...these young people are campaigning for place, esteem and ultimately respect. In this situation, the school becomes transformed in the most profound sense into a staging area for the streets, a place where people come to present themselves, to represent where they come from, and to stay even with or to dominate their peers...In school as in the neighbourhood, adolescents are concerned with developing a sense of who they are, what they are, and what they will be.” (p 94-5)

Status amongst adolescent peers is paramount. Regardless of the setting of the school similar principles apply. The influence of peers on individual decision-making was crucial and as will be demonstrated later, was the paramount factor in any judgment made with regard to violence.

I have argued that fighting between friends was difficult to control. The story of the boys that fought and took their fight out of the classroom was one such example; “Izzy” explained the confusion:

Q: “When was the last time you saw a fight?”

A: “Um...well...I saw a fight this morning.” (laughs)

Q: “Really?”

A: “Yeah it was in the classroom. It was quite funny.”

Q: “Who was it between was it boys, girls?”

A: “Yeah two boys.”

Q: “Why did they fight?”

A: “I think they’re...they’re both...they’re a bit...they are best friends with each other but they just fell out with each other.”

Q: “Yeah, was it more of a play fight then?”

A: “No.”

Q: “Was it a real fight?”

A: “Yeah (laughs) but there’s one boy (one of the boys involved) and everyone always takes his bag and he was...but his friend always does it and they fell out over it and had a fight.”

Peers played a crucial role in creating a violent situation. Play fighting always happened between friends. When it was a real fight between friends, those watching were often unsure of the category of conflict themselves. Clearly an audience bestows reality on a situation, as will be demonstrated further in the section on the role of the bystander. However, if the individuals fighting were friends the audience found it problematic to assume the role of bystander. Conflict between friends tested the boundaries of friendship. It can be seen that:

“...a conflict is more passionate and more radical when it arises out of close relationships. The coexistence of union and opposition in such relations makes for the peculiar sharpness of the conflict. Enmity calls forth deeper and more violent reactions, the greater the involvement of the parties among whom it originates.” (Cosser, after Simmel, 1956, p 71)

Friends who fought were often engaging in ‘real’ forms of violence as well as recreational ones. Furthermore, if ‘real’ fights did occur between friends there was usually an issue or a disagreement to test the friendship, such as a best friend ‘fancying’ the other’s girlfriend.

I tried to comprehend why pupils would be so reluctant to help a friend, especially as peer networks are important during adolescence. The possible reasons for not helping one’s friends will be discussed in the chapter on peer groups and friendship networks. With regard to violence, the responses unanimously stated that one says nothing and does nothing. There was a code of silence that enclosed the violent episodes and

influenced its incidence and seriousness. There was a reluctance to tell anyone in authority about violence, whether it was play fighting that got out of hand or real fighting, and this code amongst the pupils needed understanding.

The Code of Silence

Unwritten codes of silence surrounded any form of conflict, whether it was real or play. Part of this code was a postulated fiction that the teachers saw everything anyway. "Sarah" explained this:

A: "I think teachers just see it like from the staff room 'cos the staff room is high up."

Q: "Right, does it overlook like play areas?"

A: "I don't know probably but people like the dinner ladies see everything anyway."

The fact that there was an assumption that everything that happened within the playground was seen, was offered as a justification for not telling. This is similar to Bentham's panopticon:

"It is obvious that, in all these instances, the more constantly the persons to be inspected are under the eyes of the persons who should inspect them, the more perfectly will the purpose of the establishment have been attained. Ideal perfection, if that were the object, would require that each person should actually be in that predicament, during every instant of time. This being impossible, the next thing to be wished for is, that. At every instant, seeing reason to believe as much, and not being able to satisfy himself to the contrary, he should *conceive* himself to be so." (Bozovic, 1995, p.34, letter 1, Bentham's emphasis)

An impression of constant surveillance was constructed. Even though the individuals were not really always being observed, they claimed to believe and envision that they were. The pupils thought they were under constant surveillance from a host of sources: CCTV, teachers, prefects and school meals assistants, and it was possible for pupils to claim that the teachers saw exactly what was going on at recreation times. It became apparent that the levels of supervision did not particularly inconvenience the pupils. Furthermore, I got the general impression that the students felt safe in their school environment and that was something for which they were grateful.

“Rosie” explained this belief further:

A: “I think the teachers usually find out we’ve got (the school has) the security cameras, quite a few around the school at the moment and they are like always recording (laughs) like in a prison.”

Q: “You can’t get away with anything then?”

A: “No you can’t, well people do get away with smoking, you still get the blind corners round the Elliott huts (temporary classrooms).”

The cameras arrived long after the code of silence. The idea that one should not tell because the teachers knew what was going on anyway, was not an adequate justification for not telling.

It became necessary to understand why this code should be practised universally amongst the pupils. A consequence of telling was the individual who ‘grassed’ could get picked on himself or herself. In an adult setting that would be called witness intimidation. Additionally, there were issues of the identity and solidarity amongst the pupils themselves, which will be discussed in detail in a separate chapter focussing on peer networks, friendship and year groups. The boundary of ‘them and us’, between teacher and student, is relevant here. The repercussions of telling resulted in a blanket of silence falling over the playground if an incident occurred.

Such unwillingness to tell on a peer is well documented throughout many institutions: Prisons, housing estates, the Armed Services, the police: no one ever wants to be regarded as a ‘grass’:

“The ‘no grassing’ code is in any case deeply embedded in our culture: some of our most admired wartime heroes are men and women who refused to shop their friends, even under torture.” (Devlin 1995, p129)

To illustrate this point, and due to the fact pupils themselves expressed the parallels between schooling and being in prison, I shall turn to research on prisons and inmates.

Goffman (1961) in *Asylums* examined the effects of the ‘total institution’:

“A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.” (p xiii)

He claimed that a boarding school was a 'total institution':

"Whenever we look at a social establishment...we find that participants decline in some way to accept the official view of what they should be putting into and getting out of the organization and, behind this, of what sort of self and world they are to accept for themselves...whenever worlds are laid on, underlives develop." (1961, p. 304 -5)

The school that is the centre of this analysis can be seen as having a distinct underlife that was just such a reaction to the pupils trying to control some part of their environment in some way. Furthermore, the generational gap is total and acts as another kind of enclosure. Goffman claimed;

"...significant differences in tone will appear in total institutions, depending on whether recruitment is voluntary, semi-voluntary or involuntary." (p. 118)

Because education is compulsory, the school can be regarded as possessing some of the traits of a total institution. Hence, it is important to make an impression that one is an individual within the institution. Goffman continues:

"Some illicit activities are pursued with a measure of spite, malice, glee and triumph, and at a personal cost, that cannot be accounted for by the intrinsic pleasure of consuming the product...the sense one gets of a practice being employed *merely* because it is forbidden...these practices seem to demonstrate – to the practitioner if no one else – that he has some selfhood and personal autonomy beyond the grasp of the organisation." (p. 312-314, Goffman's emphasis)

These observations could help to explain play fighting and real fighting. As incidents of violence were forbidden, to engage in conflict enabled those involved to believe they were going against the norms and values of their institution. Anything from a 'scrap' and a 'bit of fun' to a 'full on fight' to gain revenge was forbidden and to engage in violence in whatever form made a statement against the school policy.

It does not explain what girls did to 'go against the grain'. It has previously been mentioned that girls rarely fought, and never play fought. So how did they obtain their sense of 'selfhood'? Female students practised the code of silence and never told, in breach of the school's 'tell all policy'. However, it was necessary to establish if they would never 'grass' for similar reasons. The gender question will be examined later on but it is worth remembering that the majority of this literature concerns men and male experiences and there is a need to expose how female pupils deal with institutions. It is also important to note that the views of the teaching staff in relation to the 'tell all policy' will be documented later on in the chapter on bullying.

Goffman maintains that actions, such as engaging in illicit violence, are crucial:

“The practice of reserving something of oneself from the clutch of an institution is very visible in mental hospitals and prison but can be found in more benign and less totalistic institutions too...this recalcitrance is not an incidental mechanism of defence but rather an essential constituent of the self.” (1961, p. 319)

The code of silence practised within schools and prisons, along with other institutions, could be viewed as a coping mechanism and enabled individuals to keep a sense of personal identity. It also assists individuals to hold a collective identity against a system. Let me pursue the argument further by discussing the practice of a code of silence within prisons.

Prisoners interviewed for Liebling’s (1992) research used similar language to the pupils. They claimed one cannot be friendly with the staff or one will be called a ‘grass’:

“It would appear that *relationships with inmates* are more significant...than relationships with staff in relation to the ability to cope with the sentence...Bondeson showed that inmates are more sensitive to both negative and positive feedback from other inmates, particularly to criticism, than they are to the staff (1989; 59). They spend far more time with other inmates (Ibid: 46) and ‘group affiliation’ is thought to be more common amongst the young (Ibid: 65). Staff have a facilitating role...Inmates do find staff helpful, on both personal and practical ways – but wish they could be more (or more consistently) so, particularly in personal ways.” (p. 149 Liebling’s emphasis)

This is a similar notion as to why pupils would not tell the teachers about their predicament. Not only did they not want to be viewed as a ‘grass’, there was a belief that those in authority did not understand. Additionally, spending more time with fellow pupils, often in unregulated settings, makes one more vulnerable to one’s peers than to formal authority. Furthermore, peers are legitimate sources of identity. This view is echoed in Genders and Players’ (1995) work in Grendon, a therapeutic prison. The key aim of Grendon is to eradicate any forms of ‘traditional’ prison culture in order to reform its inmates:

“The wing constitutions and guidelines, for example, make it clear that it is each individual’s responsibility to feed back to the community any information he may have about the use of violence, or about the supply and use of illicit drugs. In essence, prisoners are being asked to breach a cardinal rule of the inmate code of conduct, that is, to become ‘a grass’.” (p. 130)

Within Grendon the authorities attempted to break the code of silence. Yet this does prove problematic:

“The line which inmates drew between ‘grassing’ and ‘therapeutic feedback’ was determined by their assessment of the damage which certain kinds of behaviour could wreak upon the therapeutic activities of the community. At Grendon, tolerance of violence was low and there was a general recognition by staff and inmates alike that the ‘no violence’ rule represented a valuable and indispensable source of security within the therapeutic community. It was accepted that every man, regardless of his previous malevolence, should be afforded the opportunity to engage in therapy and to speak of his past behaviour without fear of physical retribution. The control of drug use, however, was an area of conventional prison culture which proved less amenable to immediate change.” (P.130)

From the above statement a tentative parallel can be drawn between drug use within Grendon and play fighting at the school. There was a reluctance shown both by inmates and pupils to acknowledge the misconduct through not telling about the occurrence of deviant episodes within their respective institutions. On the one hand such pursuits are deemed recreational and not perceived as requiring reporting. On the other, it helps the individuals to keep a ‘sense of self’, regardless of the fact that Grendon is a therapeutic and liberal penal institution and the school operates a ‘tell all policy’.

Accounts of a universal practice of a code of silence within institutions help to explain why none of the children would ever tell if a fight occurred. Any persistence in questioning why one should not tell was viewed with caution. The pupils thought that anything they said could be disclosed to relevant authorities when they were asked about the ‘no telling’ rule. It became therefore normatively compelling; with a couple of exceptions, to accept that not to ‘grass’ was the way it was amongst the pupils.

Due to the unwillingness to be regarded as a grass, the teachers were often left to find the fights for themselves. This was a point articulated by “Chad” when he was asked if anyone would ever tell:

“Err I’m not sure, but I reckon that there was like people just crowding round and stuff and there are teachers like out at break time so they would have like gone and said ‘Oh what’s happening here’, so they would have sorted it out probably.”

Even though all of the pupils recognised that just to wait for a teacher to arrive rather than go and summon one was wrong, none could explain why they would not break this code of silence.

“If it’s like a really bad fight with blood and stuff then yeah someone will go and get the teacher but if its more just like stupid yeah like a little scrap thing then we’ll try to split it up ourselves.”
 (“Rachel” - 16 years old)

“Rachel” thereby explained how the pupils would only get help if there was blood involved, and that the pupils liked to try to keep things organized by themselves. “Rachel” was a prefect and when she talked about pupil involvement she was discussing the role of prefects in violent situations. The role of the prefects will be demonstrated later in the chapter, however for purposes of clarification *only* prefects would get the help of teachers. It appeared to be the case that this code would be broken in extreme cases but, as these forms of conflict were relatively rare, the prefects would only voluntarily fetch teachers as a last resort. The prefects summoning the staff as a last resort was similar to the staff going to the police as a last resort. There are concentric circles here in the resolution of problems and authority. Both the pupils and the staff operated a self-policing element and would only invoke outside help if the situation was outside their control.

“Jamie” put it rather bluntly:

“They (the pupils) don’t do anything. They just watch them get kicked in and by that time their nose is bleeding and they’ve got bloody noses and sore fingers and everything. So, there’s not much really you can do once they’ve got a broken nose and you take them to casualty.”

It was another unwritten rule, you just do not tell. This is consistent with observations made by Marsh (1978) who claimed:

“There is a general consensus that there are limits beyond which one should not go...By identifying the moment when intervention is seen as being required a knowledge of the legitimate boundaries of fights can be obtained” (p. 107)

When a fight reached a point where an individual had sustained injuries, a prefect would get help and tell a teacher. The prefects were exempt from normal proscriptions and subsequently relieved students of the responsibility of informing. They were the *only* students with this role of notification. If there was a casualty the fight came to a natural conclusion. A fight would not be continued if someone was hurt. The rules of the fight were slowly emerging and as the above quote demonstrated, there was a point when

everyone acknowledged conflicts should stop. There was not a single report of a situation where violence continued if someone was injured.

I had begun to piece together the rituals of real fights but needed to understand more. None of the children could articulate why one should not tell, they claimed that it was just the way it was. They had learnt this 'rule' about telling at an early age and it was something practised everywhere, from not telling on a sibling, to not telling on your friend or even on an enemy. It was part of their natural attitude, and it replicates another of Sykes and Matza's "Techniques of Neutralization"; 'The Appeal to Higher Loyalties';

"The conflict between the claims of friendship and the claims of law, or a similar dilemma, has of course long been recognised by the social scientist (and the novelist) as a common human problem. If the juvenile delinquent frequently resolves his dilemma by insisting that he must 'always help a buddy' or 'never squeal on a friend', even when it throws him into serious difficulties with the dominant social order, his choice remains familiar to the supposedly law-abiding" (1957, p.669)

Bystanders – The Importance of their Role

The code of silence practised by the pupils was interlinked with the notion of the importance of the role of bystanders. Obviously, if there was a fight it was important to deconstruct what the causes of the conflict were, but of equal importance was the role taken by everyone else within the playground. There was a distinct view that one should just leave issues of conflict to the people involved in the immediate situation and that everyone should mind their own business. When asked if a fight was a good way to end a disagreement, "Zoë" said:

"Um, no I think they should talk about it, but if it really needs it, if they do have to fight then let them get on with it."

A clear pattern was evolving with regards to the 'rules' of a fight as "Jim" explained when asked if anyone tries to stop fights:

"No, people keep on watching like, circle round and just watch it, no one hardly ever stops a fight."

This appeared to be part of the ritual of the performance: the whole population of the playground, circling round and observing, with no one saying or doing anything. There might be an occasional heckle, some pupils telling me that boys would cheer if a punch was thrown and would call out in support if a good friend was involved in the fight.

This conjures images of the fight as some form of spectacle with the bystanders playing the spectators. However, I believed the role of the audience to be more complicated than that.

Even though this at first seems to an outsider to be an indifferent response to violence, the children could easily rationalise their behaviour:

“No I think if it’s between two people, they should just like, it’s an issue between them when more people get involved then it just gets more complicated and more people get into trouble and it just goes on and on and its stupid. Especially if it’s nothing to do with them, they don’t even know the people and stuff.”

(“Rachel” - 16 years old)

“Rachel” suggests that there are informal rules of containment in operation. Every pupil interviewed expressed that they did not get involved if they saw a fight. It is worth remembering though that the pupils could have been telling me stories that they thought I wanted to hear, but an unwillingness to participate was universal. After all, some ‘conflict’ may be perfectly functional. Coser’s (1956), in *The Functions of Social Conflict*, analyses Georg Simmel’s work, and argues that conflict is required in order that society can persist.

“Groups require disharmony as well as harmony, dissociation as well as association; and conflicts within them are by no means altogether disruptive factors.” (p31)

He continues by claiming that:

“Conflict serves to establish and maintain the identity and boundary lines of societies and groups...Conflict with other groups contribute to the establishment and reaffirmation of the identity of the group and maintains its boundaries against the surrounding social world.” (p38)

Hence the bystanders are doing nothing about the violence as they realise that the fight has to happen. Could it be that the pupils acted on socially accomplished reactions and that to observe a fight was a role in itself? The fighting had to happen in order to maintain and ratify the harmony of the playground and the relationships within it?

If a fight happened, and more and more of the pupils joined in, there was likelihood that punishment would be administered. The pupils once again viewed any persistent questions on the role of bystanders with caution. Like the principle not to tell, it was something that ‘just happened’, was normatively compelling, and that ‘was how it was’.

I wanted to explore this notion further. Was the role of the bystander as clear-cut as this? Did everyone merely watch and observe? The bystanders were doing more than nothing: they were affirming the importance of the occasion; making themselves potential testifiers who transformed the event into a socially significant occasion. I attempted to get the pupils to talk about the rituals of the fight further.

Serious contradictions surrounded the notion of bystanding as “Rosie”, a prefect, demonstrated when recalling an incident that started out as a play fight and ‘got out of hand’:

“No I think everyone just thought they (the boys involved in the conflict) were play fighting and then when it got serious I think everyone (her fellow prefects) was like trying to stop them but it was too late then.”

“Rosie” was a prefect and she is clearly stating the confusions that arise: If it was ‘play’ one does not get involved; if one was a prefect and the fight got ‘too serious’, (leading for example to an injury of some form or another), one could intervene. The prefects had an exceptional license to act as regulators. The contradictory rules were almost impossible to follow. How were these decisions made? What criteria of seriousness were the pupils applying?

The fascination with observing violence needed analysing:

“Fights do attract attention, someone will just go round shouting ‘fight’ and people will crowd and then it turns out to be nothing.”
 (“Katie” - 15 years old)

This was a well-documented ritual of the spectators. If there was any form of conflict it was taken to ‘year nine land’. A few pupils would go around the playground informing everyone of its existence. Then everyone would form a crowd and watch. This is a similar perception to that of Jack Katz’s *The Seductions and Repulsions of Crime*:

“...(in) forms of deviance...actors are engaged in a transcendent project to exploit the ultimate symbolic values of force to show that one ‘means it’...not to use violence would be to raise chaotic questions about their purpose in life.”
(1988, p.321)

It could be the case that to demonstrate one’s status, one has to fight in front of one’s peers to prove oneself. This is reminiscent of Goffman’s (1969) argument in *Where the Action is*, whereby he documented occasions where moral character is tested and

displayed. He called such incidents 'character contests'. 'a special kind of moral game' (p.181). He observed that:

"The territories of the self have boundaries that cannot be literally patrolled. Instead border disputes are sought out and indulged in (often with glee) as a means of establishing where one's boundaries are. And these disputes are character contests.

If the significance of character contests is to be appreciated, however, we must turn from games and skirmishes to constitutive features of social life. We must examine the investment as individuals is obliged to make in legitimate expectations that happen to be his own, especially informal ones, and the means available in society for establishing authority, invidious position, dominance, and rank." (p.182)

Through witnessing such events individuals in the crowd are learning lessons about future conflicts. For example, if a boy fights another boy for flirting with his girlfriend, any boy in the crowd watching would learn that to engage in such behaviour could result with them being in a similar situation. Polk (1994) made similar remarks:

"The overriding theme that runs through these killings is masculine control, where women become viewed as possessions of men and the violence reflects steps taken by males either to assert their domination over 'their' women, or to repel males who they feel are attempting to take control of their sexual partner." (p. 56)

Obviously Polk's work concerns grave issues of homicide and why men kill, but the principles behind the actions would seem to be similar to those behind incidents of real fights within the playground. Both boys and men have a hard won honour to defend. Not all men who have a partner 'chatted up' by another man will kill his rival or his partner. Similarly not all boys who have their girlfriend approached by another boy will challenge his opposition to a fight in front of his peers. But the parallels do suggest that there are some fundamental elements that some men follow. It would be interesting to extend Polk's work to see if the men that committed homicide had a tendency to be violent within their adolescent years. However, for the purpose of this research it can be seen that such practices act as a deterrent to 'put off' future contenders and indeed teach those who have stepped on another man's territory a lesson.

'Everyone should watch' could be another 'rule'. When a 'situation' occurs, everybody drops whatever they are doing to observe. The reasons behind fighting on such a grand scale were becoming more apparent, but it became necessary to analyse the crowd and its behaviour and elicit why such fights were allowed to happen. There was also the ancillary question of the consequences of not witnessing these acts of violence.

A popular justification was offered for both being a bystander and observing a code of silence:

“I think people try to keep out of it. They don’t want to take sides.”
 (“Izzy” - 13 years old)

One cannot be seen to take a particular side. Apparently if one does get involved, and one is not particularly friendly with anyone fighting, then one is likely to become a potential victim in the future. The strong friendship groups and year divisions, which will be dealt with in a separate chapter, also prohibited individuals getting involved. To keep the respect of peers was more important to the pupils than actually helping someone in a fight. One does not want to be seen as a ‘geek’ (this was a term that has been picked up by the pupils from American television programmes) a term that meant one does not ‘fit in’ with any of the pupils’ friendship networks. To be a busybody and interfere in other people’s business would earn you this label. So to the students it was a perfectly normal explanation for not getting involved. “Izzy” went on to further justify not becoming caught up in acts of violence:

A: “People just see and pretend it’s not there...I think they are scared that they will get into a fight or something so...I don’t think they like doing it (telling the teachers). And there’s always like all the playground there. If there’s a fight somewhere, the whole, everyone packs over to that bit of the playground. There’s nowhere with anyone else and the teachers must realise.”

Q: “And is everybody just sort of watching?”

A: “Yeah, watching.”

Through a fear of becoming involved one does or says nothing. This was observed by Anderson (1999):

“Another reason for seeing and yet not seeing drug transactions is that as people walk the streets of the community, they cannot help seeing what’s going on, but are afraid to get involved. Concerned for their own safety, they don’t even want people to notice them witnessing what is going on. After an incident like a shooting or a gang war, people tend to clam up for fear of retribution, especially where the authorities are concerned. If a bust occurs, anyone who is considered to have been paying too much attention to the drug activity might be suspected of having told the police about it. The way people deal with this fear and the need to protect themselves is by seeing but not seeing.” (p 133)

This is similar to the justifications for the observed code of silence reported by the pupils. Although the acts at Bayview School were not as violent, the principle of ‘seeing yet not seeing’ is relative to the particular individual’s situation. Again, the

vague hope that teachers would just 'realise' anyway also helped to excuse 'doing nothing'. Another clear rule had emerged and that was that everyone would observe.

The reports given by the children were reminiscent of accounts documented in the human rights literature that focus on the bystander (Sheleff, 1978), especially Latane and Darley (1970) who proposed the concept of 'the diffusion of responsibility' and the 'diffusion of blame';

"If only one bystander is present in an emergency, he will bear all of the blame that accrues from non-intervention. If others are present, the onus of responsibility is diffused, and the finger of blame points less directly to any one person. The individual may be more likely to resolve his conflicts between intervening and non-intervening in favour of the latter alternative." (p. 90)

Within a crowd surrounding and observing a fight everyone becomes concerned with what the other crowd members are doing. This results in an attitude that 'if no one else is helping why should I?' Furthermore, the more people who become spectators the more the reason not to bother to intervene. Thus, in a situation where the whole school is watching a fight, it becomes very easy to offer as a defence, 'why should I bother when nobody else in the school did?' The *locus classicus* is of course the Kitty Genovese case, where it was alleged that thirty seven people whom witnessed her murder did not call the police. It is difficult to comprehend why individuals would watch and do nothing. Therefore, it became essential to see if there were ever exceptions to the rule and if people ever reacted in a different way to those illustrated.

There was one special occasion reported when an individual was beaten up by a number of individuals in the crowd with the approval of the assembly. This was the third real fight of the last academic year recounted in the interviews. Not every pupil was involved in the violence but it was permitted by all of the bystanders who were engaging in verbal attacks. Every boy in the victim's year went up one by one to punch or kick him. This particular event was reported by every pupil who was interviewed and the reason it happened was that the boy who was victimised had been 'slagging off' a dead peer:

"Yeah it was a group of people and then a big circle, out in the field. They circled around him and people just came in pounding him and all. And he came home in tears to his mum. And his mum phoned up the school and kicked up, because he was beaten up."

Here “Jamie” explained how the bystanders reacted and joined in. It was almost an act of self-policing by the pupils. Normally there was not such an extreme reaction but due to the fact that the individual was speaking derogatorily about someone who had been tragically killed, the crowd was incensed by his actions and felt that they had to join in and punish him. Again, every pupil interviewed spoke of this event in fond detail. They believed that the individual in question deserved the treatment he received; even the girls who tended generally to disapprove of violence.

Why does the whole playground react in such extreme ways? It was interesting to hear from one of the only pupils who did not respond to acts of violence when they occurred in the playground:

Q: “what do you do if there is a fight?”

A: “I don’t usually go, when everybody goes fight and everybody runs down I just sit there and go that’s not a fight that’s just pushing around. (laughs) Um...I don’t think I have up here (seen a real fight), I don’t hear of them anymore, but I can’t be bothered to go to them if there is one.”

Q: “So is that what happens then people just sort of call fight and everybody piles down to watch it?”

A: “Yeah everyone just sort of runs and there’s usually about three of us left in the playground going we can’t be bothered.” (laughs)

Q: “And is it usually boys?”

A: “Yeah girls are all catty, ripping hair out (laughs), nobody can be bothered to go to them.”

Q: “No, do people try and stop them?”

A: “Teachers, everyone else don’t care they’re all going kick her in the head and stuff (laughs).”

(“Demelza” - 15 years old)

Girl fights did not attract a crowd. This was interesting, as male violence would motivate the whole playground if necessary. It could be the fact that female violence was rare. The only reported act of female violence which was one of the three key fights would not have had an audience, as it happened off the school grounds. It would be interesting to see whether crowds would gather to watch, if female violence ever became as frequent as male violence. Due to its infrequency it is not appropriate to draw comparisons or make generalisations.

“Louise” summed up the attitude of the bystander:

“Um...I don’t know I don’t really pay much attention to it all to do anything about it. ‘cos when there is one everyone runs to it and um sometimes I might walk over and see who it is and stuff but I don’t do anything about it when I get there.”

What was the justification for not getting involved? Was it a real fear of becoming involved or was it really a matter of ‘can’t be bothered’? From the interviews another rule of the fight emerged: that the role of the bystanders was a mechanism to limit damage and disruption. An audience to a real fight helped to set the boundaries of the timing and depth of a conflict. This was why violence that happened without bystanders could become problematic; the means to maintain the violence were not present. It was difficult to ascertain if those who were assuming the role of bystander were consciously aware of what they were doing. The argument offered to me that they ‘do nothing’ is similar to the attitudes documented by Corrigan. ‘Doing nothing’ is doing something, and I do not think the pupils necessarily realised how important their role as bystanders to an event was. The explanation for assuming the role of bystander was a rather tentative justification for ‘doing nothing’. The ritualism surrounding ‘real’ fights was fascinating, but was a fight ever right? Could a ‘real’ fight ever be justified?

Violence as a Consequence of Bullying

“Most recently (in April 1999), and of course most notably, eighteen-year-old Eric Harris and seventeen-year-old Dylan Klebold masterminded an elaborate plan of destruction which was only partly carried out when they rigged Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, with explosives and used two sawed off shot guns, a rifle, and a handgun to kill twelve and to wound twenty-three others before killing themselves...The rifle and shotguns were legally purchased at a gun show by Klebold’s eighteen-year-old girlfriend; the handgun was purchased by a twenty-two-year-old friend...Apparently, Columbine was a school where athletes tormented members of the “Trenchcoat Mafia” group to which Harris and Klebold belonged. The athletes were known for pushing students in the halls, throwing bottles at the self-described outcasts, sexually harassing a female student and teasing a Jewish boy in gym class, all without consequence from the school authorities. While other students endured the bullying, Harris and Klebold seemed to take the taunting to heart. As one student said, “I think they were taunted to their limits” (Adams and Russakoff, 1999).” (Redding et al., 2001, p301-2)

The above quote emphasizes how an individual, or individuals, can be pushed to their limits and take extreme consequences to end their situation. This was a case in an American school and there has not to date been an incident this brutal committed by pupils (although the murder of Philip Lawrence might be borne in mind) within the British education system. The number of reported suicides committed by tormented pupils and the recent discovery of mobile phones being used to send abusive text messages, demonstrate that bullying has become a widespread phenomenon within our

schools. Along with episodes of bullying, the principles of revenge seeking were manifest in Bayview School. Bullying was cited as a situation when violence was an acceptable and an even necessary element to playground culture. A conversation with “Zoë” illustrates this point:

Q: “When was the last time you saw a fight if you have ever seen one?”

A: “Um...about four weeks ago, maybe a bit longer.”

Q: “Was that in school?”

A: “Yeah, in the playground.”

Q: “So what was it, was that boys?”

A: “Yeah.”

Q: “Why were they fighting?”

A: “Um I just think one of them was getting picked on and he didn’t want to take it anymore.”

The apparent cause of this confrontation was a reaction to a hostile situation. The individual concerned had had enough and was not going to put up with the bullying anymore. As a form of defence the individual turned to violence.

When asked if a fight was ever ‘right’, “Chad” offered this conclusion that supports the violence of those who are being victimised by their peers:

“Well it depends what they do to you. If they are like picking on you and they’re only in year seven or something and the teachers if you say stuff to them (tell them you are being picked on) then they say ‘oh just deal with it yourself’ And um if they (the year seven bullies) kick you and stuff then if they keep on doing it then you should kick them back and then they’ll know that they shouldn’t pick on you. And they’ll go and pick on somebody else. Or they’ll stop completely.”

He is saying that if one is being victimised and the bullies are in year seven, the teachers, when told about the dilemma, tell one to deal with it him or herself. This is an interesting account. The children in year seven were the youngest pupils in the school. They were aged between eleven and twelve and were the usual target of the older pupils because of their age and new status. Could it be the fact that the teachers believe children in year seven are incapable of bullying because they are the youngest? “Chad” then proceeds to explain that one is encouraged to take matters into one’s own hands. This is a matter of concern, if teachers are being this indifferent and if they really have an attitude of ‘deal with it yourself’ is there any point in reporting problems if this is the response one gets? It is another explanation of the code of silence practised within the school.

Research has demonstrated the absence of a clear strategy towards pupils:

“Many sociologists have commented on the tendency of predominantly middle class teachers to make a judgement on pupils from poor families based on their background and appearance rather than their behaviour, especially if siblings in the school have already caused trouble.” (Devlin, 1995, p76)

It could be the case that, if the individuals involved in the violence were from a notorious family or were known for being troublemakers, teachers took a different attitude towards them and did not deal with the problem. This was a very difficult assessment to make and it was not addressed within the interviews. The pupils certainly did allude to teachers whom they felt did not like particular students, but this information was volunteered and not an area expanded on.

The extent to which teachers did not help may not be as indifferent as reported and could be due to a number of issues, including personal experience with the teachers. It could indeed merely be playground folklore, part of the cultural divide of a total institution, that teachers do not care and one is better off looking after oneself. However, it could possibly be a ‘cool thing’ whereby one does not want to admit to weakness and tell a teacher. Additionally, there was the relevance of my role. The pupils knew I was not a teacher but I was a young adult and could have been viewed as someone to impress with tales of discontent about teachers and members of authority.

It is worth quoting at length the account of “Brian”, who offered the best defence of violence to end a situation:

“No, not unless they (fights) are strictly necessary sort of thing, because um I know it sometimes gets to a point you know where you’ve tried everything to avoid it and it just happens, you know, like in the past when I was bullied I tried everything to stop it you know. You try to ignore them, you try to get the school to do something but that doesn’t help and in the end it came down to a fight and then suddenly it stopped. Suddenly the school realised it was getting serious and they actually did something to put their foot down and whatever and I was the one that came worse off from it, but, ‘cos like normally I wouldn’t want to fight, just like the thought of hurting someone else just makes me cringe really. But um...I think you’ve just got to learn that it’s got to be there, you’ve got to be able to do it (fight) like if necessary because you’ve got to be able to defend your rights physically as well as mentally and verbally.”

The need to be able to resort to violence as a right to defend oneself is discussed as an issue here. Research has documented how a number of aggressive groups, such as fighting gangs, would portray themselves as defensive rather than aggressive. Patrick (1973) stated:

“The boys’ manifest motives for their violence were that they were defending their territory, that they were in need of protection, that they were avenging a slight on their girlfriends, that they didn’t like the look of the victim’s face”
(p.195)

“Brian” did have a difficult experience at school and would in most people’s eyes be regarded as a pacifist if anything. He was one of the most diplomatic, tactful individuals interviewed and it is almost impossible to imagine him getting into a situation whereby he was actually punished for the act of violence he carried out in sheer desperation after two and half years of bullying. Nevertheless, if there was a case for violence to end a situation, his would be one of those to be considered and gives weight to the argument that violence was needed and was the only reaction that will work in relentless situations. The escalation of bullying into conflict will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter.

It could be that proving one’s ability to fight stops people bullying, especially if one was a boy. One proved one’s worth through proving one’s masculinity. If one was a victim of bullying there may come a time when one has to react.

Difference between Male and Female Views of Violence

There were stark contrasts between male and female views of violence. Girls expressed a desire to resolve tricky situations through talk rather than fight about them. This was the case for every girl interviewed. Boys on the other hand tended to display bravado, an almost heroic view of violence:

“Yeah it’s like the boy thing you know. Like play fighting before you sort of go out there and do it for real I suppose (laughs), sort of puppies playing I suppose, that sort of thing.”
 (“Brian” - 15 years old)

Girls however, found it hard to justify fights:

“Um no, oh I don’t know (laughs) some people might have reasons to do it but I can’t um...no I don’t think there should be fights.”
 (“Rachel” - 16 years old)

And they even felt they should be banned:

“I don’t think it’s very fair that someone should just get punched or something for no reason.”

(“Rosie” - 16 years old)

There were definitional problems between the genders over what constituted a fight. Boys tended to see fighting and violence as part of everyday life, as “Raj” explained:

“Um, well I haven’t seen one (a ‘real’ fight) this year, there was. I mean when I went away I went away on holiday and there was one then, which I missed. But there’s always sort of the odd something when somebody breaks up with somebody else that sort of thing, but it’s not normally fights, it doesn’t get to that situation.”

What is also interesting to note is that even though the boys regarded the odd ‘scrap’ here and there as normal, they also viewed it as a masculine pursuit only, as “Raj” clarified:

A: “There are girls who seem to be, how can I put it, a bit rough. Rough and tumble, they’re the ones who you know think a girl fighting is acceptable. Not really sure, I don’t really think it’s acceptable myself.”

Q: “What, for girls to fight?”

A: “Not really.”

This is a very ‘macho’ view; it could even be argued that it is sexist, and rather ironic that the boys should disapprove of girls fighting. It was difficult to establish where the boys got their opinions. It was claimed that fighting was a boy thing, an interesting analogy was offered by “Brian”:

“Hand bags at dawn type thing? (laughs) err, no I don’t think so they’re more likely to swear at each other and spit and hiss you know type of thing.”

These accounts offered by the male pupils are very similar to Connell’s (1995) work on masculinities and his observations that;

“Women are presumed unable to compete in the masculine world of violence and are not legitimate participants in the exchange of physical aggression”
(p. 100).

Fighting and violence were perceived as a male activity and it would appear to be the case that female violence was not taken seriously by the male pupils of this school. “Brian”’s account conjures up an almost comical picture of girls fighting and the condemnation of female aggressiveness has been represented in research (Marsh et al., 1978).

Nonetheless, as Anne Campbell (1991) demonstrated in her research, girls were increasingly becoming involved in physical fights and did not regard violence as 'unfeminine'. Although this research at the time of writing was over fourteen years old, it was the first substantial piece of work that explored female violence. Our society tends to draw an unbreakable link between masculinity and violence that is depicted in the media, yet the issue of violence between females is an escalating and under-researched phenomenon (for notable exceptions see Chesney-Lind, 1993; Philips, 1994, 2003; Kirsta, 1994; Burman et al., 2001; Laidler and Hunt, 2001)

A predominantly male view of violence was that it could 'clear the air':

"Um, it depends I mean you get people who are very good at talking their way out of a situation, I think you know, well I've never had a fight. So um I've always managed to talk my way out of it. I think probably sometimes, its good it clears the air otherwise its always going to be, its always going to be there, something niggling, so I think you know just lay somebody out lets go, tomorrow."

("Raj" - 15 years old)

Fighting could be used to resolve problematic situations. All of the males interviewed, whether they liked fighting or not, viewed aggressive behaviour as something that they were born to manifest and had the ability to do if necessary. This was a view, which is represented in Coser's (1956) work supporting the necessity for some degree of violence within a society:

"Conflict is thus seen as performing group-maintaining functions insofar as it regulates systems of relationships. It 'clears the air' i.e., it eliminates the accumulation of blocked and balked hostile dispositions by allowing their free behavioural expression." (p 39)

It is an argument that maintains the male view of violence and asks questions as to whether fighting was necessary to maintain the harmony of the playground.

Boys also explained that they would talk; try to be rational and then fight as a last resort. Polk (1994) observed: "A fundamental characteristic of such confrontations is that initially the intent is to defend masculine honour by means first of words, then the fight." (p. 61) The fight process did display a degree of rationality. If the male pupils were willing to try and talk their way out of a situation first, this parallels the described incidents of male violence documented by Polk. 'Real' fights were a last resort if they were purposefully started. Furthermore, accounts of play fighting getting out of hand can be explained in the idea of a 'spontaneously developing fight'. If a real fight

between men can develop into a homicide. amongst boys a play fight can develop into a real one.

The generational context of fighting was salient. Asked about fighting between people of their age and fighting between adults, the pupils claimed profound differences. An answer offered by an eleven year-old boy in year seven, is revealing:

“Yeah ‘cos if a policeman was going past and he saw the two kids fighting, the kids wouldn’t get hurt, because they can’t hurt each other and that. Apart from like making each other have bruises and stuff, but if grown-ups fight they can kill each other. ‘Cos they kick really hard and break their necks and stuff. So if a policeman went past he’d arrest them and not the kids.”
 (“Chad” - 11 years old)

In contrast an answer given by a year ten pupil, who was fifteen:

“No I wouldn’t have said so I think a fight with an adult is always a bit more sort of double hard, you get fully nailed (into a lot of trouble) if you get in a fight with an adult sort of thing.”
 (“Raj” - 15 years old)

The older male pupils were interpreting the question as ‘would you fight an adult’? Boys from the age of fifteen obviously felt that they could fight an adult and it would bring them prestige amongst their peers if they were able to defeat an adult in a conflict situation. Presumptions about the severity of adolescent and adult conflict were also being made. From these accounts the male pupils claimed that fighting at school was harmless whilst fighting between adults was harmful, again this points to issues of consequentiality and intent. The interactions of the police that the pupils hypothesise suggest that the latter is criminal but the former is not. Is this the case though? The elaborate narratives of both play and real fighting did not always describe harmless situations, especially if ambulances were called or the police involved! The male students appear to be denying their criminal responsibility and assume that acts of violence committed by them are not viewed as threatening. They also believed that adults should know better and act accordingly.

Girls, when questioned about the similarities between adults and adolescents fighting, returned similar answers regardless of their age. "Katie" explained:

"Yeah 'cos I think adults don't really think about it especially if they're drunk, it's just the same type of things, something about a girl or someone's boyfriend, it all revolves around like they think someone's chatting up someone else. I think fights are a bit pointless, also I think it's more stupid when you are older 'cos you should know better and they all think they're hard like the men, they all try and act like these big hard men and go and start a fight and then probably end up looking like a wuss (soft, not manly and aggressive) (laughs) 'cos they end up at the end not looking too good."

The female view was that adult fights were similar to violence between adolescents and, usually fuelled by alcohol; violence consisted of macho displays over girls and was all rather pointless.

Whereas boys viewed fighting as clearing the air, girls thought it would breed contempt:

A: "No I don't (fight) obviously I like argue with my friends and stuff but I, I don't fight. There's no point." (laughs)

Q: "What about people who say it's a good way to end a disagreement, do you agree with that?"

A: "No 'cos you just, if somebody hurts somebody they just end up hating them."

("Jessica" - 13 years old)

The gendered interpersonal relationships the pupils engaged in could provide an explanation for the female observation of men fighting over women:

"One of the most important features of school as a social setting is its informal peer group life. The peer milieu has its own gender order, distinct though not fixed. There is turbulence and uncertainty as young people try to define their paths in life...interactions between boys and girls are liable to be sexualised, by flirting, innuendo and teasing. The heterosexual 'romance' pattern of gender relations persists through high school...The romance pattern defines masculinity in general through the masculine/feminine dichotomy. It also feeds in the hierarchy of masculinities, since heterosexual success is a formidable source of peer group prestige." (Connell, 2000, p. 161)

The importance of developmental issues and the fact that the majority of the pupils interviewed were going through puberty could explain, at least partially, the dominance in the accounts of boys fighting over girls. It is interesting that none of the boys offered an explanation of fighting occurring because of a girl. They preferred to pass off violence as 'boys' stuff'. That could be because they were trying to impress their female interviewer with their tales of heroism.

The girls interviewed mentioned the possible influence of television whereby the boys copy the WWF (World Wrestling Federation), as Rosie explained:

“Um, yeah, um like all this wrestling on TV at the moment boys are getting so many ideas and like just trying out moves there’s so much violence I think, too much violence on TV, and the boys are just copying it and it’s just like really stupid.”

It was intriguing that they made this observation. The influence of television on child violence is well documented with one of the first and most important studies being Bandura’s work with the Bobo doll in the 1960’s. The role of the environment and how it affects and influences behaviour is the focus of social learning theory and it was fascinating that the girls interviewed noted the possible influence of the environment whereas the boys did not.

The link to WWF is made in the professional literature, Miedzian observes:

“Most adults know that the wrestlers’ acts of violence are simulated. I suspect that most children do not know. To them when the wrestlers kick and punch each other, pull each others hair, throw each other down to the mat and sometimes out of the wrestling ring it is real. The reality of the punches, the groans, the bodies falling to the ground, is amplified through the loud speakers hidden under the wrestling ring. In spite of this heightened reality no one ever gets hurt...Children are being completely misled as to the effects of physically attacking others.” (1991, p. 259)

The extent to which the pupils interviewed were influenced by what they watched on the television was not an issue covered by the questions asked in this piece of research. However, the argument that the television does influence older children as well as younger children has been looked at by Prothrow-Stith:

“Exposure to media violence also significantly influences old children’s behaviour. Meta-analysis of a series of experiments demonstrates conclusively that school-aged boys have more fights in the days after exposure to violent mainstream movies than they do in the days after exposure to less violent movies” (2001, p. 103).

That boys were influenced by the television could be a possible explanation for the incidents of play fighting. The boys would often report their activities at ‘playtime’ involved acting out moves from WWF. This could potentially add weight to play fight justifications. If the boys claimed they were just ‘acting out a television programme’, and if this explanation was offered as a defence to the teachers, it made the distinction between ‘play’ and ‘real’ fighting impossible to clarify.

Many girls saw violent conflicts as fights between men over women regardless of age, as “Jessica” claimed:

“Well if, if it’s something about somebody’s going out with somebody and their friends fancy them if it’s a fight like that, that can happen with like adults like if somebody has an affair and stuff but, other things like...just normal boy arguments don’t normally happen with adults.”

Girls appeared to view conflict as a natural part of the ‘boys’ way of life’ as well; the term ‘boys’ stuff’ could be a reference to play fighting. The female view of violence was primarily that conflict between teenagers was trivial and little more than play:

“I think fights between teenagers are a bit more silly but...I’ve never really seen a fight between adults.”
 (“Izzy” - 13 years old)

Girls also believed that adult conflict was more serious and problematic:

“Um, adults do more damage than what children do, normally, children it’s just, a thump here and a kick there and that’s it, it’s over. But with adults it gets more serious.”
 (“Jamie” - 11 years old)

Not once did a girl misinterpret the question and take it as a reference to children fighting adults. This was not surprising as none of the girls interviewed had ever been in a fight.

Overall, females acknowledged that one should have the right to defend oneself, although ideally not through violence:

“I think it’s alright if someone hits you or anything you should be able to defend yourself. But I don’t think you should fight there should be a better way.”
 (“Kerry” – 16 years old)

There were major differences between male and female views of violence and these did reflect the occurrence of violence between the sexes. It would be interesting to see how such views may or may not change in the future.

In connection with the idea that females refrain from fighting, Coser (1956) argues:

“The absence of conflict in itself does not indicate the absence of feelings of hostility and antagonism and hence absence of elements of strain and malintegration.” (p. 82)

Females may not be as violent in this particular school but it could be the case that they engage in conflicts other than violence, such as bullying. The topic of bullying will be discussed in the next chapter.

It was rewarding to pursue the adolescent view of adult violence because it presaged later behaviour and gave chronological context to school conduct.

Grown-Ups Know Better Than To Fight

The general belief expressed by all pupils interviewed was that grown-ups knew better than to fight:

“I think adults should...should know to respect people. Like our age we don't understand the meaning of respect sometimes and we just have to like fight it out but adults should understand that they are not supposed to fight. They should learn by their mistakes.”

(“Sarah” - 13 years old)

It was universally agreed that adults have the ability to walk away from violent and confrontational situations; and that this skill comes with maturity and experience. This was an interesting observation when it is compared to work which highlights male conflict as necessary for ‘saving face’. It could be that adolescents at this particular school were unaware of the extent of violence between adults generally.

To add to the complications of the issue of play fighting, it was agreed that children would fight for amusement, as “Zoë” explained;

“Cos I don't think adults get that violent; children will just fight for the sake of something else to do.”

Fighting between adolescents was regarded as a recreational pursuit that is grown out of, which adds weight to the justifications to play fight.

Another common view expressed by the pupils was the fact that at the end of the day children cannot do much damage, an interesting observation was offered by “Chad”:

“Well kids can't do much to each other, they can kick but they can't do as much damage as grown ups. ‘Cos grown ups are really strong.”

It may well be the case that ‘kids’ cannot do much damage but is that really true of those in years ten and eleven who have already commented that having a fight with an adult makes one ‘double hard’. What was interesting was the fact that “Chad” talked

about fighting and violence as a masculine activity that can potentially be praised, a sentiment echoed by older male pupils interviewed.

On the whole adult violence was regarded as more severe than any form of violence between adolescents:

“Um, I think if there’s fights between adults they’d be more violent, yeah like weapons would probably be used and like maybe people would end up with like I don’t know broken limbs and stuff rather than like in school it doesn’t like go that far, someone might get a black eye or something but that’s about it (laughs).”

(“Rachel” - 16 years old)

It was interesting that girls as well as boys were both equally flippant about adult conflict. Overall, the girls expressed the most concern about issues of adult confrontation and noted the triviality of adolescent conflict in comparison to anything that happened between adults:

“No, I think that children probably fight over silly reasons and then when you’re an adult it’s more scary and there’s more serious injuries. No I don’t like that, that’s scary.”

(“Rosie” - 16 years old)

“Mike” offered another example to highlight these differences:

A: “Err...no (laughs) we might fight over smaller things than adults.”

Q: “Yeah, like what?”

A: “I don’t know er just like, I don’t know...if a person is just going on to someone all the time and just someone sticks up for them, like if its something small, I don’t think an adult would do that, they would just take it as a joke.”

The only time any pupils hypothesised a situation when adult violence was trivial was when they were under the influence of alcohol, as ‘Demelza’ told me:

A: “No, I don’t think, unless the adults are really drunk, but no.”

Q: “Why not?”

A: “Um I think the adults are a bit more grown up about it, you know real fights.”

There was a clear acknowledgement that adults would only participate in ‘real’ fights. There was no definitional problem surrounding adult violence. The pupils assumed that adults did not play fight and that this recreational pursuit was grown out of. This could be an exhibition of innocence of the students, as I know my own peers will engage in a play fight on the common in the middle of a game of football for no apparent reason. The adolescent age group may well believe that playing is something one grows out of. Therefore, when they were questioned about adult violence they believed that the only

form of fighting was the real fight. This was due to inexperience and seeing the world of an adult through teenagers' eyes. What I think is important was the belief the pupils had that adult life is uncomplicated in comparison to adolescence. If one was an adult, one should know better, one does not play, therefore a fight must be real and only real violence would occur. It was difficult to understand where the pupils obtained such views. A parallel can be drawn with the previously documented views of 'up country' and the myths held about living in big cities, which can be found in the previous chapter.

The conflict was perceived as trivial where the adults fighting were drunk. Here a parallel with adolescent conflict can be drawn. Alcohol makes one immature and childish. Polk's (1994) observations in "Masculinity Honour and Confrontational Homicide" highlight the 'role of alcohol', which was found to be a prevailing factor in the majority of cases. The narratives also described the public places in which the events occurred such as pubs, bars and clubs. These mirror the descriptions given by the pupils concerning the macho displays of violence in 'year nine land'. The rationalization by the students that adults 'should know better' was intriguing. Conceivably adults should, especially if they are quick to condemn violent actions carried out by adolescents, but studies like Polk's demonstrate that adults act just as the teenagers acknowledged. A comparison of adolescent violence and males under the influence of alcohol engaging in conflict could be a noteworthy piece of research to investigate, to see if similar rules and situations apply.

Through acknowledging that adolescent violence was trivial, the pupils were almost offering a defence for their behaviour:

"I think adults should know better and but I think its alright if sixteen year olds do it (fight) because they are younger."
(“Kerry” - 16 years old)

Thus adolescents are merely growing up and violence is just a natural part of that process? It is something that happens and it diminishes with maturity? Adolescence is often depicted as a period in which roles and identities are being resolved – a 'psychosocial moratorium' – where there is licensed inconsequentiality. Nonetheless, with a form of conflict naturally occurring daily in one form or another, how was it being controlled?

Prefects = The Police of the Playground

“Research has shown that effective school discipline is a key component of school safety; rules must be clear and consistently enforced, and there must be a consequence for each act of misconduct (Decker 2000; Gottfredson, 1997).” (Redding et al., 2001, p320)

There was a team of prefects at Bayview School who helped to maintain the order of the playground and make sure that school rules were adhered to. They, for example, had to make sure that the pupils were dressed appropriately for school and that they had their shirts tucked in when they came in from the playground.

Almost half of year eleven made up the team of prefects. There was a head boy and girl and a deputy head boy and girl who were the managers of the prefects. Then there was a team of twelve ‘leader prefects’, who wore golden ties and were responsible for approximately three ‘normal prefects’ each. They are best understood as ‘team leaders’. Then there were forty ‘normal prefects’, who made up the teams of three. They wore a blue prefect badge on their ties. A role of the prefects when violence occurred was to fetch the teachers, or take those that were fighting to them. As “Brian” explained:

“Err normally prefects don’t tend to get involved so leave that to the teachers, erm, even if there are real fights we are told to just like get the teachers so really we don’t take responsibility for that side of things, which is just as well really. (laughs)”

Even though prefects were told not to get involved, intervention depended on the situation. If they believed they could intercede effectively they did. They would mediate if the fight occurred between any pupil from year seven to nine, as the prefects felt that they were old enough, and in the majority of cases big enough, physically to split those fighting apart. Fighting between years ten and eleven was dealt with only by male prefects and only if they felt they had the ability to intervene effectively. Usually confrontation between the older years was left to the teachers or for the violence to come to its natural conclusion.

Furthermore prefects had to tell if there was a fight occurring. “Raj” said:

A: “Yeah I’m a prefect myself so I have to, you know you have to (tell).”

Q: “It’s part of your job is it?”

A: “Yeah. Whether you want to or not, you have to (tell) ‘cos they’re the rules. You’re not allowed to have a full on fight, it’s not right.”

Prefects were the only pupils allowed to break the code of silence without repercussions; they were the only students who could fetch the teachers. They can be viewed as the allies to the school's authority whether they wanted to tell or not.

“Research indicates that students who are well connected with their schools are less likely to engage in various high-risk behaviours, including aggressive or violent behaviour at school” (Resnick et al., 1997 cited in Furlong et al., 2001, p286)

The above statement could be true but the impression that was created by those prefects who were interviewed like “Raj” was that they did not engage in violence as they were obeying rules, not because they did not want to. It was a demonstration of a stake in conformity and the usefulness of citing rules to avoid problems. Once the pupils had left the school premises their lives were completely different. “Raj” was a character, a surfer and a ladies' man. He claimed never to have had a fight, but would if necessary. His role as a prefect meant he had obvious connections to the authority. He could not fight, but it did not mean he would not fight, or that he disagreed with violence. The majority of the male prefects shared this opinion. Once again my role was important as the older male students were trying to impress me with their heroic tales, which I listened to but not without caution!

The prefects were often taken to be policing the playground:

“Yeah I think the head boy came in, 'cos it, it wasn't a fight he just hit him like twice I think and then by the time the head boy came over it had already stopped but he (the head boy) just like tried to warn him off or something.”
 (“Katie” - 15 years old)

It was part of their duty to wander around the school playground and deal with any trouble. Nonetheless, the role of prefect was not always a satisfactory one:

“Yeah, well there's prefects and everything that try to break these fights up but they can't do that much 'cos we're (the prefects) not allowed to touch them (the pupils) or anything.”
 (“Kerry” – 16 years old)

Even though the prefects would like to have done more, on occasion they just could not. Sometimes their peers regarded their authority and power in the playground as arrogance and a ‘power trip’. Many pupils complained that the prefects thought they were in need of some form of special recognition as the elite pupils of the school. It was thought that they exceeded their mandate for personal reasons – a difficult matter to pull off. The students believed that the prefects thought that they were better than their peers

and demanded respect and attention because they were prefects. Some complained that the prefects had a tendency to be very domineering and not particularly helpful. Furthermore, those in older years, especially year eleven would not listen to the prefects:

“I think like lead prefects and prefects try to stop it (a fight) but normally people don’t listen especially if they’re in our year.”

(“Rachel” - 16 years old)

Policing by fellow pupils can prove to be problematic if those involved in conflict situations will not take orders from their peers. Students in the same year as the prefects, who refused to obey them, were not really surprising, even though the prefects who were interviewed were exasperated about it. The social foundations of the prefects’ authority are relevant here. To become a prefect one achieved academically, and one has usually provided a service to the school such as excelled at sport and played for the county team. One was outgoing and was a figurehead to represent the pupils when there were visitors or functions on. People who did not become prefects were often envious of those that did. The pupils were probably aware that their peers were jealous but did not, for one reason or another, want to discuss this possibility in the interviews. It was a problem that would not go away but required attention in analysing the role of the prefects. When anyone is given some form of responsibility and is selected over their peers there are naturally envious reactions. This is what I believe led to the problems the prefects had in policing their own year. The individuals who hold power in the playground to stop people from getting hurt were not always popular, but this playground culture can be seen as a reflection of the wider society.

The role of the prefect can be viewed as similar to peer mediation where the students become mentors and counsellors for their fellow pupils;

“Peer mediation programs have become common in US schools. The goal of peer mediation is to provide students with the skills to regulate their own behaviour, particularly when conflicts arise.” (Furlong et al, 1997 cited in Peterson et al, 2001, p356).

Such programmes are documented as successes, therefore the prefects, even with slight opposition, were playing a fundamental role in controlling the violence at this particular school.

Emerging 'Rules' of the Fight?

The intention of this chapter was to try and establish the moral order of the playground and how the pupils at Bayview School dealt with instances of violence. This was not going to be an easy task due to the complexity of the two key definitions of fighting 'play' and 'real'. As has been demonstrated, not even the pupils could provide concrete definitions as to what constituted 'play' or 'real' instances of violence. This was not surprising and is an argument presented by ethnomethodologists who claim that there are taken for granted rules that are tacitly presupposed but are not articulated. As Marsh observes;

“...it would be unreasonable to expect people to be readily able to articulate the rules which guide their behaviour. Many of the routine social situations we find ourselves in are clearly rule governed, but it is often extremely difficult to specify exactly what the rules are or what are the *potential* breaches of the rules.” (1978, p.17, original emphasis)

Through the process of the interviews, patterns and rules emerged. There were a number of complex interactions surrounding any act of violence that occurred between the adolescents. The rules that pupils observed were fascinating and the interpretation of them was clearly only understood by those immediately involved. What also must be considered is that the length of recreation time was very limited, one twenty minute break in the morning and a one-hour lunch. Such lengths of time circumscribed what could be done and the pupils all knew how to respond (or not) accordingly.

With questions of violence, it became necessary to see if the issue of bullying played a pivotal role. Bullying was offered as one of the only situations when violence was acceptable and even necessary. Furthermore, the demonstration of such complex rules surrounding fighting and violence resulted in the belief that the issue of bullying would have multifaceted rules and structures of silence. Finally, the peer networks that were formed between and within the year groups began to emerge when talking about conflict situations. It became necessary to see how the pupils formed friendship networks, if there were any gangs or groups within the years and how these affected violence and bullying.

CHAPTER FIVE

BULLYING – EXTENT, INCIDENCE AND REALITY AT BAYVIEW SCHOOL

Introduction

“Weaker, younger, anyone who’s different, who gives a way for someone to pick on them. If they feel they’re bigger than them or stronger than them or more older than them, then the chances are they’ll pick on them no matter what. It’s not until a kid turns around and lays them out that they decide okay, picking on him isn’t a good idea, we’ll find someone weaker. If they’re going to stand up for themselves, it’s not worth it because it’s boring. You get more flack off of them.

(“Ed” - 15 years old)

The previous chapter dealt with incidents of violence at Bayview School and how the pupils maintained moral conduct. A set of ‘rules’ was uncovered which explained these processes. During the interviews the links between violence and bullying had begun to emerge, it was now necessary to understand their patterns. The pupils were asked to consider if bullying was an issue at Bayview. If so, what did it involve? Who tended to be the victims? Who were the bullies? Furthermore, was the observed code of silence surrounding issues of violence practised in relation to bullying? Through asking such questions the parallels between violence and bullying became more evident. The power of the peer group and the friendship networks materialized as the most influential variable which guided how the pupils made judgements about bullying at Bayview School.

What is bullying?

Bullying is a universal term. It is used in everyday language and encompasses a number of events. It can be seen as an umbrella that covers a number of verbal, psychological, physical and violent interactions. Given its diffuseness, it was necessary to understand what bullying meant to the pupils at this particular school.

The pupils confirmed that bullying was an issue within the school. The predominant form of bullying reported by the pupils was name-calling and teasing. However, violent forms of bullying were also recorded. A key issue was the problem of defining what actually constituted ‘bullying’. These points can be seen in the following example:

Q: “Is bullying an issue at this school?”

A: “I think that bullying is classed in different ways by different people. From what I can work out bullying is different, I suppose the really mild things as bullying and other people would just say “oh it’s being stupid, calling it bullying” but I think, I see it as that.”

Q: “So what would you say are mild things that you see as bullying?”

A: “Mild things would be calling somebody stupid names constantly or giving them a nickname which they don’t like which they obviously don’t like, it’s obviously meant as an insult. But sticking with it and making sure that everybody else calls them that as well. I’d say that was bullying.”

Q: “But other people wouldn’t. What do other people see as bullying?”

A: “Bullying, other people see bullying as I’d say actually punching someone. I mean they call it picking on people if you call them names and that’s not seen as bullying. That’s just seen as having a bit of fun, picking on someone. But I’d just see it all as bullying but it’s just not very nice for the other people I think. People don’t kind of think what kind of effect they have on the other person. I mean that doesn’t affect me, I’m okay, they can call me all the names they want, that I don’t care, but everybody does, I’m sure that they do. I mean it might just me being arrogant but I’m almost certain everyone does get affected by it, just being called names.”

(“Jimbo” – 16 years old)

The claim that bullying was ‘a bit of fun’ is similar to the justifications of ‘play’ fighting. By applying such euphemisms to problematic situations the pupils were almost ‘lightening the tone’ of the actions and presenting them as playful rather than confrontational.

Q: “Is bullying an issue at this school?”

A: “You just know there’s name calling it’s horrible...but the year, they’re just meant to do it, you know, to be cool, you’ve got to pick on a few people. But we’re not that bad. No one ever hit anyone or I mean a lot of people talk to the, like talk to them (the year victims) There’s one that is, he knows he always gets picked on and he won’t let anyone talk to him if they’ve been picking on him either. I go and talk to him and he’s like “no, go away”, but he won’t let anyone in. That’s the problem.”

Q: “So why is this person picked on by your year?”

A: “I don’t know...Actually I do, I know why he’s picked on, it’s ‘cos he’s got like the gay voice and the high waistband.” (the pupil would pull his trousers up high and at Bayview School the trend was to wear one’s trousers on the hip)

Q: “Right, oh dear. So you know, if he changed his image, do you think that’d be enough to make him be accepted?”

A: “No, I don’t think he would because he’s got the name. And he’ll always have that name. It’s going to scar him and he’ll carry on thinking that no one’s ever going to like him.”

(“Emily” - 15 years old)

Q: “What form of bullying is your girlfriend subjected to?”

A: “They’re just calling her names, generally being irritating but she’s kind of stressed out enough because her parents are taking, have split up and her mum has had a couple of marriages and she’s kind of ripped apart between this, that

and the other thing and they don't help. So that's normally the problem. But they just, normally it's yelling stuff, irritating things like that. Things that wind you up easily.”

(“Ed” - 15 years old)

The above examples highlight some of what ‘bullying’ meant to the pupils at Bayview School. The catalogued incidents of bullying conform to the definition provided by Olweus, 1993:

“A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. Also implied in bullying is an imbalance in strength (an asymmetric power relationship): the student who is exposed to the negative actions has difficulty defending him/herself and is somewhat helpless against the student or students who harass.

In judging the seriousness of a particular sign, one must also consider the *frequency* with which the sign occurs. For example, many students are teased by peers occasionally, but, as a rule, it is only when it occurs relatively often (and in a nasty way) that it needs to be taken seriously.” (p.54)⁸

The pupils were thus providing accounts of bullying which compared reasonably well with previous research into incidents of school bullying.

During the interviews, name calling emerged as the dominant form of bullying at Bayview and I proposed to deconstruct it. What were the names being used? Was there any form of pattern to the name-calling? The following accounts provide examples of the epithets in use:

Q: “Is bullying an issue at this school?”

A: “Yeah, yeah, ‘cos like you’ll sort of call them you know, you always make fun of them and call them names. There’s Christian in our class, that was one of the people that David sort of picked on a bit ‘cos they’ve known each other for ages ‘cos they used to go to the same school but you know, like everyone used to call him short ‘cos he is pretty small, the smallest in the year, but he is pretty small and he’s sort of small and pretty tubby, you know, and people used to make fun of him for that. But I mean I’m friends with Chris and I don’t mind him.”

Q: “And what did they used to call him?”

Yeah, yeah, they used to call him Leprechaun I think. He isn’t Irish or anything.

A: “Yeah, they just sort of called him a Leprechaun and stuff, it just sort of caught on and everybody used to call him that.”

(“James” - 12 years old)

⁸ There is an increasing amount of research into school bullying. However, the definitions used by Olweus in his pioneering studies in Scandinavia have been added to, yet never bettered. Thus for the purpose of this thesis I will be using his original findings for points of clarification.

Q: “So would you say that in your school life bullying is an issue at this school?”

A: “Um...I dunno bullying hasn't been that bad in this school really. It's been OK. Like some people have been fairly (properly) bullied but...”

Q: “And what sort of people have been bullied like who's been the victims?”

A: “Um, there's someone over his homo over his sexuality even, erm no the way he acts to um, oh what's the saying?”

Q: “Camp?”

A: (Laughs) “Um, yeah.”

Q: “Is he in your year?”

A: “Yeah.”

(“Jim” - 16 years old)

The problems associated with dealing with incidents of ‘name calling’, ‘teasing’ and ‘picking on’ have been identified by Boulton (1997), who argues:

“...teasing may be problematic for both pupils and the adults concerned with managing their behaviour because of its ambiguous nature. This ambiguity also means that teasing is difficult to define. Whilst it is clear that teasing consists of verbal name calling, taunts and derision, the intention of the teaser may vary. Thus some people equate teasing with playful verbal statements of a trifling or petty nature, whereas others stress its destructive, hostile nature.” (p.54)

The accounts provided by the pupils of Bayview demonstrate that during the process of verbal bullying an individual's differences will be attacked, and they will be explored further in the chapter. Bullying is an attack on the vulnerable and there was a consensus amongst the pupils that they should be intolerant of differences. The question that arose was what differences were held to matter at Bayview School? Additionally, the narratives provided by “James” and “Jim” show that the abuse that the victims received was about their sexuality. Adolescence is a time of development and the majority of pupils were going through/had gone through puberty. To attack a person's sexuality would have a fundamental impact, especially at a key time of maturation and development. None of the questions asked in this research was focussed on issues of sexuality; nonetheless, there were many sexual undertones reported in answers given by the pupils. Furthermore, a universal rule at Bayview was that bullying was an attack, be it verbal or physical, on an individual's difference from the rest of the peer group/year group norm. The importance of status within one's peer group will be dealt with in the next chapter.

The teenagers that were bullied provided moving recollections of experience regardless of how much time had elapsed since the bullying had occurred. A virtual consensus of opinion was that one would always encounter bullying at Bayview School. “Katie's”

account of her experience highlights the idea that bullying was a way of life. In her case, she had found in year nine a picture that her peers had drawn of her in year seven. She confronted one of her bullies:

“Only little comments, and I used to think they were my mates and everything and all, and I confronted them about it and I just said um...’cos they drew a picture of me and I found it and I went, “why?” and I got one of the like lead boys on their own and they didn’t have anything, “I don’t know what to say I’m sorry” and it was like ages ago they done it but I found the picture...it was like year nine when I found the picture and year seven when it all happened. And I sort of like confronted him on his own and I went “why?” and he couldn’t say anything and he was just so gobsmacked and he was so sorry. But obviously like year 7 it’s just childish behaviour and everyone thinks its cool to be nasty to someone.”
 (“Katie” - 15 years old)

Katie, although obviously upset by her experience, could understand that what happened to her was ‘childish’. Furthermore, although she was in year eleven, the bullying happened in year seven and she confronted her bullies in year nine. This supports criminological arguments that if one is victimised the impact can be life-changing (Devlin, 1997; Roland, 2002; Schreck, 2003). One cannot make generalisations, however. During the process of her interview Katie became tearful and distressed and her bullying from five years previously clearly had an effect on her when she recalled the experience. To be bullied by one’s friends and immediate peer group appeared to be ‘the norm’ at Bayview School.

Stages and Patterns of Bullying

Bullying was a day-to-day experience. It was therefore crucial to deconstruct the forms that it took and to see if there were any patterns or predictors of bullying taking place. Bullying was viewed as a cycle through which the majority of pupils passed at some point during their school career. “Jim” notes:

Q: “Is bullying a problem here then?”

A: “Yes, but we all seem to take it like in turns, ‘cos I was bullied, ‘cos I was a farmer, farmer’s son.”

Q: “What when you were younger?”

A: “It’s only for about...you only get bullied for like a month at a time.”

Q: “Right.”

A: ““Cos like that was like farmer’s son and then next month it’s someone else.”

From this recollection, and others given, it certainly appeared at the outset that nearly every pupil went through some form of bullying at some point in their schooling life.

Jim continued:

“Yeah but probably say that’s the circle of life, we were bullied all the way, well from the other groups so...”

“Brian” reiterated this point:

A: “Yeah we (his bully and himself) like get on now, it just like goes round in cycles, don’t they?”

Q: “Yeah, yeah”

A: “Um, it’s strange really”

Q: “A kind of little adolescent glitch?”

A: “Yeah.”

The reference to bullying happening in circles and being part of life is reminiscent of the notions of cycles of crime. It is an almost Darwinian explanation of situations within the school, bullying was embedded into the school culture. These observations support previous research into school bullying which demonstrate its day-to-day, routine existence:

“...schools are aggressive places, where bullying occurs much more frequently than teachers even think happen. Every piece of research demonstrates that teachers underestimate the amount of bullying when compared with the response of the pupils in the school.” (Tattum, 1997, p.47)

Not only did bullying happen to the majority of pupils it also took on distinctive patterns. In extreme cases, bullying was pursued from the transition between primary and secondary school:

Q: “So you were bullied at school?”

A: “Mmm.” (yes)

Q: “Was that when you arrived here or...”

A: “It like crossed over from the end of primary school and then it went on for like two years or so into this school as well.”

(“Brian” - 15 years old)

This particular pupil had had a painful experience which will be explained shortly, but, his case was not isolated. He went on to explain the pattern which cases of bullying tended to follow:

“Um I think normally in years seven and eight it’s most popular. that’s where it’s most common, I think, but normally between themselves rather than older people picking on you. I mean you might feel intimidated and a couple of people might take advantage of them being small or whatever. I know when I came up here like a chicken sandwich was chucked at me and things like that, erm but I think that’s all really, I mean once you get to year nine and ten it sort of like, fizzles out, and you just learn to like enjoy it (school) all together and it’s like you’ve gotta work as a team to actually get through it (school).”

The youngest years, seven and eight, consisted of those pupils aged between eleven and thirteen, experiencing the crucial years of adolescence, when bullying was reported as being at its peak. Then as the pupils got older, they claimed that one ‘grew out’ of the need to bully. This was articulated by both boys and girls and is demonstrated in the following accounts:

Q: “Is bullying an issue at this school?”

A: “Um...I think it was more like, that was more like year nine and eight rather than now. I think now everyone in our year (eleven) definitely has calmed down a lot and just accepted the fact we have to go to school and do everything and there’s no point making more trouble for ourselves.”

(“Rachel” - 16 years old)

Q: “Is bullying an issue at this school?”

A: “Only a couple like year eights digging into year sevens because they’re smaller. That’s really it.”

Q: “And do you know if like year elevens bully year tens or year tens bully year nines? Does that happen at all or does it just happen between like eight and seven?”

A: “Eight and seven really because eight, year eight are just like thinking we’re bigger. But year elevens are nice ‘cos they’re...most of them are prefects and really act nicely to people.”

(“Tammy” - 11 years old)

Q: “Is bullying an issue at this school?”

A: “Well quite a lot of the older years, they came to the school as year seven, all big kids, picked on them, again pushed and laughed at them and all that. So “right, revenge, we’ll pick on the little ones. Now we can get our own back for what happened to us”. And it just sort of goes round and round. That’s what, that really is happening in schools. Normally it’s bullying, it’s “oh we’ve always been picked on by the older kids, now we’re the older kids, we’re going to carry on with what they’ve started”.”

(“Ed” - 15 years old)

Bullying at Bayview was viewed as a course of action that the majority of pupils would experience and/or come into contact with. It was a process by which hierarchy was established and reinforced.

There were two key forms of bullying: 'intra-year', which was where one became a victim of a bully within the same year group; and 'inter-year', whereby an individual was victimised by a pupil in an older year group. Year seven would suffer the greater part of both intra and inter-year victimisation, as years eight and nine would 'pick on' and 'tease' the youngest year group alongside members of the year seven peer group. Years eight and nine suffered from predominantly intra-year group victimisation. Those in the oldest years; ten and eleven had 'grown up' and no longer engaged in bullying as they had become focussed on GCSE's. It must be considered that when matters are presented as structural and inevitable in this fashion, it is easy to absolve oneself of responsibility. The exception to the 'cycle of bullying' was the 'year group victim', which is explained below.

Along with the accounts of the 'cycle of bullying', it was reported that the form of bullying would change over time as "Sarah" explained:

A: "So they (the victim) retaliate and then the other person that's giving them names thinks 'Oh right they're retaliating I can carry on' and then it gets physical instead of just names."

Q: "Oh so it sort of goes from verbal to violence?"

A: "Yeah."

If the individual who was bullied reacted in any way to his or her bullying the bully would make the transition from verbal abuse to physical. It was almost like a test of character: if the individual who was bullied did not react, then the bullies tended to keep the bullying at the verbal stage, teasing, name calling and taunting. If, on the other hand, the victim retaliated, the bullying turned to a physical form to see just how much the victim was prepared to endure.

These violent forms have been documented to an extent as 'real' fights, in that they have a purpose, nonetheless, a fight involves two contestants and in the case of bullying the victim may not be a contestant. There was only one case of bullying that was reported as reaching this limit and that was the case of "Brian" who will be discussed later. It is also worth considering that incidents of bullying and fighting were not that clean cut. The boundaries that the pupils maintained were complicated and interconnected. An account given by "Chad" expands this observation further:

A: "One boy, who's my best friend, he um was getting teased by a boy called JB, the same one that..."

Q: "The one that did the neck?" (Threw the boy into the bushes – see the chapter on violence)

A: "Yeah."

Q: "OK."

A: "And um, he (JB) is really horrible, and he teases my friend saying he's going to kill his dog and stuff but um he (the friend) was getting teased a lot and he'd get held up at break times and going late to lessons because all these boys were crowding round him and picking on him and stuff?... But he got that sorted out, he weren't going to school but then our year head Mr B said lets go and get a stop to this and he gave him (JB) a detention for a week or something, and that made him (JB) stop."

What is important here are the parallels to the crowding around that was customary in acts of violence that occurred in 'year nine land'. "Chad's" friend was a subject of some form of ritualistic bullying whereby boys would crowd around and prevent him from getting to his lessons. This was the only case of bullying that was detailed in this manner, and it cannot be regarded as a 'normal' form of bullying. However, the macho ritualistic display echoed the traditions used in 'real' fights and provides us with an example of gendered techniques of bullying that will be discussed below.

The above examples highlight that there were distinct stages and patterns of bullying. These accounts would suggest that once an individual is in the upper years of their school career the motivation to bully had disappeared and bullying was something that had been 'grown out of'. One could also argue that the idea that one 'grows out' of bullying is in fact related to hierarchy. Those in the older years were the top of the school in status, which will be explained in the next chapter. Thus, 'growing out' of bullying, like 'growing out' of the need to play fight, actually symbolised the process of establishing the hierarchy that the pupils went through whilst they were at Bayview School. Consequently, the significance of the symbolic hierarchy of the year groups had been established once a pupil had reached year eleven and a hierarchy of esteem had been enforced.

Territory – Where Does Bullying Occur?

Pupils argued that, unlike the incidents of violence, which, as we have seen, had a designated fighting venue; 'year nine land', acts of bullying could happen anywhere. This was an area of questioning for which the pupils could not form distinct explanations: the location of acts of bullying. Some pupils believed that bullying had a

seasonal context and would happen in the Summer or when there were opportunities to be outside:

Q: “When does bullying occur?”

A: “It’s normally at break time, lunchtime, when you’re outside and there isn’t any teacher in control of the environment. It’s just an open ground and sure you’ve got teachers on duty and you’ve got prefects, but there’s always somewhere where they can’t see you or no one cares or someone turns a blind eye.”

(“Ed” - 15 years old)

Q: “When does bullying occur?”

A: “Erm, probably near the summer ‘cos we’re not out at this time of year (March), ‘cos it’s always raining, we have a video put on for us in the hall?”

Q: “Oh right so you can spend playtimes and lunchtimes in the hall?”

A: “Yeah.”

Q: “So it’s more summer times and at break time is it?”

A: “Yeah.”

(“Sarah” - 13 years old)

Alongside the video played in the hall at times of recess in wet weather, there was also a homework club that ran everyday during the lunch break all academic year. Observations of this club were made to see who exactly attended. To say that there were predominantly children who looked as though they would be the type to be bullied would be unfair and judgemental. Nonetheless, it was the case that not a lot of homework was achieved in this club, the children were rather timid and appeared to sit around in small groups talking. Some were exceptionally shy and were wary of my presence at the group. However, I began to attend frequently and I was assigned the role of ‘helper’, thus legitimating my presence.

It felt rather like being in a haven or a sanctuary. The club was run by two of the learning support staff, and on talking with these ladies, I ascertained that they too were of the opinion that they were a ‘safe house’ for the more vulnerable children. They were able to point out children that they knew had particular problems within school for one reason or another, which included bullying in some circumstances. The existence of the homework club and the video presentation in the hall appeared to be a step to control incidents of bullying. They were not established with the intention of aiding an anti-bullying scheme; nonetheless, on reflection they could be measures that helped to reduce episodes of bullying during the lunch break at Bayview School.

Cases of bullying were also reported to have occurred in the classroom and they took on a more subtle guise. “Jessica”, who was also a victim of bullying, explained how, even though she could avoid her bullies during recreation time, the classroom was a little more difficult:

“Um, at breaks not really ‘cos I’m not really around those people they’re normally out of school so, like, but sometimes in class like if you answer a question wrong they just laugh at you but they wouldn’t have got it right anyway. It’s a bit sort of annoying.”

Another example was provided by “Ed”:

A: “In class you get the odd person yelling the odd obscenity across the room at someone they don’t like or someone walks in with a message and they’ll say something about them because they’re younger or they’ve got a background or something, that’s been made up by a previous year.”

Q: “So can it sometimes happen in class in front of certain teachers then?”

A: “Yeah, some teachers, kids feel they can get away with more in front of. You could say less control over the children because and they’ve gotten away with so much, they just keep on going. I mean it depends on what teacher, Mr P had difficulties coping with classes. He has huge IT classes now sure there’s three IT rooms but there’s only two IT teachers, him and Mr U, so huge classes between the two...Mr K has problems with science, well with everyone, people have been telling others about how Mr K is so easy and all the little kids start doing things and find they can do more and more and this, they get older, they can do even more they get even harder to control.”

Q: “So do you see this is like a preying on weaknesses almost, whatever, regardless of teachers?”

A: “Yeah, it is weakness because Mr K has difficulty with control because it’s really stressed teaching job, it’s really stressful and he’s just one of those people who looks slightly different. He’s quite round and he’s going bald on top so of course someone made up a name for him, probably decades ago, but that’s still going through. And everyone just winds him up and because he gets wound up quite easily, they enjoy seeing him wound up and he doesn’t often send people up, out of class or write green slips. So if you know, on the odd occasion you get a green slip, it’s not worth worrying.”

In this sense, there were a number of classes which the pupils knew they could ‘get away’ with bullying and in extreme circumstances knew which teachers they could victimise. The role of teachers within the bullying process will be discussed later in the chapter. However, it is worth noting that the intolerance of difference that is endemic within the culture of the pupils extended to the adolescents’ view of the teachers. If there was a particular teacher that, in Mr K’s case, ‘looked different’ then the class would often pick on those differences too. The intolerance of difference appeared to be a key to understanding bullying at Bayview School and will be analysed later in the chapter.

A number of accounts documented how victimisation occurred off of the school premises. “Brian” shared his experience of when and where it took place:

“It was all the time really, just like it was in school, then it went out of school as well, it was just everywhere and then it like came to the house as well like vandalism. It was quite scary actually. You could actually see it escalating all the time and I was thinking, “when’s it ever going to stop?” And it actually got to the point where I was considering suicide, and all sorts of things, it was pretty bad.”

“Simon” provided another example. He was a pupil who had suffered from extreme victimisation. He came to the interview with his hand in plaster and a sling. At the outset he informed me that he had fallen off of his skateboard and broken a few fingers. After an interview that lasted for approximately two hours, and once my tape recorder had been switched off, it emerged that his bully had caused his injury, by riding his skateboard over ‘Simon’s’ hand. I had already pledged that anything said between Simon and myself would remain between us. The teachers, police, no one would know about his experience. Nonetheless, he is worth quoting at length to demonstrate extreme forms of victimisation:

Q: “What does he do to you?”

A: “He just teases me and if he sees me by myself I think he’s going to do something nasty to me.”

Q: “Right. Right. And he’s a year above you?”

A: “Yeah.”

Q: “And why do you think he might do that?”

A: “Because um, I don’t know, I can’t remember how it happened but for some time, he’s just been picking on me. From primary school, he’s just been picking on me. And if he sees me in this school, he just wants me. And if he sees me out around, he just goes, he just teases me and stuff.”

Q: “But if you’re with a friend or something, he doesn’t do it?”

A: “No, ‘cos I’ve got a big friend and he’s the same year as me but he’s big. He’s bigger than him and I’m bigger, a little bit bigger than him but he still...”

Q: “And does he do it when he’s on his own or is he with other people?”

A: “He’s with other people normally older than him, much older than him.”

Q: “And will he only do it if he’s with these people or if it’s just you two, one-on-one, will he do it?”

A: “Yeah...He’ll do it if Chris isn’t there but Chris, with Chris he don’t, Chris has got his brother, Chris got a older brother that” (voice trails off)

Q: “Goes to school here?”

A: “No.”

Q: “No? Much older?”

A: “He’s at college.”

Q: “Right, yeah.”

A: “And he looks after Chris and me so...”

Q: “Yeah, yeah. And have you told anybody about this Jack guy or?”

A: “Only Chris, my other friends but they knew ages ago, not Chris though.”

Q: "Does anybody else have a problem with him? Is he known for being like this?"

A: "I don't know, I know he's known for doing that."

Q: "So it's only him you try and avoid on the journey?"

A: "Yeah."

Q: "Does he live near you?"

A: "No, but his, one of his mates lives just outside my estate, so I take my chances going that way sometimes. And then on the way to my cousin's, I have to go down this hill where he's not (going to be) and then if I want to go down to my mum's work, there's those other mates going down that hill as well. But I don't normally see them."

Q: "No?"

A: "No"

Q: "And what does he do?"

A: "Well, if I'm on that side of the road and he's on that side, he'll just shout at me but I've never, he's always been on that side when I've seen him. So I don't know what he would do if he's on that side and I'm on that side." (Indicates on the table if they were both on the same side of the road)⁹

In the above extract "Simon" tried to document the avoidance tactics he employed just to miss his bully on his way to and from school or to visit his mother or cousin. The accounts that highlighted the problems the pupils encountered out of school led me to look at the school journey itself.

The School Journey

The location of the school resulted in a number of pupils being driven to Bayview. Those students who reported getting a lift to school everyday with parents or friends did not report anything significant or spectacular about their journey. However, a number of the villages in the surrounding areas had a bus system in operation and the pupils' experience of these journeys was very enlightening. Furthermore, a number of pupils who lived in Rivers End would walk or cycle to school. They too had interesting tales about their journey to and from school.

⁹ I would like to update the reader on "Simon". I returned to Bayview School at the beginning of 2004 in order to take pictures for the thesis. I asked a member of staff, whom I knew had been involved with his welfare, how "Simon" was getting on. He had been in year seven at the time of his interview and was now in year nine. Unfortunately he was now on report for truanting, had become a bully himself and was close to being excluded from the school. True to the victim offender cycle within criminology Simon had now become a bully.

Walking to School – Areas to Avoid

The account given by “Simon”, articulating how he used avoidance tactics to evade his bully, was not a unique experience. A number of the pupils explained that there were whole areas of the town that they tried to avoid on their way to school, “Sarah” explained:

A: “I feel unsafe in Brook Way down the hill from this school ‘cos there’s lots of people that I think are quite nasty.”

Q: “What is Brook Way?”

A: “It’s a housing estate.”

Q: “Right you have to bear with me ‘cos I haven’t been here for a little while so I don’t know what it is!!”

A: “It’s an estate.”

Q: “Right and why, what ‘sort of people’ are there?”

A: “Well I just think they are bullies.”

Q: “Really?”

A: “Yeah. I haven’t seen anybody get beaten up but a lot of my friends that I don’t like live there.”

Q: “So do any of those kids come to this school?”

A: “Yeah”

Q: “And are they bullies in the school?”

A: “No.”

Q: “No? Just on the estate?”

A: “Yeah.”

Q: “Right so that the only time you’d feel sort of at risk is going through Brook Way?”

A: “Yeah but I’m OK when I’m with somebody.”

Brook Way emerged as an area of concern. It was a housing estate built during the early 1990’s. It had faced a lot of objections during the planning phases of development and the residents of Rivers End did not hide the fact that they were not impressed with the ‘blot on the landscape’ that was eventually constructed. It gained a reputation for housing the undesirables of the town. A number of families had been moved to the estate from metropolitan areas ‘up country’. The residents of Rivers End were not accommodating to the residents that moved into the town. The following picture depicts the locality:

“Brook Way”



“Sarah’s” observations are interesting. The individuals that lived on the housing estate were very territorial about where they lived, yet once they were on the school grounds they were no longer ‘bullies’. Thus roles were being played out, territorially determined, but not related to school issues. This is important, as ‘bullying’ has appeared as a contingent process. The residents of Brook Way sustain a hostile environment where the pupils felt intimidated. This was a constant territory and location for bullying that did not change over time. It can be paralleled to ‘year nine land’ to an extent. However, Brook Way was consistently viewed as a potential threat, but the significance of ‘year nine land’ changed. It was either an area for year nine to congregate and play football or the fight venue.

Nonetheless, bullying was happening in an out of the school context if pupils walked to school via the housing estate. Other individuals alluded to Brook Way in their interviews:

A: “Er probably the pavements ‘cos there’s dog poo everywhere!!! Um no just er, ah the council estates I hate walking through they.”

Q: “Is that Brook Way, do you walk through that one?”

A: “Yeah”

Q: “Why do you not like it, is it because of the people that live there?”

A: “Yeah, well, I know it’s the atmosphere I don’t like it at all.”

(“Jim” - 16 years old)

“From my house it’s quite a safe journey, erm, there’s no real scary things you go through as such and you I mean some of the estates around the back are a bit grotty and a bit dodgy but you know, no one really bothers you (laughs) so I suppose nothing’s changed there really about the estates they’ve always been bad I think.”

(“Brian” - 15 years old)

Thus it emerged that the housing estate near to the school was an *area* of concern for those who walked. It had to be established whether there were any individuals who were avoided too.

Younger Years Avoid Older Years

A number of pupils interviewed from year groups seven to nine explained how they did not like to come in to contact with those from year groups ten and eleven when they walked to school:

Q: “And is there anybody that you try to avoid on your journey or is it not that sort of journey?”

A: “Um we try to avoid the older people, like in year eleven and ten.”

Q: “What do they do?”

A: “They just shout stuff out. And it’s like jobs that just shout stuff.”

Q: “Do they shout because you are younger?”

A: “Yeah we’re younger.”

(“Zoë” – 13 years old)

Q: “So is there anybody that you feel intimidated by or anything on your journey?”

A: “No not really. Sometimes when I walk home, down by um Fishpond there’s some like the year older than us like on skateboards and stuff and I get a bit like I just walk really quickly and I’m like head down and walk really quickly but um no not really that’s about it.”

(“Rachel” - 16 years old)

Q: “Is there anybody that you try to avoid on your journey?”

A: “I don’t, I don’t like doing it one way because there’s always, always people like they always call you names like when you walk past and stuff.”

Q: “Are they other school children?”

A: “They are the same school but I think I don’t know why but there’s like a little gang around the school gates if you go the other way and they always like shout at you and chuck things at you and stuff like that.”

Q: “What do they throw?”

A: “Um...bottles and cigarettes and things.”

Q: “Are they older?”

A: “Yeah, older.”

Q: “What year?”

A: “Ten and eleven, yeah.”

Q: “Are they always hanging around?”

A: “Yeah, yeah, like they don’t go into school, they go just as the bell rings.”

Q: "And they just hang around waiting for people to go to school?"
A: "Yeah."
Q: "Is that all they do like name calling and things?"
A: "Yeah...and they usually like talk and things."
Q: "So is that the only sort of time you feel at risk on your journey to school, when you have to walk past those people?"
A: "Yeah, yeah."
Q: "Um, do they do that to all years?"
A: "Um, I think they do it when you are in year 7 a bit more."
Q: "Yeah?"
A: "Um...and I think I always think that if there's any teachers around, they never do it, they never do anything. But it's not as if it was far away from the school. Because they are quite close and they can get found out. But I think they wouldn't do it to their own year."
Q: "No, it's always younger years is it?"
A: "Yeah."
(“Izzy” - 13 years old)

These accounts highlight the fact that those in years ten and eleven do continue to bully and intimidate. However, they conducted their victimisation off school premises. Those in years ten and eleven who claimed that you ‘grow up’ and ‘grow out’ of bullying appeared to be referring to activity within the confines of the school. This could be linked to the fact that those in the senior years of school were the prefects and the ‘allies to authority’. They were obliged to uphold the rules of the school due to their status. Nevertheless, when the boundaries change and the territory was the wider society, they exerted their authority over the younger years and subsequently intimidated them whilst they walked to school. When talking about the wider society, outside the boundaries of schooling, were there any individuals whom those in years ten and eleven avoided?

Older Years Avoid Late Teens

Overall the pupils in years ten and eleven did not avoid many people on their school journey. With the exception of, perhaps, individuals in their late teenage years who would have been in years ten and eleven, when the current years ten and eleven were in the youngest year, year seven:

Q: “Is there anyone that you try and avoid on your journey?”

A: “Erm, well I suppose...out by there’s like a car park near there and there are all like 20 year olds and they all watch you like going to school and like, they don’t seem very happy.” (laughs)

Q: “Right, and do they hang around there everyday?”

A: “I dunno, they are usually fixing their car or something. Usual council estate stuff really.”

(“Jim” - 16 years old)

Q: “Is there anyone that you try to avoid on your journey?”

A: “There’s always going to be, there’s always somebody bigger and stronger than you are, that’s generally it. It’s not that you avoid them its just you don’t cross...I mean it just depends who you are mates with or who you hang around with. ‘Cos I’m mates with a lot of the people who are I guess avoided, by some of the people in my year, but I’m you know, I’ve always got on with them so I can never really have a problem.”

Q: “Yeah, so why do you think they are avoided though, what sort of people are they?”

A: “Um they’re generally sort of badass people, that’ll do something wrong and not really care they’ll just, they’ll just do stuff, they’ll just do what they want to do.”

(“Raj” - 15 years old)

The tactics of avoidance used by members of year groups to avoid older individuals related to the emerging theme of a relationship between status ranking and bullying which will be discussed in the chapter on peer groups.

“Rosie” gave the only example of a pupil in an older year avoiding someone from the year below:

Q: “Is there anyone that you try to avoid on your journey?”

A: “Um, there’s one girl in the year below, who’s been expelled that I’d be scared of.”

Q: “Is this the one that punched the other girl?”

A: “Yeah ‘cos um a while ago her sisters in our class and I had quite a few things stolen.”

Q: “Oh great.”

A: “And the girl, her sister, the one who punched the girl, was wearing all of my clothes in town so I went up to her and I said why are you wearing my clothes? And she said “oh they’re not yours”, I said “yes they are”, so we called the police, I had to make a statement they went and arrested her, ‘cos she’s only just come out of jail for assault.”

Q: “Nice girl really.”

A: (laughs), yeah, that’s the only person I’d be scared of ‘cos she’s got like a record, if I was like walking down the street and I saw her I’d be like, look away, but that’s the only person.”

Q: “Like make no eye contact?”

A: “Yes that’s the only person I’d be intimidated by.”

Q: “Yeah, yeah and there’s no other like older gangs or anything?”

A: “No, no, no there isn’t.”

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter on fighting, the girl in question in this account was the only ever girl to take part in a 'real' fight at Bayview School during the period of research, one of the 'big three'. Thus, it was not surprising that girls at the school who had experienced victimisation in one form or another avoided her on their school journey regardless of their year group.

Road Safety

A small number of pupils responded to the questions of avoidance in relation to road safety issues:

"No, no, oh, apart from across the road, down by the Fishpond, the lollipop lady is there but she only helps like the primary school people across where like we stand there waiting to cross and like we have to just look ourselves and hope we don't get knocked over. I think she could help us a bit more, even though we are old enough."

("Rachel" - 16 years old)

"Erm, when you're walking round Bower Street it's got a really thin pavement, the cars always go slow, but I still think that for younger children they should widen it."

("Rosie" - 16 years old)

A: "No not really, I mean there's not a lot of roads, if you take the back, there's like a back route and there's not a lot of roads to cross or anything like that. Down near the back it's the most risky, just getting across there, there's one road that you have to cross and the worse bits on the estate, I don't really take a lot of notice you're just a target when you are crossing the road there."

Q: "What so they drive at you?"

A: "Yeah"

("Raj" - 15 years old)

It is important to note that these individuals were from years ten and eleven and that they viewed the only potential problem on their journey to school to be road safety rather than to be intimidated by other individuals on their journey.

'Back Gate Crowd'

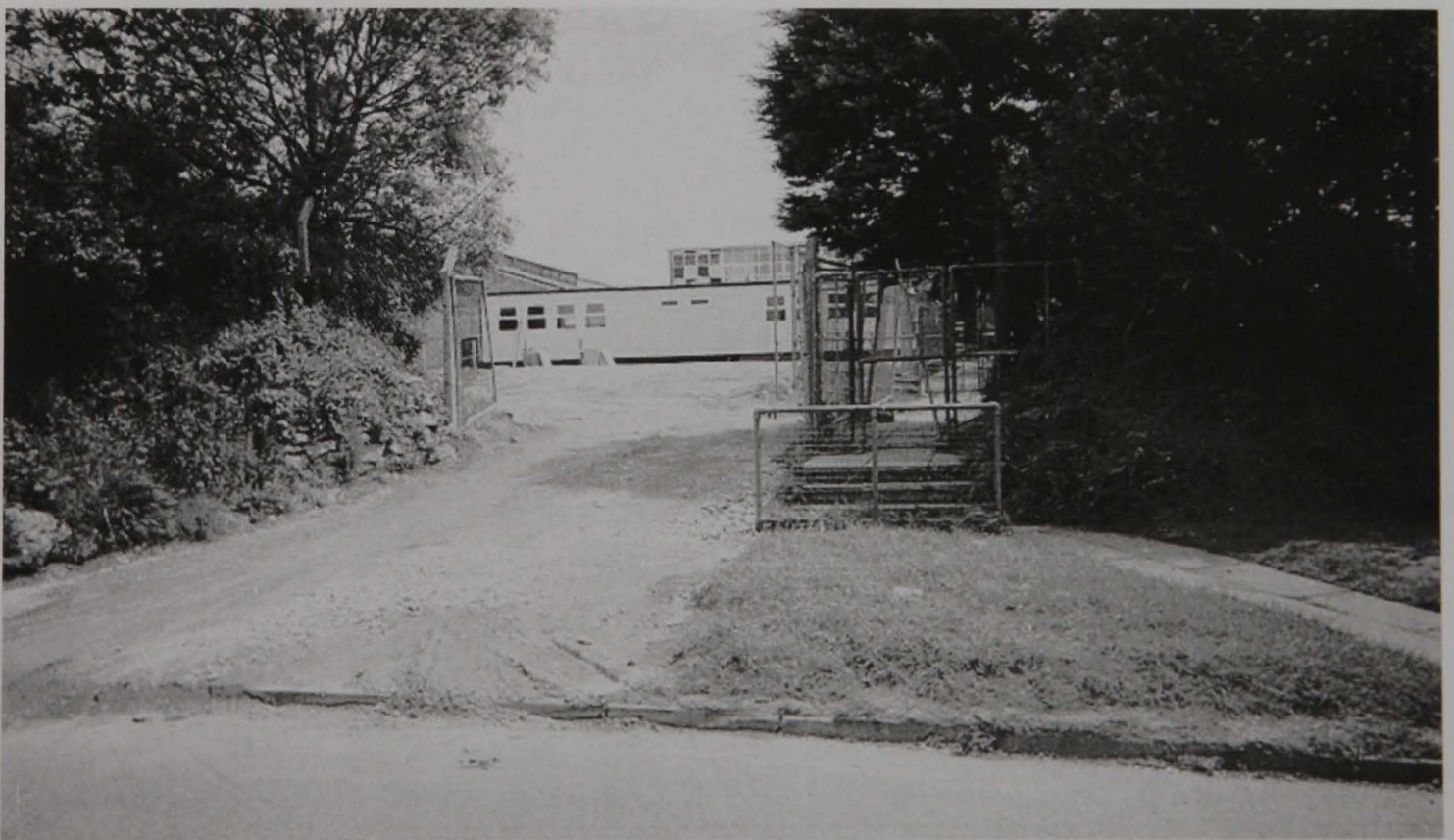
Another area to avoid on the school journey was the back gate. There are two main entrances to Bayview School. The front gate is where the buses deposit the students and parents drop off their children on the school run. It was also the route pupils chose to take if they wanted to avoid using the back gate.

“The Front Gate”



There was also an entrance at the back of the school that is situated beyond ‘year nine land’.

“The Back Gate”



A number of pupils explained how they tried to avoid the back gate and would take detours to enable them to come into school via the ‘safer’ front gate:

A: “No, I walk up the front because they (trouble makers) all walk up the back because most of them are on Brookway and go in the back gate and they all gather there anyway, so it’s easier to walk up the back. But I go in the front...they end up congregating at the back gate and having the odd smoke and things like that. I know who they are because they walk in smelling of smoke.”

Q: “And do they do anything to other kids trying to get into school?”

A: “Well, sometimes, it depends on whether they know them or not. If they know them and dislike them, well they’ll yell the odd thing, maybe they’d give them a quick push as they come past. So a lot of people do avoid that way. I know my girlfriend’s had trouble with a particular lot of them and because of her, I’m getting flack off them as well.”

(“Ed” - 15 years old)

“Jimbo” supported this point:

A: “Well I felt a bit self-conscious when I was walking through the back gate up until I was in year nine I’d say. Just walking, just like, but years above us were pretty bad they were the kind of people if you gave a stupid look they would be trying to beat you up or something. But no, nothing anymore.”

Q: “And do you think that there are people in your year (eleven) that other years try to avoid on their journey to school?”

A: “No, I don’t, no, ‘cos we are just a friendly year, ‘cos I don’t know why but all the years seem to be merging. We’ll hang out with year tens and they’ll hang out with us and there doesn’t seem to be a problem between the age difference, just accept it that we are all just friends. That’s all it is. It doesn’t really make a difference what age you are. Anyway we’re kind of maturing I think in that kind of respect.”

There was an area just outside the school boundaries that the pupils avoided due to the intimidation by the older years. What is interesting about Jimbo’s observations is that he did not believe that his year, year eleven, posed problems to younger years. Yet there were accounts that demonstrate the contrary. It could be that the behaviour and attitudes of people in different years was not uniform. It could also be that members of years had incomplete information about one another. Nonetheless, it could be that those in year eleven had ‘forgotten’ how intimidating a teenager of sixteen can appear to an adolescent of eleven. This was not something I explored during the interviews.

Safety in Numbers

There were concentric circles of avoidance with younger individuals being wary of older individuals. Consequently, a final element of the school journey for those that walked to Bayview School was that there was ‘safety in numbers’, and one had a less

threatened and problematic journey if one had peers to walk with. This again points to the importance of peers and the emerging significance of friendship groups:

Q: "How do you get to school?"

A: "I walk."

Q: "You walk?"

A: "Yeah."

Q: "Do you walk with people?"

A: "I normally walk with my brother, and then it's like he splits off and goes with his friends, like I either walk on my own or find my own friends with to walk with, whatever, so it just depends."

Q: "Is there anyone you try to avoid?"

A: "Erm, no not really (laughs) I can't think of any, other year eleven's I suppose if you don't really like them. Erm, erm but I don't think there's many of those really."

("Brian" - 15 years old)

Q: "Do you walk with other people?"

A: "Erm up to a certain point just by myself, I'll meet up with a couple of friends just down the road, not very far down the road. About half a mile down the road, I'll walk the rest of the way with them."

("Raj" - 15 years old)

The School Bus Journey – A Micro School Society?

The accounts that the students gave of the bus journey into school gave an important insight into the problems that a number of pupils experienced before they had even arrived at Bayview within the boundaries of the school:

Q: "And how do you travel to school?"

A: "Bus but it's very, very small. A lot of people have to stand up."

Q: "Really?"

A: "Yeah."

Q: "And is that everyday?"

A: "Yeah, because we did have a bigger bus twice but that was it, and now we've got to all stand up...most of us have to actually stand up and it's getting really annoying."

Q: "Are you the last people they pick up then?"

A: "Yeah."

Q: "Yeah. And what's the bus journey like? Is there anybody I don't know on the bus that you try to avoid or you don't like to sit near or are there troublemakers on the bus or anything?"

A: "Yeah, all the bigger ones like in nine and ten really."

Q: "What do they do?"

A: "They like... 'cos I normally where my hair like that (indicates on her head up in a bun for the interview her hair was down) and the first time I did that (wore her hair up) they all made fun of me but...I just didn't care."

Q: "Yeah, and was boys or girls?"

A: "Boys."

Q: "Is it always boys though?"

A: "Yeah, they're immature."

Q: "And is there a certain person you sit by if you get a seat?"

A: "There is my friend called Dale. Not really, I normally stand up. I always try to get near something which I can hold onto, 'cos if you fall off, over, then everybody will laugh."

Q: "Oh dear. Does that happen much or?"

A: "No. On the first bus journey we ever had, a boy called Chris did fall over."

Q: "Oh dear, what happened to him, did people just laugh?"

A: "Yeah, but he got back up and started laughing as well."

Q: "Oh bless him. So you go to and from school on the bus and do you ever walk at all?"

A: "I do sometimes, if I want to go and see someone like my cousins down there (indicates out of the window down the hill, so one would assume she means in the actual town itself) and my auntie's down there. So if I want to see them then I walk."

Q: "Do you do that often?"

A: "About once a week."

Q: "And is there any part of that journey that you feel unsafe doing or are there any people you avoid when you're walking there or anything?"

A: "No, not very many people walk home. They either go by car or bus."

("Tammy" - 11 years old)

"Emily" provided another account documenting incidents that occurred on the bus:

Q: "What is your bus journey like?"

A: "Well sometimes it can get a bit, there's this girl and this boy and they were fighting like anything and like saying silly things, like they were having a go at each other and I was just staying out of it. I had no idea what it was about but it did get a bit aggressive."

Q: "Yeah? And do other years intimidate other years on the bus, like do the older ones pick on the younger ones?"

A: "Yeah, they do a bit actually 'cos there's this boy who gets it (picked on) and he gets trouble, once the teachers like got you all to sit down and then after the teachers goes, it's like come on move and people pick on him."

Q: "Yeah, what year's he in?"

A: "Um, I'd say seven or eight."

Q: "Yeah, does anybody try and stop people getting off the buses and stuff?"

A: "Yeah they do that sometimes. But usually keep an eye here, and they let them go, it's a game to stop them...once someone took someone's shoes off the bus or something like that. That's happened twice I reckon."

Q: "What, was that older years picking on younger years?"

A: "Yeah, year ten, they fool around."

Furthermore, it emerged that the journey in the mornings were often less problematic than those after school had finished. "Jessica", explained the differences:

Q: "Do you have any problems on your bus journey?"

A: "Not in the mornings, in the afternoon's 'cos I think in the afternoon's people are just fed up and they know that if they do something they're not going to get in trouble for it when they get to school."

Q: "Right yeah."

A: “Actually on Fridays it’s worse because they think oh I’ve got a whole weekend they can get out of it by then. Um...people like...there’s some people that in the year above us when we, ‘cos we always sit upstairs quite near the back. And when we go upstairs they are standing like by the stairs and there’s only two seats left and they won’t let you past, so you just climb over the seats to get to the back and they like push us over and stuff.”

Q: “Yeah, is that boys or girls?”

A: “Boys.”

Q: “From year nine?”

A: “Mmm year nine yeah.”

Q: “Are they, do they do that practically most journeys?”

A: “Yeah.”

Q: “Are there any people you avoid on the bus? I mean obviously those?”

A: “Yeah there’s um...some year eleven’s that...they actually, they were in year eleven last year so its OK now but they were a bit rough kind of thing and a bit...(laughs) a bit scary sometimes.”

Q: “Yeah, and what sort of things did they do? Do they sort of intimidate people, or call them names and things?”

A: “Yeah, and like...if they are standing and you asked them to move ‘cos its your stop or something they just go no and turn away and you say excuse me can you move please and they’re like “no why should I”? “Cos I want to get off the bus”, “yeah but you’re younger than me”, annoying.”

Q: “Yeah and were they always on the bus?”

A: “Yeah.”

Q: “Yeah and did this happen like every journey, everyday?”

A: “Well it did...when they were on the bus, when they came to school.”

The bus journey to school could be an unpleasant experience. One can regard the school bus as a microscopic version of the society of the school itself. Similar scenarios of violence, peer group domination and bullying all took place on the journey to and from school. A number of pupils reported that the journey on a Friday night was the most problematic and the least looked forward to. Due to the fact there was no schooling on a Saturday, situations that occurred on a Friday were often ‘forgotten’ about by the following Monday and as a consequence remained unreported, unpunished and a taken for granted element of the school journey on a Friday afternoon.

Bullying did not have a clear territory. It could happen at anytime and anywhere. Furthermore, the accounts of the school journey support the endemic nature of bullying at Bayview School. During the process of the interviews I never raised any questions about what happened during school vacations as my focus was on everyday life at school. Perhaps future research could consider patterns of bullying during extended periods off school premises. However, bullying at Bayview School clearly emerged as an issue for the pupils interviewed. I now had to attempt to understand how it was that people became victims. What makes one ‘different’? Why should this matter?

What Makes a Victim?

“For children, the status of victim has to be earned in some way in order for them to be recognized as needing a response. The position of children as dependants of others limits their capacity to acquire this status. Moreover, the validation of victim status usually depends upon the precipitating act being defined as criminal. Yet many types of crime committed against children are not regarded by adults as sufficiently serious to merit any formal response. Routine acts of minor violence such as bullying, chastisement, or assault appear resistant to being defined as criminal when committed against children. To this extent, children are liable to be denied recognition as victims.” (Morgan and Zedner, 1992, p.22)

Bullying was clearly a problem at Bayview School and I needed to understand who became a victim and why. This was difficult for the pupils to articulate, and was an area of the interviews that the majority of the pupils had problems with for a number of reasons. If they were bullied themselves, it was a process of understanding and coming to terms with why they had been victimised. If they were the bullies, it was a realisation of what they had done to fellow pupils. Those in years ten and eleven who had been the bullies were especially remorseful about their actions. Finally, every pupil interviewed had experienced bullying in some form or another at Bayview School and this was the first time any of them had deconstructed and provided explanations for their experience.

It was said that an individual became victimised because he or she was different in some way. This was an answer given by practically every pupil interviewed:

Q: “Who gets bullied?”

A: “They tended to be like smaller people or like they were like fat or something and like really tall and skinny and its just people who look odd might add to the fact they get picked on.”

(“Rachel” - 16 years old)

Q: “Who gets bullied?”

A: “Um well, they’re (the victims) like...just other people, anybody that they (the bullies) think “oh I can pick on them”, that kind of thing.”

Q: “And what sort of things do they say?”

A: “Like call you fat, make fun of you, like if you’re short, they take the mick out of you. They take...people take the mickey out of me ‘cos I’m short and I’ve got a brace.”

(“Jessica” - 13 years old)

Q: “Who gets bullied?”

A: “They (the bullies) just say, “oh look at you, look at your face, or your clothes, or your teeth”, ‘cos my cousin has got goofy teeth and he wears glasses and everyone picks on him for that. He had an operation to take that tooth (indicates to top front tooth) out so everyone calls him goofy teeth now.”

Q: “What year is he in?”

A: “My year, seven.”

Q: “And who is picking, is it year sevens that pick on him or other years?”

A: “Oh, he has been beaten up quite a lot by someone in year eight, he’s beaten up like five times. Jack’s had a go at him once outside the back gates, yeah. He just, he broke his boxers (underpants) and stuff by wedging him.”

Q: “What, how do you do that?”

A: “They just grab the back of your trousers and just pull it up.”

Q: “Oh God.”

A: “And then they, he (Jack) burnt him and stuff.”

Q: “Burnt him?”

A: “Yeah, with his fag.”

(“Simon” - 11 years old)

For one reason or another, all the victims described in the above examples were perceived as being different from the rest of their peer group. There was a distinct intolerance of difference. This point had been previously raised when the pupils tried to define what bullying and teasing were. There was not one pupil who could articulate where such ideas were formed and why there were manifest prejudices amongst the students.

Furthermore, it is important to note that “Simon” was the pupil who had a problem with his bully “Jack” and previously documented the lengths he followed in order to avoid confronting his bully on his journey to school. It should be explained that during the process of the interview, he did not have a cousin in his year group at all. “Simon” was actually documenting further examples of his own victimisation through the third person and this was how he began to explain his levels of suffering to me. I had already noted his missing tooth and his small build and surmised that the tales about his ‘cousin’ were in actual fact personal accounts. However, we had to build a relationship during the process of the interview. It was not until he was absolutely certain I would not tell a soul about his problems that he confessed to me that he was “cousin”.

Olweus' defined 'typical victims' as being:

"...more anxious and insecure than students in general. Further, they are often cautious, sensitive, and quiet. When attacked by other students, they commonly react by crying (at least in the lower grades) and withdrawal. Also, victims suffer from low self-esteem, and they have a negative view of themselves and their situation. They often look upon themselves as failures and feel stupid, ashamed and unattractive. The victims are lonely and abandoned at school. As a rule, they do not have a single good friend in their class. They are not aggressive or teasing in their behaviour, however, and accordingly, one cannot explain the bullying as a consequence of the victims themselves being provocative to their peers...Also these children often have a negative attitude toward violence and use of violent means. If they are boys they are likely to be physically weaker than boys in general (Olweus, 1978).

I have labelled this type of victim *the passive or submissive victim* (1973a and 1978)...In summary, it seems that the behaviour and attitude of the passive victims *signal to others that they are insecure and worthless individuals who will not retaliate if they are attacked or insulted*. A slightly different way of describing the passive victims is to say that they are characterized by an *anxious or submissive reaction pattern combined* (in the case of boys) *with physical weakness.*" (1993, p.32, original emphasis)

This definition exhibits how a victims 'difference' can add to the likelihood of an individual becoming victimised. It is an area of which researchers studying bullying are aware yet the 'differences' between a victim and the 'norm' of the peer group have not been unpacked sufficiently. The Bayview pupils believed that one's difference from an undisclosed 'norm' was paramount to understanding bullying. Therefore, the 'differences' that mattered at Bayview School were considered.

Why do Differences Matter?

A number of pupils tried to offer explanations as to why such differences mattered:

"He tries to be funny and no one thinks he's funny and then he tries to be tough, like if , like just a second ago when I was in food the teacher said "no don't try and put um curry powder in the cake", well and then he goes, "well what about peppers?" And she goes "that was the wrong time Jonny" and then he just started trying to be tough to the teacher. And he's not tough."
(“Chad” - 11 years old)

“Chad” argued in this fashion that a teacher would not put up with a pupil who was trying to “show-off” to his peers in class. The boy in question was trying to gain popularity with his peers by trying to “back chat” his teacher, but it did not work and his peers in his class did not approve of his attempts at comedy. In a sense, he was making himself different from the other children but could not do so in the ‘cool’ manner that

would give an individual status if he or she were popular. Olweus (1993) regards this form of victimisation as resulting from the actions of a 'provocative victim':

"...there is also another, clearly smaller group of victims, *the provocative victims*, who are characterized by a combination of both anxious and aggressive reaction patterns. These students often have problems with concentration, and behave in ways that may 'cos irritation and tension around them. Some of these students can be characterized as hyperactive. It is not uncommon that their behaviour provokes many students in the class, thus resulting in negative reactions from a large part of, or even the entire, class." (p. 33, original emphasis)

However, one is in danger of supporting notions of victim blaming. "Jonny" clearly provoked his class and his teacher yet his attempts to 'be funny' and 'fit in' must have stemmed from a desire to be accepted. "Chad" was annoyed at how "Jonny" could not be 'normal' and was always making a show of himself. Perhaps "Chad" could not understand that the actions of peers were the root cause of "Jonny's" behaviour. "Jonny" and "Chad" were in year eight, so one could make an assumption that empathy had not developed sufficiently and "Chad" was not able to comprehend what his peer experienced. However, these are just circumventions and one must remember that "Jonny's" differences were not completely clear. He was rejected by his peers for messing around in class, which contradicts conventional thinking that being the 'class clown' often makes one popular with peers as they are rejecting the social control of the school. The concept of 'being different' required further investigation.

A victim's account can help to explain the principle of difference:

"Um, um, I, in year seven, 'cos I sometimes get teased about having a dad who's a vicar, and he comes in to assemblies and that's made it much better because you know, they'll discover he's not what people think vicars are. He's all human so that helps. But in year seven, when anybody'd say something, I'd come back and I just, I got into trouble, I got on report, I didn't do my homework, it was a disastrous year and I was in a fight. And that made me quite unpopular but in year eight and year nine, I've sort of been in the middle...now, I just, if anybody says something, I just you know, ignore it or come back with a comment, yeah."

("Bill" - 13 years old)

"Bill" was victimised because of his home circumstances: He was not markedly physically different from his peers. It was his father's occupation that was the principal reason for his victimisation. He admitted that his reaction to his bullying was ill-advised. Retaliation got him into trouble himself and ruined his school career. He was

still teased about his father. However, as he progressed through the school he learnt how to deal with his 'difference'.

Bullying at Bayview School was an intolerance of difference based not only on physical appearance, but a difference about *anything* that was not perceived to be 'the norm'. It was an impossible task to try to get the pupils to explain what they were measuring perceived differences with. What was the norm? The pupils really struggled to articulate their thoughts within this section of the interviews, similar problems of definition are documented by Sparks et al., (1977):

"In theories of societal reaction, the dependent variable is neither the commission of crimes nor the experience of victimization; instead it is the victims' responses to such experiences, and the perceptions, definitions and attitudes of victims and non-victims in different social groups." (p.7)

The ambiguity surrounding the deconstruction of terminology was apparent during every interview. What did I mean by asking about differences? The pupils often regarded me as a mad woman when I would not accept their 'just so' explanations. As I remarked when I tried to push the pupils to unpack the term 'play' I did not want to break the flow of the interview. Thus, through fear of impeding the progress of a number of the interviews I ploughed on in the hope that both the pupils and I would be able to unravel what was meant by the term 'difference'.

"Katie" offered an explanation as to what the key to being a victim entailed:

"I think it's a lack in confidence, it's that way, that if someone is a real bold person then they know that they can make someone feel small and they'll use it and if the person (victim) ever says anything or if they cower down, then they need someone that's got a bit of a like very big personality to stand up for them. And that's what I think, probably it's the lack of confidence in yourself."

There certainly was a case for a lack of confidence being demonstrated amongst the victims. Other pupils expressed 'confidence' as a key issue yet could not articulate the distinction as well. They categorised the pupils who were victimised, 'quiet' or 'loners' or 'not fitting in', which, it could be argued, are personality traits of individuals who are not confident, outgoing people, or people who have been victimised.

Criminology tends to focus on studying offenders:

"...thus implicitly assuming that crime is wholly or primarily a function of the criminal's behaviour, personality or social situation, and that the victim of crime is a passive rather than active element in it." (Sparks et al., 1977, p. 9)

Bullying research attempts to look at both the bully and the victim but without 'labelling' children. One does not want to stereotype the characteristics of those who tend to bully and who tend to be a victim. However, I would tentatively argue that character traits of the pupils must have an impact. During the process of the fieldwork I became adept at identifying which children were going to tell me stories of victimisation and which were going to confess to being a bully. One could argue that there are certain personality types that are prone to victimisation. However, it was not possible within the remit of this research to elaborate on this speculation. Nonetheless, I would have been intrigued to see how some of the pupils I interviewed scored on Eysenck's personality inventory which measures extraversion and introversion traits on a continuum. This in turn might have helped one understand confidence levels and outgoing personality types.

Year Group Victims

The interviews made it apparent that almost every pupil experienced some form of victimisation during their school career, usually in the form of 'teasing' or 'picking on'. There were accounts of victim alliances that formed, almost as a coping mechanism to defend against the bullies:

"It just became like a little small group of victims who were always victimised and it was just trying to get a group together to find something in common. Erm, actually my friend who I was talking about earlier, who goes over the top or something, he's actually one of those people. Once again he'd like, he'd been friends (with the bully), he'd actually been bullying me at one point and then like he became the victim himself and got like ejected from that group and then so, and then you find a common vein that you've both been victimised and like you become friends from that, but once that was gone of course you just think am I with him? (Laughs)"
("Brian" - 15 years old).

The victims were virtually forced together to ensure that they had someone to talk to and hang around with at lunchtime and recreation times. One could state that victims may concur in the pariah status of other victims. It became clear that "Brian" thought he had absolutely nothing in common with the character he described and once the bullying finished he could not explain why he was still his friend. Similar experiences meant that he had remained loyal to this individual.

"Brian's" victim status ended by year nine. However, there were intriguing reports that within every year group there were two or three individuals who were constantly

victimised. These individuals were viewed as 'the fall guys' of their year groups and they were picked on continually from year seven through to year eleven. These 'year group victims' were often labelled the 'unpopular people'. The dynamics of the year groups and the friendship networks will be explained in the next chapter. However, with regards to bullying, the 'year victims' were a stable group present in every year:

Q: "What happens to the unpopular people?"

A: "They (members of the year group) just push people into them (year group victims) (laughs) and call them names and just pretend to be nice like but they're being sarcastic like you know?"

Q: "Yeah like sly remarks sort of thing?"

A: "Yeah definitely."

Q: "So would you say that's a form of bullying then?"

A: "Yeah...Er, oh yeah, er sorry, er just you know people who don't, there's not that many people who get picked on, its only like about two or three."

Q: "Yeah and has that been the same like from year seven upwards?"

A: "Yeah."

("Mike" - 15 years old)

Q: "Why do they pick on him?"

A: "Everyone calls him (the year victim)...They call him a geek and a square and wedgies and all this and he's like in bottom set for everything and he's, don't know, he's like not that bad a person but he takes everything too far and he's just like he's got to be one of the most immature people in our year, all except like a mentally disabled boy in our year (There was a boy with Downs Syndrome in the year group) but this boy he's perfectly fine but he takes it too far. He's like, he sits there and goes (sits and makes childish noises) and he refuses to stop."

("Tilly" - 13 years old)

The presence of the 'year group victims' is reminiscent of the observations made by Parsons and Bales (1953) work on the formation of roles in small social groups. They studied random groups of college students who had been selected to solve an administrative problem. No leader was appointed to any of the groups. Nonetheless they found that regardless of the fact that the groups were randomly generated, similar roles and ranks appeared. They found five roles which materialised in all groups studied: 'the top initiator', 'the man who *receives* the most interaction', 'the man who "has the best ideas"', 'the man who "does the most to guide the discussion"', and 'the man who is best liked' (p.150-1). Consequently, the same roles kept recurring despite different occupants, this in turn established hierarchy in the groups to solve the task. This process occurred within the year groups at Bayview School.

It was an unwritten rule that every year group had year group victims. These individuals were fulfilling an important role which maintained year group divisions and alliances. Thus, in order for the year groups to survive they needed to have year group victims? A year group victim was a role that required filling in every year at the school?

“Jimbo” explained the concept of the year group victims further:

A: “There’s some people who have been shut out by people because I reckon that groups need someone to take out just to say you’re not right, you’re separate, you’re the ugly one or whatever. Just so that they’ve got someone to make themselves feel better. It’s just, I don’t know, I’m really struggling for words now. To put somebody else down, they make yourself feel a bit higher up, make yourself feel better than them. So they’ve got a few people like that in each year as well for all that stuff...just like they just take it out ‘cos every year they can be horrible to one person. So they just, the whole year kind of puts someone on the side and says right, this person is the victim.”

Q: “And what’s wrong with that person? What sort of qualities has that person got that makes them like a victim?”

A: “Um, well there’s a girl that everyone’s nasty to, really flat-chested, really lanky and horrible. She’s actually, I think she’s actually got a mental problem. Just completely serious. She is just really weird and different and she’s like, the whole way she presents herself really. I mean it’s not like, it’s not like she’s doing it deliberately. She just can’t help being like that. So everyone just sees her as someone they can pick on. Like boys pick on her as well. It’s like, it’s calmed down a bit now but like in year nine, ten, it was like boys just punching this girl. I mean I don’t think it actually happened, that blokes could actually punch girls like that, especially not at this age, it just didn’t seem right. But yeah, it happened.”

Q: “And is she still picked on today?”

A: “Yeah, she’s picked on but not...”

Q: “Not to that extent?”

A: “Yeah, yeah.”

Q: “And is there a boy that everybody picks on as well?”

A: “Um, yeah, there is actually yeah. He’s got his own group of friends who aren’t picked on but he’s the guy who is. I mean I don’t see it as a problem, he’s one of these people that hasn’t got confidence so of course, so that’s why he’s become isolated. But yeah, he does seem okay, he seems alright, there doesn’t seem anything wrong with him.”

Q: “And has he always been picked on as well?”

A: “Yeah. Yeah, teachers and all actually.”

Q: “Really?”

A: “Yeah, I mean I didn’t think they’d have the guts to try and get away with it but they have done, maybe a bit.”

Q: “And what do they do to him?”

A: “I don’t know, just like they don’t let him talk or anything in class. I mean of course he can talk a bit but if he says something stupid, then they’ll just tell him to shut up and he’s held behind after class and stuff. It’s just like I don’t know, reading a textbook I suppose. This is how we victimise and it’s teachers too.”

The above quote demonstrates an element of self-fulfilling prophecy:

“The systematic condemnation of the out-grouper continues largely *irrespective of what he does*. More: through a freakish exercise of capricious judicial logic, the victim is punished for the crime... Superficial appearances notwithstanding, prejudice and discrimination aimed at the out-group are not a result of what the out-group does, but are rooted deep in the structure of our society and the social psychology of its members.” (Merton, 1963, p 428, original emphasis)

One could argue that certain pupils in every year group were moulded to fill certain roles. In this particular case it was to ensure the constant presence of year group victims. “Chantel” provides a final example of a year group victim:

Q: “Why do the year pick on her?”

A: “I don't know, it's the way she, she sometimes she just sits there and stares and you and it's just like it really bugs you and it's so annoying, you just want to hit her.”

Q: “And has she always been unpopular?”

A: “Yeah, ever since, all the way through school and the same for all other schools, primary school.”

Q: “Really?”

A: “Yeah.”

Q: “Yeah. And what about boys? Are there any boys like that as well for your year?”

A: “Um, no, I don't think there are any boys.”

Q: “It's just this girl. And does she try to be friends with people?”

A: “Yeah, you know, some people do actually talk to her but she's got like no one to hang around with and you've got to feel sorry for her really.”

Q: “Yeah, yeah. And how does she look like? What does she look like?”

A: “She's just like, she's really skinny and she's like really lanky, she's got like really big curly hair and she's got like really big buck teeth and stuff.”

Q: “And so people call her names and that?”

A: “Yeah.”

All years had ‘year victims’. Some had more than others but there were never more than six. The continued classification of year group victims is comparable to Kai Erikson's (1966) observations about the way in which control processes generate stable quantities of deviants:

“...the term “deviance” refers to conduct which the people of a group consider so dangerous or embarrassing or irritating that they bring special sanctions to bear against the persons who exhibit it. Deviance is not a property *inherent in* any particular kind of behaviour; it is a property *conferred upon* that behaviour by the people who come into direct or indirect contact with it. The only way an observer can tell whether or not a given style of behaviour is deviant, then, is to learn something about the standards of the audience which responds to it.” (p 6, original emphasis)

This could help to understand why the pupils categorised their year group victims.

Erikson continues:

“When the community nominates someone to the deviant class, then, it is sifting a few important details out of the stream of behaviour he has emitted and is in effect declaring that these details reflect the kind of person he “really” is.” (p 7)

There is a group process of applying rank and order to maintain a hierarchy of “them and us” which is important here. Erikson observed that groups seem to work to produce stable numbers of deviants. The year groups at Bayview School were working together to produce a stable group of year group victims.

The victims of the year groups had a tough time throughout their school life. The idea that individuals were singled out and picked on by the rest of the year was disturbing yet all of the pupils talked about their ‘year victim’ as though it were as natural as having a pet dog. Observations by Sparks et al., (1977) begin to explain the presence of ‘year victims’:

“...it is a feature of many legal and moral rules that they expressly allow for exceptions, so that what is normally proscribed may be permissible in certain circumstances.” (p.170)

Bullying was frowned upon by the authorities at Bayview School and a ‘tell all policy’ was advocated (see Appendix 7). From the accounts given by the pupils bullying was a problem. However, the idea that every year group always had to have year victims prevailed. Morgan and Zedner (1992) argue that:

“Vulnerable children may be subjected to violence in the form of bullying, yet never attain the official status of victim.” (p.51)

This was true to some extent, yet the exception at Bayview was the year group victims. They were assigned their status from their first day at secondary school and continued to be the victims until the day they left. The recurring theme of diffusion is apparent. The pupils labelled acts of violence ‘play’ and subsequently reduced the consequences of the action. This process acted as both a buffer and a gauge on which to measure the level of severity. A ‘play’ fight was ‘a bit of fun’ and something that occurred everyday. It defused the fact that violence took place daily at Bayview School as it was ‘only play’. Likewise, if one was bullied then the victimisation suffered would never become as bad as the victimisation that the year group victims were subjected too. Thus, in the case of “Brian”, even though he suffered for two years, he did not suffer for the whole of his school career. The hidden scales that the pupils measured incidents of

violence against were present in bullying. No matter how bad one's victimisation became, one never found oneself in a position like the year victims. Unexplained scales of severity were commonplace at Bayview School that enabled the diffusion of situations.

One could argue that there was a crowd mentality surrounding the plight of the year victims:

“There's a couple of boys in my form and people leave them out because they are very, very intelligent and one's got long teeth, they call him goof tooth and things like that. Um I don't want to be dragged into it, but people drag me into it, calling them names and that but I don't want to, because I've grown up with them in primary school, since like class one and I know them really well and I know they're not like losers or anything, I know they're really nice. They get picked on a lot.

(“Jamie” - 11 years old)

In parallel to the position of the bystanders discussed in the previous chapter on violence, here is another example of the year groups acting as a collective whole. What is interesting is that “Jamie” documented being a victim of bullying herself and found her position very distressing, yet here she openly admits to following the crowd and bullying these boys with the rest of her peers. She claimed that she was ‘dragged’ into the bullying, yet it could be the case that she bullies to ‘save face’ in front of her peers. It appeared that there were no circumstances when pupils tried to protect the victims of bullying. It would be interesting to see what would happen if one did not join in; would one become a victim oneself?

Through the process of the interviews I began to understand my own school experience and was able to recall the ‘year victims’ of my own school year. At the time they were individuals whom everyone in the year ‘picked on’. It was an unwritten rule. I did not understand the gravity of my own actions until I interviewed individuals who were the year victim. Would I have altered my own behaviour if I had been able to see into the future and view the consequences of my actions or would I have ‘followed the crowd’? I cannot answer that question and I could spend a great deal of time considering childhood actions. However, during conversations I have with fellow pupils who are now lifetime friends I bring in the topic of our ‘lesbie friends’ (as we cruelly labelled them for the duration of their school life) and I ask my peers if we would have changed our behaviour if we had thought about our actions. It is only through doing this

research that I even consider such issues. Otherwise I would probably be unaware of the significance of adolescent bullying.

In attempting to define who was a victim, it has to be remembered that the accounts given by pupils were retrospective justifications. The students were giving me answers elicited by an interview. However, was being shy, fat, skinny, 'different' an 'explanation' for bullying? Or could it be argued that bullying was a process for labelling victimization. The attitude of 'there's always going to be victims at school' has to be challenged. Why should there always be victims? Can this be accepted? Why have criminologists not been interested in this labelling process?

There were a number of possibilities which needed further consideration. Was a victim's so called 'difference' part of an ex post facto justification for bullying? In some cases was it an effect *of* the bullying (for example a stammer or odd behaviour)? Or was it a member of some class of despised attributes on which peers would agree and which would, in effect, trigger selection?

In order to consider this point, it is now necessary to unpack who exactly were the bullies. Was there a distinct group of people or was everyone a bully at some stage during their school career?

What Makes a Bully?

There was confusion establishing who 'bullied' at Bayview School. The year groups were divided up between a 'popular' group and a 'non-popular' group. The complexities of these structures warrant a chapter to explain and analyse these divisions. However, it is worth noting the divisions for the purpose of this section. "Sarah" offered this rather perplexing explanation about who bullies whom:

Q: “Who bullies?”

A: “I don’t really know...I’d probably say er a popular person...”

Q: “They are the bullies?”

A: “Yeah.”

Q: “Or they tend to be?”

A: “Yeah they tend to be, or the other way round, the non-popular people are the bullies.”

Q: “Really?”

A: “Most likely that way round ‘cos they want to get in with the popular people and they think they’ll bully somebody to make themselves look big and strong.”

Q: “So it’s (bullying) like a status?”

A: “Yeah.”

Further explanations about who was a bully were equally confusing:

Q: “Who bullies?”

A: “If it ever was an issue, there’s like quite a few strong characters in our group and it’s mainly the girls, they won’t like stand for anyone. It used to be, even like when we first had our group, I was probably like they did used to make like sly comments and like pick on features about a girl that they knew were insecure about and then tease them about it. And um, so that was a form of bullying that they used to do to like even the people in their group...I think its probably a lack of confidence within their self but they don’t want to show it, it’s like a false pretence really, if they can make someone else feel small then they can feel a lot bigger and I think that’s probably why they do it to make themselves feel a lot better.”

(“Katie” - 15 years old)

Q: “Who bullies?”

A: “Yeah, some (popular people) are bullies, some aren’t some popular people are OK, they just are cool but they don’t do that sort of thing but some aren’t. I think actually some not very good people like they’re not very bright, they have a go at the other not very bright people and usually because of their looks and because they are stronger.”

(“Mike” - 15 years old)

Q: “Who bullies?”

A: “Um, it’s usually, it’s usually people with the big following behind them, popular, popular people who can use their strength on other people. Most people who get bullied aren’t tough or something or they’re not very good at fighting or they don’t fight. Yeah.”

(“Bill” - 13 years old)

Bullying at Bayview School played a role in a ‘popularity’ contest to gain prestige and recognition amongst one’s peers. It was emerging as a process by which the pupils upheld some form of hierarchy and ranking system. This required further investigation.

Olweus (1993) viewed bullies as having:

“...a more positive attitude toward violence and use of violence than students in general. Further, they are often characterized by impulsivity and a strong need to dominate others. They have little empathy with victims of bullying. The bullies often have a relatively positive view of themselves (Olweus, 1973a and 1978; Bjorkvist et al., 1982, Lagerspetz et al., 1982). If they are boys they are likely to be physically stronger than boys in general, and the victims in particular (Olweus, 1978).” (p.34)

Furthermore, aggression and occasional cruelty gained one status in front of one's peers. The previous complexities surrounding the issues of victimisation lead to the belief that there must be a parallel intricacy with regards to the bullies. The victims had been assessed as being low in confidence and self-esteem, a cause of their victim status.

What personality traits did the bullies exhibit? “Zoë” offered an example;

“Um, quite hard, like if people say something then they (the bullies) retaliate back, I think they smoke and drink and maybe drugs. Dunno...they um...they just if anyone says something they'll just say something back. They don't let anybody be horrible to them.”

A first impression of the bullying personality was that the individuals concerned were 'tougher' in some way, again a cause of their bullying status and would not take any form of trouble or bullying themselves.

Paradoxically, because exercise of power and popularity are mutually reinforcing, the bullies were often regarded as the 'popular' group, because of their status:

Q: “Who bullies?”

A: “Er, I dunno, it's just people who think that they are better than you really. It's not really hard nuts either, it's just, I dunno.”

Q: “And are they the in group that are doing the bullying or is it people from all over?”

A: “Yeah, yeah, it's the in group.”

(“Jim” - 16 years old)

However, the confusion linking 'popular' to 'bully' emerged. Being in the popular group did not mean one automatically bullied. These contradictions required further investigation alongside the continuous references to being 'popular'.

It was often stated that bullying obtained one 'age status', one attempted to look older by victimising a peer. This was not the way that the pupils regarded the bullies though. Those that engaged in bullying were often regarded as somewhat juvenile by their peers, as "Izzy" comments;

"Um...I think they're showing off usually. And...they (the bullies) try they're trying to be really hard, it's like they (the bullies) are trying to be older than they are or something. They don't actually seem older, they seem younger, really, and it's silly."

"Brian" was an outsider to his primary school and was bullied from his infant school into year nine of his secondary school. As I remarked, rarely were 'outsiders' accepted into the already existing social groups. He was asked if his 'outsider' status contributed to his victimisation:

A: "No, no 'cos like I was actually bullied by someone else who was a new boy. But er it's quite strange I expect, it's just a case of it just escalated I think you know, um, he felt I don't know left out, I think he might have felt vulnerable some how and er and just turned on me. 'Cos we were actually quite good friends initially and he just suddenly just changed. I'm not really sure what actually changed. It just happened and it just started off and that was what made it worse really, 'cos like two years and you think what's this all about. I can't even remember why it started but um it's quite strange really 'cos then it just escalated to gang war fare."

Q: "Oh did it?"

A: "And like yeah and like they had their massive great gang and like you're with your friends and you can't go down the park, can't go there, and just got to stay in your house, so put up with your family...oh god that's not helping either. But it was just like, just feel, nothing to do really, you just can't do anything about it."

Brian's case was interesting. He was victimised by a fellow 'outsider' who used to be his friend. It could have been that his bully was jealous that 'Brain' had settled into school and made more friends or it could have been that the bully wanted to gain popularity and status in some way and prove his value.

This interview was the first time "Brian" had been able to reflect on his experiences and discuss them with someone who was not involved in the immediate school environment.

His views as to why the individual bullied him were thus:

"I don't know. I think it's just like I was saying, about having a common group of being the victim you have the common group of being like the bully as it were. I think it's just sort of some sadistic streak in people (laughs), it's just the feeling of power that you get over that person that you're actually making feel...terrible...I mean personally I wouldn't get a kick out of it at all, erm but obviously some people do."

The status of 'outsider' clearly made an individual different. Thus, the theme of intolerance of difference continued.

Some pupils argued that bullying was a form of retribution:

“Right, they (the bullies) could be like unsure of themselves or perhaps they got bullied or something and now they feel it's their turn to do it to someone else, they've suffered...it could be something like that.”
("Rachel" - 16 years old)

This observation is supportive of the victim-offender cycle argued in criminology. Studies have demonstrated how those who were bullied once did indeed become the bullies:

“...I found...a considerable overlap between bullies and victims and it frequently emerged during interviews that many of the bullies were 'worms that turned': they were picked on by others, learned to fight back in self-defence and themselves became bullies. So it seemed unproductive to regard the bullies and the victims as two separate groups: what seemed more important was to identify the circumstances most likely to give rise to bullying behaviour.”
(Devlin, 1997, p.151-2)

Nonetheless, as with the attempts to deconstruct who was a victim, the category of who was a bully was just as problematic. This is because it was intrinsically relational. Interestingly, none of the pupils described himself or herself as 'a bully', especially given that some of the accounts have linked bullying to levels of popularity and one's status. This is important when one compares the narratives documenting the year victims. If every year group has designated victims then it follows that regardless of one's direct involvement in the victimisation, the fact that as a year group the principle of a scapegoat for the year is allowed to continue must mean that there are many more bullies at Bayview than emerged during the process of the interviews.

In order to establish what 'bullying' meant, it was important to analyse the different techniques the genders used for victimising peers. Throughout the interviews, the victimisation of the boys had emerged as a theme at this particular school. I now wanted to understand exactly how such acts were carried out.

Male and Female Techniques of Bullying

There were three key forms of victimisation at Bayview: male on male, female on female and mixed. I will consider each of these bullying techniques in turn. However, it is worth beginning by considering existing research:

“There are typical gender differences in types of bullying, as in aggression generally. Often, these differences have been thought of as physical (more by boys) versus verbal (more by girls). But this generalisation appears to be over-simple. Research by Bjorkvist, Lagerspetz and Kaukainen (1992) has recently clarified that sex differences in aggression are not so much physical/verbal, as direct/indirect; boys tend to use more direct methods, girls more indirect. This research in Finland has been replicated in the UK (Ahmad & Smith, 1994). Since direct bullying is easier and more obvious to observe, it is likely that girls’ bullying has been underestimated in the past.” (Smith and Sharp, 1994, p.6)

I wanted to analyse the extent of bullying across the genders at Bayview School and to see if the techniques used were direct or indirect.

Male Victimisation

Q: “What form did the bullying take?”

A: “Oh it was like small things like, you sort of didn’t notice but they were annoying and worrying that they had like been there and so I don’t know...like people just running across just like for the fact that they’d done it...and we’ve got like an acre of land and like, they’d be pulling up vegetables and things like that, ‘cos they used to do just vandalising it in general and stealing things. I know someone, I think it was actually at the time of the bullying, they just pulled out this moneybox that my dad had made and broke it up and chucked it in the river down the bottom of our road. So it was just, it was like, it was coming closer all the time, and before long it was like prank calls on the door and prank ‘phone calls. It was just pretty scary actually.”

Q: “And that was all this one boy that you had met from primary school?”

A: “Yeah, and his actual little clique sort of thing that were actually doing it. His little group of people.”

(“Brian” - 15 years old)

As we have seen, “Brian” and “Simon”, both suffered victimisation on and off of the school premises. In both cases their aggressors were boys. A popular myth about bullying between boys is that it tends to be of a violent nature and, once there has been a fight, the situation is more often than not resolved. This is an observation made by many of the female pupils during their interviews:

A: “Yeah boys just have a fight and then they are friends the next day.”

Q: “Right but girls tend to carry it on and let it stew?”

A: “Yeah.”

(“Stephanie” - 13 years old)

However, the following account given by “Bill”, bullied because his father was a vicar, highlights the complex nature of patterns of male victimisation:

Q: “What happened when you were bullied?”

A: “It was a really bad year. I got a bad report, didn’t do well in any subjects I usually do well in. And I just, I got it full stop. I mean I sometimes, I sometimes, you know, they’d say something and I’d turn around and say shut up or it would just escalate and then I’d be in trouble. Yeah, I must have been in the office about five times. It’s all sorted out now. I’m you know, I’m in a group, I’m not unpopular, well I’m not popular...yeah, it’s all sorted out.”

Q: “And who was that like edging you on or making you mad?”

A: “Yeah, it was all boys really.”

Q: “All boys?”

A: “I was taking on people I just couldn’t beat or they’d be in a really big group and I just wouldn’t think, it would just be, I was just reckless. But I’ve learnt to deal with it. And I don’t get teased anymore ‘cos they realise that you know, dad’s just a human vicar and he’s, he does come into assemblies and talk which I didn’t think was, I was a bit nervous but I’m always nervous during assembly but it’s really made it better. But he’s involved in the committee of the skate club and Rivers End youth project, he runs the Christian youth group. Yeah, that’s improved it.”

Q: “So in year seven, was that almost like a bullying period, you went through, would you classify it as bullying?”

A: “Not really, um, I would, it would usually be a one-on-one. It wouldn’t be kids piling in, it would just be sort of and the other thing, I would come back with a comment and that would make them cross and then would fight back. It wasn’t bullying, yeah, bullying in some sense, there were a few people doing it but it was my fault because I came back and fought. And I wouldn’t have had that problem if I had just left it. Yeah, should have just left it, not reacted.”

Q: “So were you being a bit over-sensitive do you think?”

A: “Um, I thought I could win every, every time, I thought I could stamp out the problem if you know, by saying a comment or fighting back. Yeah, but it’s all sorted.”

As a consequence of the verbal provocation received at school, “Bill” reacted in a violent way once he had been pushed to his limit. Thus, boys were engaging in both verbal and physical forms of bullying and direct and indirect methods at Bayview. Furthermore, the boys interviewed reported more incidents of victimisation than their female counterparts. Male victimisation is an under researched area within criminology. Feminist criminologists demonstrate how male victims ‘play down’ their experience of victimisation as it may threaten their masculinity to talk about themselves as weak and powerless (Stanko and Hobdell, 1993).

Feminist criminologists argue that female offenders are regarded as ‘double deviants’ (Carlen, 1983; 1987), for offending and for offending against the gendered ideal of femininity. I would argue by extension, that male victims are double victims. Firstly

they have been victimised, secondly they have suffered from the workings of the gendered norms of masculinity. The idea of victimisation is predominantly a feminised term. “Brian”, “Simon” and “Bill” openly discussed their victimisation during the process of long, often highly emotional one on one interviews. Their experiences demonstrate the necessity to look at how bullying is dealt with within schools. This will be considered later in the chapter but is important to keep in mind.

Female Victimisation

Female patterns of bullying were verbal at Bayview School:

“And if they ever bullied someone or if I see ‘cos I’m a prefect now, if I see anyone being bullied I always go over to like sort it out and it’s not, I don’t ever think there’s an issue but there might, there’s some people that...I know people think that some people smell and things like that, and there’s this, there’s a couple of girls that get teased about things like that. And I just always try and think, if I put myself in their shoes, um they can’t obviously help whatever’s wrong with them and I always think, everytime someone says something I just tell them to shut up because if you think what it would be like. I don’t think the boys really understand, I don’t think they think as much as girls do, like what it would be like to be in that person’s situation. And then that’s why there’s quite a few of us that won’t stand people being picked on ‘cos I just think it would be awful like. ‘Cos I had like a little bit of it and everyone is starting to find out who they are, but I just always try and think what it would be like and then I try and tell some of them lot and they do understand and they do stop. ‘Cos they respect what I feel about it...I had this close friend, she was my best mate and she got bullied and we was mates forever like we went to primary school. Like the first day I met her she was crying ‘cos her mum had left her in primary school it was her first day and I went over and hugged and that’s how we started to become friends. And ever since then we’ve been like the best friends, we’ve got exactly the same sense of humour...And we’re always cracking up about things and we’d fallen out about something, I can’t remember what it was and because she was like at the time everyone wanted to try and be her friend and they all like, she fell out with me, so everyone did. It was the whole, even the boys, and I couldn’t stand and I had a lovely form tutor Mrs B um she helped me through it and I was at the time my Gran was dying as well. They didn’t know but I didn’t want them to know either, but it was just everyone was picking on me and then it was then my other friend after and then like, you regain the friendship with one person and then they all want to be your friend again. It just seems so, like they’re sheep following the flock and it just makes you really annoyed. And when they all came over to be my friend I just I just I don’t know I felt really like I didn’t want them anymore and then but now we’re like the best mates that we’ve ever been now. But we’re really, really close but I met like three other people from talking to them, ‘cos they weren’t really, I didn’t know them ‘cos they were from a different school, and now those three are like my three best friends and one of them in particular is like my soul mate. I hang around with her all the time. And I’m quite glad that I sort of fell out with them to now become friends with the others.”

(“Katie” - 15 years old)

Along with bullying verbally girls tend to ostracise individuals from their peer group and not talk to them or isolate them. This was a common form of bullying amongst the female pupils:

“I think wherever you go there’s going to be bullying ‘cos you always get people that no one will talk to and that everyone like teases. I wouldn’t say it was a huge issue here, there’s no big bullying really. Er people may get teased, like certain people may get picked on for certain reasons. Like there’s one girl called Jane Buck who’s got quite bucked teeth and like she (laughs) walks around with a little bounce and she’s always smiling and quite a few girls may like go oh look at her and not talk to her...but yeah you always get that.”
(“Rosie” - 16 years old)

Female on female victimisation followed existing patterns uncovered in previous research. It was discrete in nature in that girls would often be excluded from their peer group. It was a problem and every girl interviewed had either experienced or been involved in bullying whilst at Bayview. As I have argued, gendered explanations are required to highlight the plight of male adolescent victims. They are also essential to uncover the true picture of discrete female bullying. Females engaged in subtle methods, which criminologists such as Heidensohn have highlighted in relation to female criminality. Nonetheless, discretion will result in an unknown quantity of female on female victimisation.

Mixed Victimisation

The dominant style of bullying technique at Bayview School was mixed, whereby boys and girls would unite and victimise together:

Q: “And do boys and girls do the same?”

A: “Yeah definitely...they are all doing similar sorts of things, all teasing like.”

Q: “And do boys ever pick on girls or is it just boys on boys and girls on girls?”

A: “Um, yeah some of the boys like the more popular boys pick on the like unpopular girls and like make rude comments about them.”

(“Rosie” - 16 years old)

Q: “So would you say she’s being bullied then basically?”

A: “Yeah sort of, not, not in the way that they always follow her, more in the way they make fun of her when she’s there if she’s in the same room and a teacher goes out of a lesson they make comments.”

Q: “Is it the whole year that does it, or just a few people?”

A: “It’s certain boys more.”

Q: “The boys?”

A: “Yeah. You get the odd girl who’ll say something to her but they’ll say it behind her back but she knows and I don’t know why really.”

(“Kerry” - 16 years old)

Q: “Yeah, is that the case with this boy then in your year or does everybody have a go at him?”

A: “Normally only guys actually, quite a few of the girls pity him but have a laugh at the same time. So I think a lot of them well go, “oh that’s very cruel” and laugh, walk off chuckling... Yeah, they know it’s cruel but they can’t help but laugh.”

(“Ed” – 15 years old)

“Everyone does it. Um, I suppose you could call it bullying. You know, some people really say nasty things about her but some people just ignore her. You know, it’s like mainly the boys are out to bully her and call her names and stuff. The girls just you know, ignore her.”

(“Chantel” - 15 years old)

Peer group bullying has been documented in existing research:

“For most children it is important to feel accepted by their peer group. The making and breaking of friendships can figure largely in their daily experiences of school, and the feeling of group membership can underpin their happiness there. When talking to pupils involved in bullying gangs it is often fear of what the rest of the group would say that hinders pupils in changing their behaviour.”
(Cowie and Sharp, 1994, p.88)

This is an interesting observation. Mixed bullying was the most indiscreet form of bullying that took place and more often than not would involve the public humiliation of the year group victims. Bullying that transcended gender was united in an exercise in ‘saving face’ before one’s peers. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, the recurring theme of diffusion to soften the impact of the action is relevant. If the whole peer group are involved in the victimisation, then more subtle, indirect, private instances of bullying go unnoticed or are undermined in comparison to the ritualistic mixed forms of bullying. Secondly, the importance of peer group and friendship networks is a recurrent issue. Olweus, 1993, has identified a form of bullying that happened between the genders at Bayview:

“It should also be emphasized that there are students who participate in bullying but who do not usually take the initiative – these may be labelled *passive bullies, followers, or henchmen*. A groups of passive bullies is likely to be fairly mixed and may also contain insecure and anxious students (Olweus, 1973a and 1978).”
(p. 34-5, original emphasis).

The students who participated in this kind of behaviour were assuming the previously mentioned bystander role, in that they were present and aware of the scenario but took no action to stop it. Such forms of bullying are highly problematic, especially in a small school like Bayview. I would like to remind the reader that Rivers End is a small town

and problems that occur within the school leak out beyond the school premises, making it difficult to segregate roles and identities. Therefore, if one is a victim at Bayview School one is more than likely to be a victim in the wider community. There are no opportunities for individuals to make friends with pupils from other schools. The nearest secondary school is approximately five miles away.

To underscore this point further, I noted that my talk of my schooling experience is almost alien to my university peers who have gone to school in big, urban areas. They have often attended schools that are two, three, even four times the size of Bayview. Thus, the idea that everyone knows everyone else is a very difficult concept to comprehend. Peers who have been schooled, for example, in London, told me how they would often have friends who live down their road but did not attend the same school. Therefore, if they had problems at school they would often have friends in the wider community with whom they could socialise. Furthermore, clubs such as swimming, Guides, Scouts, etc., would often have adolescents present who did not go to the same school. The reverse is true in Bayview. The people one attends school with are the individuals one socialises with. After school activities, such as sports clubs, held in the town are only subscribed to and attended by people who live in Rivers End or come from the surrounding villages, the same people who populate the school. Thus, the desire to 'fit in' and be 'part of the crowd' is fundamental to the adolescents. Otherwise peer group rejection means complete rejection until one leaves the town or moves onto Sixth Form College and is able to socialise with pupils who attended other comprehensive schools within the County. These issues will be discussed in the next chapter when the importance of friendship networks are analysed.

Patterns were emerging about group solidarity and gender, the effect of age needed to be examined further to see if this had an effect on patterns of bullying at Bayview School.

Older Years Vs Younger Years

I reported that bullying tended to be inflicted on members of younger years by members of elder years:

Q: "And is it like between years or like an older year picking on a younger year?"

A: "Older year picking on a younger year."

Q: "But between years?"

A: "No but there are like, my year, I know some people that bully other people, younger but then the other times some people bully the same year."

Q: "Right."

A: "It just depends on what's happening"

("Sarah" - 13 years old)

Q: "And was that older years doing that to you?"

A: "It was the same year, my form, they were picking on me 'cos like I'm a bit behind in work 'cos I've been away. And um, they pick on me 'cos of that and they pick on me because I'm like the youngest in the class um, they pick on me for all different things I'm not as good as people would think I was at working and that I'm polite and everything but I'm not as good at work as what I should be. So I get picked on for that as well."

Q: "Being the youngest is hard, do the other years like bully your year or pick on your year?"

A: "Um I've got, there was some year nine's that were picking on me and that scares me because one day I turned around and hit one of their mates? Who was picking on me and ever since he's not picked on me since, because I hit him and he's scared of me now. So whenever he picks on my brother I just do this (raises fist) and he runs away. Its funny 'cos like he's there in a group with all his mates and I do this and he just goes off."

("Jamie" - 11 years old)

Q: "Does your year like pick on other years like year seven's and eight's?"

A: "Yeah, er we do but it's not like that it's just like for a bit of fun like I said earlier, like the wrestling."

Q: "It's more like teasing?"

A: "Yeah, it's just, you know they don't mind. They know its fun."

("Mike" - 15 years old)

Again the diffusion element is apparent. Calling acts of bullying 'fun' runs parallel to naming acts of violence 'play'. Nonetheless, just as 'play fighting' could be viewed as an assault, the 'fun' and 'teasing' of one may be the bullying of another:

Q: "Now would you say that that's a form of bullying going on within your year?"

A: "No I don't think there is like bullying but I don't know."

Q: "Does your year get on with year seven's and eight's?"

A: "Yeah. Some people they might playfully tease but they are not really bad no."

Q: "What about the older years?"

A: “Yeah some people from our year get on with the people older, some from our year get on with people who are younger.”

(“Louise” - 13 years old)

Q: “Does like year eleven pick on the lower years at all?”

A: “No it’s more year nine’s on year seven’s more than anything.”

Q: “So when you were year nine, did your year pick on year seven?”

A: “Yeah in year nine I reckon they would have done more back then but in year ten you don’t really ‘cos of key stage three.”

Q: “You grow up then?”

A: “Yeah.”

(“Kerry” - 16 years old)

As we saw with the accounts of the journey to and from school, members of the older years, would bully those of the younger years. Bullying which occurred beyond the boundaries of the school was between all years. Bullying that occurred on the school premises did not involve years ten and eleven as they refrained from bullying (apart from the designated year group victim!) This could be a link to the theory that those pupils in the older years were the ‘allies of authority’, they had often become temporary prefects and prefects. Bullying at Bayview was formally not tolerated and a ‘tell all’ policy was in operation, therefore, the older years may refrain from bullying whilst they were on school premises as they were upholding prefect duties. Nonetheless, there were many parallels with violent incidents and the last link to deconstruct was the unwritten code of silence. Could it be possible that the older years did not engage in bullying on the school premises, as they were the pupils whom victims were encouraged to talk to? However, when the restrictions of the school were lifted they would bully as the boundaries of control, such as on the bus to school, were blurred and unpoliced?

Links with the Code of Silence

“Although bullying is not legally defined as a crime in its own right, many of its component parts (threatening behaviour, assault, and actual bodily harm) are clearly criminal offences which deserve to be recognized as such. The tendency of adults to dismiss bullying as a phase of growing up common to childhood makes it doubly difficult for a child to gain recognition as a victim. Moreover, school subculture imposes a code of silence and shame on the victims of bullying. As a result, it may continue undetected for months or even years until the victim finally breaks down under the pressure.” (Morgan and Zedner, 1992, p. 26)

Parallels with violent incidents were demonstrated though discussing the topic of bullying. Perhaps the most significant link can be drawn with the code of silence. “Rachel” gave an example of this:

Q: “Do you think that your current year eleven picks on your younger years a lot?”

A: “I wouldn’t say a lot but there are certain people who like pick on the younger ones, yeah.”

Q: “And why do you think they do that?”

A: “Um, I’m not sure because again I think the little children are really small and I think some of the people are really big in our year and I think it’s ‘cos they know they can pick on others the little ones don’t tell, they don’t tell teachers ‘cos they’re really scared of what like might happen to them if they say something.”

The bullies who were victimising the younger years exploited the code of silence. They knew that their victims would not tell on them and took advantage of the situation. The only explanation offered as to why year eleven would want to pick on the younger years was that it was a display of power; they did it because they could. The hierarchy formed through categorisation is relevant. Those at the top, the eldest pupils with the highest rank, bullied. The claim that year eleven did not bully was refuted in relation to the code of silence.

The code of silence was deeply embedded in the playground culture and there were cases given that highlighted that telling does not always help, “Jamie” shared her experience:

A: “I mean I was getting picked on and I told my mum and told the teachers but nothing happened.”

Q: “Do you think that’s because the teachers don’t really know what’s going on?”

A: “Yeah, like when you go and tell them they need proof its being done and that, you need to go and get your friends and then your friends will say another thing to what you said and it just goes on from there and the teachers just don’t believe you anymore. So, they don’t listen and it just goes on bullying and that, so...”

Thus, if telling the teachers does not really resolve the problem the code of silence is strengthened. In order to demonstrate that one is being bullied one has to rely on one’s peers for help to support what one says. The existence of the code of silence meant that peers were reluctant to offer support. Consequently the bullying becomes even more severe and in some cases one could create a potentially perilous situation for oneself. Furthermore, if the teachers needed ‘proof’ in order to act, and ‘proof’ is something that one cannot obtain, what is the point in telling? Breaking the code of silence does not always lead to a satisfactory result. This supports Morgan and Zedner’s (1992) observations about anti-bullying programmes that: “place the responsibility for the

child's protection firmly on the child himself or herself." (p.163) This is true of Bayview School. Operating a 'tell all policy' is a good idea on the surface, yet criminologists interested in the plight of victims within the criminal justice system demonstrate how difficult it is to admit to victimisation. Consequently, if one is faced with the impossible task of obtaining proof of victimisation and breaking down the barriers upheld by the code of silence, is it surprising that those who were bullied at Bayview opted not to tell about their ordeals?

'Stephanie' was another victim of bullying:

Q: "Have you talked to teachers or anything about it?"

A: "Not really, they don't think it's serious enough."

Q: "No? Does anybody ever talk to teachers about stuff like that?"

A: "Not usually."

Q: "Do they think teachers won't help?"

A: "I don't think that teachers do help at all."

Q: "No?"

A: "No."

There was a very negative picture being painted about the teachers' unwillingness to counteract the bullying situation within the school. The code of silence had permeated all years and the benefits of breaking it and telling did not outweigh the burden of suffering and 'getting on with it'.

"Ed" also shared his views on why one should not tell:

Q: "So in year seven and eight, what were they doing to you?"

A: "Oh, it was just more names and everything, people being irritating. There was one kid who's gone to the Isle of Wight now, he's moved, but he always had to be right and wasn't sort of into anything, didn't, Aaron liked you for who you were like he just wanted to be around someone. They made themselves so unpopular by being "oh I'm wonderful, of course I need someone to hide behind." And there is someone else who I knew in primary school, who'd gone to the Truro school, he was slightly dodgy. He was well known from getting you into something and then leaving you there or inviting you over and not being there and generally just not being useful."

Q: "And that stopped for you at year nine did it?"

A: "Yeah, easily year nine because it just wasn't worth bothering with them. I started to get more self-esteem and stronger minded and all the rest."

Q: "Did it bother you at the time? Were you bothered?"

A: "Well, it was just the fact that they were always there was what was winding me up. I couldn't seem to get away from them but it wore off, you found ways to avoid them or they weren't, they ran out of things to use on you like I say and but one of my friends moved, the one I did the training with, we did mental preparation as well so it was sort of easier to ignore them, stronger that way, not bothered by anything really."

Q: “Yeah, yeah. And did you go to anyone for help about it or did you just deal with it yourself?”

A: “I stuck it and everyone said go to someone but I think, I did try that once and I know someone else who tried that and the teacher, the person went to the teacher in this case, turned around, problem stopped and of course, the moment they stepped outside they got flack for oh, you went to the teacher, yah-de-yah-de-yah-da, they can’t tell us what to do. And it just wasn’t worth it. And there’s one person who still goes to school who was the person to pick on for everyone because he was the weak one. He was the one who had the most problems, who wasn’t, who didn’t fit in and of course, he just went to the teacher again and again, wound up the teacher and of course gave you know, students more things to pick on him about. And that just caused more and more problems and now he’s really, he won’t talk to anyone. You say hello and he tells you to get lost or he’s just really abusive now.”

Q: “And he’s in your year is he?”

A: “Yeah. He’s in my year but I don’t know him very well, he’s in a different form. But he still gets a lot of flack because he’s now so abusive that every time they find the chance to talk to him and wait for him to turn around and yell at them to go away. It’s just the irritating thing they have, what they see as fun.”

Q: “And that’s happened to him for his whole school life basically?”

A: “Yeah, as far as I can see, he’s always been picked on since quite young, since about ...when you’re really young, no one really bothers about anything but when you get to year four, year five, things like that start to matter, you start to get socially aware and everything changes. Yeah, you get the odd person who thinks “oh probably he’s gone off to a teacher crying and we should annoy him some more because there’s only so much a teacher can do and if we’re out of school, you can’t do this, you can give him even more flack for it.” But the idea of the school, what Mrs K’s definitely trying to bring across now and Mr P had already started was the idea of the community and everyone will stick up for everyone else. You talk to your friends if not teachers, if your friend can’t handle it they’ll talk to you again, you’ll both go to a teacher or something. And the more...if there’s only a couple of bullies, then you’re more likely to have more friends than there are bullies and it’ll be easier to ignore them more, stand up to them. Hence you’ve got more people backing you up and more people keeping you as safe...people to hide behind, someone stronger.”

Crimes against children often go through a ‘triple filtering process’. First, the child has to disclose the victimisation to an adult. Then the adult must make a decision whether to take the matter to the police. It is then the role of the police to decide whether or not to record the offence (Morgan and Zedner, 1992). One can apply this logic to bullying. Is it surprising that adolescents adopt a code of silence? Alongside the stigma of being a victim, would the bullied children at Bayview benefit from reporting their situation? One can make intelligent assumptions that, for example, in “Simon’s” case he could have pressed charges of assault. However, the potential rejection by his peer group for being a ‘grass’ far outweighed the benefits of justice for his injuries.

Many of the pupils interviewed confessed that I was the only person who knew about their experiences and they only told me because I swore to them that I would maintain confidence and would under no circumstances tell any member of staff at the school. If the pupils cannot tell the teachers about their experiences, there should be someone they could turn to. The resistance to report victimisation resulted in questions about the role played by the school itself in cases of bullying. What was being done? What could be done? Who could assume responsibility for these pupils?

Responsibility of the School

“...schools continue to be engaged in the difficult task of striking a balance between protecting the victims of bullying (through the use of permanent or temporary exclusions), and attending to the welfare of pupils who bully others.” (Oliver and Candappa, 2003, p.11)

It cannot be denied that managing bullying within schools is a highly skilled balancing act that weighs a number of factors. The pupils at Bayview told me about the official policies in place but were exasperated at the lack of results:

Q: “Is there a bullying policy here?”

A: “They have got anti-bullying policies but they are not always effective ‘cos like they can control it, they can keep a lid on it in school but often that leads out of school or it just gets twice as bad because its not going on all the time and that’s really what happens ‘cos like they put a lid on it in school.”

Q: “And pushed it out?”

A: “Yeah, and like you knew it was still going on ‘cos you could still hear them talking behind your back and you go to the teachers and they say “oh you’re just being paranoid” or something like that. And I thought “oh that’s fine” and so next year it then suddenly, it just explodes in this massive physical violence thing and you think “oh well there you go, that proves my point it was still going on” er it’s just they I don’t think they acted quickly enough really. I think things got better since then in terms of I think less people are actually bullying as it were still.”

(“Brian” - 15 years old)

Q: “So do you think more could be done about the bullies? What do the teachers do about it?”

A: “I don’t think there can be more done, they’ve suspended people, I think they’re doing well.”

Q: “So it’s quite tough really to be a bully?”

A: “Yeah I think we’ve got a tough bullying system in this school.”

Q: “And you think that’s a good thing?”

A: “Yeah.”

(“Mike” - 15 years old)

Q: “Do you think more could be done about the bullies?”

A: “It’s (the school) trying its hardest because there’s only so much you can do. If you don’t have the evidence for it, well you’re stuck. You’ve got to have proof and not everyone comes forward otherwise they’ll have problems with these people, all this, it’s just, one of those really irritating things.”

Q: “Yeah, yeah, but you don’t really think anymore can be done, the school is doing everything?”

A: “No, it’s doing, as far as I can see, it’s doing just about everything that is humanly possible against a problem that’s age old.”

Q: “You know, are you happy with how your scenario was dealt with or did you prefer to deal with it on your own?”

A: “Oh I just, when it was confronted, sure they left me alone immediately within the vicinity of that teacher. They always had their eye on them but of course that teacher can’t be everywhere or that person can’t be everywhere and it’s out of school, and they’re around the corner and all these sort of things. So there’s no real way of dealing with it, there’s no real way to completely, to get rid of it unless you have CCTV everywhere and someone constantly monitoring it and dispatching people to go and deal with it or talk to these people. It’s just human nature to pick on the younger or the weaker.”

(“Ed” - 15 years old)

These quotes demonstrate that the pupils believed that Bayview’s policies were as effective as they could be. There were ‘tell all’ policies, but the complexities surrounding bullying meant that little could realistically be achieved. There were clearly problems of definition, echoing Sparks et al., (1977) argument that:

“...the behaviour and its situation may be ambiguous, in the sense that there may be genuine doubt as to the correct description of ‘what happened’ at the most basic level.” (p.169)

As the authorities at Bayview School required ‘proof’ before dealing with accusations of bullying, clear-cut evidence of what had occurred would be required. However, obtaining such explanations without elements of doubt and/or obscurity would never have been achievable without the co-operation of other parties.

Could criminalizing bullying be the answer? Morgan and Zedner (1992) argued that:

“Physical assaults by other children are all too readily dismissed as part of the rough and tumble of childhood, so that only the most serious assaults by other youngsters are conceptualised as crimes.” (p.51)

However, this is not always the case. In one of the most ‘serious’ incidents of physical bullying, “Simon” clearly suffered a criminal offence. Yet no one knew about it. This is not that surprising, as criminologists we know that only a very minor fraction of crime comes to police attention. Consequently, making bullying a criminal offence will not help the pupils at Bayview School if the code of silence persists.

The View of Authorities

As I remarked at the beginning of the thesis, I did not manage to interview a large proportion of the staff. Nonetheless, I did secure interviews with a small number and they disclosed some part of the adult perceptions of the bullying problem at Bayview School. The first quote is from an interview carried out with the school nurse. She was not a trained counsellor but she was trained in first aid and had her own office which the pupils could drop into at anytime:

Q: “Do you think that this school has a problem with fighting?”

A: “No, I don’t think it’s violent. Cornwall’s really opened my eyes actually ‘cos parents still biff their kids. I was absolutely amazed and the teachers shout at the children, quite, a bit negative at times. And where I’ve come from (she had recently arrived from London), like this didn’t happen. But having said that, the school was more violent where I’ve come from. So there’s a case for both sides. But I was surprised that parents, pupils who say oh my dad cuffed me but I did do so and so. Crikey. (laughter) But that’s surprising. The level of violence from parents to children seems to be greater here...But the children, the thing that worries me here is the peer pressure, although innocent compared to violence and drugs, they feel they have to be naughty to be one of the crowd. And they will openly tell you that. And don’t want to be naughty. And it is only naughty, but if I don’t, they won’t talk to me and you know, so I don’t worry too much about that. And I don’t see bad violence in school. There’s been a couple of fights but nothing compared to what I’ve seen before...But you get some kids coming back. I had a lad the other day, kept coming back. I knew there was nothing wrong with him, no temperature, looked perfectly okay, but he kept saying headache, headache, headache. He got right to the last lesson and I said “look, it’s your last lesson, okay?” He said “I can’t go in, I’m too frightened, they’re going to beat me up.” “Why didn’t you tell me in the first place?” All day I’ve been sending him back to class. “You’ve got to be honest with me.” And they’re gradually realising “yeah, you’ve got to be honest with her” ‘cos see I won’t tolerate anything other than that, if I can help it. But I don’t think I have anything like a very important role here. I don’t feel, I feel like they could probably do with someone better qualified than me in the welfare side and then the role would become very important, where the kids could have a qualified counsellor. That’s what I’d like to see although I’m very grateful to get the job. Yeah, very grateful. But I don’t think, I’m between the devil and the deep blue sea really. I’m not qualified enough to give them expertise. I can listen and I can advise, but I’d hate to think I gave them the wrong advice. And I do try for more counselling for them. That worries me a bit. I think my role should be a better qualified role. Should have someone better than me.”

Q: “Do you set them up for counselling if they need it and stuff like that?”

A: “What I have to do, I have to report to the deputy head teacher, the pastoral teacher, the pastoral. And he then, I make my report out and I give it to him in quite detailed, what’s happened what I feel sometimes ‘cos obviously I can’t always tell. Then he will pass that on to either a counsellor, Social Services or whatever...There are, I think the school generally is a very caring school. But I

think it needs, the problem children need to be addressed a bit more urgently I think.”

Q: “And do you think bullying is an issue here?”

A: “From where I sit, it doesn’t seem to be a very bad issue but every school has its, what worries me more in this school is the drug taking. Drugs is rife here. It’s like geez. I’ve got one lad that comes up and tells me all about it, I’ve learnt more off him than any other courses I’ve ever been on. The drug taking worries me here. It doesn’t seem or rather I haven’t seen the drugs problem escalate into any kind of violent problem here. But what happens outside the school I don’t know.”

Q: “No, exactly.”

A: “So, but they seem quite happy on their cannabis which is such a shame. But Cornwall’s rife anyway. It’s such a part of their culture, modern culture, sad. I feel sorry for them really. It seems to be such a part of life. But then most of the children, oh no, I wouldn’t touch it. And you can see what, I would never touch it you know, but you’ve got that group. Sadly it seems to be growing, sadly. In this school it’s quite sad I think. I would worry about the drugs more than the bullying.”

The pupils made use of the service that the school nurse provided. However, it is interesting to see that she wanted to be able to help the adolescents more. Furthermore, the fact that she viewed drugs as the key concern for the pupils at Bayview was highly significant. During the interviews the adolescents had remarked about their drug use but as the chief focus for this thesis was violence and bullying I could not concentrate much on drug taking. As I exited the field and the research for the thesis came to a close, the drug problem at Bayview School was being investigated by the Headteacher and Devon and Cornwall Police. In hindsight I should have considered analysing the drug use in connection with acts of violence, peer pressure and bullying. However, I think that would have made it impossible to complete fieldwork in a practicable length of time. One can always add to and improve work but there comes a point where one has to draw a line. Nonetheless, I think it is telling that the school nurse was more concerned with drug related issues than bullying and violence. Especially when she gave detailed accounts of how pupils would use her office as a haven, in a similar vein to how the pupils used the lunchtime homework club.

The following extracts are from interviews with members of the teaching staff. The first is with a teacher who had been at the school for twenty years:

Q: “Do you think bullying is an issue at this school?”

A: “Some kids of course are damned before they come here you know, they’re damned by their siblings who went before them or you know, the reputation or whatever it is of the family in the community. You know, they’re just and that can be very, very corrosive you know. We had a boy here who left, I think went

through the school but you know, he left two or three years ago whose father had been prosecuted for assaulting some girls who were also pupils in the school. And that lad just went through absolute hell, you know, everywhere he went okay, there was this sort of whispering you know, that followed him. It was, it was like ice, you know...do you understand what I mean, it was you know, even though he had full-time support and he'd got on very well with that, you know, if you walked around the school with him you know, the change of lessons you know, the name calling and you know, all of that which I think when he was with me, I managed to suppress a lot of it but you couldn't you know. I take my hat off to him, he survived you know, and in his last year at school we managed to get him released to college and you know, to do some, he was very interested in farming and tractors and all that kind of stuff. And he loved it and that's really what kept him going as far as you know, teaching him to read which was a goal I set myself, I failed. I mean he could just about, he could just about read...When he left, he had a reading age of about eight you know, measured reading age, whatever tests you wanted and that's almost functional. Yeah, I'd say about 8 ½ to nine is a kind of functional, you know, minimal functional reading level you know, and he didn't quite get there. You know, but he was okay, pleasant enough lad."

Q: "Who were calling him names? Was it pupils and teachers or just to pupils?"

A: "Pupils, pupils. But in the school of you know, five or six hundred. That's easy, yeah, the whole year, the whole school knows about him. Yeah, the whole school. Even when he left, his name was frequently brought up you know, so..."

('Mr X')

The account provided by "Mr X" highlights the plight of a year victim at Bayview. There was an intolerance of difference in that the reputation of the boy's father influenced his school life. Again I must stress the size of the community and the extent to which its social and status structures overlap with those of the school. The very idea that just walking around the school from classroom to classroom was problematic for the individual demonstrates the closed knit community in operation within the school. Furthermore, this account supports the pupils' accounts of the presence of year group victims. Every year group had a scapegoat whose situation was used throughout their school career to victimise them.

"Ms G" provides an example of the teachers' view of the year group victims:

Q: "Is bullying an issue at this school?"

A: "There are unfortunate children who are victims and what we do for them is often limited. We may solve the problem on the short-term but in the long-term they carry on with some sort of bullying...But it's the long-term unpleasantness. You see children in some classes who throughout their school life have been isolated because nobody likes them, because they may be just a little different. There's the sniggers behind the backs and I think that's probably far more damaging in the long-term than an occasional big incident that is easy to identify and easy to deal with. I have one girl in year eleven, who was a very sweet

young woman, but she is different. She looks different. Her behaviour is different, she's not very high ability although she's desperate to do well and although I do not allow any laughter at her in class, I know that as she leaves people poke fun at her for things that she said or things that she got wrong. And I'm always very wary of criticising her in front of the class even when it's constructive criticism because I know that there's a fair number that will turn it on her. And that I suspect is true for her entire school life. And she is hard work because she is, she is difficult in the sense that she doesn't fit in easily. she wants to do things differently, she doesn't listen well, she's not that switched on. And you can see why she's become a victim but she's. it's not her fault, and that you know, I look at her and I think she's not had a good five years here."

Q: "So she's been a victim throughout, from year seven to year eleven?"

A: "I would have thought so and it's never been, in fact, I would doubt that anyone has ever punched her or pushed her or whatever but she has practically no friends. The friends she has are nice kids but they're also a little bit of loners and who, but even then, there's not a closeness there. There's kids that tolerate her rather than people that genuinely like her and I think that's the biggest problem here. It's because, I've got another one in my year seven form and again he's difficult. He's fidgety and he, he's fussy and he's difficult in class but you also see that the kids all laugh at him given an opportunity. They're quick to tell tales on him because they don't like him and you can see that he's going to be very similar. And I think that's much harder to deal with because the kids aren't doing anything majorly wrong and you can say don't laugh at him and they won't that minute but they will two minutes later when they're around the corner. And I think, I think that's probably one of the worst problems here. And there's not many kids like it but for the few that it happens to, it must make their lives just miserable."

Q: "And would you say there's one in like every year group or a couple in each year?"

A: "Probably, yeah. Couple probably in each year group that just don't fit in and they must be isolated throughout the five years and probably it will carry on into their adult life to a certain extent."

Q: "So can you spot, I know it might sound awful but you know, as you teach in a place, can you sort of spot the child that you think is the victim?"

A: "More often than not, yes... And they will go to somebody on their own and they will sit slightly away from others. And other kids, particularly when they first come and they don't know that they're going to get into trouble for it. who will sort of move things out of their way 'cos they don't want them to touch them you know. And all those sort of horrible things that we've seen done when we were kids, I don't think that's changed. I mean I can look back and I can remember kids like that when I was at school and for one reason or another they were just left out and never fitted in. And I also suspect, 'cos I know one or two people that have actually done it but moving school wouldn't help. that if you're that different. it's going to happen almost wherever you are. But I don't think the school or any school really addresses that sort of problem. I don't know how you would go about addressing that. It's a very difficult one to deal with I would suggest."

Once again from Ms G's account we can see that the teachers were aware of the year group victims and they could spot which pupils would be the individuals who fulfilled

the role of year group victim. It begs the question then, why does the school do nothing about this if they are aware of the year group victims and the problems they must face on a daily basis for the duration of their school career? Or could it be the case that the year group victims were indeed required to keep some sort of equilibrium among the year group? In fact, I would argue that this process was a complicated hierarchical battle.

The pupils claimed that the teachers did all they could and from the accounts provided by the teachers it would appear to be the case that it was not only bullying that was at issue. One was dealing with status amongst the peer groups, reputation within the wider community and a whole host of factors which the pupils had expressed during the interviews. Nonetheless, it was all grouped under the umbrella of “bullying”.

There were clearly a number of ambiguities surrounding bullying at Bayview. The code of silence and friendship networks emerged as dominant factors affecting pupils behaviour and responses. Fluidity is needed between bullying and violence as it helps the pupils to establish the moral boundaries of ‘acceptable’ behaviour. Thus, labels such as ‘play teasing’ and ‘play fighting’ come into operation. Furthermore, the continuous presence of ‘year victims’ gives the pupils at Bayview a scale of severity of victimisation to operate against.

The concepts of ‘popular’, ‘unpopular’ and the structures of peer groups and friendship networks required further analysis, as these factors transcend everything. Furthermore, the desire to belong to a group or become accepted was greater than the need to break the code of silence and speak out against victimisation. I believed that a complete understanding of these complex relationships which had been hinted at during the narratives on violence and bullying would hold the answers to understanding everyday life at Bayview School.

CHAPTER SIX

POPULAR VS NON POPULAR PUPILS

Introduction

In interview, the pupils explained incidents of violence and bullying in relation to friendship groups and status within one's year group. There were universal references to being 'popular' or 'unpopular' and the 'status' an individual held appeared to affect the levels of victimisation suffered.

It was reported, in the chapter on bullying that 'popular people' were often the bullies, the 'year group victims' of bullying were the 'unpopular people', and there is the role of the self-fulfilling prophecy to consider as there is the question of which came first. Did popular people always bully, or did bullying give one status which enabled one to assume the rank of popular and vice versa. Thus it became necessary to understand what the pupils meant when they reported individuals as being 'popular' and 'unpopular'.

This chapter attempts to unpack further the definitions provided by the pupils and demonstrates that the importance of belonging to the peer group is the key to understanding incidents of violence and bullying at Bayview School

Who were the 'Popular' Pupils?

The pupils found it difficult to articulate what being 'popular' meant. Just as play fighting and bullying were normalised actions within the school, notions of popularity were reported as an accepted 'norm'. Within every year group there was a group of ten to fifteen pupils who were viewed as the 'popular people'. This group was present in every year and the size of the group depended on the numbers within the whole year. Members of this group had always been 'popular' and had been 'popular' at primary school:

Q: "Who are the popular people?"

A: "I think they've always been a group, 'cos like we come from different schools at primary but most of the popular people come from Sandy Hill and stuff."

Q: "Do they? What outside of Rivers End?"

A: "Yeah. There's more popular people outside of Bayview than there is in."
("Sarah" - 13 years old)

Q: “Who are the popular people?”

A: “When I came up into Bayview School, to secondary school, I came from Sandy Hill and we were in a popular group at Sandy Hill and then I guess from there you instantly go into the popular group. And if you know a few people from the other schools then you all sort of group together. And it’s not generally the biggest group, the biggest group is the sort of indifferent people, but I mean there’s probably twenty very, very popular people. And everybody else wants to be in the group or like them...Yeah I mean yeah that’s how it is, you probably came up in school and its like you weren’t anybody when you come up and you’re like the popular group in year seven and then you go up and you’re the popular group in year seven and eight and then you’re the popular group in eight, nine and ten, that’s just how it is. I don’t know why that is, it is a feudal system in a way. And often the popular people in say in year eight will be mates with the popular group in year nine.”

(“Raj” - 15 years old)

Q: “So how do you become popular, can you change your status in your year group, do you have people that have done that or have they always been popular?”

A: “No not really, it’s always like an ongoing thing, you are popular when you start the school.”

Q: “So have your groups stayed the same from year seven?”

A: “Yeah.”

(“Kerry” - 16 years old)

Notions of popularity survived the transition from primary school to secondary school. This is similar to the cases of bullying which also survived the transition. The status of ‘popular’ appeared to be ascribed at Bayview. They were an established group. There were clearly wider issues that determined one’s popularity status at Bayview School, such as the role of the social meanings of community and locale. It was reported that the pupils who lived in the surrounding villages, such as Sandy Hills, two miles north of Rivers End, were popular. Furthermore, the popular pupils from within the town came from respectable, wealthy families and tended to live in detached houses. Thus, a class issue is beginning to emerge. One could argue that the popular children were the middle class children from the town and surrounding villages. However, it was not that clear cut. “Bill”, who was victimised because his dad was a vicar, was from a middle class family. Therefore, class was not the only factor which determined one’s status. Notions of popularity would be a difficult concept to unpack in Rivers End.

A number of the narratives provided by the pupils were, as I remarked, reminiscent of Elias and Scotson’s (1994) *The Established and the Outsiders*. This research

documents residents in Winston Parva and the relationships that the members of the community had with one another:

“The ranking (in Winston Parva)...was almost automatically extended from the parents to the children and affected the latter’s personality development, particularly their self-image and their self-respect. The younger generation established and maintained among themselves in their own way the same social division as the older generation sometimes much more rigidly...in many respects attitude and outlook of the established and the outsiders, locked inescapably in the interdependence of their neighbourhood, were complementary. They had a tendency to reproduce themselves and each other.” (p.145)

We have already considered the size of Rivers End and seen that it was a small rural community in Cornwall. A number of the pupils responses’ indicate that if one lived outside the town one was popular. The surrounding villages were where the professionals and wealthy families lived. Thus one could assume that wealth influences popularity at Bayview School. But was that the only factor? The meaning of being popular had to be probed further.

A number of pupils explained that those individuals who were popular had outgoing personalities:

Q: “How do you get accepted into being the popular group?”

A: “Um, you try and be cool. Everyone likes to be cool, um, they try and look up to the year nine’s and try and take their example, but um, if you just, have to make friends by just going up to them and um, saying “oh hi what’s your name”, but that’s the thing Jonny’s not good at, he’s not good at making friends.”

Q: “Right.”

A: “That’s why he hasn’t got many. You need to just go up to people and say ‘hi what’s your name, blah, blah, blah’.”

Q: “So it’s like more of a social issue when you are in year seven?”

A: “Yeah”.

(“Chad” - 11 years old)

Q: “What makes you popular?”

A: “Like I said, it’s actually more like a class system, it’s like um the feudal system I guess, it’s like, you have the very popular group and if you’re not one of the popular groups then, then you’re not I dunno, I guess you’re not considered...to be of a high status. But generally the popular group who are the sort of badder people who will have the fights, who seem a bit more rowdy, it just depends. I mean now its gone the other way. The group that we’re in seems to be the ones that are knuckling down but they’re still not going to stay in all the time, they’re not gonna do anything, they’re not gonna not be in trouble if they do something wrong then they’ll just take it.”

Q: “So do you think its like a confidence measure almost, like people are popular ‘cos they are confident and have got outgoing personalities?”

A: “Yeah it probably is I mean if you’re seen to do well but you’re not anal all the time and you’re not just doing essays and every so often you do something wrong or, you’ll not hand a piece of coursework in on time, that’s the cool group, that’s the popular. Yeah I mean you seem to do well but still have fun.”

Q: “Like have parties and get pissed on Saturdays, come to school on Monday and are still going to get a good GCSE?”

A: “Yeah that’s what it is, there’s probably a couple in the popular group who don’t want to do well and who get you know rat arsed (drunk) every weekend or every day and probably shouldn’t be in the popular group ‘cos they don’t really set a good example. I think the popular group sets an example for the rest to try and maybe follow or to try and imitate.”

(“Raj” - 15 years old)

Q: “What makes these people popular you know?”

A: “I don’t know. I think it’s just like you know, like really happy and cheerful and they just get along with a lot people.”

Q: “Are they good at school?”

A: “Yeah, quite clever, all the girls, they’re like you know, the most prettiest in the year and all the boys really like them. The boys you know, they’re just like walk about all big and stuff...some of the popular ones are prefects. Some of them, their most popular girl is head girl so.”

Q: “Right, right. And what’s she like? How’s she like really popular?”

A: “She’s pretty, everybody gets on with her, the girls really talk to her, she doesn’t like us though.”

Q: “So it’s like a popularity thing, like your personality?”

A: “Yeah, in a way.”

(“Chantel” - 15 years old)

The confident personalities of the members of the popular group were very similar to the observations Walker (1988) made in his study of Australian male youth culture:

“Overall, the footballers enjoyed the most cultural autonomy of the pupils groups and the most social power. Subjectively, this was reflected in a high profile of self-confidence and cultural celebration.” (p.37)

Walker found that the footballers had ‘legendary status’ and this made individuals aspire to join them. Participating in sport got individuals ‘accepted’. This was also a factor at Bayview School with it being reported that those who were popular often would be in the school sports teams. Let us see what the individuals at Bayview School were additionally required to do in order to become regarded as popular.

Along with the out-going, confident personalities it was reported that a number of the popular group would engage in behaviour that pushed the boundaries of adolescence. This could also be considered as the roots of popularity:

Q: “Right, and um so what if you wanted to join the group what would you have to do or what would you have to do to be popular?”

A: “I don’t really know I think it’s just getting along with all the other popular people.”

Q: “Right, right, so would it be things as well like, I dunno, underage drinking, underage smoking, are they that sort of group, is that what constitutes popular?”

A: “Yeah it’s actually that and drugs and stuff.”

Q: “Right, what sort of drugs are they doing?”

A: “I don’t know but I would have thought that they would have been taking drugs, like smoking pot or something like that or cannabis or something.”

Q: “So basically they are doing adult things?”

A: “ Yeah, just to get themselves popular.”

Q: “Right OK.”

(“Sarah” - 13 years old)

The pupils explained that the members of the popular group ‘did stuff’. This was interesting as it packs in unstated assumptions. To say the individuals in the popular group ‘did drugs and stuff’ implied that what they actually engaged in was unknown. Reputation and hearsay were what the pupils used to measure the popular pupils recreational pursuits:

Q: “What do popular people do?”

A: “I don’t know I suppose they like um...well...if they like mess around or something, like in the class or um or if they like go somewhere like no one’s like been that um they are not supposed to that’s like cool or something and they think um they’re great or something like that.”

(“Louise” - 13 years old)

Q: “What makes you popular?”

A: “Um...money and their social lives, they go out a lot more...I don’t know what else really...And the druggy lot obviously they are popular ‘cos they are drinking and smoking and forgetting about school basically (laughs).”

(“Kerry” - 16 years old)

Q: “What do popular people do?”

A: “Drinking and smoking and stuff. Not all of them smoke but most of them will get drunk on a Friday night.”

Q: “Is that boys and girls?”

A: “Yeah, boys and girls.”

Q: “Yeah, and your popular group in year nine, have they always been popular people from like year seven?”

A: “Yeah.”

Q: “Did it change?”

A: “No, they’ve always been popular.”

(“Bill” - 13 years old)

The popular group engaged in activities that bought them into the adult world. For example, the observation that the members of the popular group would get drunk on a Friday night. It seemed that the pupils who were in the popular group were trying to make themselves appear mature in comparison to peers from the year group. By participating in smoking, drinking, underage sex, they are experimenting with adult activities in order to gain status and maintain membership to the popular group. The accounts the pupils gave when trying to explain friendship groups within the school were centred on specific cultures. There is a wealth of research that looks at adolescent subcultures and deviant behaviour. Furthermore, adolescents who engage in such behaviour are viewed as ‘suffering’ from conduct disorders if they become tangled up in the official care system. However, to participate in acceptably deviant behaviour was a characteristic of the popular group and it is necessary to know *why* such behaviour gave one status rather than jeopardised it.

Walker (1988) made a similar argument in his work:

“‘Culture’ is a word with a variety of uses, many of them quite vague. I have said that I am using the word to refer to the whole way of life of a social group. This can be defined more precisely as the set of *behavioural dispositions* characteristic of the group. A group, then, is constituted through its culture, through the behavioural dispositions which make it a group and may be *observed* as tendencies to behave in particular ways, or group practices. A culture includes the disposition to produce all kinds and all items of characteristic behaviour: verbal and other symbolic practices, embracing ‘style’; the manner of participation in organised or semi-organised activity such as games, school classes and ‘nights out’, whether or not the group ‘creates’ the basic pattern of activity in the first place; and the whole range of way in which members of that group respond to each other – ‘insiders’ – and to others – ‘outsiders’. Thus, ‘culture’ is an inclusive term: it embraces the economic, the ideological, the kinship, the recreational – all aspects of a group’s way of life.” (p. 30-1, original emphasis)

The narratives the pupils gave in response to ‘how do you become popular’, were complex interlinked observations. On the one hand they explained how the popular group are a continued, close-knit, predominantly middle class, affluent group. On the other hand, accounts were given which described the culture of the popular group and the characteristics and activities that the members engaged in. Being ‘popular’ was a complicated process that was influenced by a number of factors.

However, being popular did not necessarily mean that one was liked. A number of pupils, who were not members of the popular group and took a jaundiced view, made observations that included some fairly derogatory comments about individuals who had the status of popular:

Q: "What's the definition of popular? How do you be in the popular group?"

A: "I suppose being a sheep, that's all really, you can't really be um like different, it's quite sad really but it is true."

Q: "So what sort of things do you do?"

A: "Um, well the clothes you're wearing you've got to have the in, the in stuff. I dunno you've just gotta keep up with the crowd really. The mob."

Q: "Is it still like you were the first lot who were smoking, drinking, da, da, da. You are popular?"

A: "I wouldn't have said this year as much every other year but this year is not actually pushed in to smoke anything or drink anything. It's quite good for our year actually...Apart from the popular group there's definitely two distinctive groups the council estate and then everyone else."

("Jim" - 16 years old)

Q: "What makes them popular?"

A: "Um...they...boss people around a lot which is on the unpopular side, but they are more popular because they've got like the most house points and that in year seven and they've got more certificates and things than anyone else and they're popular in that way with all the teachers and other pupils and they're just basically slagging people off and using them. Like "oh go tell Gemma this" and "go to tell someone that" and like in the end you just say "no" and they go off in a huff. Because they can't have their own way. That's basically the only reason why they are popular."

Q: "So it's nothing to do with what they wear or how they dress or anything like that?"

A: "No. Well yes, there is one and she's always got to be smart and if she's not smart or her make up's run then she goes off in tears and she doesn't like anyone for the rest of the day."

("Jamie" - 11 years old)

Q: "What makes you popular?"

A: "I don't know (laughs) I think being pretty and thin, but they are usually really horrible people, nasty to each other."

Q: "And what makes you sort of not so popular, like on the outside?"

A: "Being different (laughs), like me."

Q: "Would you say you were on the outside then?"

A: "Yeah, definitely."

Q: "So are the popular people like clever, do they smoke, drink, why do they think they are so special?"

A: "Um, some of them are clever, they just pretend they are not (laughs), they drink and smoke and I think they have more social lives than anybody else."

Q: "And do they pick on the other people?"

A: "Um well they kind of like me but um there is someone they usually pick on which is really cruel but..."

("Demelza" - 15 years old)

The popular group at Bayview School were established. In their own research, Elias and Scotson (1994) argued that group charisma can act as a group preserver:

“...elevating the group’s own members, the group charisma automatically relegated members of other interdependent groups to a position of inferiority...It did not simply help to define the boundaries between those who belonged and those who did not belong. It also had the function of a weapon which held outsiders at bay, which helped to preserve the purity and integrity of the group. It was a weapon of defence as well as a weapon of attack. It implied that it was a sign of disgrace not to participate in the grace and the specific virtues which the members of the distinguished group claimed for themselves.” (p.104)

The established popular group at Bayview School had to participate in a number of deviant acts, such as drinking, smoking, and recreational drug use. They also had to wear the ‘in’ clothes etc., and all of these elements were the ‘specific virtues’ that distinguished the members of the popular group. One could argue that it was a sheep mentality, in that one had to ‘follow the crowd’ in order to be popular at Bayview School. The popular group was held together by a ‘group charisma’, the pupils in that specific group all engaged in similar activities and *believed* that what they were doing warranted the status of popular at Bayview School.

These accounts of popularity also highlighted the links between popularity and bullying. It was reported that the members of the ‘Back Gate Crowd’ tended to be popular members of the school:

A: “Well, it’s sort of like that. You’ve got this lot who hang out at the back gate, they think they’ll all, a lot of people know them. They’re supposed to be the place to be, we smoke, we’re brilliant, we’re going to die because of lung cancer, all that sort of stuff. And they’re the sort of people who you should avoid but then again who, command respect amongst the younger, they will be the people who do tend to mess around in younger years. But it’s generally the fear factor for out there. It’s what they’re working on. If you’re afraid of them, then they can play it.” (In that they will pick up on one’s fear and use it to victimise)

Q: “Yeah, and have they been like the popular people all the way through your school career?”

A: “Well, they’ve been well-known, they have friends, they always hang together. They don’t separate that much, they’ve always been like this, sort of group of people. But it’s not really, you don’t really have a class system, you get the odd person who you, one automatically assumes that they’re gay or they’re not worth hanging about with, they’re one to be kicked about. And ‘cos that happens and it’s sort of not nice ‘cos I know what it’s like. I got that and in primary school and the end of primary school, the beginning of year seven and eight but after a while it just wears out because they run out of things to use and it ends up just water off a duck’s back, just ignore them.”

(“Ed” - 15 years old)

The members of the popular group viewed themselves as superior in some way to the other pupils at Bayview School. The popular group can be viewed as an established group and the links to bullying can be explained as a way in which the popular group maintained their status:

“Exclusion and stigmatisation of the outsiders by the established group were thus powerful weapons used by the latter to maintain their identity, to assert their superiority, keeping others firmly in their place.” (Elias and Scotson, 1994, p.xviii)

However, as mentioned the school was located in a small close community. How did certain children become popular and who were the unpopular children? We have learned that in every year group there were a small number of year victims. Were they outsiders to the town? – An argument that would support Elias and Scotson’s observations. Or were the unpopular people the opposite of the popular people in that they were shy, withdrawn, had no social life and less disposable wealth that would mean they could not ‘keep up with the crowd’?

Who were the ‘Unpopular’ Pupils?

The pupils found it much easier to explain who was unpopular at Bayview school. There was a unanimous clarification that those individuals who were regarded as being in the ‘unpopular group’ were the ‘year victims’. As we have seen in the chapter on bullying the ‘year victims’ were the small group of pupils that every year group had who were the scapegoats of their particular year and remained with the status of ‘victim’ from the first day of school in year seven until the day they left in year eleven. Here one can see the links between popularity and bullying in that those pupils deemed as unpopular were the year victims:

Q: “Who are the unpopular people?”

A: “There’s kids that...don’t fit in. Like um...I try and help them, ‘cos if people are picking on them I try and stick up. There’s one boy...um...and he pulls his trousers up really far and people tease him ‘cos of that and he’s known all over the school. And...I tell him to pull his trousers down...like he’s got them up here (indicates to his armpits) and um, people tease him ‘cos of that and I say “pull your trousers down Jonny”, and he um doesn’t and I don’t why and he knows that if he keeps on doing that he’ll get picked on.”

Q: “Right, what do they call him, what do they say?”

A: “They just say he’s got a wedgie and no one likes him much his got some friends but no one likes him much. ‘Cos um he always, I think, I don’t know whether he likes it but he tries to fit in, like me and this boy are going to sing this song like in front of the class. And he’s given me lyrics and stuff for it. So I think he’s trying to be people’s friend but then he makes it worse because he

does stuff that's weird and he knows it's weird but I think he likes the attention that people give him. Calling him stupid and stuff."

("Chad" - 11 years old)

Q: "Who are the unpopular people?"

A: "Um, yeah. there's someone in my year who always tries to be popular. she always tries to hang around with everyone and like everyone finds that really annoying and then she just gets no where (laughs)."

Q: "Why does she get nowhere?"

A: "I don't know really it's just that I don't know, no one likes her, I don't know why that is I think it's probably just her personality and like...the way she follows people around and she won't stop and I find that quite annoying (laughs)."

Q: "Yeah, has she always been unpopular, like throughout the school?"

A: "I don't think she's really unpopular but she's not like up that end just more towards the unpopular side. I'm not really sure 'cos I've only known her like these last few years really but I'd say she's always been towards the unpopular side rather than the popular end."

("Rachel" - 16 years old)

Q: "Why do you think she'll never be popular?"

A: "Well she's always trying to...like a loner she doesn't really go with any of her friends and she was trying to fit in with everyone and kept trying to talk to anyone and was like very annoying (laughs), no I don't think she'll ever be popular (laughs)."

("Rosie" - 16 years old)

Q: "Who are the unpopular people?"

A: "Unpopular people like have one or two friends and they just hang around and don't think like what other people like say. There is a girl called Natalie...she, everybody says that she's like smelly and she wears old shoes and there is boy called Damien but he does wear old shoes, very old."

Q: "But does this girl or smell or you know, are people being nasty or?"

A: "I don't know probably being nasty. All the popular ones they, like anybody looks funny or anything, they'll just like dig into them."

("Tammy" - 11 years old)

As these quotes demonstrate there are clear parallels with bullying. Furthermore, one can view the unpopular group, the year group victims, as an outsider group:

"...where the power differential is very great, groups in an outsider position measure themselves with the yardstick of their oppressors. In terms of their oppressors' norms they find themselves wanting; they experience themselves as being of lesser worth. Just as established groups, as a matter of course, regard their superior power as a sign of their higher human value, so outsider groups, as long as the power differential is great and submission inescapable, emotionally experience their *power inferiority* as a sign of *human inferiority*." (Elias and Scotson, 1994, p. xxvi, original emphasis)

The unpopular group were also established, in that their victimisation was carried on from primary school and their victim status remained consistent throughout their school life at Bayview. Thus, it is perhaps more accurate to describe the unpopular group as an *established outsider* group. Furthermore, they were not outsiders because they were new to the town of Rivers End, unlike the residents of Winston Parva, they were outsiders due to their status within the year group, which was explained in the chapter on bullying. The intolerance of difference, the key 'measuring device', employed by the pupils in their judgements of peers, has once again emerged as a basis on which to assess one's unpopular status. The follow examples explore the notion of 'being different' further:

Q: "Who are the unpopular people?"

A: "Yeah there is definitely that um, there's like the people who are like excluded in many ways because they are different in some way."

Q: "What sort of differences?"

A: "Um I think a lot of it's about behaviour, um I mean like if you're like immature or whatever and if you don't/can't have a laugh or you just don't know when to stop or to stop going over the top as it were, yeah those sort of people are excluded. Yes there are...one of my friends from primary school is one of those people who just goes over the top and in doing so he just annoys people and in annoying them never ends up actually being popular, erm, he just needs to chill out he just can't do that, he has to be there doing everything trying to be cool too hard sort of thing, yeah instead of just being himself which I think is the best way to get friends that you actually can trust or whatever. so."

("Brian" - 15 years old)

Q: "Why is she different? Is she unpopular or popular?"

A: "No, she's not very popular. She's unpopular. She's just, she's like, fat. And my mum wouldn't let me get that way personally. My mum said she'd put me on a diet if I was that big and she's just like huge. Like she had to take off her jumper in class and these two boys saw her take off her jumper and, and they said they went white and she just criticises everybody else and nobody really wants to be friends with her. She just walks around with my other friends and they don't like her around her. She just follows them everywhere. They don't really want her. I've been over her house before. She broke her metal bunk bed and she rolled off it, knocked over a lamp and it's messy her room, like dirty clothes everywhere. It is, she is not very nice, not very nice to look at. But other friends hang around with her, one of them did and they, the other kids, they hang around with her because they look better than her so but I don't, I wouldn't hang around with her because she's just like bitchy."

("Fudge" - 13 years old)

Q: "No, and what about unpopular people? Are there any people that like the whole year really doesn't like?"

A: "Yeah, there's Tyson in our year, I don't really like him. And no, there's, I think he's a bit disabled in a way but yeah, he really really shows himself up and no one likes him and kids often make fun of him. But I mean but I don't really

bother with him. I just sort of try and not really bother with him. But yeah, there are always kids that people just sort of you know, blank them, just sort of look away and not really bother with them. You know, well they're sort of like two groups, like the popular people and the unpopular people."
("James" - 12 years old)

The parallels with the labels used in the description of bullying incidents at Bayview were fundamental to understanding who was and was not popular at this school. What was interesting was the materialism exercised by the popular people. Previous research has demonstrated that bullying can occur for material gain. However, at Bayview the pupils who were 'poor' or could not afford to 'keep up with the trends' were often victimised. Thus, a class or status issue emerged whereby the middle class children had a tendency to be the bullies and the popular group as they had more disposable wealth. A number of pupils made this observation, as we can see in the above examples whereby being 'poor' and 'untidy' adds to one's unpopularity. Value judgements about one's wealth and material possessions were being made and added to victimisation. "James" clarified this observation:

Q: "Yeah, and the kids that are really like not liked, why do you think they're victimised and people blank them and stuff?"

A: "I don't know, it's often because like they haven't got all these really really cool things. You know, like they haven't got this new computer game and they haven't, they haven't sort of, they're just not as good. They're sort of, it's, you can't really change it, it's just you sort of get picked on, you know. There are people who like you or they don't, 'cos like you do something good or cool once, then you'll do it again and again and again and then they'll think that you're cool. And some people they just don't really bother with any of it and they often get you know, they're not really the popular people."

It can be seen that the constant references to one's wealth and material status meant that the pupils were describing the impact of a consumer culture in constructing identity. This has been raised as a cause for concern by practitioners who work in the field of adolescent welfare. A special edition of the "Journal of Research on Adolescence" (2002) considers the future for adolescents'. In an article entitled "Globalization, Societal Change and New Technologies: What they Mean for the Future of Adolescence", Reed W. Larson makes the following observation:

"A parallel process to economic globalization is cultural globalization, which is altering adolescents' tastes, lifestyles and some of their values. The most visible aspect of cultural globalization is a direct by-product of...the worldwide spread of a materialistic culture of consumption. Multinational firms market products to adolescents using the imagery of a global adolescent culture of fun, "coolness", friendship and heterosexual romance. Adolescents around the world are learning to aspire to consumption and ownership of brand names...which are

recognized all over the world, even by street children (Diversi, 2002). Not surprisingly, evidence suggests increasing materialism in adolescents' values and aspirations across nations (U.S. Dept of Education, 1996; Verma & Saraswathi, 2002). Adolescents of the middle class consume these products; those of the poor can only aspire to them. Paradoxically, although the overt message of commercial youth culture is freedom and empowerment, the effects of globalization on adolescents in traditional societies is often one of "cultural disenfranchisement". Youth lose their rich cultural heritage and the systems of meanings, support, and social control that were part of traditional society, typically getting little in return except poverty and unrealistic hopes of material achievement (Côté, 1994; Dasen, 1999)." (p.13)

Nonetheless, the pupils at Bayview School, whilst having material aspirations and a dominant middle class in the popular groups did not just aspire to the culture of consumption. Furthermore, they were not completely influenced by the impact of globalization.

Anthony Giddens, has written extensively on the idea that one becomes disembedded from outside institutions within society and as a result become increasingly responsible for routing one's own life as a consequence of globalisation. He remarks:

"My relationship to modern society – my social identity – has become unglued from the contexts, communities and expectations that once circumscribed my (and your) knowledge of who I am and how I live. Today I am responsible and liable for my own identity." (1998, p.31)

This was not the case for the pupils at Bayview School. The town of Rivers End was not disembedded from its cultural and spatial identity. Consumption impinges on the youths to an extent but as we have seen in the chapters on violence and bullying, the influence of the wider community is also paramount. Thus there are limits to the generalisation of modern theories, and the influence of globalisation and the culture of consumption were not the only factors dictating levels of popularity.

Being unpopular at Bayview School was a guarantee of victimisation. Once again one must be reminded of the size of both the school and the community. If one is ascribed the status of year victim on entering Bayview, he or she will remain a victim until the day they leave. Due to the size of the town there is little opportunity to socialise with a wider peer group. The pupils were more than aware of this fact:

Q: "So what makes someone unpopular?"

A: "Them people (unpopular people), I don't think they are sad but they're made sad by everyone thinking that. They've always had this name and until they leave for college or whatever, people know that they're sad. But if they got a new chance and they're at a new school, they won't be sad. It depends on what friends they make and now they always get picked on. Some of them can take it."

Q: "So the ones in your year that are sad. Why are they sad?"

A: "I don't know why they are sad. I think you'll find that people make them like that. People make them sad because that's what they think about them. I don't know what makes them sad. I just always know that that person is over there is a sad loner one and that makes me think that and that makes everyone else think it and they just get left out 'cos nobody wants them in or whatever."

("Emily" - 15 years old)

The narratives the pupils offered were based on hearsay. Not one pupil could tell me *how* an individual was *perceived* as unpopular, yet they could tell me *what* made an individual unpopular. Similar retrospective justifications were being employed which were offered in the section on bullying. Furthermore, the idea of the self-fulfilling prophecy is relevant once more through the proclamation that 'people make them sad because that's what they think about them'. I think that the labels that the pupils employed to define popular are best understood as gossip networks:

"Gossip...has always two poles, those who gossip and those about whom they gossip. In cases in which subjects and objects of gossip belong to different groups, the frame of reference is not only the group of gossipers but the situation and the structure of both groups and their relationship with each other. Without this wider frame of reference the crucial question why group gossip can ever be...an effective device for wounding and humiliating members of another group and for ensuring one's ascendancy over them, cannot be answered." (Elias and Scotson, 1994, p.101)

As was demonstrated in the chapter on violence, the pupils universally acknowledged the occurrence of the 'big three fights', to such an extent that they became legendary and embedded in the folklore of the school. One can argue that these 'legends' were maintained through the gossip channels between the pupils.

Thus, bullying and the proliferation of the year group victims, can be viewed as being upheld by labelling, gossip and hearsay. Furthermore, due to the size of both the school and the wider community, the gossip that is produced about an individual can be both dispersed to the point that it becomes common knowledge. And it is upheld and continued by the existence and nature of the friendship groups within the school itself.

It has to be remembered that when talking of popular and unpopular groups we are only considering a small fraction of the whole school year groups. Those in the ascribed popular group only accounted for between fifteen and twenty pupils whilst those in the ascribed unpopular group- the 'year victims' accounted for approximately five pupils in each year group. The average number of pupils per year group was one hundred. We now have to consider what the roles, friendship groups and social networks of the remaining pupils were.

What Friendship Categories exist?

During the interviews it emerged that if one was not in the popular group or the unpopular group there were a number of groups 'in the middle', which the majority of pupils in every year group 'belonged' to. Friendship groups are carried on from the transition between primary and secondary school. "Brian" explained how the friendship groups worked:

"There's always been like the groups of people who have been always together, like Temple or the Fishpond end of people like they might always stay together and like there's always the people from like Sandy Hill which might still be friendly, they always like remain your best friends or the people you can always trust, really I think. And then like you just make other friends and it just builds up from there."

Due to the fact that the middle group was the biggest, that was the category that the majority of pupils interviewed placed themselves within:

Q: "Are you in a friendship group?"

A: "Definitely (laughs), well I think more of our group, our year are kind of bonding more together now but um you do get like the popular girls and you do get the people that no one really talks to, the little group that hangs around together. And you get like the people that are friends with the popular people, the people that are like in between who are friends with everyone, like that kind of category, I try to fall in there. So yeah."

("Rosie" - 16 years old)

Q: "Are you in a friendship group?"

A: "I have a kind of like in the middle. I'm...I get on really with the popular people, I'm in the middle, I'm a bit popular, lots of people like me and if I need someone, there's like always someone there, no matter like well someone there that I know. Like I'm popular but not in school, I get on with everybody in school but I don't know!"

("Tilly" - 13 years old)

Figure 4 demonstrates the different categories that were present at Bayview School. Not every year had all of the categories. For example “Barbies” were only present in year ten and “Goths” were only in years eight and nine. The quotes are memorable examples of what pupils said about one another during the interviews, especially if they were from a rival gang or friendship group.

Figure 4. The Different Friendship Groups at Bayview School

'POPULAR PEOPLE'

"I think some of the most popular people are just the loudest people"

'TOWNIES'

"Town people just stay in town all the time, get drunk around the town"

'GEEKS'

"They like to stay at home a lot, but not 'cos they're clever. I think it's the way you look at life and these are people who don't drink much alcohol or have as many parties...they're more serious about life"

'DRUGGIES'

"They're just fucked up, always off their tits"

'BARBIES'

"They think that they're more popular, they're just pretty"

'BEACHIES'

(Also **'SURFERS', SKATERS'**)

"In winter you can't go to the beach so we've gone like a few times to the town to drink and stuff and they like yelled at us, 'cos that's their territory"

'GOTHS'

"We're into rock and like going to gigs and stuff like that"

'UNPOPULAR PEOPLE'/THE 'YEAR GROUP VICTIMS'

"They don't go to any parties...just like nobody understands why they don't go to parties...they got *a bit* bullied, it all depends on the way they look and the things they do, that's what they get picked on for...they're victims that's gone all the way through the year with us, yes"

An Explanation of the Friendship Groups

During the first run of interviews the different friendship groups were being presented, however, due to my preoccupation with bullying, violence and popularity I rather ignored what the majority of the school were engaged in. Thus, in the remaining runs of interviews I asked the pupils to deconstruct and explain what 'Barbie', 'Goth', 'Townie', 'Beachie' etc., meant.

'Townies'

Pupils who were labelled as 'Townies', spent their spare time 'hanging around' on the streets of River's End. As we saw in the chapter which set the scene for the research the town has two key areas where the pupils congregated. They would often drink in the 'Rec' or 'Fishpond Gardens'. There was not rivalry as such as the groups would often walk the length of the town to get to the other end and join up with their peers. The groups would often stay divided by year group. Thus, 'Townies' from year seven did not hang around with 'Townies' from year nine. This was a relatively big group with each year having approximately twenty pupils who regarded themselves as 'Townies'. Along with drinking it was reported that they would engage in mild drug use, such as smoking cannabis, they were also sexually active but not within secure relationships. Girls who hung around were viewed as 'slags' or 'tarts' and were often reported as being 'easy' by girls from rival groups.

'Geeks'/'Squares'

Individuals who were viewed as members of this group were called 'Geeks' or 'Squares' because they stayed in, didn't drink or go out to house parties, beach parties etc,. Thus, one could argue that these pupils did not form much of a group based around sociability. If one was labelled 'Square' it did not necessarily mean that one was clever, instead at Bayview School 'Geek' and 'Square' tended to mean boring. These pupils would stay in and play on their computers. A number of pupils reported that people viewed as 'Geeks' or 'Squares' were addicted to a game called 'War Hammer' and they had leagues and competitions around this game. This group tended to be male in every year with between five and ten boys who were viewed as dull and boring and into computers. Girls rarely received the label 'Geek', this could be due to the links to computers and 'War Hammer', however, I did not push this point in the interviews. Girls would be called 'Square' and once again it referred to being boring.

Once again this group was present in all years. It is important to note that 'Square' was also used to make observations about one's academic ability, this will be explained below.

'Druggies'

Every year group had a number of people who were experimenting with drugs. It was hard to estimate numbers as the 'Townies' and the 'Beachies' would also engage in taking drugs. However, those labelled 'Druggies' would often take E's, speed and higher class drugs. They would often be linked to the 'Townies' and would be the source of supply for other groups. However, the 'Druggies' were identified as pupils that would take drugs during school time and would often 'get off their faces' before going out and meeting up with other groups. It is important to note that within this 'middle ground' of groups there were fuzzy boundaries and pupils could drift between groups and belong to a number of groups during their school career. Nonetheless, a number of pupils were, for examples 'Druggies' and identified with that group the most.

'Barbies'

The 'Barbies' were present only in year ten. They consisted of a group of seven girls who would wear make-up to school, had blond hair and their boyfriends were referred to as 'Ken'. They had acquired this status because they were viewed as 'up-themselves', 'snobby' and 'stuck-up'. The girls in the popular group of year nine were the girls who rivalled the 'Barbies'. One could make the assumption that jealousy was behind the labelling of the 'Barbies'. I interviewed a girl who was a self confessed 'Barbie' and she laughed when she described how she was labelled 'Barbie'. She said that they took the label as a compliment, a form of pet name that distinguished her and her friends from the rest of the school. The 'Barbies' were a division of the 'Townies' and all had boyfriends who were at least seventeen as they could drive and the 'Barbies' would go out with their 'Kens' in their 'Barbie mobiles'!

'Beachies', 'Surfers', 'Skaters'

This group was the other group that dominated the year groups in terms of membership numbers alongside the 'Townies'. Once again both boys and girls belonged. They were 'sporty' in that they would prefer to hang around on the beach and surf, swim, etc.. They would hold Beach Parties which would involve drinking and minor drug use but

with the beach as the venue rather than the town. The girls did not tend to skate, instead girls in this group reported that when the boys were skating they would sit and watch them. However, the girls did surf and engage in water sports. The 'Beachies' obviously did not hang around on the beach during the winter months. They would relocate to the town, this would cause rivalry with the 'Townies'. Thus the 'Beachies' would often hold house parties during the winter months. This group was intra-year, in that year seven 'Beachies' would not 'hang out' with year nine 'Beachies'. Like the 'Townies', a sharing of territory was maintained. However, it has to be stressed that conflict between these groups was rare. One could change. For example, a 'Townie' might take up skate boarding and become a member of the 'Beachies' instead. Membership of these groups was very fluid and integrated with one another.

'Goths'

The last group identified were the 'Goths', who were present in year eight and nine only. They built their identity on music and liked going to gigs and were identified by their dress, which tended to be all black. This was a relatively small group with ten members in year eight and eight members in year nine. This group were predominantly female. A number of the 'Goths' were learning musical instruments. I interviewed one female in year nine who identified herself as a 'Goth' and told me she was learning the drums and the bass guitar. The 'Goths', like the 'Barbies', were identifiable at Bayview School in that both groups adapted their school uniforms in order to 'stand out from the crowd'. The 'Goths' wore dark eyeliner and painted their nails black. Dr Marten Boots were also compulsory alternative uniform accessories. Both the 'Goths' and the 'Barbies' were the only groups one could identify during the school day.

Therefore, at Bayview School there were a number of universally recognised friendship groups with which every pupil had an affiliation. Not one pupil was excluded from membership; everyone at Bayview had a recognised place within the friendship hierarchy. However, such division between the friendship groups did not mean that the pupils were engaged in constant battles during the school day. This is a point made by Elias and Scotson (1994) who stressed that the presence of divisions within Winston Parva did not mean:

“...that there was personal enmity or even that there were constant personal frictions between all the individual members of the two neighbourhood groups. Many individuals of the two neighbourhoods were personally on quite good terms with each other.” (p.19)

The majority of pupils identified with the middle group. They found it difficult to explain what the presence of these groups meant, it was yet another taken for granted rule that the different categories were present and every pupils belonged to one of them. The confusion is highlighted in the following account given by “Brian”:

“Erm, I think there’s also like the people who are willing, I think there’s like the thing about drugs as well. It’s going to be like the people who smoke cannabis and then go to lots of parties and take E’s and everything. Its quite a small group in a sense like there are other people who sort of get sucked into it who sort of smoke cannabis ‘cos that’s what everyone else is doing. And I think but then like there are some people like me who sort of like drift in between and like in a way that’s quite a disadvantage ‘cos like you’re never very popular with either group, but in the same sense you get lots of friends who you can obviously can talk with. So yeah it (different groups) does really exist still.”

Widdicombe and Woofitt (1995) analysed how members of youth subcultures characterised identities and how this influenced their relationship between themselves and their subcultural group. They found that:

“...the assignment of a person to a category ensures that conventional knowledge about the behaviour of people so categorised can be involved or cited to account for or to explain specific actions of that person.” (p. 70)

The pupils at Bayview labelled one another as members of distinctive friendship and peer groups as part of a process of comprehension. By identifying with one another as members of archetypal social groups they were able to make sense of the patterns of the school year groups that remained intact from year to year. They were establishing themselves by way of forming social identities:

“...social identities are resources for social action: category ascriptions, or what is conventionally known about a category, can be occasioned, invoked, indexed or made relevant so as to accomplish specific inferential tasks which arise in the course of interaction.” (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995, p. 71)

This observation highlights the processes the pupils used when they made judgements about fellow peers. A pupil in year ten who was female, had blond hair, a full face of make-up and who wore short skirts and high heels (within the limits of the uniform regulations of health and safety) was labelled a ‘Barbie’. Once labelled that was how one was expected to act. This can be viewed as a process of applying off the peg

identities for purposes of displaying character in and around school. The social identity was formed.

Labelling theory has been debated for decades within criminology following Becker's famous citation:

"...social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label." (1963, p. 9, original emphasis)

Nonetheless, the pupils at Bayview School were not labelling purely deviant behaviour. They labelled, categorised and comprehended *all* forms of behaviour, status and friendship group within the school. It has to be considered that labelling theory was a simple extrapolation from symbolic interactionism which does not deal solely with deviance. Thus, the labelling by the pupils is reminiscent of the writings of Strauss (1959). He argued that the:

"...necessity for any group to develop a common or shared terminology leads to an important consideration: the direction of activity depends upon the particular ways that objects are classified." (p 21)

For example, at Bayview School there was a classification and presence of year group victims who were also deemed to be the 'unpopular' pupils. Every year group knew how to respond to them. He continues:

"An act of classification not only directs overt action, but arouses a set of expectations toward the object thus classified." (p 22)

Once again this is true of the unpopular pupil. Once labelled, the individual was viewed as a year group victim and behaviour towards that individual was directed accordingly. Furthermore, Strauss' argument could also help to explain the justifications of 'play' in acts of violence:

"...classifications not only carry our anticipations but also those values that were experienced when we encountered the things, persons, or events now classified." (p 23)

Thus, in labelling an act of violence a 'play fight' values about the act were established that enabled categorisation of future events. This is true at the other end of the scale as well and was apparent with the classification of the 'big three' fights that occurred

during the period of research for this thesis. Those three acts of 'real' violence became a gauge on which to judge other incidents of violence.

Thus, the importance of the peer group and the friendship networks as the key factor to understanding incidents of bullying and violence at Bayview School was beginning to materialise. However, the static presence of the popular group and unpopular group in every year was still rather puzzling. How did those categories become embedded in the culture of Bayview School? The relevance of the peer group required further deconstruction.

The reason for attaching oneself to a group became clear during the process of the fieldwork. If there was a falling out between year groups, the year groups in conflict would 'unite', for example during the fieldwork there was a falling out between popular members of year eight and popular members of year nine. The reasons behind the conflict were popular girls in year nine believed that popular girls of year eight were getting 'above their station' and were not acting how one in year eight should act. Thus the year groups became two whole groups and the divisions within the years were less apparent. Those in year nine had to save face and put on a united front to teach those members of year eight a lesson! Furthermore, if there was an incident that occurred within a year group, for example a 'Townie' might fall out with a 'Beachie'; the respected groups would unite and defend their position. However, it must be noted that the members of the unpopular group, the year group victims, were never called on to form alliances to protect the status of a friendship group or a year group. The middle group/s would identify with all pupils but would view themselves as superior to the unpopular group and in allegiance with the popular group if an incident evolved at the school. These temporary alliances are similar to the observations made by Suttles (1968) in *The Social Order of the Slum*. He described coalitions that would form between groups if and when the need arose:

"Occasionally, *ad hoc* alliances develop between groups for some specific purpose or for a limited time period." (p 183)

The uniting of the year groups happened rarely, but the fact that there was potential for it to occur demonstrated the fluid nature of the different friendship groups. Nonetheless, it can be seen that obtaining a 'status' amongst ones peers was paramount in the identity formation of the pupils at Bayview School.

The 'Hidden Scale of Popularity'

There was clearly a form of labelling process occurring amongst the pupils at Bayview School, and it was based on a hidden scale. There were a multitude of variables that counted towards being viewed as 'popular'. These variables can be understood as status elements and depending on how many of these elements one scored positively on the more likely one was to be popular.

Figure 5 shows the key status elements that the pupils used to measure popularity.

Figure 5. The Status Elements Used to Evaluate Popularity

1. **FAMILY STATUS** – *LOCAL* Vs *OUTSIDER*
RICH Vs *POOR*
MARRIED PARENTS Vs *DIVORCED*
2. **APPEARANCE** - *TRENDY* Vs *OUT OF FASHION*
THIN Vs *FAT*
TALL Vs *SHORT*
GOOD-LOOKING/PRETTY Vs *UGLY/GOOFY*
3. **RELATIONSHIPS** - *FRIENDLY* Vs *LONER*
BOY/GIRLFRIEND Vs *SINGLE*
4. **PERSONALITY**- *OUTGOING* Vs *QUIET*
CONFIDENT Vs *SHY*
5. **SOCIAL LIFE** - *GOES OUT* Vs *STAYS IN*
DRINKS Vs *DOES NOT DRINK*
SMOKES Vs *DOES NOT SMOKE*
TAKES DRUGS Vs *DOES NOT TAKE DRUGS*
SEXUALLY ACTIVE Vs *VIRGIN*
6. **INTELLIGENCE**- *CLEVER* Vs *THICK*

These rather crude categories are drawn from the answers given by the pupils when they were asked 'What is popular?' Each 'status element' can be broken down into many factors outside these rudimentary categories. For example, when the pupils talked about 'Family Status' they considered factors like the size of the family, the size of the family home, the location of the house within Rivers End or the particular village where one lived, the occupation of the parents, etc.,. As with the explanations for bullying, these

categories are retrospective justifications for labelling popularity. The status elements in italics are the positive elements and if one scored highly in these categories, one was popular at Bayview School.

The ranking system employed by the pupils was reminiscent of the studies of American high schools and the rating and dating categories employed (Waller, 1937; Lowrie, 1951; Turner, 1964). Furthermore, Gordon (1957) in *The Social System of the High School*, made this observation:

“The prestige values of the informal sphere were found to be friendships, dress, grade level, clique incorporation, dating, and morally approved behaviour. Money, leisure, car, and kindred possessions were highly relevant...Values of the youth culture, including personal qualities, were the crucial determinants. Clique behaviour centering around prestige was rigidly conforming. Closely related and crucial determinants of social position were patterns of dress, dating, and moral behaviour.” (p.23)

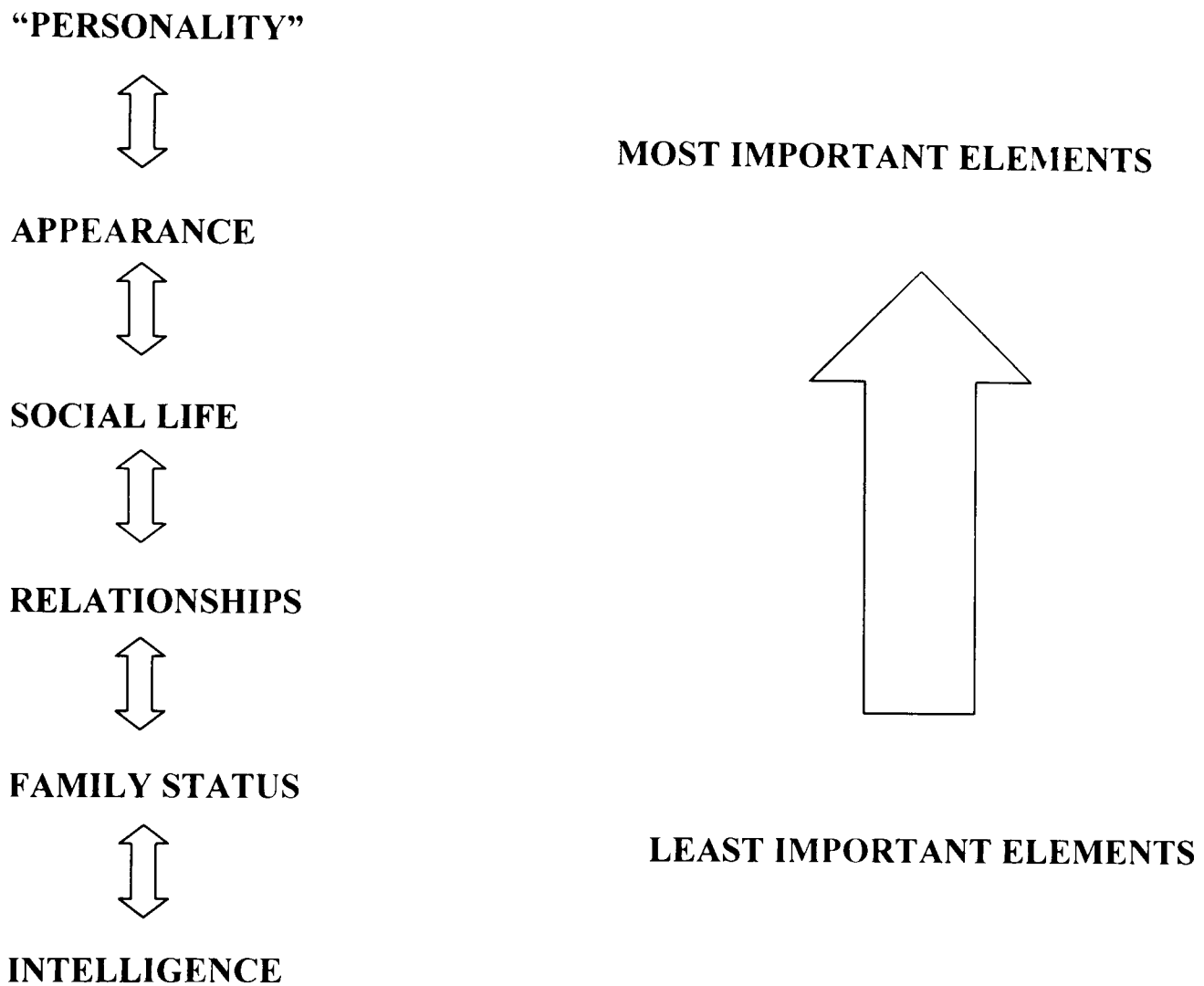
Gordon’s concept of prestige is similar to the notions of popularity expressed by the pupils at Bayview School. He also found that those in the highest ‘clique’ had been popular for a long time:

“Clique structures have remarkable stability, and most of the dominant cliques were those which had been formed in grade school as early as sixth grade.” (p.106)

Thus, his pupils had achieved a high status in a clique from junior school. Again, this is similar to the popular group at Bayview School. It has to be remembered that the popular group have remained popular from the transition from primary school. The pupils in the middle groups liked to assume a status of popularity as well. A number of the pupils who were members of the ‘Townies’ and the ‘Beachies’ documented that within their own groups there was a desire to be viewed as popular. For example, an individual who was a keen surfer and a member of the ‘Beachies’, would hold a status of popular if they excelled at surfing. The middle group would never make it into the ‘Popular’ group but they could be viewed as more popular within their own group. Therefore, these labels apply to the dominant middle group. Those in the popular group scored highest in the positive categories and those in the unpopular group – the year group victims – scored highly in the negative categories, the polar opposite to the positive categories.

These status elements – ‘the Hidden Scale of Popularity’ – were ranked by the pupils without much sign of reflexivity. They could not articulate the process they were using to label one another but they could tell me what was important to them personally. They could explain which of the status elements was the most important to score positively on in order to be viewed as popular by the peer group. The status elements had a hierarchy that can be seen in figure 6.

Figure 6. The Hierarchy of the ‘Hidden Scale of Popularity’



This figure demonstrates that the status elements interact with one another and the “personality” of an individual is the most influential status element by which one is measured at Bayview School. The interviews have demonstrated that being outgoing, sociable, friendly and confident influenced a number of interactions. One is less likely to be bullied, more likely to be perceived as popular and will have a number of friends if one has an extroverted personality type. The opposite is true for those individuals who exhibit more introverted personality types. If one is shy, quiet, a loner and has less of a social life, then one is more likely to become bullied and victimised and in extreme cases is ascribed the status of unpopular and year group victim from the primary school.

Walker (1988) found similar adolescent hierarchies in his study:

“The dominant form (of youth culture) was a culture of youth self congratulatory ‘Aussie’ masculinity, which highlighted standing up for oneself and one’s mates, against authority or anything else; physical, especially sporting prowess; and daring or exciting escapades. To be successful in this culture was to be a ‘legend’. Although non-members might also claim to be legends, the most usually conceded by the dominant ‘Aussies’ was that they were ‘good blokes’. They might also, if they were less fortunate, be ‘cats’ ‘puff-heads’ or ‘poofers’. In terms of youth culture, the legends were on top; and so they were for many teachers as well.” (p.3)

The ‘legends’ in this study can be paralleled with the popular group in my study. Furthermore, the labelling of the different groups helped the boys in Walker’s school identify and interact with one another. Again in a similar vein to the pupils at Bayview School.

The Confusions of Labelling

As with all ‘rules’, ‘patterns’ and ‘relationships’, there are exceptions and it is at this point that we return to the label of ‘Square’. The label ‘Square’ could be used in one of two ways. We have seen that it could be used to label a group of friends and when used in this context it was synonymous to the term ‘boring’. However, the pupils at Bayview also used the term ‘Square’ in the more traditional notion of being related to academic achievement i.e. a ‘Swot’.

There were different interpretations of the word depending on who in the year group had been labelled ‘Square’. One could be called a ‘Square’ in any of the friendship groups but the explanation and meaning of the term differed. To call an individual from the Popular group ‘Square’ was a term of endearment. The popular square was praised for achieving and was congratulated. ‘Square’ in this situation is light-hearted and positive. An individual from one of the middle groups, such as the ‘Townies’ or the ‘Beachies’, would be praised depending on their reaction to the label. If they took the label ‘Square’ light-heartedly and in good faith and did not view it as a criticism or an act of teasing then, as with the popular group, a middle group ‘Square’ was congratulated and the term was affectionate. However, a negative reaction from the middle group member could result in further teasing and the academic achievement turned into a negative scenario. Thus the middle group ‘Square’ can have the potential of being a swot. If an individual from the unpopular group – the year group victim- was

labelled a 'Square', then the term was negative. An unpopular square was criticised for being clever and the label 'Square' was used in a vindictive manner.

Therefore, the influence of the peer groups and the year group structure can be seen in relation to the labelling of individuals as Square. There are complex interactions between the friendship networks, and the power of the hidden scale of popularity could affect a Bayview pupil's school day. It is interesting to see how a term such as 'Square' can be used and interpreted universally by the pupils and the deciding factor is where one is placed within the friendship categories. Furthermore, 'Intelligence' as a measure of popularity sits at the bottom of the hierarchy, yet when one assessed an individual's academic achievement, the hidden scale of popularity, in relation to personality, influenced the pupils. A popular person was praised, an unpopular person was criticised, yet they have achieved the same academic standard. The intolerance of difference was demonstrated once again. Now we turn to gender to see if that influenced the unwritten, yet universal rules of popularity assessment that the pupils used at Bayview School.

Gender Differences In Popularity

After establishing the patterns of the friendship networks and year groups, I wanted to see the effects of gender on notions of popularity. The pupils commented that popular girls were often attractive:

A: "I think you have to be really pretty (laughs), um have a lot of well maybe have a bit of money like have all the brand names and...just be really nice and everyone gets on with you I suppose (laughs), but quite a few of the popular girls all grew up together, and they come to this school and make friends with the other pretty popular girls and they just form one group. There's about ten of them, that all are together."

Q: "Yeah, and have they been the same like all the way through the popular people from year seven are still your popular people in year eleven?"

A: "Yeah definitely, they are yeah."

("Rosie" - 16 years old)

The popular girls were often cited as being 'pretty', 'grown-up', 'more mature'.

Popular boys were cited as being sporty:

"Yeah. There's a lot of people who hang around playing football and they're quite popular. They're mostly, most of them are rugby team, most of the boys are in the rugby team. And I'm in the rugby team but I'm in the middle...I'm not unpopular but I'm not popular. So yeah, most of them, most of them hang around the football sheds and the football courts and play football so."

("Bill" - 13 years old)

As well as being sporty the popular boys were also the ones who could handle themselves in a fight. The macho displays of violence, which were dealt with in an earlier chapter, are relevant here. Popular boys often engaged in 'play fights', demonstrating their masculinity and ability to appear 'manly'. Furthermore, in appearing 'manly', there are parallels with the girls who are 'pretty'. The emphasis on appearance is established within the sociological literature of adolescent subcultures. For example, Suttles (1968) described how "clothing, grooming and personal display" (p 67) distinguished the ethnic groups in his research. Furthermore, research has highlighted the importance of the rating, dating and mating process between adolescents as Anderson (1999) observed in *Code of the Street* in relation to the attitudes of his subjects towards sex:

"To many inner-city male youths, the most important people in their lives are members of their peer groups. They set the standards for conduct, and it is important to look good in their eyes. The peer group places a high value on sex...though sex may be casual in terms of commitment to the partner, it is usually taken quite seriously as a measure of the boy's worth." (p. 150)

The social meaning of the body and the role of attraction in forming peer group relations has also been documented in the masculinity literature:

"One of the most important features of school as a social setting is its informal peer group life...There is turbulence and uncertainty as young people try to define their paths in life. With the approach of adolescence, interactions between boys and girls are liable to be sexualized, by flirting, innuendo and teasing. The heterosexual 'romance' pattern of gender relations persists through high school into college, where it can still dominate student life...The romance pattern defines masculinity in general through the masculine/feminine dichotomy. It also feeds in the hierarchy of masculinities, since heterosexual success is a formidable source of peer group prestige" (Connell, 2000, p. 161)

Thus, it was hardly surprising that appearance was crucial to understanding how one became popular at Bayview:

“I mean sometimes they (popular people) try and prove themselves I think...if you can fight, the way you act, the way you walk, what you look like sometimes...They (popular boys) don't really need to fight because you know, some of them are really big and you know that, anyway they don't pick on the unpopular people. They just I mean the three boys I mentioned, they hang around in a school group. They don't really do anything. I mean they don't really meet anybody in school but I think what makes them popular in my year is sports. If you're good at sport you're usually popular and because I'm in the rugby team. I've got friends in the popular groups. I think it just sort of helps being good at a sport and you know, you see them...But I hang around with those groups, go and play football. Yeah, but my group's sort of middle. It's a mixture of boys and girls we're all roughly the same. We're not boisterous, we're not yeah, we're not boisterous and we, eight of us who go to the cinema shopping and stuff. And it's evenly split between boys and girls.”
 (“Bill” - 13 years old)

Bill's observations about the groups not really being divided by gender are important. There was not really a distinct divide between the boys and the girls. All groups had members of both sexes. The following account provided by “Katie” highlights the integrated nature of the friendship groups:

“I think it is, like even though I don't think any of my friends are not pretty that's 'cos like well they're all my best mates but I don't know I don't think it's a pretty thing at all 'cos I think there's some really, really pretty girls that aren't in say our little group. And I look at them and I think they're really pretty and the boys don't necessarily look at them 'cos maybe they're not in the so called group, which I think is really unfair because they've only now just realised how pretty these girls are and we've been telling them for ages look how pretty they are, they just don't realise it and then they're like all of a sudden, oh they're really pretty. (Laughs) And its just like hello. But um I think its just our sense of humour we are all really loud and we're mad and we don't like, when a girl goes to Starlight they all dance like really serious and we just get on the dance floor and start doing the sprinkler move and just all really mad. So I think that's what sort of makes our group. And the boys are silly as well but there used to be like a boy girl divide and we'd be like sitting there wouldn't talk to the boys but now live we've grown up and like I went to primary school with most of my boys that are my mates now so, we get on really well with them.”

Therefore, if one is a member of the popular group, regardless of gender, one has to maintain the standards of being part of that group. This is very interesting as previous criminological research into deviant subcultures and gangs has been dominated by male membership and interaction, with little or no observation of what female members could or should be doing.

Heidensohn (1996) argued that descriptions of deviance often:

“...define the delinquent as unmistakably and exclusively male. Indeed, when girls feature in these accounts it is to provide the appropriate counterpoints to the dominant male theme. There is no balance or equality in these accounts, female figures are whisked on and off the stage, a small caste of extras without whom the plot cannot go forward but who have no lines to say.” (p. 133)

Corrigan, in his book ‘Schooling the Smash Street Kids’, apologises for his gender bias:

“At this stage I would hope that the reaction of many of the ladies reading the book is fairly irate about my failure to mention girls at all to date. Throughout, this book follows the male-dominated sociological line of researching only into male adolescent activity; male delinquency; male experience of school. There is little real defence of this total exclusion of half of the population from sociological research; my only defence is that I was going to have to use a lot of the insights gained from my own adolescent experience.” (1979, p.13)

Following this line of logic one could argue that female researchers can integrate women into their research easier than male subjects, which in turn could lead to women researching women. The female researcher can draw on her own personal experience and deconstruct the female participation. However, my own adolescence was not about being a ‘girl’ and growing up in conflict and opposed to the ‘boys’. We grew up and interacted *together*. Therefore, the role of gender in this research is crucial to understanding everyday school life at Bayview. The girls rarely committed the acts of violence but they had their own unique style of bullying, namely exclusion from the peer group. Furthermore, the girls upheld the role of bystander when the acts of violence between the boys occurred and they practised the code of silence. All of these, as has been demonstrated, were crucial elements to enable one to understand the pupil interaction within the school. The roles of both the male and female pupils enabled a complete understanding of pupil networks and peer groups.

In relation to popularity the hierarchy of the hidden scale is in practice. In relation to gender, the second important status element, that is appearance, is most influential.

Girls are ‘pretty’ boys are ‘good looking’:

Q: “Right, so what makes these popular or why do they think they are popular?”

A: “They’ve got a lot of friends and also ‘cos...like some of them are best at more things than the others.”

Q: “Right and so is it still, when I was at school, um is it still the case where, you know if you look a certain way or dress a certain way you are popular as well or is that not so much the case now?”

A: “Yeah, you have to look good.”

Q: "So how do you have to dress to be popular?"

A: "You've got all the designers clothes, you got to make to sure you break lots of rules and get into trouble otherwise you get called a swot."

Q: "A swot?"

A: "Yeah."

Q: "Or a square, or a geek or something like that?"

A: "Yeah."

Q: "So...what do you think makes people unpopular?"

A: "If they don't break laws, um also if they like say stuff, or break up with one person and then other people get involved and break up with them."

Q: "So it's just like a difference?"

A: "Yeah. They pick on differences."

Q: "So are there like hangers on people who try and join and try and change and try and be popular?"

A: "Yeah there are."

Q: "And what happens to them?"

A: "They just get shoved away and they just go and join another group."

("Stephanie" - 13 years old)

"Stephanie's" account highlights how the groups are united by gender and will be equally exclusionary. She was an individual who was being bullied at the time of her interview and she had fallen out with a friend and had been excluded from her peer group as a consequence. She was in the popular group, but because of her exclusion she had to make friends with people in the middle groups. Her experience helped to uncover the links between friendship networks and bullying. Previous research has demonstrated the importance of the peer group but has not considered how the individual who has been excluded from the group copes with their school days, especially in such a small community. In Stephanie's case she kept a diary and was marking off the days until the summer holidays when she was going away with her family. She informed me that she only had 'seven and a half weeks of hell left'.

Growing out of the Importance of Popularity

A number of the pupils expressed that one grows out of the need to be popular and the divisions and friendship groups diminish in importance as one goes through the school years. The popularity status appeared to be linked to assumptions about maturity. There was a peer pressure to 'grow-up'; for example to drink, be involved in relationships and smoke. Therefore, once the pupils entered the top year group they had nothing left to prove:

“Yeah I think well I think its since year ten and eleven I think our whole year’s just got altogether, its more just like a year now rather than groups but there’s still in our year the popular group and like the unpopular group, who always do all their work and never go out and the popular group do all their work but sometimes go out as well.”

(“Rachel” - 16 years old)

A: “Yeah, I mean it’s...being popular, you just have to be quite funny really. And I never used to be popular but since I started like being more confident, being more cheeky in class, it’s like, it does kind of make people like pay more attention to you. I believe that everyone’s a nice person if you just give them a chance to get to know them properly. And other than what they want you to think they’re like. So you get people who are really nice people, they just think they’re the best ‘cos they try and show you what you want to see but what you really want to see, you want to see them as they are. So they end up being this complete prick in front of you. But that’s breaking down. People are becoming more confident, people are feeling easier around each other and becoming friends.”

Q: “So was it worse when you were like year eight, nine?”

A: “Yeah. I’d say it was.”

Q: “Yeah, so your popular people, how were you popular? What made you popular in those years?”

A: “I don’t know.”

Q: “Was it still like you know, your first people to drink, your first people to smoke?”

A: “It’s definitely that kind of thing you know. I mean the peer pressure used to be like try and be grown up, grown up and drinking. But yeah, it’s not really that I would say. It’s just, I know it’s being confident. I mean people will say I like you because you’re confident. If you are confident and like put across your true personality, so everyone just like gets to know you and you just...it just happens. Can’t really say why it is.”

(“Jimbo” - 16 years old)

A: “I think with my year, like gone up through the school, we’ve all like kind of grouped together really ‘cos there used to be like really separate groups and everything and all the groups didn’t like each other. But now like all the groups kind of just like get along with each other and the group I’m in has now joined up with like another group, so we’re just like one big group now.”

Q: “Yeah, what did it used to be like when you were in younger years?”

A: “I don’t know, it used to be like quite a lot of arguments between like all the different groups of girls and stuff, but it’s okay now.”

(“Chantel” - 15 years old)

A number of the pupils suggested that one becomes mature and does not need to maintain the rivalry that was apparent in years seven to nine. Those in years ten and eleven claimed to have become focussed and wanted to work towards their GCSE’s.

Popularity was generationally specific; to be popular in year seven was not the same as the other years. Pupils in year seven were new to the school and were trying to establish themselves. Popularity in year seven was important, as it was an achievement against the rest of the school. Years eight and nine were the problematic years. Conflict was at its peak during these years. Bullying reached its high point and fighting happened in 'year nine land'. These pupils were in another transition. They were not the new kids and they were not established like the eldest years. Obtaining the status of popularity for years eight and nine was important and the conflict between the middle groups tended to be rife. Rivalry between these years was paramount and was a constant phenomenon. A number of year sevens reported that they could not wait to be in year eight and 'give the year sevens flack'.

Years ten and eleven explained that they had grown-up and matured. Pupils in year ten would become temporary prefects and those in year eleven were the prefects. Those pupils who were given responsibility to become prefects were all from the popular group. To be popular in the older years enabled the pupils to assume the roles of the allies to authority and to become the police of the playground. The focus of schooling had changed, along with the dynamics of popularity. It was still important but popularity would enable one to achieve academically and be noticed by the staff not just the peer group:

Q: "Have your popular group become temporary prefects?"

A: "Yeah. But those are people that can like have fun with the teachers and stuff. I think the other group...they just take it too far and then they're badly behaved. But our group have fun and stuff like that. And we really only get into trouble if you talk too much or something but we like have a laugh."

("Emily" - 15 years old)

Therefore, being popular was not something one grew out of. It remained a constant phenomenon, however, the dynamics of popularity change in that the older years could utilise their popular status to become prefects. The middle group did unite and become cohesive. Pupils would still refer to themselves as 'Beachies' but the importance of belonging had diminished.

The unpopular people – the year group victims – were still present in the older years. Thus the importance of popularity did not disappear as one went up through the school year groups. The impact of popularity was constantly apparent to the unpopular people

who had been permanently excluded from other peer groups within their year group during their time at Bayview School.

Through understanding the complex networks and social groupings it should be easier to understand and evaluate the occasions of violence and bullying. For example, the 'no grassing' codes and the reluctance to tell come into focus. The importance of the peer group and what the friendship networks meant to the pupils at Bayview School highlight the fact that it is not surprising that individuals would not tell. The blanket of silence is allowed to dominate as the potential rejection from one's peer group far outweighed the benefits of reporting victimisation. Current bullying research does not adequately look at peer groups and their importance. A small, rural school like Bayview is a unique setting yet the much publicised tell all policy would never work as the repercussions for the wider community are far too great.

I will now conclude this thesis and demonstrate that in order to begin to understand the incidents of violence and bullying at Bayview School a complete understanding of the close knit community and friendship groups need to be taken into consideration if an effective anti bullying policy is to be devised and implemented.

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter explores what this thesis contributes to our understanding of patterns of violence and bullying as they occur in a particular school at a particular point in time. It discusses the broad research questions set out in Chapter One in light of the key findings of the research. In summary, this thesis explored the social regulation of violence in a Cornish school that I called Bayview. It became evident that ‘bullying’ and ‘violence’ serve to reinforce and maintain a well established hierarchy.

The ‘traditional’ method for measuring bullying and incidents of school violence is quantitative data collection and this is often ‘housed’ within the disciplines of psychology and education policy. Statistical data, such as school exclusion rates, bullying rates and discipline reports indicate that there are important issues to explore but there has been virtually no qualitative research on this subject so we do not know what violence and bullying *means* to the pupils directly involved and *how* they address it. Consequently, this study partially addressed the lack of qualitative, criminological data on the topic of bullying and school violence.

The primary aim of this research was to learn about the display and regulation of violence and how it influenced and was influenced by bullying. This was achieved by a qualitative analysis to discover how adolescents in a small, rural comprehensive school go about their day-to-day life and was explored through an examination of four broad, interrelated topics: Patterns of violence; rules of violence; experiences of violence; and the role of the school in regulating violence. In order to address these areas and the research questions specified, the research adopted qualitative research methods which enabled the voice of the young person to be heard and is something which has not been achieved in previous school based bullying and violence research.

Patterns of Violence

Through giving the adolescents a voice in the research, we were able to understand the day-to-day schooling experience of a group of pupils at a point in time. This was especially significant with regard to violence where a number of the accounts treated varying degrees of conflict as “play”. The attribution of play neutralises the harmful

implications of what is done and enables an adult to begin to comprehend how these particular pupils control their environment within the context of the institution of the school.

‘Violence’, whether in its ‘play’ or ‘real’ form occurred daily during the recreation periods at Bayview School and on the journey to and from the institution. However, it became necessary to understand what rules (if any) were followed, what experiences the pupils had had and how violence could be a continuous phenomenon within the context of a school: An institution which had a code of conduct that condemned and punished violent incidents.

‘Violence’, between young people and adolescents, has traditionally been researched within criminology in the fields of subcultural and deviancy theories and it has assumed a rather biased, male focus. This could be because the majority of criminological research has previously been carried out by male researchers. Nonetheless, at a mixed comprehensive school with a relatively even gender split, the role of the female pupils was considered. This advances our knowledge of the female role in incidents of violence and bullying, and attempts to bridge the gap with feminist criminologists who argue that women are absent from research.

This thesis demonstrated an intricate gender dimension which highlighted how females were present in acts of violence. It also showed the plight of boys as victims. This is an under-researched area within criminology as is the topic of victimisation as a whole and one, which I would conclude, is highly significant.

The male pupils had a contradictory role. On the one hand, they dominated the incidents of violence at the school as they were the only individuals who engaged in play fighting as well as being involved in the majority of real fights. On the other, they also reported the highest victimisation levels of violence and bullying.

The male pupils interviewed for this thesis disclosed that I was often the only person they had told about their victimisation. Thus, it transpired that boys as victims are ‘double victims’. Firstly, they have become victims at the hands of their aggressor. Secondly, they are victimised by their gender. The status of ‘male’ meant that they

were often unable, or unwilling, to vocalise their victim status. This is an area that requires further research and I believe that this thesis somewhat highlights the plight of the male adolescent victim.

Rules of Violence

The focus of this thesis was violent interactions between the pupils and their connection with what is regarded as bullying. The severity, incidence, patterns, distribution, regulation and organisation of violence within Bayview School were revealed. Further, a set of 'rules' was established to enable an outsider to begin to understand the moral conduct of the pupils and the way in which it shaped issues of violence and fighting.

The first form of violence was the 'play fight'; a style of behaviour that always occurred between boys and which was taken to be mere 'rough and tumble' and a way to 'let off steam'. The label 'play' softened the impact of the actions and aided justifications supporting the avoidance of punishment. Most conflict was labelled 'play' and thereby neutralised.

The other form of violence was the 'real fight'. Such conflicts, for example a fight over a girlfriend, had a more pronounced moral structure and a disciplinary character. They were started purposefully and all students would be aware of the location and timing of the conflict if it occurred in school. Real fights took place in 'year nine land' but would sometimes be arranged outside school premises so that punishment became difficult to administer. Those fights that happened without an audience were the most violent and the least regulated. The pupils described relatively few incidents of 'real' fights. Violence can be deployed to end hostile relations, in particular where bullying is involved. This was the only time when both male and female pupils viewed an act of violence as acceptable.

Girls only engaged in 'real violence' and the occurrence of 'real fighting' was rare. This lent important incidents of real conflict an emblematic status with which other forms were compared. They took on a symbolic role, and I argued that, during the time of my fieldwork, three key events achieved a particular notoriety and a transparency that revealed a number of constitutive rules.

There was a designated fight area, 'year nine land', which was the location for real fighting, whose use was subject to clear rules. There appeared as well to be popular consensus about the issue of rule breaking away from school premises that did not focus on violence alone. Thus, space refracted relations. Another rule of the fight was the importance of location.

Adolescent peer group networks were also an important element in the shaping of conflict situations. Related to this was the unwritten code of silence that all pupils upheld. All students interviewed claimed that one did not inform authority unless the fight was severe and someone required medical attention. In such an instance, a prefect informed the teachers. Under no circumstance, apart from this one exception, must one tell, otherwise one is labelled a 'grass' and rejected by one's peers. To tie in with this code is the notion of the bystander. There was a ritual that surrounded any form of conflict within the playground. All pupils would observe a fight, however, once again there was a crucial rule which was adhered to and that was one does not get involved if one is not a participant. If a fight occurred the pupils present in the playground would watch. However, girl fights did not draw a crowd. Again this was interesting, female violence was rare but when it happened no one made any effort to observe it. There are dilemmas surrounding this, as the most unpleasant case of female violence documented was where the girl was 'beaten up' over the lunch hour off the school premises.

The rules governing the code of silence and the role of the bystanders, flowed from the contradictions between 'play' and 'real' which made it impossible to intervene, even if one desired to. Rather, one 'goes along with the crowd' for an easier life. However, the code of silence, in conjunction with the role of bystander, does act as a mechanism to limit damage and disruption. For example, the fighting became severe, if a crowd was not present, as the case of the two girls fighting demonstrated. The presence of a group regulated the conflict subliminally. There were limits that should not be crossed and there was the possibility that an audience did actually maintain order. In extreme circumstances the prefects would intervene or get help. Perhaps knowing someone would stop the fight if it went too far helped the individuals involved make the decision to engage in conflict.

Also problematic were the very different views towards violence expressed by the boys and girls. Boys, talking about real fights, claimed that they would discuss matters rationally and only then fight, as fighting would 'clear the air'. When they talked about play fighting they viewed it as part of their everyday life, something they were meant to do, just a bit of fun. Girls, on the other hand, took it that one should never fight because violence only exacerbated relations. Furthermore, they viewed play fighting as childish and something that only the boys did.

Gendered differences also emerged in perceptions about adults fighting. Girls viewed adult conflict as immature, especially if alcohol was involved. Boys also demonstrated a generational difference. Whereas the younger members of years thought boys would 'get away' with fighting because they inflict less damage, the older boys took the question to mean would they fight an adult. The moral boundaries of violence were different between male and female pupils, yet both boys and girls agreed everyone should have the right to defend oneself, especially if one is being bullied.

There were many 'rules' of the fight but the most significant was the role of gender. Even though girls did not actively take part in play fighting or even real fighting to an extent (the reader must be reminded that only one 'real' fight between females took part during the period of field work), they assumed different roles and it was often the case of the bystander. Therefore, future research needs to consider this and look at the interaction and inter-connectedness of the adolescent population and not treat them as an exclusive girls versus the boys.

The final factor was the prefects who could be regarded as a last resort and the allies to authority. It was their duty to report fights and generally keep the playground safe. They were literally the police of the playground. Their role was sometimes met with hostility, especially from peers in their year group. Just like the role of bystanders, the prefects played a crucial role in maintaining order. Everyone interviewed acknowledged that only a prefect could intervene effectively and break the code of silence without fear of repercussions or negative labels being applied to them.

The rules that the pupils adopted were thus highly contradictory and I would argue that there was a lot more involved than merely 'fighting': Fighting was a social display. The

ritualistic elements and symbolism of a demarcated fight venue gave incidents of 'real violence' a special masculine status that revolved around questions of prowess and 'saving face'. The 'play fight', on the other hand, was a form of competitive jostling or playful competition for hierarchy and status, modulated by the symbolic surveillance of teachers. Pupils could be violent within the boundaries of school discipline.

The Role of Self Policing

In connection with the 'rules' of the fight, the role of self policing is highly relevant as this thesis had a continuous theme of self policing and regulation. For example, when violent incidents occurred there were concentric circles of decision making in operation.

If violence happened in the playground the pupils would often make the moral judgement about how to classify the event. More often than not it would be a 'play fight' and thus, matter of factly judged as a normal, daily occurrence which happened every time the pupils had a recreation period. If the fight was a real fight, the prefects, the police of the playground, would fetch the teachers or take the offenders into the school to the teachers. This was an action that occurred as a last resort for the pupils due to the potential repercussions which such an action entailed. This can be surmised as only three real fight events happened during the process of the field work. An adult gaze on the pupils during 'break time' would probably view incidents of 'play' fighting as 'real' fighting and here the reader must be reminded that I never witnessed deviant episodes. This could possibly be due to the fact that the pupils operated such covert surveillance systems and knew that 'play fighting' was wrong, but rules within rules enabled it to occur.

The prefects escorting the guilty pupils in from the playground resulted in the baton of responsibility being passed to the teachers, who would ask for accounts of the fight. The pupils, as we saw in the chapter on violence where a child nearly had their neck broken on a tree stump, would pass off the event as play in their recollection to the teacher. It would then be up to the teacher to call in the parents, which was a rare occurrence. Therefore, those responsible for policing the school and rule breaking interpretation tended to go to the higher level of authority as a last resort.

This is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it highlights the role of self policing within an institution. Secondly, it demonstrates how rules are often interpreted and that subsequent secondary, 'informal' rules develop. These in turn often emerge as the key rules to follow, just as Hargreaves (1975) documented in his findings. Finally, and possibly most importantly, it diffuses and obscures the reality of violence within an institutional setting, in this case a comprehensive school.

Experiences of Violence

As I remarked in the introduction to this thesis, I wanted to partially replicate the work of Elias and Scotson's (1994) *The Established and the Outsiders*. This research was indeed a study of a small town, with the focus remaining predominantly on the school. Nonetheless, we have seen how opinions expressed by the pupils were carried into the wider community, beyond the informal control and boundaries of the school. I would argue that the unique location of this research has partially contributed to our understanding of pupils and young people's behaviour in small rural areas.

'Rivers End' – Researching the Rural

The symbolic community of the town was thought to be relatively safe, surrounded by imagined dangers. Within that community, there was a complex system, mediated by the majority, position in the school and space that defined risks and places of safety and gave order to the world.

The pupils shared their experiences and opinions about growing up in the town: their likes, dislikes, fears and aspirations. They were asked hypothetically to compare what living and growing up in London would be like with their experience of Rivers End. This resulted in an expression of caution about living 'up country' and the possible dangers one can encounter. These views were formulated largely as a result of media coverage. Only four of the pupils interviewed had ever been to London. Additionally, out of these four, only one expressed the view that they actually enjoyed their visit and would contemplate living there.

The adolescents liked where they lived and preferred the cleanliness and serenity of a rural location. They believed that the town was somewhere one could go out and enjoy

oneself. Safe in the knowledge that one did not have to worry about dangers, such as those reported on the news about the 'big cities'. Everyone who lived in the town knew everyone else. Consequently, there was a perception of safety and protection about living in the town.

The most frequently committed crimes were vandalism and joyriding. The students documented how the only time when they felt 'unsafe' in the town was during the holiday season when the population of the area doubles. These views were explored and linked to previously documented conceptions about 'up country'. These findings are consistent with Merry's (1981) findings from her study of a Boston Neighbourhood. In this research she proposed a 'theory of danger' and states that:

"The theory may not be applicable elsewhere, but it offers an hypothesis worth testing in other neighbourhoods: The sense of danger is rooted in feelings of uncertainty, helplessness, and vulnerability triggered by encounters with strangers who belong to unfamiliar, hostile and potentially harmful groups. The dangerous group generally differs in ethnic background, but suspicion may also arise due to differences in class and lifestyle. Knowledge of the identities of potentially hostile people, and familiarity with their ways of life tend to diminish feelings of danger." (p. 160)

I would argue that Merry's theory of danger is supported in Rivers End. The idea that anyone from 'up country' should be treated with caution is reinforced because a number of the residents of the town studied for this thesis have no direct experience of 'up country'. They based their judgements of people from other areas of the United Kingdom on media coverage and the select members of the population who chose to take their vacation in Cornwall. Thus, a diffuse fear of the unknown and of outsiders emerged. This appeared to be transmitted from generation to generation, as local knowledge and folklore were reproduced. These attitudes were not surprising in a community of this size. One began to understand the significance of rural behaviour. It followed that if the pupils learned to distrust those from 'up country', then they could have learnt similar opinions about fellow members of their community from parents, grandparents, etc. The argument of this thesis, including those that bear on schooling experience and bullying, must be set within these wider factors of community influence.

If we return now to the issues of self-policing as it is relevant here. Within the town of Rivers End the residents would often go to the police as a last resort and would try and deal with situations themselves. They would also operate their own ways of regulating

potential crime problems. The reader is reminded of the individual who disclosed that his mother went into town and 'scored' for him in order that she knew her son was not smoking 'bad stuff' and so that he would not get into trouble himself or get 'ripped off' in a bad deal. Thus, the town operated a self policing element which could potentially diffuse and obscure the reality of crime. This is not something that can be concluded in the remit of this thesis but is an area which could be pursued in future research of rural communities.

I sought to understand the social and moral topography of the town and the complex friendship networks and rituals in which the adolescents were involved. The recreational drug use, although not a focus for this thesis, emerged as a taken for granted activity for the pupils of Bayview School. This leads to the question of why rural areas are not in the remit of criminology, especially when one's involvement with underage drinking and smoking 'weed' gave one 'points' on the hidden scale of popularity, the paramount factor in regulating the behaviour and perceptions of these pupils.

Deviant youth subcultures have been a popular area of study for criminologists *but* they have focussed predominantly on groups of male adolescents in inner cities. This thesis showed that the youth of Rivers End did not observe specified gender activities and if anything, the genders tended to unite during periods of 'hanging out'. Furthermore, both male and female students engaged in the deviant behaviour to an extent. This needs consideration in future criminological work

The Role of the School in Regulating Violence

The role of ranking and rating to gain prestige amongst peers was the paramount factor in this thesis. The research analyses the social and subcultural organisation of adolescence and demonstrates how they are embedded within the school. There were rules within rules. The rules of the school were maintained to an extent, but the unwritten peer group rules were deemed as superior to uphold. They were more like a badge of honour that were practised through, for example, the Code of Silence. The subject of bullying demonstrates this argument further.

Bullying at Bayview School

Bullying was something of a problem at Bayview School. Every pupil interviewed had experienced it at some point during his or her school career. There were many forms documented, including physical and psychological and students tended to mitigate it by arguing that bullying was 'a bit of fun', 'play teasing' that was similar to the notions of 'play fighting'.

Bullying was staggered over a pupil's life, understood to be part of a student career and the process of 'growing up'. Pupils in years seven and eight were bullied the most. In years nine and ten the bullying began to end whilst year eleven 'couldn't be bothered' to engage in bullying. Interestingly, every year group had up to five victims that were victimised in one form or another by the whole year. They were usually singled out in year seven and remained the 'victim' for their entire school career.

The year group victims were known as the 'unpopular' people of the year group, illustrating the effect of hierarchy. Pupils operated a status ranking system and the year group victims displayed despised attributes on which peers agreed and that consequently triggered selection. The justification that the pupils offered was that these individuals were 'too different to fit in' and their bullying constituted a policing of the boundaries of the acceptable. An intolerance of difference was revealed. Bullying can happen at anytime and anywhere. In extreme cases it would start at school and then be carried on out of school.

All this was condensed in the journey to school. There were elaborate patterns of avoidance used by all year groups. Those who walked to school would avoid certain areas, routes or people. Pupils who travelled on the school buses from the surrounding villages detailed elaborate seating patterns and hierarchies. Such rituals enabled the students to elude bullying or the potential of being victimised even if it took twice as long to get to school. Pupils who used the buses described more incidents of bullying because they were obliged to occupy a confined space and could not use avoidance tactics. It also became apparent that the bullying on the buses would be most extreme on a Friday on the way home as it was the weekend and it would be 'forgotten by Monday'. The links between bullying and violence were expanded. There was thus a temporal as well as a social and spatial dimension to violence and intimidation.

Furthermore, I would argue that territorial boundaries were not significant for incidents of bullying. Thus I conclude that fights were institutionalised whilst bullying was more idiosyncratic. For some pupils at Bayview School bullying had no boundaries. As I remarked, for a town of the size studied for this thesis, that would mean that an individual who was a victim at this school had little opportunity to escape from his or her ascribed victim status.

From a victimologist's point of view, the moral career of a victim at Bayview School is highly problematic for him or her. Bullying was a static, negative action that was always present within every year group. The acceptance that 'there's always got to be' year group victims, neutralised its importance and echoes the neutralising effects of the word 'play'

The question of gender dominated this thesis, it was especially crucial to the analysis of bullying. There was not a gender divide of girls being 'bitchy' and boys being 'violent' at Bayview School. Although these forms of bullying did occur, what is of greater interest and significance is the 'uniting of the genders'. For too long criminology has looked at interaction between men at the expense of women and vice versa, but the interplay between the genders was very interesting. As the majority of adolescents interviewed for this thesis had been, or were going through, puberty, a number of accounts were highly sexualised in nature. Questions of prowess and attraction dominated narratives under the guise of 'confidence'. Furthermore, the year group victims were bullied by both genders and were both male and female. As I remarked, perhaps being a female researcher I am more able to consider the role of women, nonetheless to have done so at the expense of the male students would have been a mistake.

Overall, the pupils believed that bullying could never be stopped, it was a 'natural part' of school life. This begs the question of where did the culture of this particular school originate? Pupils accepted their year group victim and used their plight as a gauge by which to evaluate their own experiences. Once again another form of hierarchy dominated conduct: A hierarchy that measured the severity of one's situation. An interesting observation was that the victims could not understand why they had been bullied and I would suggest that this issue needs addressing in order to find possible

solutions. Even when members of the year group claimed to be united, they *still* had the obligatory year group victim. Thus, Erikson's observations that groups seem to work to produce stable numbers of deviants applied to victimisation at Bayview.

A Question of Popularity

I would argue that the key to understanding incidents of violence and bullying at Bayview School can only be understood in relation to the peer groups. I have alluded to the hidden rankings and status hierarchies that existed and I believe that these are how relations were established and maintained within the school and the wider community. Within every year group there was a group of 'popular' people and a group of 'unpopular' people or year group victims. The majority of the year belonged to one of the 'middle ground' groups; 'Townies', 'Geeks', 'Druggies', 'Barbies', 'Beachies', 'Surfers', 'Skaters' and 'Goths'. The interplay between such friendship groups reproduced the culture of the school.

All pupils judged one another on a 'hidden scale of popularity' based on a number of variables: Perceived personality, intelligence, appearance, sexuality, and relationships with partner and/or peers, poverty and family status. Along with other markers, they contributed towards an individual's status. There would be approximately twenty popular people in every year and these pupils would remain popular for the duration of their school career. Their peers would admire popular people who were held to be clever, would go out on weeknights and were usually the first to smoke, drink, take drugs and engage in sexual relations, i.e. those who pioneered 'cool' behaviour. This ranking is highly significant as it demonstrates the power of the individuals at this school to impose what is popular at a given point in time. Things do change, the static presence of the popular group over the generations was made fluid by the fact that those who were popular, ten to fifteen years ago, were popular because of different music tastes, fashions etc.

The culture of consumption had an impact on the pupils at Bayview School but only to a limited extent. I would argue that the continual formal presence of the popular group was a consequence of the size of the school and the community. The intimacy of pupils and residents of the town influenced the social organisation of the community, in a manner reminiscent of Willis' argument in *Learning to Labour*, which looked at how

working class children upheld working class values and ended up in working class employment. It is in effect a functionalist argument with a link to parenting styles. A similar functionalist argument could be applied to Rivers End. However, the dominance of the middle class children, the popular people, was an outcome of the peculiar size and location of the school.

The hidden scale of popularity dominated all forms of interaction within Bayview School, and it enhanced a hierarchy that was reproduced through bullying and violence. In turn, the established hierarchy maintained a pecking order, which was upheld from generation to generation.

Concluding Remarks

This thesis demonstrates the day-to-day experience of school for a group of pupils at a point in time. The size and location of the school aid the maintenance of the hierarchy. The wider community uphold similar values, and problems within school often dispersed into the surrounding town. It would be interesting to see if similar views are upheld and maintained in similar communities and what the subsequent effect is on the school and the pupils. It is a qualitative investigation in one school and cannot be taken to stand for day-to-day schooling of other pupils elsewhere within the British education system.

Nonetheless, the intricate patterns of violence and bullying do need to be studied further. In the end I would argue that I did not study 'violence' or 'bullying', but a process whereby status and power reinforced an established hierarchy of pupil's informal relations. Thus, the importance of the peer group emerged as the key to understanding interactions between the pupils at Bayview School. The power of the peer group would have to be taken into consideration in any strategies devised to curtail bullying. Otherwise, the code of silence would continue to be upheld and the pupils would continue to police themselves, upholding the code of the hidden scale of popularity.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1
LETTERS OF ACCESS

2nd December 1999

Dear Mr

Some time ago you kindly allowed me access to your school in order for me to interview ten pupils for my MSc dissertation project. I now have been given the opportunity to conduct research for a PhD dissertation under the supervision of Professor Paul Rock at the London School of Economics. My topic is primarily the social life of schoolchildren and their experiences of life in and out of school.

For the purpose of this work I need to talk further to children and I wondered if you could permit me to return to Bayview School in order to do so.

Obviously I understand that this is a potentially difficult request but I would be extremely grateful if you could contact me and I could give you more details of the research.

I enclose a letter from my professor who would be happy to talk to you about my work.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours Sincerely

Carrie Myers.

P.S. I am in Cornwall until the 6th of January and can be reached on ...until that date.



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE
tel: 0171 955 7296
fax: 0171 955 7405
email: p.rock@lse.ac.uk

Department of
Sociology

Paul Rock
Professor of Social Institutions

1 December, 1999

Dear [REDACTED]

May I thank you for the help which you have already given to Carrie Myers in the work she has been doing on the social life of schoolchildren. As you know, Carrie is a responsible and serious woman who is conducting research for a PhD dissertation under my supervision at the School, and she clearly understands the need to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of any information that she is given.

Carrie now needs to talk further to children about their experiences of life in and out of school, and I would be most grateful if you could permit her to return to [REDACTED] in order to do so. I would of course be very happy to talk to you about her work if you would find it useful.

Yours sincerely,

The London School of Economics is a
School of the University of London; it
is a charity and is incorporated in
England as a company limited by
guarantee under the Companies Acts
(Reg. No 70527)

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE INTERVIEWS WITH PUPILS

- Describe your family for me. (Where do you live? How long have you lived there? Is that with your family? Do you have a big/small family? What do your parents do? What do you want to do when you leave school? How much do your parents know about what you get up to?)
- What's it like for _ year olds in Rivers End? What's it like growing up here? How does it compare with other areas? Fantasy of London – What do you think its like for someone of your age to live and grow up in London? What are the best and worst things about living in Rivers End? Where do you hang out? (Do you go out at night? Do you go out at the weekends?) Do you use the youth club at all? Do you visit the new youth drop in centre? Do you know anyone that has? Are facilities improving in Rivers End with the opening of such centres? What more could be done for youths in Rivers End?
- Have you been a victim in the last year? What happened? Did you know the perpetrators? Did you do anything? What happened next? Did you talk about it? Are there any crimes you would report? Do you ever tell? (The Who's are important Brother? Sister? Cousin?) Have you ever bullied at all? Do you have a particular dislike to someone? Why?
- When was the last time you saw a fight? Who was it? What did they do? What happened? Did anyone try to stop it? Should anyone try to stop it? What happens if someone tells? Does everyone agree with you, is this the norm? When do you think a fight is right? Is it a good way to end a disagreement? Are there any rules for the fight? Are weapons allowed? When some one is down is it stopped? When is it fair for other to join in? Are fights between someone of your age and those between adults different?
- What year are you in at school? How do you travel to school? (If on foot, is that with a friend or friends? Do you always walk together? If by bus, how long does the journey take? Do you always sit with the same people?) Are there any unsafe parts in your journey? Why? What do you do? Are there times you fell at risk? Is there anyone you try to avoid ?
- Are there any gangs or groups within your age group? Are you a member? Do they accept you? And who do you accept? How do you join? Are there any

hangers on? Are there any groups you try to avoid? Is bullying an issue? Where does it happen? When does it happen? Who are the victims? Have you been in trouble yourself in the last year? What makes a bully? Has anyone tried to do anything about bullying? What should be done?

APPENDIX 3

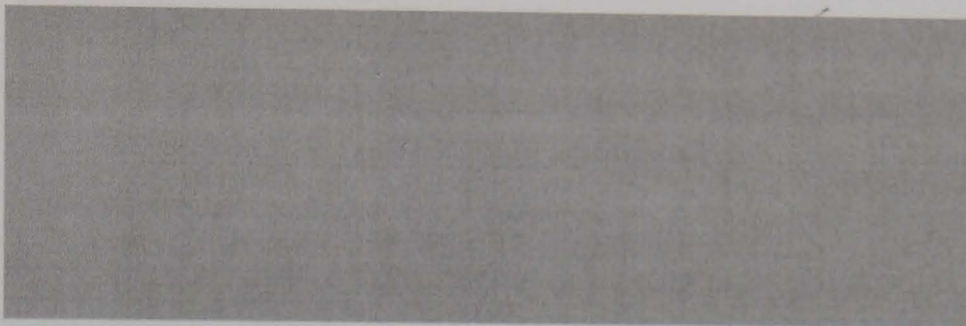
TABLE DOCUMENTING DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE INTERVIEWED

PUPILS

Name (chosen by interviewee)	Gender	Year Group	Age	Prefect
Sarah	Female	9	13	N/A
Zoë	Female	8	13	N/A
Chad	Male	7	11	N/A
Jim	Male	11	16	Head Boy
Brian	Male	11	15	Deputy Head Boy
Rachel	Female	11	16	Deputy Head Girl
Rosie	Female	11	16	Head Girl
Raj	Male	10	15	Temporary
Katie	Female	10	15	Temporary
Jessica	Female	8	13	N/A
Izzy	Female	8	13	N/A
Jamie	Female	7	11	N/A
Mike	Male	10	15	No
Demelza	Female	10	15	No
Stephanie	Female	9	13	N/A
Louise	Female	9	13	N/A
Kerry	Female	11	16	Prefect
Tilly	Female	8	13	N/A
Tammy	Female	7	11	N/A
Simon	Male	7	11	N/A
Fudge	Female	9	13	N/A
Bill	Male	9	13	N/A
Ed	Male	10	15	No
Emily	Female	10	15	No
Jimbo	Male	11	16	No
James	Male	8	12	N/A
Chantel	Female	11	15	No
Mia	Female	11	16	Prefect
Tristan	Male	11	16	Prefect
Sally	Female	10	15	Temporary
Max Power	Male	10	15	Temporary
Jon	Male	9	13	N/A
Jess	Female	9	14	N/A

APPENDIX 4

LETTER OF CONSENT



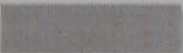
Dear Parent

A former pupil of our school Carrie Myers is conducting research for a PhD Dissertation at the London School of Economics. Her topic is primarily the social life of young people and their experiences/outlook on life. I would like to support her efforts and have asked for two volunteers from each year to take part in an interview with Carrie to be held at this school.

Your son/daughter has volunteered to be interviewed and I now request your permission for this to take place.

Thank you in anticipation of your support.

Yours sincerely



Headteacher

.....*Please detach and return*.....

To: The Headteacher, 

*I am willing/not willing for my son/daughter to be interviewed as detailed in your letter of the 17th January 2001.

Signed: _____ **(Parent/Guardian) Date:** _____

*Please delete as appropriate

APPENDIX 5

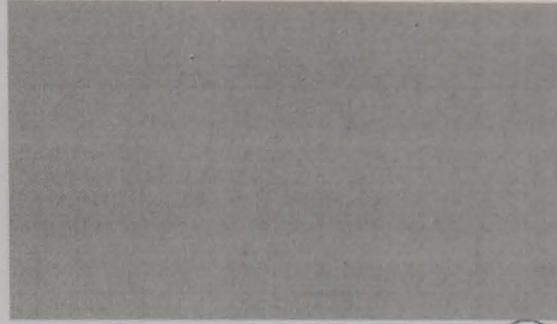
OFFICIAL SCHOOL POLICIES

General Procedure for Pupils

- All coats to be removed on entering school and placed in lockers - the cloakroom is available for emergency use. NO coats in classrooms or on top of lockers.
- The school uniform/jewellery code to be fully observed at all times.
- Always follow the one-way system, which is essential for your safety.
- During wet breaks, go to the Hall.
- The front door to be used by staff, prefects and visitors only.
- Keep all books and the school free of graffiti.
- During non-lesson time you are only to use a room under the direct responsibility of a member of staff.
- Observe all bell times promptly
- Move quietly around the school.
- Organise personal equipment/kit as necessary and in advance. Be prepared for lessons.
- No chewing gum allowed in school.
- You must not use blackboards/white boards unless specifically instructed so to do by a member of staff.
- When seated use chairs and stools only unless otherwise instructed by the member of staff in charge.
- You must not leave the school premises at any time without the necessary permission and both sign out and sign in on return.
- Do not leave bags on tops of lockers.

SJ2337

Appendix A



CLASSROOM CODE

- ◆ Arrive on time, line up quietly, have all necessary books and equipment.
- ◆ On teacher's instruction enter and stand behind chairs silently. Remain seated during registration and lesson unless told otherwise by teacher.
- ◆ Follow instructions first time - raise your hand before speaking - treat others, their work and property with respect.
- ◆ Work quietly and purposefully - ask for help if required.
- ◆ As instructed by teacher, enter homework in Diary on appropriate day - stand silently - move quietly and directly to next lesson.

SJ2363(6)

POLICY STATEMENT : BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE

"Schools play a vital part in promoting the spiritual, cultural, mental and physical development of young people. The ethos of the school should include a clear vision of the values which matter within the school and in the surrounding community, including respect for property, honesty, trust and fairness, and self-respect and self-discipline."

*"Pupil Behaviour and Discipline"
(DfEE 8/94 - May 1994)*

Rationale

This policy builds upon the extensive consultation with staff which resulted in the school's "Discipline Policy", the discussions with both staff and pupils leading to the "Anti-Bullying Policy", and the clear rules, values and expectations set out in the "Prospectus", "Classroom Code" and "Mission Statement". It confirms the commitment of [redacted] to equality of access for all to an ordered and secure learning environment.

Aims

"To ensure that each boy and girl is permitted and encouraged to develop as an individual, as long as that development does not conflict with the accepted common standards of learning and behaviour."

Objectives

- To confirm good and consistent practice in dealing with pupil behaviour.
- To promote, among pupils, self-discipline and proper regard for authority.
- To encourage good behaviour and respect for others.
- To ensure pupils' standard of behaviour is acceptable.
- To deal effectively with negative behaviour.
- To ensure effective liaison within and outside school on matters relating to pupil behaviour.

Action Plan

1. The school ethos concentrates upon what is positive in pupil behaviour rather than the reverse. It actively encourages reward for pupil co-operation and effort through two main channels:
 - a) Academic: through a system of certificates for progress and for attainment.
 - b) Pastoral: through a credit system given in Year 9 and an integrated house merits system for Years 7 and 8. Certificates, prizes and the wearing of merit badges play an important part.
 - c) Sporting: through cups and certificates awarded at the close of each term after House Matches, and at the close of the academic year after Sports Day.

In these cases, and many others, letters home from members of staff and individual commendations from senior staff, play an important part. Occasional awards and commendations are also delivered by the Headteacher in an awards assembly every Friday morning, with appropriate publicity in the local press.

2. The School Development Plan contains further emphasis on this ethos through the "Mission Statement", "Aims and Philosophy", "Parents Charter" and the clearly outlined intentions and evaluations contained therein.
3. This positive ethos is further stressed to pupils through the Pastoral Curriculum delivered to all years during the tutor period on a Wednesday morning.
4. Negative pupil behaviour is viewed as disruptive, unacceptable and necessary to overcome in the shortest possible time frame. The formal structure for this is outlined in the "Discipline Policy", which includes methods for recording and monitoring discipline. However, teachers and pupils are encouraged to resolve problems quickly and individually before recourse to this policy becomes necessary.

Clear expectations of behaviour and presentation have been made known to all parents and pupils who have received a copy of the "Classroom Code" and "Dress Code". The "Classroom Code" also appears on every classroom wall in the school and in every Study Diary. There is also an "Anti-Bullying policy", prepared following discussions with staff and pupils, a "Bus Code" and a lunchtime exit procedure.

Guidance to teachers on appropriate methods of intervention in disciplinary issues is offered on an ongoing basis, through individual discussion, staff meetings and through the "Discipline Policy". Guidance relating to professional restraint in such dealings is offered in Cornwall L.E.A.'s "Guidance to Teachers" and in the [redacted] document "Referrals to External Agencies". All teachers at [redacted] are expected to conform to the standards set out in these documents.

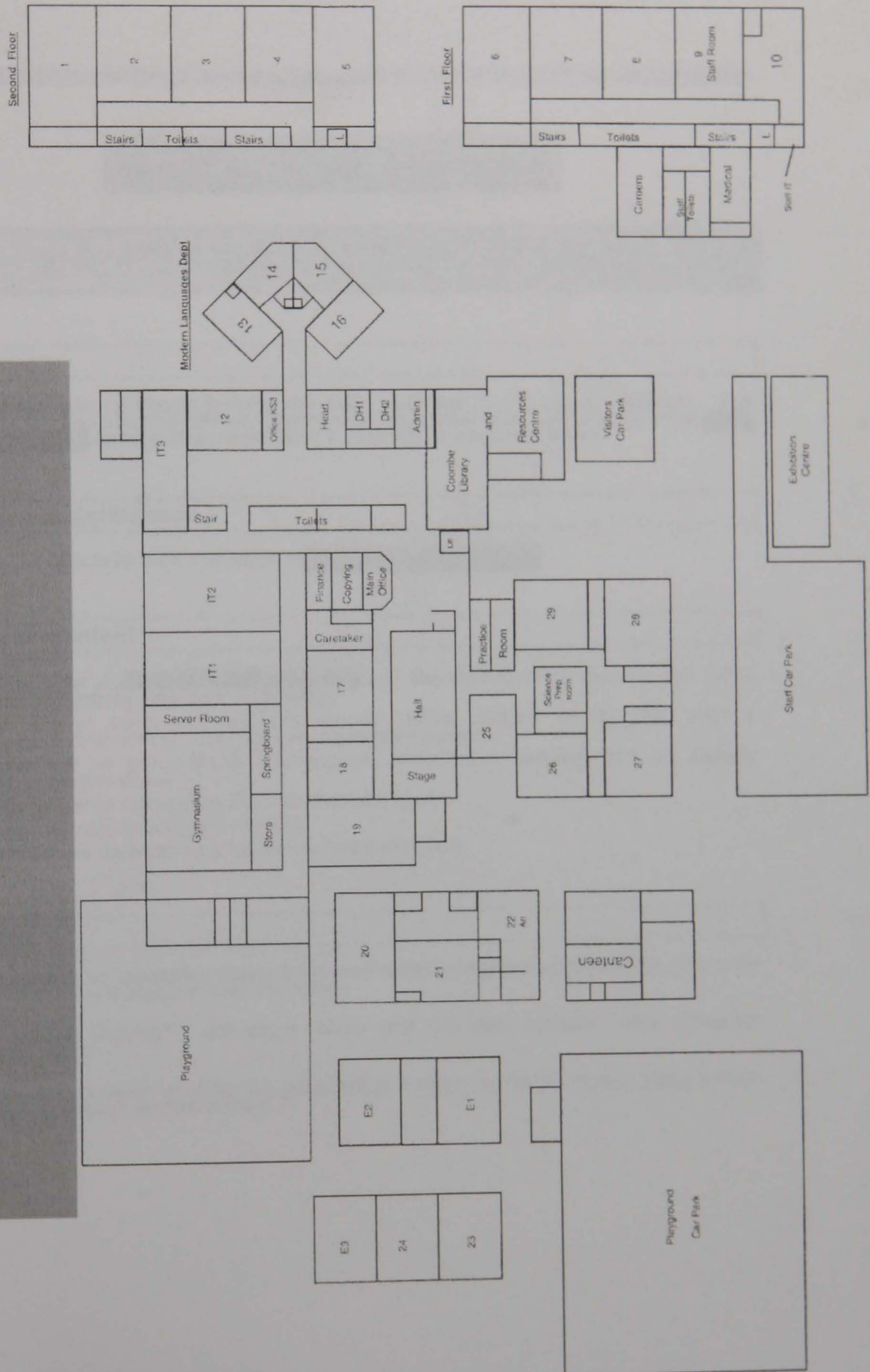
5. Parental involvement operates at every level of management, from the classroom teacher and form tutor to the Headteacher. Teachers are encouraged to contact parents immediately over any behavioural issue which concerns them, keeping senior staff informed and calling for support as necessary. Involvement will range from interviews, joint arrangements for out-of-school hours detentions and referral to outside agencies up to signing of contracts of behaviour and involvement in moves to exclude.
6. Governors are similarly involved in pastoral and disciplinary issues, primarily through the Discipline Sub-Committee. This will be convened to meet with parents and pupils to try to head off disciplinary situations, or to agree contracts of behaviour or consider exclusion should this become a necessity.
7. Senior staff at [redacted] are conversant with orders under Section 262 of the 1993 Education Act and subsequent changes to the law on exclusion, education otherwise and discipline matters. These prescribe fixed term exclusions for up to 45 school days in any one school year and permanent exclusions. Schools also have clear legal authority to detain pupils on disciplinary grounds after the end of the school session, without the consent of the parent. The school fully intends to operate under these orders and also seek the guidance of the Cornwall L.E.A. in such matters, including regulations governing appeals.
8. [redacted] sees exclusion as a last resort only after all available methods to resolve pupil indiscipline have been exhausted. This will mean that an exclusion follows systematically from the policy on behaviour, and may also mean that allowing the pupil to remain at the school would be seriously detrimental to the education or welfare of the pupil concerned or to other pupils at the school.
9. From time to time senior staff will seek agreement from parents to keep pupils at home for a brief period to enable a way forward to be determined regarding their behaviour.
10. [redacted] has also published an "Equal Opportunities" policy confirming its stand against any attempt by pupils to become involved in racial or sexual harassment of others. Such behaviour will not be tolerated at [redacted].
11. Arrangements for investigating truancy are outlined in the "Policy on Attendance", and pupils can also expect to be dealt with under the "Discipline Policy" in such cases. However, [redacted] is fully aware of the complex issues which may lie behind such behaviour, and will always seek the full support of parents and specialist external agencies in addressing them.
12. Through all these arrangements, the emphasis wherever possible will be on positive reinforcement. Example will be given through the system of prefect leadership and prefect teams, as described in the relevant policy, and community involvement will be sought wherever possible.

Conclusion

██████████ is justly proud of its reputation for clear expectations of presentation and discipline, and for a caring and supportive environment which reaches out into the surrounding community. Through continual review of the policy outlined above, ██████████ is confident of maintaining and extending this reputation.

APPENDIX 6

MAP OF THE SCHOOL



APPENDIX 7

BULLYING POLICY

Reviewed and Approved by Governors: March 2000

1763

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY STATEMENT

Introduction

The procedure for reacting to bullying has been confirmed in this policy document. The serious issues raised by this form of negative behaviour have been fully recognised at [redacted] and the steps to be taken in response are outlined below.

Statement of Entitlement

Pupils have a right to be safe and happy at [redacted]

Statement of Intent

- Every pupil at [redacted] has the right to enjoy learning and extra-curricular activity, free from intimidation.
- Our school community will not tolerate unkind actions or remarks, even if unintentionally arising, and however apparently insidious.
- Pupils will be supported in reporting any instances of bullying, and are actively encouraged to do so.
- Bullying will be taken seriously and dealt with firmly.
- Pupils will receive a careful hearing.
- Concern will be expressed for both bullied and bullies.

Definition

"Bullying is the wilful, conscious desire to hurt or threaten or frighten someone else, and is the exercise of some sort of power over the victim".

("Action Against Bullying" - Johnstone, Munn and Edwards, Scottish Office Education Department, 1992)

Statistically one in seven children are subjected to bullying, some 1.5 million pupils in both state and independent sectors in the U.K.

Indicators

Bullying can lead to:

- absenteeism
- underachievement and decline in achievement
- friendship breakdown and family disruption
- depression and other psychological disorder
- anti-social behaviour
- attention seeking
- self harm
- becoming a bully in turn

Causes

Bullying can result from factors such as:

- stereotyping inside and outside school
- parenting problems
- background and community issues
- pupil groupings
- sub-cultural secrecy among pupils
- peer group and sibling rivalry
- media pressure

Target Groups

Much bullying can be directed at particular pupils who are:

- new to the school or group
- easily identified to a particular social or cultural group
- particularly high or low in the scale of academic achievement
- predisposed to academic effort
- physically different
- emotionally fragile
- of low self-esteem
- prone to strategies of appeasement

Teacher Action

In response to the challenge of bullying, teachers will need to:

- watch carefully for signs or instances of bullying
- take these seriously, but react calmly
- be aware of the insidious nature of some negative activities
- listen to those involved
- keep notes of situations
- pass these on to the Year Tutor
- liaise with Prefect and Mentor teams.

Management Implications

Senior staff will need to consider:

- A measured response, involving all parties
- Interviews with those involved either separately or together
- Parental involvement
- Strategies for the future, often involving named teacher and senior pupil mentors
- Achieving conciliation or, in extremes, separation
- Treating cause as well as effect.
- Behaviour counselling with sanctions
- Securing written agreements between pupils if other measures fail
- Liaise with Prefect and Mentor teams.

Positive Reinforcement

In an "open" school dedicated to anti-bullying strategies, the pupils will expect:

- reinforced cohesion, through pupil groups and teams
- discussion and topic work through the Pastoral Curriculum
- time for work on the issue in mainstream classes (i.e. English, Drama, History) when it is raised
- thematic work and information in assembly
- support from all teachers, particularly form tutors and pastoral staff
- intervention at the appropriate level
- mentoring by staff and senior pupils

Conclusion

"Bullies are guilty of robbing their victims of all that is essential for making a happy, well-balanced childhood, and instead filling their lives with intolerable pain and misery."

(Mother of a victim of eight years of bullying - "Bullying: A Positive Response" - Cardiff Institute of Higher Education 1992)

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4. "Bullying: Anti-bullying Methods and Strategies"
Heateachers' Briefing, 1992
5. "Bullying: The Child's View"
La Fontaine, Childline/Galbention Foundation, 1991
6. "Bullying: Don't Suffer in Silence"
An Action Pack for Schools.
D.f.E.E. 1994

For Internal Use Only

Action for Pupils

If you are subjected to bullying:

- do not remain silent, this is an "open" school.
- inform any teacher if you wish.
- focus particularly on "mentor" teachers - your Form Tutor, Year Tutor or Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral).
- Gain support from other pupils if you wish in coming to speak, particularly Prefects and Mentors.
- Inform your parents of events as they unfold.
- Operate the strategies proposed to the best of your ability.
- Inform parents and teachers of their effectiveness.
- Check your own response to instances of bullying of others.
- Help others who are bullied to seek help.

For Internal Use Only

Action for Teachers

If you are asked for help against bullying:

- listen carefully
- take notes of the immediate situation
- pass these to the relevant Year Tutor or the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) advising on the background and the timing of intervention
- liaise over strategies for treating the problem, using knowledge of the personalities involved.
- assist in liaison with parents as appropriate
- watch for signs of success, for recurrence, or for any other indicators in other pupils.
- liaise with Prefect and Mentor teams.

For Internal Use Only

Action for Senior Staff

In assessing the situation, have regard for:

- the information from the pupil or parents
- background knowledge supplied by the other staff
- advice on the timing of intervention
- effective liaison with parents
- dedicating the necessary time to interview the pupils, whether separately or together
- remaining calm and even-handed in response
- investigating the full period of time the bullying has occurred, and the available evidence of causes
- achieving agreement by pupils to a new course of action - reconciliation if possible or separation, if not.
- naming mentors among teaching staff and senior pupils
- balancing counselling with sanctions
- proposing possible sanctions if conformity is not achieved
- monitoring the results
- providing positive reinforcements to these pupils and the school as a whole
- liaise with Prefect and Mentor teams.
- remaining vigilant.

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