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Student violence and school practice : experiences of a lower secondary male student using the methodology of participant observation

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STUDENT VIOLENCE

AND

SCHOOL PRACTICE

A study of the experiences of a lower secondary male student
using the methodology of participant observation.

Denese Shepherdson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Master of Education at the Faculty of Education,

EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

Date : November 1997

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
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ABSTRACT

School experiences are said to be a preparation for life. The experience of violence perpetrated against a male student over a period of years has resulted in wide reaching implications for him, his family, the perpetrators, his peer group and school staff. This case study examines the experiences of a provocative victim and his bullies.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Over the past thirty years I have been teaching in primary and secondary schools, rearing three children, practising social work as a School Counsellor and having close involvement with a support centre for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. In all these pursuits the notions of violence, power and control have arisen. The exercising of power and control through violence, whether it be verbal, physical, social or psychological, is something that people do to other people, regardless of age. School violence is ever present in the playground, classrooms and changerooms. The notion that some students 'deserve' to be victims, is held by some students and staff. Why such beliefs are held and used as motivation for perpetrating acts of violence against another, are questions many researchers have asked and will continue to ask. This continual encounter with incidents of violence has prompted my interest in researching the subject, firstly in the area of domestic violence and now, in this study of school violence. Why should young people seek to exercise power and control over their peers, thus causing pain and misery in their victims' lives?

In searching for answers to this question, I will draw on a case study of a lower secondary male student's experiences with student violence and school practice. The following incident taken from my journal entries marks the beginning of my interest in school violence :

A Year 9 student who had been the victim of bullying at the school for a number of years was observed by his maths teacher as having become unusually quiet and withdrawn. The boy was recognised as a provocative victim who, according to some teachers and students, "deserved much of what he got". A series of interventions had taken place over the years. As the bullying continued to be perpetrated by a varying number of Year 9 boys, a close watch was being made on them by staff members and one perpetrator was on a contract to keep away from the victim who was also contracted to stay away from this particular boy. The victim was reluctant to see me as suggested by the maths teacher so I went to the classroom to ask him to come and talk in my office. I was aware that my presence could cause further difficulties for the victim but determined to set up a procedure the boy could follow should problems result as a consequence of the meeting.

(August, 1996)

Violence has been a part of society throughout human history. It is seen as a normal part of life and typical of human behaviour. And yet, eruptions of violence in what is perceived as a stable society always come as a surprise. Acts of hatred and violence are often attributed to the deviant, immature or abnormal mind. Violence is not perceived to be a common occurrence or part of everyday life (Schostak, 1986).

Violence has become one of the major social issues of this decade. Violence in the home, the community, the workplace and the school are all receiving attention. The media has played a significant role in raising community awareness although at times this has been at the expense of a totally balanced view. Violence in schools periodically becomes the focus of attention through reports of some latest research findings (Slee, 1992; Rigby, 1995; and Tulloch, 1993), conference proceedings (Chapell, 1993; Polk, 1993) or, more dramatically, legal action taken by parents or a victim (The Australian, April 3, 1997). With violence so clearly under the spotlight explanations are being sought regarding its occurrence, justification or otherwise. This case study seeks to understand the attitudes, dynamics and practices involved in a situation where the victim is regarded by the perpetrators, the students and some staff members as being provocative.

The similarities between school violence and domestic violence are significant. The issue of power and control is common to both forms of violence (Bessant & Watts, 1993). Just as it has been found that bullies enjoy the feeling of power they gain when they victimise others, so perpetrators of family violence have been found to be seeking power over their partners and children. (Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1993; Olweus, 1993; Besag, 1989 ; and Tulloch, 1995). Significantly, the desire to exercise power and control appears to be a predominantly male characteristic although some

females do attempt to exercise the same over other females, often using less physical means. (Siann, Callaghan, Lockhart and Rouson, 1993 ; Batsche and Knoff, 1994 ; Rigby and Slee, 1995 ; and Tulloch, 1995.) Connell (1995) and Kenway and Fitzclarence (1996) acknowledge that the social, cultural and psychic construction of masculinity is related to violence. Both in and out of school many adolescent boys are constantly seeking to sort out identity and dominance relations through legitimate means such as sport and illegitimate means such as brawling, bashing and bullying. Unfortunately, according to Bessant & Watts (1993), the likelihood of school bullies becoming domestically violent is significant.

When the power of one or more individuals over another is unequal violence can occur. This power can be used to control the victim. Not all power imbalances are seen as being socially unacceptable. For example, a highly competitive approach to academic, social and sporting endeavours is actively encouraged in Australian schools. Likewise, a parent's power is culturally sanctioned in controlling the behaviour of a child. A teacher is expected to use her power to control the pupils in her care. School administrators are considered to have failed if violent behaviour breaks out in the school. Arriving at a common understanding of how power can be used positively and effectively and modelled in a morally just manner is the challenge facing educators, parents and the wider community.

Research Problem

The research problem is to understand how one group of students and teachers make sense of acts of violence involving a lower secondary school male student. The aim of this case study is to explain the nature, functions and consequences of school violence from the perspective of the key stakeholders. In doing so, the study will seek answers to the following four research questions :

1. What does this case study tell us about the nature of school violence?
2. How do students and teachers make sense of acts of school violence?
3. How do they explain these acts of violence?
4. What are the implications for school practice?

Significance of the study

The purpose of the study is to examine one student's experience of bullying at an independent secondary school. Over a period of nine months an examination of the events leading up to the violence, the interventions made by staff and the response of the perpetrators and the victim are considered. The aim is to gain greater insight into the nature, functions and effects of school violence by analysing the stories of the key stakeholders, both students and staff. The stories and meanings attached to the experiences of pupils and staff members are significant in themselves because they can shed light on the nature and causes of school violence. Qualitative case studies such as this do not have to be viewed as exploratory but rather as informative in their own right (Jackson, 1992 ; Owens, 1982, and Woods, 1985).

In much of the literature reviewed victims are often seen as passive participants in violent incidences. In contrast, this case study looks at the experiences of a provocative victim. The tendency of onlookers and perpetrators to blame the victim is common in many such incidents of school bullying and also domestic violence.

This study seeks to develop an understanding of the victim's motivation to provoke or retaliate, and to consider the attitudes of the other participants. The aim is to reveal the subtle and complex

dynamics which operate in situations of male violence. The features that drive the ongoing, long term battle for power and control among the male stakeholders and their supportive peers, are significant issues in this study.

The vast majority of literature surveyed for this thesis reports on the results of surveys and other broad ranging examinations of violence in schools. For example, Oliver, Hoover and Hazler (1994) surveyed small-town midwestern schools in the United States; Olweus (1993) has conducted extensive surveys in Norway and Sweden; and Mellor (1994) used a variation of Olweus' questionnaire for his Scottish research. A long term study of English students by Ambert (1994) used students' written recollections while Branwhite used a questionnaire to survey large numbers of students in Northern England. Australian research by Slee and Rigby (1989) and Tulloch (1995) used surveys with primary and high school students. Few, if any, case studies have been reported in the recent literature.

'Snapshots' of some students' experiences may have been reported but full case-studies conducted over a period of time have not been easily found.

It is hoped that the insights gained from this case study will help schools and teachers to better understand the ways in which schools intervene and discipline children in cases of school bullying. While

this research focuses on a single case of school violence, some of its insights may be of relevance to other forms of violence. This may help us to understand the cycle of violence which appears to be perpetrated through the generations in families, schoolyards, workplaces and sporting arenas.

Definition of terms

Underpinning school violence is the desire for power and control over others. In the case of Australian males, power is often linked to the need to sort out identity issues and dominance relations (Connell, 1995; Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1996 ; and Tulloch, 1995). In this section, I want to provide a working definition of the key concepts used in this study. These include power, control, school violence, bullying, disciplinary site and masculinity.

Power

....is present in all interactions and people attempt to balance power either productively or destructively. Destructive power can exist where there is the ability (or perceived ability) to inflict harm or to inhibit another person from realising his or her interests. It can also be derived from the ability to cause discomfort. It is sometimes manifested by verbal, but often by non-verbal, messages of disinterest, disrespect or disagreement (Girard, and Koch, 1996 : 169).

Control

....is an individual or individuals' domination and/or command over one individual or more (Besag, 1989 : 4).

School violence

....includes conditions or acts that create a climate in which individual students and teachers feel fear or intimidation in addition to being the victims of assault, theft or vandalism (Batsche and Knoff, 1994 : 165).

Bullying

....is an attack carried out solely by one individual against another, one individual against a group, one group against another group or a group against an individual. It is regular, often repeated over time, systematic and perpetrated with the intent of persecuting the victim. It includes physical, verbal, social and emotional actions of a destructive nature to the victim (Besag, 1989 ; Olweus, 1993).

Disciplinary site

....is concerned with the observation and regulation of human beings, with production of subjectivity, particularly as it relates to the area of their desires, physical dispositions and cognitive power (Preston and Symes, 1992 : 23).

Masculinity

....is the characteristic forms of behaviour expected of men in any given culture (Giddens, 1993 : 756).

Conceptual framework

This research adopts a socio-cultural orientation developed initially by the sociologist Anthony Giddens (1993) who recognised the limitations of traditional biological and psychological explanations of violence. Despite a recent resurgence of interest in biological explanations, particularly in relation to the debate about men's behaviour and health, psychological explanations have become less important as social-cultural explanations have gained more prominence.

The limitations of biological and psychological explanations

Fitzclarence, Laskey, Kenway and Warren (1995) note that in the analysis of violent behaviour :

biology and psychology are the two major theoretical fields which have traditionally provided the basis for analysis and explanation (Fitzclarence *et al.*, 1995 : 3)

In the past, various biological theories have been used to explain crime and other forms of deviance. These theories included peculiarities in the size and shape of the skull and brain as suggested by Broca, an early French anthropologist and Lombroso, an Italian criminologist working late last century. While these ideas were soundly criticised, further attempts to use biological make-up as an explanation for deviance have followed. Sheldon in the 1940s claimed that the muscular physique (mesomorphs) of some people

made them more likely to be delinquent than the thin (ectomorphs) or fleshy people (endomorphs). This theory, says Giddens (1993 : 123) is seriously flawed because it cannot show the influence of heredity.

More recently, with the resurgence and refining of genetic science, claims have been made that criminals, particularly those committing violent crimes, have a higher incidence of possessing an extra Y chromosome than in the wider population. This claim was discredited when research with a more representative population was carried out (Mednick *et al.*, 1982, in Giddens, 1993 : 123).

Psychological theories have associated criminality with particular types of personality. While Freud paid little attention to criminology, his ideas have been used by others to develop explanations for deviant behaviour in individuals. One such explanation focuses on psychopathic or amoral behaviour. It argues that a minority of people exhibit psychopathic behaviour because of a failure to learn self-restraint during the Oedipal phase of development in childhood. These individuals are seen to be totally without empathy and delight in acts of violence (Nye, 1986, and Haralambos & Holborn, 1991). Such individuals may also be found among the non-criminal population, argues Giddens (1993 : 124), presenting themselves as explorers, gamblers and heroes, seeking adventure along more socially acceptable avenues.

Many different circumstances are involved in criminal behaviour. Psychological theories fail to explain why some violent acts are carried out by lone individuals while others are the work of gangs. The psychological make-up of loners has little to do with those who make up close-knit gangs. Fitzclarence, Laskey, Kenway and Warren (1995 : 4) maintain that:

violence cannot be reduced to matters associated with the deficiency of the personality of the perpetrator or victim, or to the dysfunction of the particular family involved.

In contrast, and in light of the evidence presented in the 1990 report of *The National Committee on Violence*, Fitzclarence *et al.*, argue that masculinity, sexuality, marginality, age and familiarity should be central to any analysis of causes of and solutions to the issue of violence in Australian Society. It is to some of these matters that I shall now turn.

Socio-cultural explanations

Drawing on the work of Smith (1995), Fitzclarence *et al.*, believe that violence and crime can only begin to make sense by integrating explanatory insights from psychology, sociology and economics. For this reason, they are attracted to the work of Giddens (1993), one of

the few social theorists who has managed to develop a holistic approach which brings together the elements suggested by Smith.

Giddens (1993 : 132) believes it is unlikely that a single theory could account for all forms of criminal conduct, including violence. While psychological and biological theories can identify personality characteristics there is a need to understand how the:

particular context of social learning and experience, predispose certain individuals to contemplate criminal acts... (The) sociological theories of crime... correctly emphasise the continuities, between criminal and 'respectable' behaviour... there is (also) a strong contextual element in the occurrence of criminal activities (Giddens, 1993 : 132).

Giddens' (1993) writing links social context and individual characteristics to violence. He acknowledges that violence within families reflects patterns of violent behaviour in the wider community. For instance, many men who perpetrate violence against their female partners and children, also have records of violence towards others (Giddens 1993: 418).

Violence in its various forms, including school violence, needs to be considered in terms of social interaction. To understand the actions of perpetrators and the experience of victims, Fitzclarence *et al.*, (1995) believe that an understanding of crime from a sociological

perspective is necessary :

One of the most important aspects of sociological thinking about crime is an emphasis on the interconnections between conformity and deviance in different social contexts (Giddens, 1993 : 125).

Thus what is considered conformity in one subculture can be considered deviance in the wider community. The rules of conduct (norms) specify certain types of behaviour in certain social contexts. At the same time, norms can forbid certain behaviours according to the social context.

The link with education can be made at this point. Children in a school setting are influenced by the norms of that setting. If bullying is carried out and teachers have an attitude that it is inevitable and intervention is a waste of time, then children will consider retaliatory bullying as an option. Social learning and social location can be influenced through interventions by schools and the education system in general.

Violence and masculinity

Evidence cited in the report of *The National Committee on Violence* (1990) identified violent offenders in Australia as being overwhelmingly male, primarily aged between 18 and 30. Their

altercations were either with other males or with women and children with whom they lived. A considerable proportion of violent crimes go unreported and frequently are those related to sexual and domestic assaults. Using a socio-cultural perspective the link between violence and masculinity can be understood.

Connell (1995) believes there is an urgent need to develop a cultural analysis of violence. He argues that violence and the social construction of masculinity are related. He maintains some kinds of masculinity are more implicated with violence than others.

Connell maintains that masculinity is socially constructed and not static, but constantly evolving. As an individual interacts with those within his surroundings so he pursues what Connell refers to as the individual's life 'project'. This 'project' involves the making and remaking of identity and meaning, in a manner that reveals the social and psychic complexity and fragility of masculinity. Kenway and Fitzclarence describe it as :

the vulnerable under-belly of all masculinities, to the driving force of such emotions as confusion, uncertainty, fear, impotence, shame and rage and to their expression..... (of) masculine performances. These performances displace such emotions at the same time as they allow the performer to claim power and potency (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1996: 2).

Connell (1995) identifies four types of masculinities - *hegemonic*, *subordinate*, *complicitous* and *marginal* on the basis of general cultural, social and institutional patterns of power and meaning. *Hegemonic* masculinity refers to the dominant and dominating type of masculinity which claims the highest status and exercises the greatest authority and influence. *Subordinate* masculinity is the direct opposite of hegemonic masculinity and is characterised by repression and oppression. An example of this type of masculinity is the gay male or any male who links himself to 'feminine' characteristics or behaviour. *Complicitous* masculinity refers to those males who do not actively practise violent behaviour but who are able to benefit from the subordination of women or the 'patriarchal dividend'. These males do not have to take the same risks that the 'front line troops' take. The *marginal* males are those who, because of their race or class, are dominated by the hegemonic males. Aborigines are an example of this type of masculinity. They may actually practise domination through power and control within their own marginalised group but are unable to practise it in the wider community (Connell, 1995, 79).

Kenway and Fitzclarence (1996 : 3) believe it is important to identify the different femininities which unconsciously support hegemonic masculinity. Women escaping domestic violence often need to change their manner of relating to male partners so that the cycle of

power and control is broken. The authors suggest that anti-violence education is not only a boys' matter.

The notion of sexuality is important in the masculine identity. Its fragile nature is evident when considering the type of taunts tossed about between males. Violence against females is commonly in the form of rape and sexual assault. It is believed that more girls are victims of incest than boys. In the schoolyard, teasing and taunting relating to sexuality are frequently directed at girls and women.

The issue of sexuality has been liberalised in Australian society in recent years. Giddens (1993: 15) describes sexuality as 'a prime connecting point between body, self-identity and social norms' This widening of the view of 'normal' sexuality has both supporters and opponents. Those with a strong belief in dominant forms of masculinity find this liberalising of sexuality most threatening. As gay and lesbian relationships, for example, have become socially and legally acknowledged, so male dominance in sexual relations has been challenged. With the dramatic social changes of the last thirty years, there has been a greater push for equality and anti-discrimination legislation which has also produced a conservative backlash. There is evidence of a well entrenched resistance to liberalising sexuality, as there is with other issues such as racial equality (Connell, 1995; Giddens, 1993).

Schools are micro social environments. Thus changes in the wider environment are reflected in relations between the members of a school community. Learning how to initiate and sustain intimate relationships without the need for emotional and physical abuse is a task all young people undertake. From their first encounters in the classroom and playground children are being monitored, corrected and encouraged to interact harmoniously with each other. For children from abusive homes this is often a difficult task.

As Miller (1990) notes, many children encounter for the first time alternative forms of relating to each other when they enter school. Schools are uniquely placed at the intersection of private and public spheres. Their importance in modelling and shaping genuine forms of equality and democracy, should not be underestimated. Fitzclarence *et al.*, (1995) note that tolerance of difference, the ability to negotiate in a genuine and principled manner, together with recognition and understanding of the emotional domain in human interaction, are key areas schools can consciously teach. This is an area where schools can bridge the changes taking place at a societal level with the changes necessary at a private level. Schools should be aware that many forms of violence are instigated by males and that it is directed towards those males (and later towards their wives and children) who they perceive as weaker than themselves.

Prohibition of violence and matching outbreaks with clear consequences is important. Equally important, is the modelling and teaching of alternative ways to solve problems. The promotion of democratic relations in the private and public sphere is a key element. As Slee (1995) notes, 'overcoming the problem of violence and its antecedents in patriarchy, authoritarianism and meritocratic competition is central to this project.'

Fitzclarence *et al.*, (1995) commented that not enough is known about gender and how it will challenge educational intervention to violent behaviour. By gaining a greater understanding of the nature of school violence, the sense that students and teachers make of acts of violence and their explanations of them, schools can play an active role in bringing about social change.

Schools, power and social control

In bringing about any such changes to school practices it is essential to understand the features which underpin a school's existence and operation. School processes based on the exercise of power, may very well model to students the hegemonic masculinity which Connell (1995) so clearly relates to the violence constantly being practised in schools and the wider community.

The broad classical, liberal view of schools is that they serve the common good of a society. By providing education for all, a society is able to progress. There is a belief that by teaching children the 'three Rs' they will become fit and able members of the workforce. The promotion of democracy to young people is believed to create law abiding citizens of the future. Notions of responsibility are imparted in the hope that as future parents, they will be capable of rearing their own families to be loyal members of a stable and progressive society.

A more critical view of schools suggests that they serve four distinct functions (Marginson, 1993; Robertson & Harvey, 1995). The first of these functions is custodial, or that of controlling students. Various means are used to ensure this occurs. Each school has a set of rules which determine starting and finishing times of the school day. Students are governed by these in terms of when they may leave the school grounds. They are expected to attend specific classes so at all times a school staff member is supervising the students' activities. Students are under surveillance at all times, including recess and lunch breaks with staff members 'on duty.'

The second function is that of supervision and discipline which overlaps to some extent with the first function. Students who do not conform to the school's rules of attendance, code of behaviour towards staff and other students, completion of tasks and other forms of expected behaviour, are disciplined according to the school's code

of practice. Students and staff have a general idea of what this disciplinary practice entails.

The third function, is the legal obligation of ensuring attendance and maintaining duty of care for all students. Thus attendance checks are kept and parents and guardians are expected to account for student absences. Suspected truancy can be reported to a government agency which then takes over the investigation and possible recourse through the courts. A school is expected to maintain its duty of care at all times. The school is accountable if a student is reported missing, or has had an accident or been attacked by other students or staff.

The fourth function is that of maintaining control over student behaviour, ensuring that the second function is carried out, that of developing suitable future citizens. Various means are employed to ensure control is maintained with staff and administration exercising constant surveillance, policing and self-regulation (Foucault in Smart, 1983). Foucault, the influential French philosopher describes social institutions such as the school as disciplinary sites. In his words, social institutions :

secreted a machinery of control that functioned like a microscope of conduct; the fine, analytical divisions that they created formed

around man an apparatus of observation, recording and training (Foucault, 1977, 173).

Disciplinary techniques of observation, recording and training are also used to carry out another two functions of schools, those of preparation and selection for the workforce and imparting knowledge, albeit selected knowledge. Foucault's work highlights how schools establish a system of punishments and rewards which serve to regulate pupils' ability to master a set body of knowledge and time, whether it be lateness, absenteeism or interruption. As well, their activity, inattentive or zealous, behaviour, speech and physical presentation and sexuality are all monitored according to certain norms.

In these ways, Foucault (1977, 173) argues that schools "classify children to create categories, determine what constitutes average and to fix norms". From this perspective, schools function to form, shape and govern individuality by utilising a variety of disciplinary techniques. School administrators through their teachers, exercise power and control over their pupils. In other words, schools are disciplinary sites where students are shaped in a multitude of ways. School practices and behaviours are used to control and direct students to conform to a prescribed set of expectations.

In the same way, some students exercise power and control over other students in an attempt to 'shape' their behaviour. 'Disciplinary' practices are exercised when some students (the victims) fail to conform to the 'expectations' of students who are attempting to exercise power and control (the bullies). This appears to be the case where males attempt to shape and control those who do not have similar interests. Violence in all its forms is used in this exercise of power and control.

While school practices entail considerable coercion through rewards and punishment for appropriate performance and behaviour, student behaviour can take a negative view of power and its ability to control others. In other words, bullying can take place. The victims realise that adherence to the bullies' demands is necessary to avoid further negative consequences, hence reinforcing the bullies' power and influence. The motives of the bullies to shape their victims appears to be of a negative orientation while, for the most part, the power and control of schools over pupils is viewed as legitimate, positive and desirable in order to forge responsible, law abiding citizens of the future. The question becomes who determines the positive and negative uses of power and control and how is this transmitted to students in the school setting?

If schools subscribe to, albeit implicitly, hegemonic masculinity then they are assisting in the production of violence. Kenway and Fitzclarence (1996 : 7) argue that if schools:

fear 'the feminine' and avoid and discourage empathetic, compassionate, nurturant and affiliative behaviours and emotional responsibility and instead favour heavy-handed discipline and control then they are complicit. If they seek to operate only at the level of rationality and if they rationalise violence then they are complicit. If they are structured in such a way as to endorse the culture of male entitlement and indicate the needs of males are more important than those of females then they are complicit. If they are repressive in their adult/child relations and do not offer adolescent students, in particular, opportunities to develop wise judgements and to exercise their autonomy in responsible ways then they are complicit. If they operate in such a way as to marginalise and stigmatise certain groups of students then they are complicit.

Therefore, whatever interventions take place to address violence in schools and the wider community, all of the above issues must be addressed if real change is to take place. An examination of a school's culture is an important first step in this process. Mass education, as has already been argued, is about order and control, accepting the rational and instrumental over the relational and affective (Miller, 1987).

Studying the disciplinary processes in a school helps paint the picture of the school's culture. Examination of the views of students and staff and how they understand the meaning behind the processes, will shed light on the culture of the school and its acceptance or otherwise of violence in its different forms.

Summary

In conclusion, I have chosen a socio-cultural framework because it provides a much wider scope through which to view the subject of school violence. I have argued that biological and psychological theories provide only limited frameworks with which to analyse and understand violence, its relationship to masculinity and to school practice. The socio-cultural framework devised by Fitzclarence *et al.*, (1995) does not exclude these more limited theories but takes account of the 'social', especially the social construction of masculinity to provide a more integrated theory of school violence. Within the socio-cultural perspective, I have drawn on the work of Connell to explain how particular constructions of masculinity are made and re-made through complex cultural, social and institutional patterns of power and meaning. To illuminate how schools are implicated in these processes of power, control and identity, I have turned to the work of Foucault, especially his understanding of the ways in which the day to day routines and practices of schools forge and shape particular identities and meanings.

Methodology

The study of violence in schools has accelerated over the past decade. A variety of methods has been employed by researchers in the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Australia and the U.S.A. ranging from surveys, questionnaires, interviews and observation embedded in action research, case studies, ethnographic studies and experimental studies (Besag , 1987 ; Mellor, 1990 ; Smith, 1991 ; Olweus, 1993 ; Stee, 1992 ;Rigby, 1995 ; Hazler, Hoover & Oliver, 1992). According to Kirby & McKenna, research methodology, theory and ideology are intertwined to reflect the researcher's particular view of the world (Kirby and McKenna, 1989). In the past, quantitative research with its collection of variables and relationships has been given more prominence by the *status quo* and therefore, has been acknowledged as the 'proper' means of producing legitimate knowledge. Hence, some methods tend to be well-developed while others are not. For instance, measurement using so-called scientific techniques, produces quantifiable and more readily generalisable conclusions (Bell, 1987).

In contrast, researchers using qualitative approaches are more interested in understanding an individual's perceptions of the world. Rather than seeking statistical 'truths', qualitative researchers are looking for insight. As Bell (1987) explains, these researchers doubt whether social 'facts' exist, and whether human beings can be examined 'scientifically'. Kirby and McKenna (1989 : 65) believe that

different people experience the world differently and therefore produce different sorts of knowledge and meaning.

Whatever the approach used, each has its strengths and weaknesses. Particular contexts are more suitable for particular techniques. The type of information required and the nature of the inquiry will determine the research technique and the data collection method chosen by the researcher. Lather (1986 : 272) believes that :

methodological questions are decided in the practice of research by those committed to developing the best possible answers to their questions, not by armchair philosophers of research.

Case study

A case study methodology has been selected for this piece of research because of the long-term, on-going nature of the bullying episode. In my view such an approach is more likely to generate a better understanding of a complex and all-engulfing social problem.

The case study methodology has no comprehensive catalogue of research designs. Yin (1995) discusses how the case study design has finally been recognised as something different from a sub-set or variation of the research designs used for other strategies such as experiments. Case study design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and to its conclusions. In other words, it guides the researcher in the

process of collecting, analysing and interpreting her observations. This research was conducted using a case study method, employing participant observation and interviews. Participant observation is research where the researcher involved is a participant during the data gathering process. The researcher is in direct contact with individuals where they normally are and doing what they normally do (Kirby and McKenna, 1989 : 77).

According to Cohen & Manion (1994 : 123) case study can reveal a great richness of information because it is in harmony with the reader's own experience, it provides a 'natural' basis for generalisation and it can represent aspects of the differences between participants' viewpoints. Stake (1978 : 5) believes that in studying human affairs there is the 'need to capitalize upon the natural powers of people to experience and understand.' Case study allows the reader a degree of freedom in judging for herself the implications of a study.

The choice of case study was made on the basis that it is a more appropriate approach for an individual researcher who is a participant observer and who is working within a limited time scale. This research was primarily concerned with the interaction of factors and events and also of people's construction of the phenomenon. That knowledge is socially constructed is a firm premise of qualitative research (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). By taking a practical instance of

bullying it was hoped that a 'full picture' of the interaction would be obtained. In large scale quantitative research these interactive processes often remain hidden. According to Labovitz & Hagedorn (1976), research by case study is designed to describe a unit rather than test hypotheses. From the results of case study hypotheses can be drawn for further study. Bassey (in Bell, 1987 : 7) believes that if case studies:

are carried out systematically and critically, if they are aimed at the improvement of education, if they are relatable, and if by publication of the findings they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research.

A major criticism of the case study approach is that it is difficult to cross check and distortion may therefore occur. In other words, generalisation may be difficult to achieve thus limiting its contribution to the development of educational theory. A case study is low in control when compared with experiments and it is low on representativeness when compared with surveys. Cause and effect are hard to differentiate. Inferring from an intensive single study or a small number of studies involves a high and unknown risk (Bell, 1987 ; Walker, 1996). In response, the supporters of case study claim that it is more important that such research is able to be related to similar situations rather than be generalised widely into theory.

Participant observation

As the researcher is the School Counsellor dealing with this instance of bullying, participant observation seems to be the most appropriate case study method to investigate the subject of school violence and school practice. Participant observation allows the researcher to incorporate her own observations with the stories of the other stakeholders. The researcher has shared and continues to do so, the experiences of the participants. She is an accepted part of the situation and therefore able to interact with the actors (Bell, 1987: 8).

Compared to other types of research, participatory research is more dependent on the other stakeholders and therefore the researcher has less control over the process. Other people's definitions of the situation are more likely to drive the researcher's work because of the cooperative nature of the situation (Elden in Reason & Rowan, 1981 : 261). Guarding against random observation is important. The researcher needs to plan carefully her approach. The researcher also needs as much as possible, to limit the sensitising of the other stakeholders to her presence. The researcher's actual role narrows her range of experience. For example, she cannot experience what a student experiences, whether it be the bully, onlooker or victim. A final problem which can occur in participant observation is that of the researcher needing to wait passively for occurrences. In fact, some useful events or material may not occur within the time span of the study.

Nevertheless, the advantages of participant observation can counteract these disadvantages. One such advantage is that the observations take place in a 'natural' setting. A second is that the observer is able to perceive the emotional responses of the other stakeholders which may lead to some useful hypotheses. Another advantage is that the extended period involved in the observation reveals a broader and richer data. The researcher is able, to record the context which gives meaning to the stakeholders' opinions. A final advantage is that, by establishing a sound rapport with the stakeholders, more sensitive questions may be asked (Labovitz & Hagedorn, 1976).

It is hoped that a three-dimensional explanation will result from this study, showing relationships, micropolitical issues and patterns of influence in the context of an independent secondary school. The approach is holistic, seeking understanding in a qualitative manner using a case study rather than a quantitative, statistical study which may provide different kinds of knowledge (Bernard in Reason and Rowan, 1981 ; Selltiz *et al.*, 1965).

Research phases

As a preliminary investigation student surveys were conducted, one being issued to lower school students by the relieving School Counsellor in the latter half of 1994, and the second in mid 1996.

These surveys sought responses regarding the incidence, nature, location and reporting of bullying in an independent secondary school. Students were also asked to assess how well teachers and administrators handled bullying. The surveys showed that many students thought there was a bullying problem in the school. Between 40 and 50 per cent of students reported incidences, about half of these occurring more than once. These took place mostly in the playground, at the lockers or in the classroom. Students feared retaliation or being branded a 'dobber' so frequently did not report it to a staff member or their parents. Students felt that the school should stop bullying. Boys reported being bullied in greater numbers than girls. A high proportion of the reported incidents were between students of the same age. In the second survey students were asked for similar information and in addition were asked to contribute ideas regarding ways to stop bullying.

As a consequence of the survey findings it was decided to further explore violence in the school. This particular case study seeks to gain further insights into the links, if any, between student violence and school practice. A series of interviews with some staff and some students were conducted. While the interview is an instrument of data collection it is also a sharing of ideas and philosophy, experience and symbolic expressions. It is a sharing of self (Kirby & McKenna, 1989: 68).

The interviews were basically unstructured. Participants were asked to give their views on the particular case under study. It was hoped that their comments would reflect their overall attitude towards bullying or school violence. It was also hoped that their comments about the particular case being researched would cover their attitudes about the legitimacy or otherwise of the violence.

The interviews were taped in the Counsellor's office at the School. They took approximately thirty five to forty minutes. While it was hoped they would be basically unstructured, some clarification by the interviewer took place, mainly with regard to the individuals they were referring to, as a number of boys have the same given name.

Analysis of data

The interview material was analysed according to the four research questions posed. As a narrative style was used in the interviews, other data was gained when the material was analysed. Unstructured interviews provide a rich source of material although there is always the risk of missing out on data relating to the key questions. The material was analysed initially to identify recurrent themes. The issues of masculinity, the role of girls, the characteristics of the bullies and the victim, the influence of gangs and school practices were identified as significant themes in the seven interviews. This material was then examined in the light of the theoretical framework and the

literature. Clear insights into the role of gender became evident and were relatable to the theoretical framework used. The characteristics of the victim and bullies were in keeping with those revealed in the literature, as were those of the gang.

Conclusions were drawn and recommendations in relation to school practice have been made.

Ethical Considerations

The guidelines set by the Committee for the Conduct of Ethical Research were adhered to. Three male students and one female student aged approximately 14 years were given explanatory letters and parental consent forms to take home after the researcher had discussed the request to participate in one taped interview. Three staff members, two male and one female, were approached and invited to participate. The usual assurance was given as to the confidentiality and non-identifying manner in which the research would be presented.

The taped interviews are being kept in a locked filing cabinet except when they were being transcribed. No other people have access to the cabinet. The typed transcriptions are also being kept securely at all times. To help minimise identification of the school and the

participants, fictitious names were assigned in the writing up of the research.

The researcher is the School Counsellor and it is important that her counselling relationship not be in any way, jeopardised by the research project. Students and staff were given the option to withdraw at any time and not feel that they would be in any way penalised by the researcher in future interactions. In addition, the ongoing safety of the victim is important. A resolution of the problem is constantly being sought and will continue to be sought throughout the course of the research, a period of approximately nine months.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This Literature Review is a wide ranging survey of recent research material on school violence. I have included literature which emphasises biological and psychological perspectives together with more recent socio-cultural theorising. As argued in chapter one what has been seen as an individual problem in the past, now needs to be enmeshed within a broader social-cultural framework. That is, school violence occurring among males has limited explanatory power within the biological and psychological theories but these can be significantly enhanced through the use of socio-cultural theories. For discussion purposes the literature has been ordered into nine themes covering the overall concepts, prevalence and attitudes to bullying and the importance of gender. A closer look at attempts to explain bullying by highlighting the characteristics of both victim and perpetrator is then presented. Following this, the attitudes of other students and adults is reviewed. Finally, school practice in dealing with violence is examined. The underlying theme in the material is the strongly masculine prevalence of school bullying and its links with the attitudes and practices of adults. The consequences and cyclical nature of violence in the school, wider community and the home are also evident throughout this review.

Violence has become one of the major social issues of this decade. Highlighted (and some would argue, promoted) by the media, violence is now seen by the public as requiring ways of preventing and controlling it. Government agencies such as schools are expected to develop policies and measures to address the problem.

Bullying in schools is receiving increasing attention by school administrators, researchers and the media in recent years. This interest has been exhibited in the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States and Australia, with Professor Dan Olweus conducting pioneering studies in Scandinavia from the early 1970s. It is worth noting that many studies have found violence in schools occurs with less frequency than in society at large (Morrison, Furlong & Smith, 1994; Bessant, 1993; Polk; 1993).

Bullying defined

Bullying can be viewed as an expression or aspect of violence.

School violence has traditionally been defined as acts of assault, theft or vandalism. Presumably this is because offences were observable and measurable. By defining violence more broadly it can include :

conditions or acts that create a climate in which individual students and teachers feel fear or intimidation in addition to being the victims of assault, theft, or vandalism.' (Batsche & Knoff, 1994: 165)

Besag (1989 : 3) defines bullying as :

an attack carried out solely by one individual against another, one individual against a group, one group against another group or a group against one individual.

Research shows that bullying is regular and repeated over time. It is systematic and may be mental or physical. It can have the single intent of persecuting the victim. The action can be unprovoked and is often perpetrated by an individual who perceives herself or himself as stronger than the victim (Olweus, 1993; Besag, 1989; Rigby & Slee, 1995; Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Bullying is a wilful, conscious desire to hurt another person, or put that person under stress (Tattum and Tattum, 1994).

Besag (1989) identifies four parameters in bullying. It is a repetitive action which, while causing distress at the time of attack, also results in the victim fearing future attacks; it is characterised by an imbalance of power; it may be physical, verbal, social or psychological in nature; and finally, by measuring the effect it has on the victim, so bullying can be defined. In other words, it is in the interpretation of the behaviour by the victim and bully that power lies.

Bullying can also be present in socially more acceptable forms of behaviour such as a highly competitive approach to academic, social

or sporting achievements, thus making others feel inferior (Besag, 1989; Schostak, 1986).

Therefore, arriving at a common understanding of what constitutes the act of bullying is difficult. What some people would regard as an act of bullying, others would not. Casual, isolated occurrences in the schoolyard or corridor, where there is a sudden flare-up and fight between two boys or two girls is not considered bullying. This is because there is an equality of power and lack of pre-meditation. Persistent or repetitive acts are not necessarily required according to Tattum and Tattum (1994) because there can be cases where a single incident can severely affect a student's school experience.

Violence is more than a nihilistic act. It needs to be interpreted and can be ambiguous because its meaning depends upon the context and viewpoint. Thus, it is political in its implications (Schostak, 1986). Trying to define what is normal is difficult. From one viewpoint, a particular act can be defined as 'just' and from another it can be defined as 'barbaric'. An individual draws on cultural knowledge, opinions, myths and images. Rarely is violence blind, arbitrary or without reason. Violence is a normal part of the culture and structure of everyday society (Schostak, 1986; Chappell, 1993).

In this context, it is not surprising that definitions of bullying, data collection procedures and sample selection, and estimates of its frequency, vary considerably (Siann, Callaghan, Glissov, Lockhart and Rawson, 1994). As a consequence, it is even more difficult to make comparisons between the different studies. The definition of what is meant by the term bullying is of paramount importance. For example, if social exclusion is not included as a form of bullying then there will be under-reporting by girls (Whitney and Smith, 1993). In primary school playgrounds an observer may have difficulty differentiating bullying from fighting. A participant may or may not construe an incident as bullying according to her or his individual social constructions of the world of classroom and playground. To overcome some of these difficulties the method of using anonymous questionnaires appears to be a useful means of assessing the incidence of bullying besides direct observation. Olweus used questionnaires in Norway, as did Ahmad and Smith (1989) in England and Mellor (1990) in Scotland.

The prevalence of bullying

The number of studies of the prevalence of bullying in schools has increased in recent years. The Elton Report of 1989, (Whitney and Smith, 1993) stated that the problem in the U.K. was widespread and tended to be ignored by teachers. Olweus (1993) found that about fifteen per cent of students in Norwegian schools were involved in

bully/victim problems 'now and then'. An English study by Stephenson and Smith (1989) reported that twenty three per cent of children and adolescents experienced bullying. Mellor (1990) in Scotland found a somewhat lower incidence with six per cent of Scottish pupils experiencing bullying 'sometimes or more often' in the 12-16 years age group. In the USA seventy five per cent of students in one study stated that they had been bullied (Hazler, Hoover and Oliver, 1992). In other studies, twenty five per cent of students said that fear of bullies was one of their most serious concerns (Hoover, Oliver & Thomson, 1993).

Rigby and Slee (1995) included acts of physical abuse such as kicking and hitting, and psychological methods of verbal abuse, threatening gestures, deliberate exclusion, removing and hiding belongings and the spreading of malicious rumours, in their study to assess the nature, extent and effect of bullying in Australian primary and secondary schools. They found about half the student body occasionally experiences some aspect of bullying from their peers. This compares with the results of Mellor (1990) in his Scottish study. Within that large group there is a sub-group who are much more frequently victimised. Using self-reports the researchers found one student in five, aged between 9 and 17, is bullied at least once a week. Bullying is overall, more prevalent in Primary than Secondary schools, although in the first two years of Secondary more bullying is

reported than in the final year of Primary. A bullying problem was revealed in rural New South Wales high schools within the range found in South Australian and overseas urban studies (Tulloch, 1995).

It is therefore reasonable to suggest that about fifty per cent of school pupils experience bullying at sometime during their school years. A sub-group of about fifteen to twenty per cent of these pupils aged between 9-17 years is bullied at least once a week (Batsche and Knoff, 1994; Ambert, 1994; Whitney and Smith, 1993).

In assessing the incidence of those who bullied, Olweus (1993) identified seven per cent of Norwegian students were chronic bullies while Smith (1991) reported ten per cent for bully status in English schools. Mellor (1990) found only four per cent prevalence in Scotland. Rigby and Slee (1992 in Rigby, Black & Whish, 1993) estimate that one child in six is involved in an episode of bullying each week, either as a bully or victim, sometimes as a bully in one context and a victim in another.

The influence of gender

Gender does have some bearing on the likelihood of being a bully and being bullied. Boys tend to both bully and be bullied and this tendency is greater among boys than among girls. Boy victims tend

to be physically assaulted while girls suffer more mental bullying such as ridicule, teasing and exclusion (Siann, Callaghan, Lockhart & Rawson, 1993; Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Rigby & Slee, 1995; Tulloch, 1995).

Victims reported that about sixty five per cent of bullying is perpetrated by boys, fifteen per cent by girls and nineteen per cent by boys and girls. More than sixty per cent of girls bullied in grades 5-7 were bullied by boys only and a further fifteen to twenty per cent were bullied by both boys and girls. Over eighty per cent of boy victims were bullied by boys (Hoover, Oliver & Thomson, 1993; Tulloch, 1995; Batsche and Knoff, 1994).

Connell (1995) and Kenway and Fitzclarence (1996) acknowledge that the social, cultural and psychic construction of masculinity is related to violence. Masculine identities are not static but are evolving historically and spatially. Connell (1995) recognised different types of masculinities and how these types were more or less likely to perpetrate violence. Kenway *et al.*, (1996) describe how in and out of school many adolescent boys' lives are characterised by constant attempts to sort out identity issues and dominance relations. These male dominance/subordination relations are frequently worked out through the use of legitimate violence such as in sport or through illegitimate means such as brawling, bashing and bullying, in other

words physical violence. Connell (1995) believes that the dirty work of patriarchy is carried out by the 'shock troops', those boys who are most marginalised by society and by the school.

School Atmosphere

School atmosphere and conditions have been investigated in an attempt to explain school variability in rates of bullying. School size, class size, ethnic mix and socio-economic levels were examined in British and Scandinavian studies. There was no positive relationship found to exist between frequency or level of bullying and the school or class size (Whitney & Smith, 1993; Olweus, 1993). Ethnicity of students appeared to have no relationship with levels of bullying behaviour in these studies. Other studies in Australia show ethnicity to be a factor (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1996).

Mellor (1994) found that variability in reporting bullying existed between the ten schools he studied and this could be explained by their administrative processes in containing bullying in their individual schools.

Lower levels of reported bullying were evident in schools where there was recognition that bullying existed, there was an openness in talking about it without fear of rebuff or retribution and there was an ownership by parents, teachers and pupils in formulating and carrying

out an anti-bullying policy. Factors of academic performance, geographical location or socio-economic status did not explain the differences in the reported rates of bullying between the schools.

A decrease in the percentage of students bullied is noticeable with age and grade (Olweus, 1993). Rigby (1995) supports this, noting that bullying is more prevalent in Primary than Secondary schools. At the same time, bullying is reported more frequently in the first two years of Secondary than in the final year of Primary. Generally, younger primary students are bullied by those in higher grades. As age increases so the likelihood of being bullied by same-age peers increases. Regardless of school, the youngest pupils are more likely to be victims because they are usually physically weaker and more vulnerable than the older students. While physical bullying decreases with age and grade, verbal bullying appears to remain constant (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Hazler, Hoover & Oliver, 1991; Hoover & Juul, 1993). The frequency of bullying others does not appear to decrease with age. The opportunities increase with age after the first year in secondary school (Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Characteristics of bullies

Bullies tend to enjoy the feeling of power they gain when they victimise others. The members of a group who perpetrate and support the bullying of a victim or victims gain a feeling of cohesion

with each other by picking on an 'outsider' (Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1993). Some bullying appears to be carried out with no thought of wanting to hurt the victim, but rather to enhance the perpetrator's status in the "In Crowd". Popularity and 'coolness' are what are being sought, together with a perception of strength (Hazler, Hoover & Oliver, 1992). Slee and Rigby (1992), using the Junior Eysenck Personality Inventory, found that bullies were cruel, insensitive, uncaring and lacking in empathy for others.

Male bullies are often physically stronger, and have a positive attitude to aggression (Olweus, 1993; Besag, 1989; Tulloch, 1995). There appears to be a balance between the power of the bully and the experience by the victim of fear and vulnerability. (Besag, 1989).

American students agreed that bullies enjoyed a higher social status than did victims, and as nearly high a status as the group of well-adjusted students (Oliver, Hoover & Hazler, 1994, Olweus, 1993).

Among the myths about bullies is that they usually have a feeling of inadequacy and low self-esteem, are unpopular and are cowards.

On the contrary, studies have shown that while some bullies are unpopular and have low self esteem, a high percentage of perpetrators are popular, energetic, enjoy conflict as a means of gaining power and control and have a high estimation of themselves.

Some have the added advantage of being able to talk their way out of trouble because they possess good verbal skills (Griffiths, 1994).

Tulloch (1995) commented that by adolescence some of the bullies' popularity may decline but they tend to form peer groups of similarly minded students. Girl bullies have been found to be loud, rude and domineering, characteristics which could be seen to be similar to those of negative masculinity (Tulloch, 1995).

In studies of 7-9 year old American students, Coie, Dodge, Terry and Wright (1991), found that there were advantages for overly aggressive boys. They got their way with their peers when they were younger and saw aggression as a positive activity. As they grew older about half of these aggressive children can be rejected by their peers. However, many of them were able to control other children they claimed were their best friends and were nuclear members of social subgroups. The friendships do appear, however, to be lacking in trust and conflict resolution. The personal and social development that is normally gained from friendship is of a poorer quality. By adolescence the friendship groups of rejected, aggressive individuals tend to be fostering antisocial behaviour which can be seen as a training for delinquency (Coie, *et al.*, 1991).

A study of four groups of American students in general education, leadership class, learning and behavioural opportunity class and special day class revealed that students in the opportunity and leadership classes experienced and observed higher levels of

violence. The special class experienced higher rates of bullying. It was found that the students with emotional and behavioural disorders were more likely to be bullies. This linked with their early family experiences of poor bonding and parenting practices, poor peer relationships, early antisocial behaviour and preferences for solving problems with aggressive means (Morrison, *et al.*, 1994).

Further to these findings Oliver, Oaks and Hoover (1994) found that the families of children who bully lack firm, consistent discipline, have difficulties in the parent-child relationship, are likely to experience family and marital difficulties and financial and social problems.

Adults who were childhood bullies are five times more likely to have a criminal record, have a tendency to be abusive with their wives and also be severely punitive with their children who, in turn, are more likely to be bullies with their children (Bessant and Watts, 1993).

The rigidity characterised by parents in these families suggests limited ability to cope with normal developmental transitions and stressful changes in family circumstances. A clear difference between families of bullies and chronic victims is that of cohesiveness and emotional closeness. Victims families seem overly involved or enmeshed in contrast with the disengaged nature of the bullies' families. It isn't clear if the victims' families become more enmeshed to cope with the victimisation of the child or that it is pre-existing

(Oliver, *et al.*, 1994). Bullies come from virtually all social classes and family backgrounds although those who had more than three siblings or who lived with someone other than their parents were marginally more likely to bully other children. Children with professional or manager parents were less likely to be bullies while those who had parents with skilled manual jobs were more likely to victimise others. Because of the small sample size, caution has been warned in viewing these results (Mellor, 1990).

In a study seeking teachers' views on the subject of bullying, Siann *et al.*, (1993) found that Scottish teachers agreed that there is no obvious bully personality. This seemed to support the view that there is ambiguity and subjectivity surrounding the labelling of a bully.

Characteristics of Victims

Anybody can be targeted and made a victim of bullying. It appears to be merely a matter of being in the wrong place at the wrong time (Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1993). Children can be victimised for very trivial and random reasons such as what they wear, how they speak or what their face looks like. Seldom does it have anything to do with their personalities (Ambert, 1994; Hoover, *et al.*, 1993). Victims were found to enjoy family life and that they had close relationships with the family. They were found to be shy, withdrawn, anxious and with little interest in others and possessing

poor communication skills. Often they were found to have no desire or ability to conform. They were also submissive (Besag, 1989).

Slee and Rigby (1992) dispute research which shows victims as being more anxious but certainly agree that victims were definitely more introverted. Their studies showed that victims suffered from low self esteem. Whether there is low self-esteem before victimisation or not, the actual experience of being bullied certainly contributes to loss of self-esteem. Over eighty per cent of victims in British Middle Schools said they felt better about themselves prior to the bullying beginning (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). Both bullies and victims were found to be unhappy in school. Perhaps bullies find the clashes with school authorities or with non-accepting peers contributing to their lack of happiness. Loneliness at school is also characteristically experienced by primary school children who were victimised (Slee and Rigby, 1992). Considering the primacy in children's lives of their friendships and the growing sense of self it develops, the loneliness victims suffer is likely to have life-long consequences (Hazler, 1994).

Female victims often suffer from depression and this could have serious consequences such as suicide, many cases of which have been documented (Neary & Joseph, 1993; Smith, 1991).

Separating out the characteristics which make a child more susceptible to bullying from those that result as a response to bullying

is problematical. Certainly their ability to retaliate is lacking, whether through reluctance or inability is not known. Their social isolation and lack of friendships means they cannot rely on social protection. The victims' low sense of self-worth may invite further attack and reinforce, through their role as victim, their perception that they deserve to be bullied. This perception is shared by the bullies and some of the non-involved peer group (Tulloch, 1995).

Branwhite's (1994) study of adolescents in their first year of secondary school, revealed higher than expected levels of physical and verbal victimisation and also an unexpected multiplicity of other potentially distressing life events having been experienced. In such a crucial developmental stage, when social anxiety and self-consciousness is common, when girls show an increase in negative coping strategies and boys score higher on social anxiety, depression, phobia and psychoticism, it is of serious concern.

Experience of loss, bereavement, moving house, parental separation or moving to a new school are all significant events in an adolescent's life and occurring in conjunction with peer victimisation, can result in increased mental health problems. Academic performance can suffer and a number of physical symptoms can be exhibited including headaches and abdominal pain (Branwhite, 1994; Hazler, 1994). Students skip school to avoid certain activities where bullying occurs

and together with constant fear for one's safety, a drop in academic performance would be expected (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). This would be particularly noticeable for students who previously had been performing at a better than average level (Besag, 1989). Being bullied can result in extreme behaviour with Hazler (1994) suggesting even 'good kids' can start fights and bring weapons to school.

Mellor's (1990) small study found that children living with their father only and those living with someone other than their parents were more likely to be victims. Children with two siblings were least likely to be bullied. Reasons offered by staff and students suggested colour, religion, disability or shyness were all possibilities although virtually any child could be selected. Olweus (1993) reported that former victims had an average or below average level of criminality in early childhood.

Some students can be both bullies and victims. Olweus (1993) found children bullied at home by parents and by older students at school, can in turn bully others, those younger and more vulnerable. These bullies tended to be physically strong and able to assert themselves. Nevertheless, they were found to be less popular with their peers than the other group of bullies (Besag, 1989).

Student attitudes to bullying

The majority of Australian students do not endorse bullying as acceptable (Rigby & Slee, 1995; Tulloch, 1995), however, a study of American students found that many believed that bullying made one tougher. It was seen too, to be a means of educating students about peer expectations (Hoover, Oliver and Thomson, 1993). In another American study it was found that students believed bullying and victimisation needed to be condemned. The attack on an individual's 'imperfections' was not seen to be acceptable (Hazler, Hoover & Oliver, 1992). Violence has a demoralising effect on all members of a school community ('Sticks & Stones', 1994).

It is assumed that all teachers in schools look on bullying as unacceptable, however problems of definition of bullying, recognition of incidences, modelling socially positive behaviour, sharing an attitude that all forms of bullying are unacceptable and implementing preventive measures, plague schools. (Siann, Callaghan, Lockhart, Rawson, 1993; Hazler, Hoover and Oliver, 1991; Tulloch, 1995).

Other students' attitudes towards the victims vary from one of empathy to that of a belief that the victims deserved what they got. Certain characteristics set these victims up for being bullied (Hoover, *et al.*, 1993; Oliver, *et al.*, 1994). In an English study of junior, middle and secondary students fifty four per cent of junior/middle school pupils and thirty four per cent of secondary pupils reported they did try

to help the victim in some way. Another twenty seven and forty seven per cent respectively admitted they did nothing although they thought they ought to help. About twenty per cent of both groups reported they did nothing because they thought it was none of their business (Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Bullying often occurs in secret, although bullies gain considerable satisfaction from having their violent and anti-social behaviour witnessed by others. The victim naturally suffers even greater distress through the humiliation of having on-lookers. If the on-lookers support the bullying or do not intervene on behalf of the victim, the bully feels vindicated (Tattum & Tattum, 1994).

In an Australian study, more than eighty percent of onlookers said they thought bullying was wrong, it should be stopped and more done about it. The majority reported that they did not intervene because they thought they may be the next one picked on or they did not know what to do (Rigby & Slee, 1992). A disturbing aspect in another Australian study was that those male victims who were perceived as failing the test of masculinity were not worthy of support within the school. These victims were further marginalised by the notion of masculinity as well as being the unfortunate target of a self-seeking bully (Tulloch, 1995).

Sixty one per cent of onlookers believed that bullying served the purpose of toughening up weak students. Harassment was believed to educate students about peer expectations, according to forty five per cent of male respondents (Hoover, *et al.*, 1993).

Teachers' attitudes to bullying

While very little in the literature surveyed addresses the role of teachers in either supporting or preventing bullying in schools, there are a number of researchers who fleetingly mention it. In the plans for action being urged upon school administrators, some mention of promoting a positive atmosphere and setting in place structures for dealing with bullying is made (Jenkin, 1993; The Gen, 1994). Examination of societal beliefs and school procedures are not common (Fitzclarence & Kenway, 1995). Individual teachers' attitudes towards bullying, whether it is seen as desirable, normal or undesirable, seem not to have been examined. Siann, *et al.*, (1994), Jenkin (1993), and Morrison, (1994) among others, urge teachers to consider their interactions with other staff and pupils, to offer support and to act when pupils tell of incidences. It would seem probable that a number of teachers would support the Australian study figures which find one in five adults approving of wife abuse in certain circumstances (Australian Government Office, 1988; NSW Domestic Violence Committee, 1990). It would seem appropriate to make the

same link between these adults as is made between pupils, wife abuse and school bullying (Rigby, *et al.*, 1993).

The acceptance of physical abuse of wives under some circumstances was found among forty per cent of male secondary students and among twenty seven per cent of female students. Further, the students' relations with their peers were found to be significantly associated with this attitude, particularly in boys who were bullied by their peers. The link between children from homes in which interpersonal conflict is high and their tendency to bully others, has been demonstrated. With one in five Australian adults approving of a man striking his wife in certain circumstances and the research showing that one in five women and one in five children are likely to be assaulted by their male partner or male parent, the prevalence of violence in Australian society is clear (Australian Government Office, 1988; NSW Domestic Violence Committee, 1990).

The two areas in Australian society where violence occurs outside what is normally defined as 'crime' are the school and the home. These two forms of anti-social aggression share some common characteristics. Rigby, Black and Whish, (1993) identified four such features. First, they both involved unprovoked and repetitive attacks, by physically stronger individuals against victims who find it difficult to escape. Second, the victims suffer physically and psychologically.

This can be long lasting and be manifested in a loss of self-esteem and a poor sense of well-being. Third, the abuse has been seen as part of the natural order in the relationship, hence no attempt to change it has occurred. Fourth, in recent years exposure of the extent and effect of school bullying and domestic abuse has meant that its control has become one of the major social issues of the 1980s and 1990s (Rigby, *et al.*, 1993; Griffiths, 1994).

Sometimes teachers and administrators, although almost certainly in a minority, would behave in an abusive fashion towards other staff and towards students. The image of force is common, as is that of manliness or masculinity. It is equated with toughness and even violent action (Schostok, 1986). Corporal punishment was supported by sixty two per cent of pupils, fifty four per cent of teachers and eighty one per cent of parents in a 1983 ITV Times Magazine survey (cited in Schostok, 1986). Male staff often resort to put-downs in an attempt to gain kudos from other staff. This is seen as no better than that which takes place in the school yard amongst students (The Gen, 1994).

School practice and bullying

Violence can be viewed as being embedded in the culture and power relationships of the school itself. It models, permits and shapes violent attitudes and behaviour, often in very subtle ways. Examples

include the sporting field and verbal and emotional violence associated with certain disciplinary practices between teacher and pupil (Fitzclarence and Kenway, 1995). Different ways of apprehending aggressive behaviour in boys and in girls by teachers in the classroom have been noted by Reid (1995). The idea that schools and their staff are given the task of controlling students as well as educating them has long been held (Collier and Fitzclarence, 1995). The Japanese education system epitomises power having corrupted its possessors - the teachers. Violence in physical and other forms is commonplace and accepted as normal (Young, 1993).

In contrast, Jenkin (1993) promotes the recruitment of staff with a similar philosophical view as that of the school policy which should contain elements of the school being a safe place, non-violent and promoting each person's rights and placing responsibility on all to maintain a non-violent school. Challenging existing patterns of behaviour and the underlying social constructions on which they are based is seen as necessary to create a non-violent school (Tulloch, 1995; Rigby, *et al* 1993; Hazler, 1994; Ambert, 1994; Bessant and Watts, 1993).

Various ideas for developing school policies and programmes for reducing bullying have been proposed. Slee (1992) offered the PEACE plan, incorporating policy, education, action, coping and

evaluation. Hazler *et al.*, (1992), Batsche and Knoff (1994), Olweus (1993) and many others support a whole school approach to tackling bullying. Staff, students and parents are all necessary in developing a safe, non-violent school. With only a half of bullied students in primary school and a third in secondary school feeling able to talk to a teacher about the problem, teachers need to change their attitudes. Another perception of half of the pupils is that teachers only intervene sometimes (Whitney and Smith, 1993; Hazler, *et al* 1991).

Oliver, *et al.*, (1994) suggest counsellors working with bullies and victims and their families use brief intervention therapy. A comprehensive pack for parents, administrators and teachers has been compiled by the Scottish Council for Research in Education, (1993) suggesting that the whole school community needs to work together to address bullying in schools. Group work with victims in helping them gain the necessary assertiveness skills is suggested for both sexes by Rigby (1995), although separately conducted works best. In-class discussion is best done with both sexes present, to help each group understand the perceptions of the other about bullying, its effects and inappropriateness.

By drawing attention to the problem of violence in a school, it may become labelled as having a problem. This is a risk all schools need to take and address (The Gen, 1994). Opening the lines of

communication between parents, teachers, administrators and pupils is very important. Breaking the cycle of 'not dobbing' needs to occur if bullying is to be recognised and minimised in schools (Tattum and Tattum, 1994; Branwhite, 1994).

In conclusion, the literature review has revealed that many commonly held ideas about school violence are not supported. For example, students seldom 'deserve' what is meted out. Bullying occurs with much greater frequency than was previously thought. Reporting of bullying depends very much on the processes used to contain bullying in individual schools. The bullies themselves are not individuals lacking in popularity. In most cases they are confident students who enjoy aggression as a means of gaining power. The victims are usually balanced children from supportive families who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Their loss of confidence and self-esteem, together with diminishing academic performance are the result of continuous victimisation. Non-involved students do not support school violence and often feel frustrated with the lack of effort by teachers to contain it. Teachers appear confused about what bullying is and what they can do about it. Schools in many cases may be seen to be practising a type of violence in the way students are controlled. This exercise of power and control may actually be modelled by school staff for some students to follow.

School violence may actually be an expression of one of the dominant forms of masculinity in Australia. It may be carried out into the community and home. There are a number of strategies schools can adopt to develop more peaceful practices among students and staff.

CHAPTER 3

THE CASE STUDY

The background

Over a period of about five years a young male student, Trent, has been bullied by other students at the private school he attends. Initially the violence began in the Primary section of the school with one student being seen as the main perpetrator. The bully was able to engage other students to participate as well over the next few years. The attacks appeared to be intermittent, consisting mainly of name calling, exclusion and occasional physical incidents. Trent disliked school and did not perform well academically. His parents were aware that all was not well with their son but found it difficult to pinpoint actual incidents about which to complain. Teachers were not always effective in their intervention. It was apparent too, Trent was retaliating verbally thus fuelling the altercations still further. A pattern of revenge appeared to develop between Trent and his peer group. By the time Trent was in Year 7 the situation had become worse and the Primary Headmaster attempted to defuse the situation on a number of occasions.

The bully, Milton, and some other students, switched their attention to another student. Milton was suspended at the end of the year for

excessive bullying. He was allowed to return to Year 8 on condition that he not engage in bullying. He was aware that he would be under close scrutiny. Trent began Year 8 relatively eagerly as most Year 8 students do. It was not long before the students from his class of the previous year had passed onto the newly arrived students that Trent was a person to either target or avoid.

Incidents occurred intermittently throughout Year 8 in which Trent was taunted, pushed around and excluded. Sometimes his belongings were taken and hidden. Trent, in turn, retaliated by name calling and hanging around groups of male students contributing to their conversations with uninvited crude comments and unusual noises. As the year progressed these incidents became more obvious in the classroom. Previously they were more likely to occur in the schoolyard, the changerooms and on the bus where adult scrutiny was at a minimum.

Trent was able to retaliate undetected in many instances. Other students reacting angrily, would be seen and admonished for their actions. Year 8 passed by without major incidents being brought to staff or my attention. Trent's academic performance was judged as being poor. He seldom finished homework and submitted little work for assessment.

Milton was not in the same class as Trent. His behaviour in class was poor for certain teachers. Although a highly intelligent student, his academic performance did not reflect this. Milton was not identified as being a ringleader in Trent's bullying during Year 8, however, he was known to be associated.

As the School Counsellor, I was aware of Milton's name being mentioned on occasion by female students. Their comments centred around his power over his peers. Some girls suggested that students were frightened of him. I watched him exert his power once as he boarded a small bus. One look had students vacating the back seat so that he and his friends could sit there. I alerted key staff to my observations but they either did not witness any incidents or chose not to share them with me.

In Year 9 I found myself teaching English to Trent. (I had a small teaching role that year) I quickly became aware of Trent's lack of popularity. His isolation in where he sat and the reluctance of students to include him in group work made it clear that his situation had not improved.

Soon after Trent's mother came and saw me to discuss her concerns about the bullying to which Trent was being subjected. She said it was obvious at times that he was very unhappy. She and her

husband offered Trent the opportunity to change schools but he and they were reluctant to pursue this avenue, believing the school had a duty to control bullying and bring the perpetrators to justice. (The school had a No Bullying Policy and a copy had been sent to all families). She mentioned Milton and his continuing role in the intimidation of her son. She also discussed their building of a new home and how she will be able to drive Trent and his younger brother to and from school, thus avoiding bus travel and all its attendant problems.

I followed this interview with one with Trent. We talked about the issues and incidents, about his unhappiness, his sometimes provocative behaviour and what could be done. Trent was asked to keep me informed about any more difficulties he encountered. He was assured that I would talk to all staff and request their close scrutiny of students' behaviour.

Trent's family became aware of Milton's presence shortly before they moved into their new home. It transpired that Milton lived quite close by and passed Trent's family's home on his way to the beach. A number of threatening interchanges were made between Milton and his friends and Trent and his family. On at least one occasion physical violence erupted in the street near Trent's new home.

According to Trent's parents it was perpetrated by some boys who attended another school, but instituted by Milton.

At about the same time the incident in the Maths class occurred thus drawing the school's attention to just how rapidly the situation was deteriorating.

Critical Incident

Trent was observed by his maths teacher as having become unusually quiet and withdrawn. Trent was recognised by most staff as a provocative victim who, according to some teachers and students, "deserved much of what he got". At this time the bullying was being perpetrated by a varying number of Year 9 boys and a close watch was being made on them by staff members. One perpetrator was on a contract to keep away from the victim who was also contracted to stay away from this particular boy. The victim was reluctant to see the School Counsellor as suggested by the Maths teacher so I went to the classroom to ask him to come and talk in my office. I was aware that my presence could cause further difficulties for the victim but determined to set up a procedure the boy could follow should problems result as a consequence of the meeting.

During the discussion between Trent and I it was revealed that a number of boys in the maths class were throwing things at him when the teacher's back was turned. There was also a lot of name calling and physical violence during recess and lunch breaks. As an escape Trent was retreating to the Library but a number of the bullies were following him in there to continue the intimidation. Life at school had become unbearable for Trent and he hated getting up each morning. When asked if he had thought of killing himself he unhesitatingly replied "No" but he wanted "to kill some of the bullies". I was aware that the victim had access to firearms so continued to determine how seriously the boy had considered accessing the weapons. After some discussion it was decided that the way to deal with the bullies was for the Headmaster to be informed of the worsening situation. The victim was satisfied with this. He was encouraged to report any instances of victimisation should they occur at lunchtime. This he did later in the day, reporting that four boys had 'wedged' him, ripped three buttons from his shirt and generally humiliated him in the very public area of the canteen. I reported the events to the Year Teacher (with whom I had already discussed the need for decisive action). It was decided that the perpetrators would be told that the Headmaster would be informed of the situation on his return to the school on the following Monday morning. This would give the boys the weekend to contemplate their actions.

Follow-up and further incidents

The following Monday morning the Deputy Head, Year Teacher and I met to discuss the situation. It was decided that a clear message needed to be given to the students about their actions being unacceptable. This would be done through discussion with the four boys who attacked the victim. A No Blame Approach was used where the bullies were asked to consider the feelings of the victim. Letters were to be sent to the boys' carers informing them of the incident but not requesting any further action other than commitments from the boys that they would not bully again. This action is consistent with the No Blame Approach where an effort to model non-violent behaviour is made and messages of power and control are avoided. The boys maintained that the victim had been provocative and had not told the full story.

A concerted effort by staff members to address the issues with the various perpetrators was made. I spoke with Trent's mother explaining the current intervention. The boy's mother reported another incident, this time involving Milton who had been engaged in an altercation with Trent outside the school. She was expecting further problems when the family moved to their new home which was only a few streets away from the bully's home.

Later in the week I observed the victim shooting pieces of eraser at another boy who had appeared to have befriended the victim. Trent spoke to me later and revealed he was "paying back" some verbal teasing that had occurred a short time previously. It was also revealed that Milton had attacked him at lunchtime that day. An assurance was given that the incident would be discussed and support for the victim would be ongoing. He was urged to avoid retaliation and to try to ignore the comments in an attempt to de-escalate the situation. He was also urged to ensure that he told the complete story, including his own actions and comments made during the incidents. If he didn't do that he would not have my support and advocacy.

The group meeting

Over the next week the Deputy Head and Year Teacher intervened in a number of reported incidents. It appeared that the violence was escalating. The more the victim reported (on a daily basis now) the greater the number of Year 9 boys were becoming involved.

The Deputy, Year Teacher and I were constantly conferring and the picture was emerging that the victim was continually engaging in provocative behaviour. He would apparently go and stand close to the various groups of boys at the Canteen at recess and lunch. They would respond by "accidentally" bumping someone who would

"accidentally" bump the victim. The victim was reported to be making "stupid comments" to class members when classes were underway. They would respond loudly, telling him to be quiet and to go away.

As I was due to travel interstate for a Conference and it appeared that the violence was not going to abate over the remaining seven days of the term, I called a meeting of twenty of the main instigators and supporters of the violence.

With the Deputy, I opened the discussion with the boys by acknowledging that there was a problem and that it would be far more helpful for everyone concerned if all were to work together instead of against each other. The boys were sitting in a circle on the floor with the Deputy Head and I also sitting on the floor, on opposite sides of the circle. The boys were reminded of normal group rules including only one speaking at a time and no interrupting or 'putting down' others' comments. Several boys indicated by their body language that they were not feeling comfortable with the situation. Some attempted to lean back on a nearby cupboard while another wanted to lie down. Others asked for the foam mattresses which were stacked nearby. I firmly requested all boys sit in the circle, facing inwards without back support. I stressed the importance of the students and staff all being able to see each other.

The group were asked to raise their hands if they had a comment or opinion that they wished to express on the current situation. A number of hands went up and Milton spoke clearly about how frustrating he found the victim and the victim's actions. He said he had tried in recent weeks to help the victim. On one occasion the victim's shoe laces had been tied together in the changerooms. Milton had helped him untie them and then Trent had verbally abused him as he ran off. Milton felt that he would not help again and that Trent asked for what he got.

A number of other boys related tales of Trent deliberately irritating them by making smart comments, pelting them with hunkey nuts, passing notes with crude comments, flicking paper pellets, making irritating noises and deliberately standing too close to 'their group'. Some said that he seemed to be 'wanting attention' and perhaps that was why he did what he did. Another very annoying feature of these situations was when Trent complained to a teacher about the actions of the other boys, he would only 'half tell' the story, omitting to describe his own behaviour which the boys maintained resulted in him 'getting it.'

I asked the group of boys to consider Trent's feelings when he was excluded, verbally and physically abused and otherwise made to feel unwanted. I commented that I knew a number of them had been

victims themselves at various times and they no doubt could recall how they had felt. I also stated that the victim's actions may be his way of trying to make himself feel better and less unhappy than he would if he cowed or crawled away 'like a dog who has been beaten'.

I then asked the boys if they could think of any solutions to the problem. Several boys put their hands up. One boy, the one who had previously been contracted to keep away from Trent, suggested that the victim should be made to keep well away from the other boys, 'like on the other side of the oval'. Others made similar suggestions about separate spaces and no contact or talking. There was no suggestion of trying to include him or talk through the problem with him.

One boy in the group, Kevin, who was often a supporter of Trent, spoke up saying that Trent wasn't always 'annoying'. At sailing, he said, he was quite different, in fact 'just normal'. Several boys sneered at this comment, many though, were quiet and appeared thoughtful.

I stated clearly that 'separate spaces' was not a solution. No student had more right to the school yard than any other. I asked that the group 'back off' and try to ignore Trent's irritating behaviour and

language in the hope that the situation would settle down and not get any more unpleasant.

I then asked if there were any students who felt they couldn't do this. One boy said that he was unable to tolerate the victim. He had spent three years at Primary School with him and was now into his second year at Secondary School with him. This year was the first time he had not been in the same class. He stated that he couldn't cope with Trent. (I had witnessed this boy shouldering the victim into bushes near the Canteen some weeks earlier). Another student who had been involved in bullying other students, said he couldn't co-operate. The boy who had been on contract indicated similar feelings.

The Deputy Head, who had remained silent throughout, was asked for his comments. He complimented the two boys who had tried to support Trent, acknowledged Trent's difficult behaviour, and asked the boys for their co-operation.

Unfortunately the final bell of the day was about to ring and, as most of the students travelled by bus, they had to be released. Further commitments or otherwise were not able to be sought.

Afterwards, in summarising their observations, the Deputy and I felt that there was a hard core of boys with memories of Trent from

Primary School days, who were not willing to back off. These boys were fairly influential among their peers and both of us felt pessimistic about change occurring.

As I was leaving for interstate, I could take no further action in the final seven days of term. The Deputy was to see Trent to ensure that there was a sense of fairness observed by the larger group of boys.

Ongoing action

After school that day I received a phone call from the victim who reported that one boy, again the one who was supposedly on a contract, had made obscene suggestions about homosexual and incestuous activities involving Trent. Trent was asked if he had been involved in passing notes, making any similar suggestions or in any way contributing to the situation. He declared he had not.

The Deputy Head followed up these allegations after I had left for the conference. He was told that the victim had indeed been making equally obscene comments. When the victim was asked in a separate interview about this he denied it. The Deputy asked him to think carefully about his response, explaining that support would only be forthcoming if he was totally honest. He was given time to think about it. An hour and a half elapsed before he finally admitted that he

had made some offensive comments to the other boy. The Deputy reinforced the need for honesty if the situation was going to be resolved. One or two further incidents arose. The first involved Trent being accused of saying the School Chaplain was gay, the second was when Trent reported a cooldrink can had been thrown at his back.

At the suggestion of the Headmaster the two boys, one who had befriended the victim and another who had remained apart from the incidents, were asked to keep 'an eye' on what occurred. The idea of the staff was that it would not be 'spying' but an objective, independent account of events. The general reaction from the group of boys was that it was spying and they were not happy. After some explanation from the Deputy Head, the boys accepted the idea.

In a discussion with me some time previously the victim, when asked what was something he would like to do at lunchtime without fearing the other boys, had responded, "I'd like to play basketball in the gym without being pushed and shoved." The Phys Ed teacher had been told this so he arranged to be in a prominent place, observing the lunchtime game. The victim enjoyed the game and was able to repeat this on another occasion.

The final few days of term passed without further incidents being reported. The staff members who were on duty, especially those in the Canteen area, were asked to keep a careful watch on the Year 9 boys and particularly those in the vicinity of the victim. The term finished with relative peace being observed by both victim and bullies.

The new term 1996

The final term of 1996 began with the Deputy Head keeping a presence in the Canteen area at recess and lunchtime for the first few days. He observed the victim participating in the large group, seemingly with the acceptance of the other boys. He also noted that the victim was spending considerable time with one particular student who had been accused previously of bullying along with the others. This student and the victim had had a very volatile friendship since Primary School days. The victim had reported to me in the past that they were friends 'sometimes.' Something would then trigger off a reaction in the other boy and he would begin physically and verbally attacking the victim. Eventually they would begin spending time together again before another 'blow-up' would set them apart.

I observed Trent in the English class. He would get to class early and sit alone at first and, as the class filled up, girls sat beside him, although little interaction took place. Trent was focused on his work

and did not appear to be behaving inappropriately towards his classmates. On one occasion he was sitting with another boy who had not been involved in the bullying. Some light-hearted banter and laughing was observed but it did not seem to go 'over the top'.

During week two of term, observations were made by teachers that the old pattern was returning. The victim was sitting alone and a fair degree of unpleasant interchange was obvious in the Maths class. The form teacher reported an incident where the 'contracted' student called the victim a 'one incher', referring to his penis. In another incident Milton was reported to have jammed Trent's head into a fence. The Deputy followed this up and appropriate measures were taken.

For the remainder of the 1996 year isolated incidents occurred which Trent reported, resulting in the perpetrators being admonished. Occasional complaints were made about Trent's behaviour but these were quite informal and not made to the Deputy Head as was requested.

The new year 1997

The start of the 1997 school year saw Trent reporting that he was happy with his form placement. He appeared comfortable with his form peers and he was applying himself in class.

Within the first few week's Trent's father requested an interview with the Deputy, another supportive male teacher and me. He was keen to let us know of his efforts to support and spend more time with Trent. In addition he expressed his concerns about Milton's behaviour near his home. He alleged Milton was setting up others, to intimidate and attack his sons. Milton had also sworn at Trent's mother when she told him to stay away. When Trent's parents tried to speak to Milton's parents the interchange was not particularly fruitful and acrimony now existed between both parties.

Several more weeks passed before Trent handed me two notes. One was addressed to me stating his Homework Diary was missing, the second accused another boy of punching Trent in the kidneys.

I managed to get the Homework Diary returned but handed the note regarding the assault to the Deputy Head. As a result the bully was suspended and his divorced parents were requested to attend the school for an interview before he was allowed to return. This boy comes from a family where domestic violence was perpetrated. Restraining orders against his father have been issued on a number of occasions.

Trent was meanwhile warned by Milton that he had 30 Year 10 boys who were going to 'get' him. Trent reported this to me. I passed it onto the Deputy who arranged for Trent to seek help immediately he needed it. Teachers were extra vigilant. Several days later as the Deputy and I were in an interview with Trent's parents, Milton and one of his peers struck! Trent was travelling on the bus to sport with Milton. A relief teacher was driving and refused Trent's request to be allowed to sit at the front. Milton attacked Trent, urged on by other boys. Another Year 10 student joined in.

As a consequence Milton was suspended. Trent's parents then decided to lodge a complaint with the police, resulting in Milton being made to attend the Juvenile Justice Tribunal. Currently mediation is underway between both families.

The meeting the Deputy and I were having with Trent's parents was to discuss the need for outside counselling. I had come to the conclusion that Trent was determined to keep up the provocative behaviour in order to maintain the constant attention from his family and school staff. I was reluctant to suggest this as it appeared to be blaming the victim. Trent's movements in the schoolyard were restricted to certain areas. He was not allowed to spend more than a few minutes in the Canteen area. The Deputy had taken this step in an effort to keep Trent safe and to allow his peers to 'cool down' and not be tempted to retaliate on behalf of their suspended peers.

Both boys who were suspended have returned to school for Second Term knowing that any more violence will result in their leaving the school permanently.

Trent was allowed to return to the Canteen area. After several complaints from boys who are generally seen as uninvolved, Trent was again not allowed to use the Canteen area because of his continuing provocative behaviour.

The situation is seen as only just under control at present. All Year 10 boys have been told in a meeting that their general behaviour needs to improve. They have also been told that violence is not the way to solve problems. Clear guidelines have once again been given regarding the reporting of problems in the classroom or schoolyard.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This case-study of a lower school male student's experiences with violence has been revealing. The long-term nature of the violence, the continual identification of one male student as being a key perpetrator and the sometimes inadequate attempts by school staff to address the violence are clearly evident. As the situation has continued to seethe so the involvement of an increased number of male students has been evident. Another aspect which has complicated the situation has been the increasing involvement of the bully's parents and those of the alleged key perpetrator.

A number of dominant themes emerge from this case study. In this chapter, I will examine the strong link between school violence and the social construction of masculinity; the role of girls; the characteristics of the victim and his alleged provocative behaviour; the characteristics of the bullies; the 'gang-like' mentality in perpetrating the violence; school practices, especially teacher intervention and finally, the issue of power and control and its constant presence throughout all aspects of the case.

The construction of masculinity

Bullying of a particularly insidious nature involving one victim, Trent,

has been occurring in the school for a number of years. The number of perpetrators is alarming and all of them are male. The quest for expression of their masculinity through the exercise of power and control seems to drive their actions. In addition, the continual provocation by Trent, who, in turn, appears to be attempting to express his masculinity, perpetuates the incidents. The use of physical violence by the bullies and the retaliation by the victim using crude and sexually explicit comments characterise the bullying.

In keeping with the findings of *The National Committee on Violence* (Australian Institute of Criminology, 1990:3) that violent offenders in Australia are overwhelmingly male, so the main protagonists in this case study are male. Kenway and Fitzclarence (1996 : 1) explain violence in schools:

as a violent expression of certain types of masculinity, that schools are implicated in the making of masculinities and that consequently they can be involved in the unmaking of the types of masculinity which are implicated in violence.

Similarly, Connell (1995) attempts to explain the lifelong process whereby an individual's masculine identity evolves. He sees masculinity as a 'life project' involving the making and remaking of identity and meaning. The complexity and fragility of masculinity results in it being extremely vulnerable. Emotions such as confusion, uncertainty, fear, impotence, shame and rage, play an important role

in male violence. Acts of violence, appear to displace such emotions, and at the same time, give the performer claims to potency and power.

In this case study the masculine performances began when the main perpetrator and the victim were about nine or ten years of age. Trent, recalls Milton saying something to him that 'wasn't real nice so I told him to basically bugger off and it just went on from there.' Stephen, in 1996, describes Trent as being 'so small... they can actually beat him.' He describes the physical nature of the bullying, 'we actually punch him or push him around..., almost all the boys in the class do that.' Kevin confirms this, believing that 'when you're in Year 9, that's the thing to do.' Elise, as an onlooker observes in 1997, that there 'used to be a lot of chasing up and down the pathway and into the bush, between classes, ... like they wouldn't let him get on the pathway, push him off into the bush alongside the path.' ... 'I guess they've got tired of that.... its mainly comments now and like a punch that looks accidental, as they're going to their seat or something in class.' Trent's size clearly identified him in the subordinate category of males and the bullies' actions were designed to ensure their place among the hegemonic males.

Stephen describes it thus, 'we, you know, just push him around but we don't mean to hurt him.... we're not really bullying. Usually only a few people actually try to hurt him.' Olweus (1993), Besag (1989) and

Tulloch (1995) all note that bullies are often physically stronger and have a positive attitude to aggression. Miller claims (in Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1996 : 4) that:

Contempt for those who are smaller and weaker thus is the best defence against a breakthrough, of one's own feelings of helplessness.

This is supported by Slee & Rigby (1992) and is evident in many of the comments of the boys who spoke out in the group session in 1996. They experienced, it appeared, feelings of uncertainty and confusion in dealing with the provocation of Trent as he challenged their sexuality. Their method of dealing with these confusions is to strike out at Trent who is physically weaker and smaller.

Elise continues 'with the boys there's a lot more bashing up and physical, but they have taunts as well, teasing. I've never seen any girls really beaten up by bullying, it's mainly the boys. That you don't really see, except for a punch in class, or.... you hear about it.... a bash up in the changerooms and things.'

Elise also noted that besides the physical violence taking place in 'the changerooms, out of class situations, perhaps during sport' there could be a challenge for a fight. She supposed 'that's their way of making someone remember that they're important, they bash them up.'

American studies show that many bullies enjoy a higher social status than their victims (Oliver, Hoover & Hazler, 1994). Olweus (1993) identified bullies as being popular, energetic and that they enjoy conflict as a means of gaining power and control. They have a high estimation of themselves. This is certainly the case with Milton and many of the other bullies. Adult challenges, rather than deterring many of them, actually appear to spur them on. Not all the bullying of Trent is physical. Elise comments, 'a lot of the teasing tends, with the boys, ... to be like about a sexual inadequate thing... I don't know how that's going to affect someone's future life.'

Alan, the Deputy Head, commenting on boys' physical behaviour, says 'there's a very fine line sometimes with boys... they'll give one another a thump... its almost a conditioning thing with them in the way they behave... sometimes that is a friendly thing... but sometimes it's not.'

Martin, another teacher, believes Milton and the other boy who was suspended in 1997, 'possess... the ability to push people around if need be.' Both boys are very physical and strong. Both have seen people close to them use violence as an option to sort problems out. Martin believes bigger boys will consider physical bullying if they are 'that way inclined.' Smaller boys have to be careful because they may get 'duffed up.' He believes Milton and the other suspended boy

will 'think more about it now and will think two or three times before they select violence as an option.' He continues 'the fact that they belt people up is very powerful. No doubt about that. That's part of (the) frustration and aggression that I think is inbuilt in the male and I think is often used as an option than would be the case for the female.'

Martin sees it as totally unacceptable behaviour. He says, 'There are socially acceptable forms of violence, contact sports and those sorts of things.' He predicted that with the football season just beginning some of this aggression could be dissipated in the game. Bullies were found to enjoy the feeling of power when victimising others in various studies including that done by the Scottish Council for Research in Education (1993).

The role of girls

The role of the girls in Trent's peer group was commented on by all of the interviewed students. Stephen was adamant that only the boys bullied Trent. 'Sometimes they (the girls) stand up for him, say stop teasing him or leave him alone or something. They don't tease him... It's just boys do most of the bullying. They seem to like fighting and stuff. The girls when they hate each other they don't actually try and hurt the other person... I don't think I've ever heard girls pick on Trent at all.'

Trent confirms this saying that there have 'never been girls involved. Just boys trying to get more attention than the girls.' Kevin names several popular girls who come to Trent's aid sometimes. Boys who do this risk becoming targets as Kevin has found out through bitter experience. Tulloch (1995) believes that girls have been socialised against overt aggressive behaviour.

Elise explains the difference she sees between boys and girls bullying. 'Girls, usually its put-downs by more popular girls... girls tend to need a lot of backing up because they're scared of losing their rank... they're trying to divide people from being popular or not popular.' Elise thought that girls who didn't take part were pretty self-confident and didn't need to bully anyone to 'get up higher.'

Besag (1989) contrasts the male desire to bully for dominance with the female need for reassurance. In both cases they are enhancing their worth and status through the devaluing of others. Tullock argues that both forms of bullying are complementary (1995).

The victim

While Trent does not completely fit the profile of many victims portrayed in the literature, he does display some of the characteristics. Being in the wrong place at the wrong time appears to be what occurred when he was in Year 4 or 5 when the bullying first began (Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1993). His

lack of desire or ability to conform is, and has been, apparent for a number of years (Ambert, 1994 ; Hoover, 1993). His low self-esteem is evident together with his loneliness (Slee & Rigby, 1992). Trent has had periods when he has been unhappy in school (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). Tulloch (1995) identifies victim's low sense of self-worth as inviting further attack. Trent's ability to escape situations such as the changerooms where violence is likely to occur, reinforces in the eyes of the bullies and some of the non-involved peer group that he deserves to be bullied. The greatest reason though for his being considered a deserving victim, is his tenacity and refusal to stop being provocative.

Throughout all the stakeholders' interviews, there is constant reference to Trent's annoying and retaliatory behaviour. Some students and teachers believe he gets what he deserves. Trent admits 'in the heat of the moment I accidentally say something back... just let myself out.' In Primary he would do 'the same thing back, like if they threw a rubber at me, I'd throw it back, or I'd do something stupid like vandalise one of their things.'

Kevin is very open about why students are violent towards Trent. 'He annoys you, like, starts it off. He'll call you a name and say something this and that. He like, wants attention, that's what I think.' He will 'just like punch every now and then, like muck around and then pull faces at you, call you names, so you just like retaliate then

you get into trouble.' In describing Trent's behaviour at recess and lunchtimes, Kevin states 'he comes down and he'll get something from the canteen, and like stays a little bit away from us, then he'll like, do something weird. So someone'll say something and then they'll chase him. He'll end up he'll just go off then.'

Stephen says Trent 'doesn't try to make friends with people, he tries to annoy them all the time ... Maybe he just doesn't feel confident with all the other people.' 'Cos sometimes he'll come up and talk nicely to people, and people get annoyed with him because he always talks about guns and stuff like that. He's a gun freak... he does lie a bit... says he has this big gun cabinet and you like press a button and it goes down into the lawn and it comes up again. He has to make up all these stories to make you like him.'

Trent is keen on weapons, as is his father. In an attempt to impress his peers he brags and exaggerates about them. Biddulph (1996) identifies one of the features of an underfathered boy as his having an excessive interest in weapons.

Elise believes Trent has 'a rude nature.' He makes 'disgusting comments, degrading comments to the guys... he says things to the girls... very insulting. Again lots of sexual references in there as well... I guess that's because they made him feel inadequate, so he felt like retaliating ... to say that they were inadequate.' She also

noted that Trent when he's been 'accidentally' punched will retort ' I'll smack you later.' She, however, believes he couldn't smack them later because he doesn't have the strength. For at least the last two years taunts of a sexual nature have featured prominently. Trent has retaliated with them and the bullies have used them along with their physical superiority in an attempt to undermine Trent's sense of masculine identity.

The bullies

Elise commented that some people have 'a lot of violence or anger in their own life and they need to take it out on someone else. And when someone gives them a reason to, they just like to.'

In relation to gender, Biddulph (1996) claims that the boys and young males have little or no respect for women. Many of the most physically aggressive boys in this particular case study treat their female peers and teachers very poorly. The boy who was suspended along with Milton comes from a family which has broken up because of domestic violence. He is particularly insolent and discourteous to female students and teachers. Milton is much the same. Oliver, Oaks & Hoover (1994) found family and marital difficulties in the backgrounds of the bullies they studied. In the case of Milton and the boy who was suspended, this is certainly apparent in their families.

The school has a Policy on Bullying. Part of the early intervention

procedure when bullying incidents are reported is to use a no-blame approach where the alleged bully is asked to consider the feelings of the victim. By engaging the empathy of the bully it is hoped that the persecution will cease. Three years previously Milton was very involved in the bullying of another student when they were both in Year 7. I attempted to engage Milton's empathy for his victim but was quite unsuccessful, the only time I have found this to be the case when using this process with students. Milton appeared unmoved, meeting my input with an expressionless face and totally still body.

Alan, the Deputy, felt Trent goaded the other students but not nearly as much as the students made out. He felt Trent, 'in a funny sort of way enjoys creating these situations, because he maybe gets recognition.... he gets some sort of reward from that, even in a negative sort of way... I've never dealt with somebody who almost seems to get attracted back to the problem area.' Alan had the sense that Trent needed considerable help with his social skills. He reflected that usually in a bullying situation one student will withdraw from the conflict situation. He wondered if this was Trent's way of retaliating 'you used to get told in the old days you had to stand up to bullies and biff them back on the nose and maybe this is what Trent indirectly is trying to do, but he's doing it verbally because he can't do it physically.'

Janet, a teacher describes another student whom she says she feels

like bullying sometimes because 'he's such a little pain. He's the biggest dobber, he's woossey, he smirks when he gets an answer right in class, he's so..... I feel like shaking him sometimes. This Year 8 boy has been a victim for a number of years at his previous school. Her comments suggest that in her mind, and in the minds of many of the bullies presumably, there is a notion of what is acceptable behaviour in boys. 'Dobbing' is not. Kevin describes Trent as a 'dobber' and this is not acceptable to his male peers. Stephen confirms this saying 'Trent usually dobs and makes everyone even more angry, and they try to bash him even more.'

Other students

Throughout the interviews with the other three students, they were able to express their concern about Trent's victimisation. They did not believe it was right that it occur despite finding much of his behaviour provocative. Rigby and Slee (1992) found in their Australian study that eighty percent of onlookers believed bullying was wrong, that it should be stopped and more done to stop it. Their reason for not intervening was fear of being the next victim. Kevin certainly found this to be the case and Stephen expressed similar concerns. These students also strongly subscribed to the belief that 'dobbing' was unacceptable.

Kevin believes Trent is 'scared of most things.' He described how, if Milton walked up to Trent, he would run away because he was

scared. He believed that the damage was done now and that Trent wouldn't be able to make friends with anyone. He thought it 'must be pretty bad' to be in such a situation. He thought he might behave like Trent if he were in a similar situation. While Kevin hadn't actually talked with Trent about how he felt, he and others had told Trent they would be friends with him if he didn't act so provocatively.

Stephen feels it isn't very nice 'when you have the whole of Year 9 ganged up against you.' He had talked with Trent about how he felt and said he'd described feeling 'quite sad sometimes.' He thought it would 'be pretty hard' and 'I haven't been bullied since I was in Year 3 or 4.... I'm glad now.'

Elise feels that bullying 'mucks up any classroom 'cos it disrupts and divides. It's not pleasant for anyone to watch, for anyone to suffer it, and it's everywhere.' She believes if someone is being bullied you have to 'get some self-esteem and get through it... it really does hurt.' As an onlooker she said it was unpleasant knowing someone was being bullied. 'In the classroom, if someone's getting teased, before you were having a lot of fun, and now someone's actually getting hurt, it destroys the fun. You can't look back and think that was a good class. That was definitely sad and you remember it for being sad.'

Trent described how, in Year 4 or 5, the constant barrage of things such as erasers being thrown at him and the sniggers behind his back

built up to make him feel 'bad'. He said that being 'put down in front of all the other kids at the canteen... makes you feel pretty small.' He described how, when the bullying was really bad, he didn't care about homework and 'I didn't really care about school.' Trent, in late 1996, was hoping for 'a bit of peace and quiet..... (to be able) to get on well with all the others, not getting put down, not having to avoid people wherever I go.' He wanted to 'be able to have more freedom in the school.' In the classroom he wanted to be able to 'get down without being worried about getting something thrown at me, and (someone) pulling my chair out from under me.'

Tattum and Tattum (1994) found that bullies, while perpetrating their acts in secret from adults, gained considerable satisfaction in having them witnessed by students. The bullies feel vindicated if the onlookers support the violence or do not intervene on behalf of the victim. In many instances Trent received little or no support from onlookers. It was more likely that intervention would come from girls which in the eyes of the hegemonic males would not be a great deterrent.

The gang

The ongoing bullying of Trent with Milton appearing to be the key instigator, took on new dimensions in late Year 9 and Year 10.

Whereas Milton perpetrated various acts of violence against Trent

from Year 5 to Year 8, either alone or with an accomplice or two, in Year 9 and 10 many acts were carried out by a much greater number of students. Milton appeared to be behind some, but not all, of these.

It became evident in September 1996 that large numbers of boys were actively pushing, punching, chasing, hiding possessions and generally making life difficult for Trent. I noted that after a Phys. Ed. lesson he was always first back in class and his Phys. Ed. teacher confirmed how quickly he changed and left the changerooms.

In studies of 7-9 year old American students, Coie, Dodge, Terry & Wright (1991) found that overly aggressive boys had considerable advantages over their peers. They got their way and saw aggression as a positive activity. As they grew older about half of these aggressive children can be rejected by their peers. Many were able to control other children they claimed were their best friends. Many were nuclear members of social sub groups. The friendships, however, were lacking in trust and conflict resolution. By adolescence the popularity of many bullies declines (Griffiths, 1994 ; Tulloch, 1995). The friendship groups of rejected, aggressive individuals tend to be fostering anti-social behaviour (Coie, Dodge, Terry & Wright, 1991).

To understand why the bullying became a group action is difficult.

That it existed is confirmed by Stephen who says 'us Year 9s we all

pick on Trent 'cos he's small and easy to bash up.' Stephen notes that since the Outward Bound Camp held in March 1996 Trent was picked on much more. He thinks that it is because 'maybe people knew him better and they didn't like him.' Stephen acknowledges that 'when you have the whole of the Year 9 ganged up against you it's not very nice.' He feels that when Trent 'tells on you then you get more mad with him, then all the boys help you, rally against him'... 'but he doesn't actually deserve all the people ganging up against him. I don't like him very much but he doesn't deserve a big gang trying to get him, he's just not that bad.'

Kevin agrees that it was nearly all the boys in Trent's peer group who were involved in the bullying. Some students in the year groups either side of his were also involved intermittently. Kevin says his behaviour towards Trent depended on what Trent did to him that day. 'If he annoys you... you'd be one of the main bullies, but if he doesn't, you'd like be his friend.' Kevin comments that Trent doesn't behave annoyingly outside school. He has spent time with him at the sailing club and finds Trent quite different.

Elise explains the situation thus. 'If someone's being very cheeky and just annoying everyone, then... I guess everyone will sort of be against them, generally the whole population will be ... For girls I suppose, it's usually one or two that get picked on by quite a lot because girls tend to need a lot of backing up... or a very strong

group of girls, like with a lot of power... they (the victims) would be pretty degraded, and the boys would be warned against them. When Elise considered what it would be like if Trent stopped annoying people she said 'I think the year would be more peaceful but I don't think the community would still be the same... I don't know whether it would be good or bad but it'd be a lot quieter. But I suppose they'd have to pick on somebody else. Someone's got to be picked on,' she laughs.

The Scottish Council for Research in Education (1993) found that the members of a group who perpetrate and support the bullying of a victim or victims gain a feeling of cohesion with each other by picking on an 'outsider.'

When Milton and the other Year 10 boy were suspended she recalls Trent saying he would have to 'swap schools' because she thought 'he felt really scared then because he thought "I've really got them into trouble this time. And something's going to happen. I've got to get out of here. 'His way to solve everything is to avoid it... which is probably not such a bad idea in that situation. Everyone was implying that he was really going to get bashed when they came back to school.'

Elise comments the Year 10 population would think 'Allelujah, Trent's left. Because he does cause a lot of trouble and disruption. Even if

he doesn't mean it. He's a victim who fights back with words. And that kind of just keeps the whole thing going... I don't know whether he's fighting it back the right way.'

Alan, the Deputy, comments at the end of 1996 'if we can still work on that environment we'll be able to keep it so that they, this group of Year 9 boys, in particular the difficult group, so that it is not a threatening environment for Trent... I think that will help solve the problem.' In commenting on the nature of different year groups Alan observes that the 1996 Year '10 group, despite having some 'pretty tough characters' are 'miles ahead of where the Year 9s are at, just in terms of maturity and being sensitive to the needs of others.....

One of the things that really concerned me with the Year 9 boys was that, when we chatted with them at the end of last term I felt a really ugly side to what I was hearing from those kids, almost Lord of the Flies like, you know. 'We're in control of this situation, there's nothing you can do about it.'... There's a strong core in there, almost a togetherness with some of those kids. I mean some of them have had tough backgrounds themselves.' (Hazler, Hoover & Oliver, 1992 ; Slee & Rigby, 1992).

Martin makes a general comment about his concern that in the school there 'is a lack of tolerance of a lot of kids... they exclude a lot of kids that are different or are new. It's just so hard to break into cliques,

...the kids from Japan... handicapped kids (Fitzclarence, Laskey, Kenway & Warren, 1995).

Janet, in comparing a Government High School with this independent school, reflects that it's (the Government School bullying) 'a bit more gang-like too. I don't think it's as gang-like here... but I think back to when I first came here and J. was bullied unmercifully, by the whole Year 9 gang basically and M. was bullied by the whole Year 9 gang, verbally, whereas J. was beaten up.' Janet concludes that Year 9 boys tend to form gangs to bully.

School practices

Students, teachers and parents all have roles to play in the perpetuation of bullying. School policies, teacher, student and parent attitudes and school climate and culture are important factors in controlling violence in schools. The independent school in which this case study took place, has, together with many other schools in Australia, attempted to address school violence by establishing a policy on bullying. All families received a copy of the policy last year and the Headmaster speaks on the topic at Parent Nights held throughout the year. Teachers were inserviced and key staff were trained to use the no-blame approach whereby the first reported incident of bullying by an individual attempts to engage his or her empathy for the victim rather than blaming him or her. Subsequent

acts, if they occur, involve parents being notified and further action if necessary.

Teacher intervention

Throughout my years of counselling I have been aware of the very contradictory position held by secondary students over teachers' involvement in the prevention of bullying. That schools and their staff are given the task of controlling students is a long held view (Collier & Fitzclarence, 1995). While they believe that teachers and other adults should identify and intervene in bullying incidents they do not believe that students should 'dob' about them. They often express frustration that teachers don't see what is going on and too, that many teachers who are told of violence among students, don't intervene. (If they do, they believe them to be ineffective.) Siann, Callaghan, Lockhart & Rawson (1993) found that Scottish teachers couldn't agree on an obvious bully personality. This appears to support the view that there is ambiguity and subjectivity surrounding the labelling of a bully. As a consequence, students experience varying and often ineffective responses to complaints about being victimised.

Trent is quite clear about his strategies in involving teachers. He believes if bullying takes place he will 'just keep it quiet. Then if they keep going, well then you've got something to go and tell the teachers about.... most of the time they've got a good way of handling it.' He

feels the Deputy, Alan, handles the various incidents well. 'He's got a fair bit of authority over kids.' He also comments Mr I., the Year teacher 'deals with it pretty well, cause like, before that, I didn't think he had much power in the way he could deal with bullying but now he's seen heaps of bullying in this school he's got onto it and knows what he's going to have to do about it, so he gets onto it pretty quickly.' He thinks if Form teacher, Mr C., sees bullying taking place he 'works at it pretty well.'

Kevin believes that some of the peer group 'reckon the teachers don't listen to them' while 'some people say... Trent's going to be expelled, or get suspended 'cos he's so annoying to the teachers.' He believes that most teachers don't know how bad he is.

Elise comments that teachers have 'got to punish him (bullies)... it doesn't matter if punishment should be the right thing some people can't accept it.' She understands some bullies believe that they shouldn't be punished or talked to and that having been admonished, they have a further reason to 'bash him (the victim) up, to pick on him again.' She observes that one teacher, Mr B., is able to quash some of Trent's insulting comments in his class and this gives the other students a sense of satisfaction. The need to retaliate is not seen as necessary, Elise describes it as 'neutralising' all the comments.

Violence can be viewed as being embedded in the culture and power relationships of the school itself. It models, permits and shapes violent attitudes and behaviour, often in very subtle ways. For example, certain disciplinary practices between teacher and pupil (Fitzclarence & Kenway, 1995). Teachers have different ways of apprehending aggressive behaviour in boys and in girls (Reid, 1995).

Martin discusses the frequent difficulties teachers have in observing acts of violence. 'The times when a kid like Milton will actually bully someone will never be in front of an adult. Will never be in front of his Mum or Dad or a teacher or even an older student that might possibly dob him in. It will always be in the background or at recess time setting someone else up.'

Alan comments on some of the boys who have been caught being violent. He believes they think 'I'm always getting picked on. Nobody ever sees what Trent does.... I don't think Trent does nearly as much as the other kids make him out to do.' He observes that after his and my intervention late in third term 1996, Trent had modified his comments and was appearing to feel safer and more relaxed. He was 'not on the defensive and therefore not with a need to use.... those sorts of comments to maintain his self esteem.'

Corporal punishment is seen to be acceptable by a considerable majority of students, staff and parents in an English survey. It seems that if violence is used to punish violence that the cycle will be perpetuated (Schostok, 1986). Confusion and contradictions abound when trying to find ways of reducing violence in schools. Ironically, Noguera (1995) believes that overt force and discipline is seen as inappropriate for administrators and staff to use.

Janet, believes that bullying gives people who don't feel confident a sense of control. She is quite clear about a Year 8 student whom she thought was 'a pain' and she felt like bullying as his teacher. She feels that students can be labelled by teachers as bullies and that they can be blamed for acts and situations for which they are not responsible. She believes that they in turn become victims. She comments that Milton has 'wiped Alan, the Deputy and he's pretty well wiped you too' (referring to me). Janet believes this has happened because Milton doesn't think anything has been done to curb Trent's provocative behaviour.

The tactics employed by Alan to monitor and control the violence among the boys was to ask all teachers on duty to keep close watch on the students around the canteen at recess and lunchtime. Close surveillance is still being maintained. Trent also has been banned from the canteen area at times when it has been considered by Alan

to be unsafe. That is the boys appear to be in an ugly mood and Trent's presence and provocations may incite violence. Control of space, something the students have tried to do, is being practised by staff over students.

The very methods that had to be employed to curb the violence are the disciplinary techniques identified by Foucault (1977) surveillance, observation and regulation. These very features characterise much of what has gone on between Trent and his peers. In Foucault's language the male bullies have tried to subject him, control his use of space and to exclude him from certain social interactions (Preston & Symes, 1992). Trent, in turn, has fought to maintain his right to use the student areas of the school and to interact with his peers. Not all of his attempts would be judged as acceptable or appropriate.

School Policies

As more attention has focussed on violence in the Australian community so governments and social institutions, especially schools, have had to address the problem. In the last decade the issue of violence in schools has been frequently debated. With the growing research identifying the detrimental effects that victimisation has on students, schools have had to face the fact that bullying cannot be

tolerated and that clear policies and procedures need to be developed to deal with incidences of violence.

The independent school in which the case study is set has developed a policy regarding bullying. A brochure has been printed outlining the school's stance. The brochure discusses what effect bullying has, what constitutes bullying and what each of the players, bully, victim and parents can do to help eradicate it. Much of the work by Tulloch (1995), Rigby *et al.*, (1993), Hazler (1994), Ambert (1994) and Bessant & Watts (1993) was considered in the preparation of the policy.

Staff were briefed on the policy by means of a workshop where they were introduced to the main ideas regarding the characteristics of bullies and victims. An examination of onlookers' and teachers' attitudes was also presented. The majority of staff supported the policy and the promotion of the school as being a safe place, non-violent and promoting each person's rights. Responsibility is seen to rest with everyone to help maintain a non-violent school. This whole school approach is essential in helping change the school culture, reducing the incidence of violence and creating a safe, non-violent school as promoted by Hazler *et al.*, (1992), Batsche & Knoff (1994), Olweus (1993) and Jenkin (1993). The recruitment of parents in

helping develop non-violent attitudes is also essential as noted by Mellor (1994) and Oliver *et al.*, (1994).

One of the difficulties identified by the three students was that of 'dobbing' which Trent was reported to do frequently. This well entrenched cycle of 'not dobbing' results in greater rejection and victimisation for Trent. Both Stephen and Keven confirm that Trent's dobbing 'makes everyone even more angry and they (the boys) try to bash him even more.' Janet, the teacher, did not support students dobbing either. She felt irritated and angry with the Year 8 boy she described as 'a dobber'. Tattum & Tattum (1994) and Branwhite (1994) acknowledge the need to break the cycle of not dobbing. Opening the lines of communication between parents, teachers, administrators is vital in reducing violence in schools. Some school administrators are concerned that by drawing attention to violence the school may be labelled as having a problem.

With regard to schools with a no-bullying policy, Trent believes that parents are 'able to send (their) kids there (with) reassurance that they wont get bullied, and if they do there's something going to be done about it.' He asserts that 'mums and dads realise their kids are doing something wrong and they give the teachers the O.K..... to 'do it how the law would do it.'

Trent comments that the no-blame approach could allow some students to keep reoffending because there appears to be no punishment as a consequence. I explain to him that if violence continues to be perpetrated by a student there is provision for that student to be suspended. (This discussion took place late in 1996. The suspensions of Milton and the other boy took place in March 1997).

The no-blame approach referred to by Trent is that approach adopted by the school about five years ago. It is based on an English concept that if a student is made aware of the effect they are having on their victim, that is, their empathy is drawn out, they will be willing to cease the victimisation. This is similar to the approach promoted by Fitzclarence *et al.*, (1995), a 'pedagogy of the emotions'.

It is interesting to note that when I used the no-blame approach with Milton when he was in Year 7 and victimising another student, he remained totally unmoved when told of the effect of his actions on his victim. This is the only case where I have observed this reaction when using the no-blame approach with a bully. Some registering of feeling for the victim's distress has been evident in all other perpetrators. Slee & Rigby (1992), using the Junior Eysenck Personality Inventory, found that bullies were often cruel, insensitive, uncaring and lacking in empathy for others.

The school has ceased to use the no-blame approach with those bullies who continue to victimise Trent. After one attempt to engage the perpetrator's empathy has failed, parents are informed by letter of their child's behaviour. Interviews are arranged and a clear message is delivered regarding the need for the student to cease the victimising behaviour. If this does not occur, the perpetrator is suspended for a number of days. Following his (or in the unlikely event, her) return, the student is placed on probation with a clear understanding that any re-offending will result in their being withdrawn from the school. Both Milton and the other student who was suspended, are in this situation.

A Year 8 student who recently exercised unnecessary physical violence in a football match is currently suspended from all sporting activities. His parents have been informed and the student is aware that the suspension from all sport will be lengthened if he does not heed this warning.

Since the implementation of the policy more reports have been made by parents, students and teachers. A number of senior staff are using the no-blame approach. Referral to the Deputy Head takes place if the initial intervention is not heeded by the student.

In the case of Trent, the policy has come too late. The victimisation and provocation/retaliation is so well entrenched that alternative methods of dealing with it are necessary. The key staff members involved, Andrew, Martin and I, are not confident that a permanent solution has been found.

Power and control

Throughout the various interviews each participant has identified notions of power and control as central to the acts of bullying discussed in this case study.

Janet believes bullying or 'putting down' gives an individual 'a bit of control over somebody, it makes you feel more in control of your situation.' She also expresses Milton's frustration with Trent, believing 'he feels Trent has enormous power over him. He's felt like that for a few years, that Trent has power and he (Milton) has no power. Trent baits and baits and they can do nothing, and no-one listens to them, and no one cares.'

Alan's comments about the situation being like Lord of the Flies contrast with Janet's views. He sees the boys in a power battle with school authorities. 'We're in control of this situation, there's nothing you can do about it.' He believes the boys think they are in charge. The dynamics have become even more complex than just a simple

power imbalance. He (Trent) is constantly giving back to keep the power up for himself and his own self-esteem.

Martin sees the physical violence as part of the expression of masculinity. According to him, 'the fact that they belt people up is very powerful.' Kenway & Fitzclarence (1996 : 2-3) identify that such violence is perpetrated by males and can be understood as an expression of masculinity. It provides a means of displacing emotions such as confusion, uncertainty, fear, impotence, shame and rage and at the same time allow the performer to claim power and potency.

Elise is notable among the students as interpreting the events in terms of power and control. The three boys were not able to do this, perhaps because of their gender and being immersed so totally in the process.

She believes Trent has to respond to the attacks to save losing face... 'like his image.' If bullies are 'doing it in front of someone then they want to show their power... they don't want to have them (the victims) stand up... that's one reason it continues.' She views bullying among girls as an expression of power. 'Girls tend to need a lot of backing up, because they're very scared of losing their rank.' She believed that 'a very strong group of girls like, with a lot of power,' could 'degrade' the one or two girls they decided to pick on. This powerful

group of girls could also 'warn' the boys against them. Girls who didn't bully were 'pretty self-confident' and didn't have the need 'to get up higher.' Connell (1995), Fitzclarence & Kenway (1995), Rigby (1995) and Tulloch (1995) all identified differences in male and female violence. Girls were seeking reassurance while boys were seeking power and control.

Trent sees the acts perpetrated against him as making him 'feel pretty small.' He feels 'pretty bad' when he is put down or humiliated. Trent identifies certain teachers such as Alan as having 'a fair bit of authority.' Mr I. also was seen as having 'power' to deal with recalcitrant students.

The perpetrators complained of not being believed or listened to. They were identified by Alan as being powerful and in control and he likened them to characters in Golding's Lord of the Flies. In trying to bring a resolution to the conflict a power battle has at times been in danger of erupting between the school administration and the male year group. The administration has had to exercise its power to control the level, type and frequency of violence being perpetrated against Trent. At times, the student violence could be described as being modelled on the structures of power practised in the school. Surveillance, regulation and assessment based on what is deemed normal are characteristics of the schooling process. Trent has been

subjected to the same types of control by his male peers. He in turn, has attempted to flout their efforts.

Other factors

Branwhite (1994) and Hazler (1994) cited moving house in conjunction with peer victimisation as causing an increase in mental health problems. Trent's difficulties appeared to increase at the time the family moved into their new house. This was not helped by Milton's home being nearby. Trent's academic performance fluctuates according to how intense the victimisation is at any particular time. Late last year (1996), as Trent was being supported more openly by staff, so his academic output and achievement increased (Batsche and Knoff, 1994).

Martin, the teacher, feels that the two suspensions were making Milton and the other boy scapegoats. He feels they were not entirely to blame. However, after sitting down with Trent and listening to his story, he reluctantly concluded that Milton appeared to be 'the bottom line'. Despite the suspension, Milton was surreptitiously hassling Trent. The other boy had kept well away. Trent had admitted to Martin that he had 'a real chip on his shoulder about the whole thing, and it really upsets him and he feels as though eventually he's going to get them back.' Martin sees Trent as a 'troubled kid' who is 'enormously frustrated and upset that other kids are bigger and that

there is a great number of them.' Martin's observations around the school have noted Trent looking 'very nervous, and in a real pressure cooker situation.' By himself he found, 'a quite likeable kid in a lot of ways.'

Janet was unable to express any empathy to Trent, this was despite having been a victim himself at primary school. Her sympathies lay with the bullies. She saw Trent's provocative behaviour as undeserving of support. She was particularly supportive of Milton. She knew of a few instances from Milton's perspective where he felt he had been unfairly blamed for incidents in which Trent had been provocative. She seemed unwilling to acknowledge some of Milton's violent responses to the provocation as being unacceptable. She was able to acknowledge that another student she had discussed the situation with, was able to brush off the irritating behaviour of Trent and not act aggressively.

Thus over a period of at least five years various students, with Milton being a key and long term player, have attempted to victimise Trent. For some reason, he was singled out at the age of about ten and made a target of Milton's violence. His small physical stature and appearance of weakness ensured that he remained a victim, isolated and lonely among his classmates. Trent's attempts to combat the exercise of power and control over his life by his male peers have

been interpreted as being provocative, inappropriate and certainly ineffective about getting something thrown at me, and (someone) pulling my chair out from under me.'

Tattum & Tattum (1994) found that bullies, while perpetrating their acts in secret from adults, gained considerable satisfaction in having them witnessed by students. The bullies feel vindicated if the onlookers support the violence or do not intervene on behalf of the victim. In many instances Trent received little or no support from onlookers. It was more likely that intervention would come from girls which in the eyes of the hegemonic males would not be a great deterrent.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Summary

The case-study that has been presented is a snap-shot in the life of a lower secondary male student who attends an independent school in Western Australia. The ongoing nature of the violence to which he has been subjected is serious with more than likely permanent consequences in his life. The impact that such experiences have had on his psycho-social development can only be guessed at. His long-term experience of living in fear of persecution, the daily battle to maintain his possessions and to make his way in a school where hostile looks, acts and words are commonplace, have all taken their toll on his self-esteem. His academic progress has been quite limited and his exposure to extra-curricular activities curtailed by a desire to keep his school contact to a minimum. His experience in making friends, of being part of 'the crowd', so typically a young male socialising agent, has been severely restricted.

Trent has experienced the full gamut of school violence. He has been subjected to taunts and teasing, physical assault, having his possessions taken and damaged, exclusion and numerous other anti-social forms of behaviour. His small stature and generally perceived immaturity have been reasons offered for his continual victimisation.

In addition, his provocation or retaliation have been recognised as factors in fuelling the violence.

Throughout the course of the case study it has become apparent that notions of masculinity and associated behaviours have been key factors. The main perpetrator, Milton, clearly displays much of the hegemonic masculinity described by Connell (1995). Milton and his peers exercise the dominant and dominating forms of masculinity which claim the highest status and greatest authority and influence. Milton has enjoyed popularity among his peers as he has wielded his power and control over Trent. Other male students have joined in, using Trent's immaturity and inept behaviour as reasons for their actions. Trent's failure to exhibit the qualities of hegemonic masculinity has fuelled the conflict. The group cohesion that has resulted from the victimisation has reinforced the boys' motivation to continue bullying 'the outsider' (Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1993).

The sexual put-downs, the constant barrage of comments about sexual inadequacy and the sexually suggestive jokes have featured prominently in Trent's victimisation over the last couple of years. The bullies and Trent have used these verbal taunts constantly against each other. Trent has been reported as making sexually suggestive comments to the girls in his peer group. This seems surprising as

neither he nor the other interviewees identified any bullying by the girls. Trent's behaviour could be construed as a means of trying to claim some masculine status in a world where it is so frequently denied (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1996).

The attitude of staff members is diverse. The Deputy Head who is responsible for discipline in the school finds Trent's situation unacceptable while acknowledging that Trent does seem to put himself in the victim role unnecessarily at times. Martin's attitude has changed over the course of the case-study. As he has had the opportunity to get to know Trent better so he has seen another side to the situation. Whereas previously he was sympathetic towards Milton, he now realises the subtle way in which Milton has perpetrated his violence as he has been confronted more by the authority of the school administration. In fact it appears that Milton and some of his friends could be engaging in a power and control struggle on two fronts, one with Trent and one with the school administration. This behaviour is recognised by Griffiths (1994) and Tulloch (1995) as being typical of some male bullies who enjoy conflict as a means of gaining power.

Janet, was not empathetic towards the victim, believing that he asked for what he got. Her perception of what was acceptable male behaviour was revealed in her criticisms of the Year 9 student whom

she said she felt like bullying herself. He was 'a dobber', 'a wooss' and 'smirked' when he got answers right. Janet appeared to accept hegemonic masculinity as the acceptable and dominant form.

Martin recognised that the expression of masculinity through the use of physical violence was an accepted feature in the lives of adolescent boys and young men in Australia. He believed that Australian rules football was a culturally acceptable means of expressing this violence. His solution to minimise the violence among the boys was to get them involved in football for the winter season. Male dominance/subordination relations can be contested through the use of sport which is seen as a legitimate form of violence according to Kenway & Fitzclarence (1996).

While the school is co-educational, the expression of a hegemonic masculinity is evident in a proportion of male students in all year groups. The year group of which Trent is a member, appears to have a particularly high proportion of students attempting to express their masculinity in a hegemonic manner. Connell's (1995) 'complicitous' males are those who allow the victimisation to occur without challenge. Only the few girls who intervene appear to challenge the boys seeking domination over a 'subordinate' male.

The literature on bullying recognises it as a predominantly male problem. The characteristics of the bullies and victims and the attitudes of the onlookers can be fitted within a socio-cultural framework and the social construct of masculinity specifically. In other words, what society accepts and supports as acceptable masculine behaviour is what is being expressed in this case of long term victimisation. The school, with many of its past and present practices, can be seen as implicitly supporting the performances of hegemonic masculinity. As challenges to these performances have occurred so the group has intensified its efforts to maintain this as the dominant and dominating form of masculinity. In summarising a highly complex and long term case of school violence, I believe the issues centre around 'performances' of masculinity by both the perpetrators and the victim. The inability of both the school and the families to halt the violence appear to lie in their confusion about the needs of the boys to express domination, through power and control, to displace the emotions of shame, confusion, fear, impotence and rage (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1996.2). Both societal and school practices reinforce this display of masculinity in boys. Until an increased awareness of this displacement performance comes about, school practices and family functioning will continue to reinforce violence as an acceptable means through which males will seek their identities.

The nature of school violence

School violence has many faces. In this case-study it has been revealed as a male problem, focussed around expressions of masculinity through the exercise of power and control. It has been perpetrated as physical violence, verbal taunts, exclusion, sexual harassment and stealing possessions. It has occurred in the school grounds, in the changerooms, the classrooms and extended to outside the school. It has been ongoing, frequent and repetitious. As more attention has been focussed on it so its group nature has been revealed. A perception that the group is in a power struggle with the so-called provocative victim and at the same time, with the school administration, is evident.

It began when the victim was in primary school with the main perpetrator and has been maintained ever since. The school has never been regarded as having a serious bullying problem. The presence of girls has meant that other forms of bullying have occurred but the girls are not involved in this particular case.

Milton is physically larger than many of his peers. He is also of superior intelligence, whereas Trent is not as able, nor is he physically large. Milton has a history of classroom misbehaviour, a poor attitude to teachers, particularly females, and is generally seen as manipulative and secretive in what he does. There is evidence of

family dysfunction in his life as there is in the life of the other boy who was suspended.

The victim is characterised by his small stature, his low self-esteem and general unhappiness with school. He is unusual in that he has continued to retaliate as his victimisation has progressed from being perpetrated by a few of his peers to a much greater number.

Other students hold contradictory views. They believe bullying is unpleasant but that the victim is very provocative. Among staff members there are many who do not accept the victimisation as tolerable while a small number have no empathy for Trent.

School practices kept intervention to a minimum in the early years and it is only in the last year that determined interventions have taken place as awareness of school bullying grows.

Student and staff explanations

The male students who were interviewed were able to recognise their behaviour as being exclusively male. They were clear about 'dobbing' being an unacceptable behaviour. It incurred their wrath and that of the other boys. It was deserving of victimisation. The female student was clear that what was happening was an exclusively male issue. She recognised it as an ugly, disruptive feature of peer relations. The victim's ongoing retaliation, she was

sure, fuelled the problem further. While she was empathetic towards him, she believed it was the victim who needed to make changes in the first instance. None of the students believed, however, that what was happening was particularly pleasant or acceptable.

The two male staff members could recognise the victim's retaliation as being part of the problem but also that the behaviour of the larger group of boys was unacceptable. Much of what they did was recognised as an expression of masculinity. Neither believed that the physically violent behaviour was now a socially acceptable means of expressing it. There needed to be a legally acceptable form such as sport to allow for its release. The female teacher, who empathised strongly with Milton, felt that the perpetrators were being unfairly blamed and disciplined. She revealed very firm views on what she believed was acceptable behaviour among male students, 'dobbing' and being 'woossey' were not included.

The victim saw his life at school as being unnecessarily difficult. He seldom relaxed and was constantly on the alert for attacks and was quick to retaliate. He longed for a stress-free school experience. His continual need for retaliation has taken its toll on his family who now accept the need for him to receive counselling. At the same time, they have taken quite drastic action through the legal process in an

attempt to stop the out-of-school victimisation which has been occurring.

The students explain these acts of violence as being an expected male response to the provocation of another student. They do not see any alternatives to dealing with what they believe is unacceptable behaviour by one of their peers. They do not consider seeking assistance from teachers or other adults as an acceptable solution. In fact they resent adult intervention.

The male staff members believe that physical violence is not an acceptable way of solving conflict. They believe that provocation is indeed present but that the boys should seek other ways of finding a resolution. The female teacher believes that the boys' responses, including physical and other means, are appropriate for the provocation being practised.

The young males, it appears cannot identify other ways to respond to what they see as an irritating and never-ending problem. Many of their peers, the complicitous onlookers, are also unable to identify alternative means of responding to the 'provocative' student.

The issue of male bullying has highlighted some serious deficiencies in the problem solving skills of young male students. It has also

revealed the strongly hegemonic masculinity pervading that particular year group. The various interpretations and explanations of the stakeholders have identified the problem as revolving around masculinity. They have not been able to recognise the wider issues in defining masculinity and the alternative behaviours which would be appropriate for such definitions. The school has an important and urgent responsibility in addressing these issues. Male violence in schools, the family and community can only be reduced if society and, in particular, schools, begin an awareness-raising programme among its citizens (staff, parents and students) of what masculinity can be.

Future directions

The school's attempt to intervene and control Trent's victimisation had been fragmented and lacking cohesion until late 1996. By raising the awareness of staff, and in particular that of the Deputy Head, a much more consistent approach has resulted. Communication between the students, staff and parents has been more open and frequent, and disciplinary action has been forthcoming. This timing coincides with the publication of the school's bullying policy and an education programme to inform all school members of its contents and meaning. Staff were in-serviced on the topic of bullying. Some attitudinal differences were expressed about the reasons and purpose of bullying. The issue of bullying of staff was also raised.

Because of staff action in favour of the victim, the boys' power struggle with authority became more openly evident. Reports were made about boys harassing girls, teachers and other boys. Only certain boys, Milton being one, were identified while others appeared to be onlookers and silent supporters.

There is division among some staff about the justification of some boys being disciplined. Their sympathies still lie with the boys who perpetrate and not with the victim. The commitment of the school to maintaining and carrying out its policy is constantly needing reinforcement with some staff, although at administration level it appears to be firm. Modelling positive non-aggressive behaviour is constantly being highlighted (Jenkin 1993). An ongoing campaign challenging existing patterns of behaviour and social constructions of masculinity and femininity is occurring as the Deputy, other staff and I deal with the incidents (Tulloch, 1995, Rigby *et al*, 1993). However, there are many features in the school structure which support male domination, including the fact that the Headmaster of Primary and the three school deputies, together with the Headmaster of the whole school, are all males. School assemblies for example, always have a predominance of males sitting out the front. The only females are represented by one or two students.

Intervention with the year group involved in Trent's victimisation will continue. Few of us feel confident that the problem will be

eradicated; the best we can hope for is minimisation. If Trent leaves the school at the end of this year he may have the chance to begin afresh, although the victimisation outside the school may continue despite Juvenile Justice intervention. The seeking of power and control over others will no doubt be an ongoing mission for some of the boys in the peer group. Their targets may become younger students in the school. They may possibly progress this mission into the community as they grow older, with other males and possibly female partners and children, becoming victims. Their performances will in many cases be silently supported by other males and the social groups and work places to which they belong. These performances have been encouraged and nurtured in their families of origin and in the schools which they have attended. The media also appears to reinforce this violence through its drama presentations, sport coverage and news reports. Victimisation in schools is not new and is destined to continue while Australian society continues to reinforce hegemonic masculinity.

As the school addresses issues of masculinity, which it is doing at present, so the social construction of hegemonic masculinity will be challenged. The emotional life of boys and men will be opened out and acknowledged. The need for violence to exercise power and control will no longer be an acceptable male practice. School violence will hopefully diminish as both boys and girls learn to express emotions and solve conflicts in a non-violent manner.

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