Dealing with Secondary School Violence: Teachers Speak

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
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Thesis Abstract

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This study seeks to explore constructions of violence from a sampling of urban and rural setting teachers and to provide insights into current directions in teacher-based violence-response and violence-prevention strategies.

The analysis draws on research findings, in the Winter/Spring of 1996/97, at two secondary schools, one urban and Catholic, the other rural and Public. This study, qualitative and descriptive in nature, used audio-taped teacher/participant interviews and classroom observation as the main strategies for data collection. Twelve experienced full-time secondary school teachers, male and female, were interviewed. The study focusses on the perceptions of teachers as those who deal with violence ‘on the front line’ and are the prime implementers of educational change. Interviews, seven at a large district rural high school, and five at a large urban secondary school, were often several hours in length, semi-structured, and interpretive in nature Seven teachers were selected for more in-depth investigation by way of classroom observation. The selections satisfied a number of criteria: male and female participants, representation from both schools, and a wide range of subjects and levels taught.

The teacher/participants conceptualized violence as any behaviour intended to be seriously
hurtful or harmful, whether perpetrated by one person on another or directed towards oneself. Such behaviour can include physical or non-physical acts of psychological, emotional, physical, economic, spiritual, verbal, and self abuse. From their perspectives on violence, teachers of both settings perceived their schools as non-violent. The perception of the rural school as non-violent did not stand up. The study explored contradictions between and among: teachers’ general constructions of violence in schools, teachers’ ideas and images concerning violence in their schools, and teachers’ particular constructions of violence in their own schools using their own articulated definitions as points of reference.

Teachers’ strategies for dealing with school violence fall into two categories: reactive and proactive. Reactive include: rational intervention, separation, threats, curricular penalties, expulsion, humour, professionalism, and school databases. Proactive include: interesting curriculum, focus time, extra-curricular activities, environmental concerns, positive reinforcement, counselling, Zero Tolerance, student participation, and participative democracy. In this instance, the more participative and more democratic the school culture, the less violent.
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December 18, 1998.
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Chapter One

The Gathering Storm

Introduction

Misbehaviours and disruptions have always existed at school. Many adults, when reflecting back on their own youth, will remember instances of fighting, or of a particular student at school, a bully perhaps, whom they took great pains to avoid. Name-calling and malicious teasing can be other not-so-fond memories of youthful school days. Some may similarly recall occasions when weaponry figured prominently: throwing stones and brandishing knives. A few may even have been perpetrators of violence themselves.

For years, educators, parents, and students, understanding that a caring, nurturing, and safe learning community is significant both for the learning process and for student performance outcomes (Haynes, 1998), have been unwilling participants in the ups and downs of school violence. The omnipresent media have constantly blared the latest statistics, "School violence down, parents told" (Josey, 1993), or alternatively, "School violence worse than expected, Ontario survey says" (Sarick, 1993). More recently, "Oregon teen on killing spree" headlined the ABC Evening News with Peter Jennings (May 21, 1998). The complexities around the issue of the school violence may be illustrated by the following incident.

An Incident

In 1992, Ottawa law enforcement agencies, educators, and citizens were fearful that an impending secondary school teachers’ strike leaving 25,000 young people free to roam the streets was a prescription for civil disaster. Anticipating a sharp increase in violent behaviour, allegedly,
many braced themselves for the impending crisis as the strike commenced. Incredibly, the dire predictions never materialized and the incidence of juvenile crime actually plummeted. However, after the strike, when teachers and students returned to school, the crime rate sky-rocketed anew, only to peter out once again during the summer months (Orbit, 1993).

The superficial implication, arguably flawed, that a causal link exists between the increased incidence of crime and the lack of controlled supervision of adolescent development in a formal school setting, is scarcely a new one (Prentice, 1977). For example, in the mid 19th century there was a 12-month shutdown of Ontario’s Common Schools because of a tax disputation between government and educators. The May 1849 issue of the Journal of Education for Upper Canada angrily charged, "In Toronto, the Common Schools are yet closed, while juvenile crime increases and abounds beyond all precedent." Such is the legacy of the century-old tradition of public schools as institutions of control, the defenders and promoters of respectability and personal restraint (Prentice, 1977). Violent incidents apparently decreased when students were away from school and increased when schooling resumed. A study conducted in 1995 also challenged the idea that youth violence is a problem that is more prevalent in the larger community than in schools (Smith, 1993). That study found victimization rates 81 percent at school, but only 69 percent in the larger society. The 1992 strike by secondary teachers in Ottawa, however, considering the number of students involved, might give us pause to consider whether, contrary to popular contemporary opinion, there may be something about our schools that plays some part, perhaps even an integral part, in the support and even the promotion of violence among young people. The reasons why may, in part, be a function of the educational system itself (Epp, 1996). The idea that there has been and continues to be something inherently harmful within the
educational system (Edwards, 1993; Watkinson, 1997) will be pursued in greater detail in Chapter Two.

**Conceptual Perspectives**

Although many agree that our schools are violent to some degree, what may not be so readily apparent, are the root causes of this violence and how to manage and curtail it. To understand what there is about the structure and culture of schools that may make them especially vulnerable to violence, there are three conceptual perspectives that impinge upon my own understanding of violence: the pedagogue’s perspective, the family perspective, and a democratic perspective. This view is intrinsic to my different approach to school violence. Read Chapter Two for a critique of more conventional approaches to violence. These can be found parcelled out in two sections: *A Selected View of the Literature* which critiques several conventional studies of school violence, and *Violence: An Evolution in Meaning* which examines how the concept of violence has changed over time.

(1) *The Pedagogue’s Perspective*

As custodians of education, teachers normally spend six or more hours a day, five days per week with school-aged juveniles in school and classroom settings. In conjunction with obtaining an education, these environments typically require children to follow rules, interact appropriately\(^1\) with peers and adults, participate in teacher-directed activities, and refrain from disrupting or disturbing the learning activities of others. As part of their pedagogical responsibilities, teachers typically assist children in acquiring the social, organizational, and

\(^1\)By whose definition is the appropriateness judged?
cultural behavioural skills that will enable them to become viable members of a contemporary
democratic society (Ungerleider, 1991). After all, youth are dependent upon teachers as
custodians of their safety during the time they spend in school acquiring these various skills
(Soder, 1990). Still, sooner or later every public school teacher becomes involved with some
aspect of violent and aggressive behaviour that interrupts the educational process, threatens
personal safety, and is generally disruptive to the harmonious functioning of school and
classroom (Goldstein, 1984).

As Lewis Coser in The Functions of Social Conflict (1964) and others (Cherryholmes, 1988;
Feinberg & Soltis, 1992; Freire, 1985) have frequently pointed out, conflict is a common enough
form of social interaction. But, somewhere along the way, and for disparate reasons, conflict
heightens, pushing the limits of acceptable behaviour. Indeed, all aspects of society have
experienced a steadily increasing rate of violence since the mid 1950s (Safe Schools Committee,
1994). Anecdotal evidence indicates that all categories of violent crime for youths under 18 in
years, the incidence of school violence has increasingly become a problem in Canadian
classrooms as well (Campbell, 1994). Traditionally, teachers have placed the blame squarely on
students as the source of the problem (Edwards, 1993). However, aberrant behaviour by students
could be regarded as a normal consequence to the inadequacies of the school as an institution and
to pedagogues as symbols of educational bureaucracy (Edwards, 1993). Arguably then, schools
may not only foster misbehaviour in students, but may also be responsible for an atmosphere that

2 A more detailed description of Ontario teachers' duties can be found in the
Consolidated Ontario Education Statutes and Regulations (1994).
commonly puts students at risk.

(2) The Family Perspective

An extensive history of empirical studies identifies family variables as contributors to early forms of antisocial behaviour and subsequent delinquency (Wenk & Harlow, 1978; Feinberg & Soltis, 1992). Families of antisocial children are commonly characterized by harsh and inconsistent discipline, little positive parental involvement, as well as poor monitoring and supervision of children’s activities (Hranitz & Eddowes, 1990; Rich, 1992). Alarmingly, the recent trends in family management and function are typified by a lessening of positive family influence on children’s morals, attitudes, and behaviour (Bradley, 1994; Feinberg & Soltis, 1992; Hranitz & Eddowes, 1990).

Fifty years ago the family had one primary wage earner, almost always the male parent. Not so today. Maintaining an acceptable standard of living has become increasingly difficult for many Canadians. Of two-parent families in contemporary society, the norm is for both parents to be full-time wage earners. As more and more mothers work outside the home, often of necessity, many children are being raised in families in which parents are able to devote less and less time to them. It seems that as a result many preschoolers spend a disproportionate number of hours a day with someone other than their parents (daycare workers, for example). While this arrangement is not necessarily a problem, it has the potential to be. And, with consumerism on the rise, children increasingly demand more of a monetary nature from parents only too willing to give, the rationale often being that money is a practical substitute for child-parent quality time (Eitzen, 1992). Children, themselves, not realizing that they are being short-changed, often may
equate this monetary advantage with love.³

Increasingly, economic stressors coupled with crises arising from chaotic parental relationships are having a profound effect on children. With the incidence of divorce in North America considerably higher than it was 40 or 50 years ago, children of broken homes are frequently deprived of economic stability. Of young people who live in single parent homes, nearly 90% (Eitzen, 1992) will reside with their mothers, which usually means existing on much smaller incomes than those of two-parent families. Young people, so dependent on peer approval, often find the gap in material differences between themselves and their peers intolerable. Possibly as a result, many may become sullen and difficult to handle, experiment with substance abuse, and reject authority by joining gangs and/or running away from home (Hranitz & Eddowes, 1990).

Studies have also shown that children from single-parent families are less likely to be high achievers, but more likely to be truant, subject to disciplinary action, and to be school drop-outs (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989). With less positive parental involvement and, consequently, disrupted child-parent bonding, a child is less likely to identify with parental and societal values regarding conformity and work. With more free time available in their formative years, children have more opportunities to absorb the negative influences of the mammoth media machines that impact their lives daily (Campbell, 1993; Eitzen, 1992; Goller, 1988). The synergistic effect of these pressures and influences can plummet children and teenagers into a spiral of antisocial behaviour and delinquency, characterized by a lack of internal control and a

³This flow of easy money from parent to child may, in part, be feeding peer pressure to acquire "fashionable" consumer goods, especially in designer label clothing and technology.
negative attitude towards school and authority. In the midst of this potential chaos, and for whatever reasons, parents unable to teach, guide, and nurture their children to be viable members of society, look more and more to educators to accomplish these tasks for them (Sigel, 1991).

Although educational institutions have made valiant attempts to step into the breach, the type of bonding that, many argue, should exist between parent and child is virtually impossible to replicate at school. It does appear, moreover, that many children involved in acts of violence and misbehaviour have been victims of various types of dysfunctional familial management (Hranitz & Eddowes, 1990). This state of affairs has resulted in difficulties that have somehow been further exacerbated by the very nature of the school environment itself (Fullan, 1982). The consequence has been a further increase in student misbehaviour and violence (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989). Strategies, both reactive and proactive, to alleviate the incidence of violence have met with varying degrees of success and failure. Yet, students, parents, police, and educators still report dissatisfaction with present efforts to reduce the extent of violence and to make our schools safe (Mathews, 1993).

(3) A Democratic Perspective

Society, a composite of individuals, shapes identity and gives meaning to the events of life and the complexities of the human experience. But, just what is a "democratic society?" As a lived experience, democracy is a somewhat encrypted and elusive social concept embedded within a specific society as an integral part of the life knowledge of individuals. Its origins go back to the Greek city-states and has the general connotation of "rule by citizens." The main thrust of educational research from the perspective of democracy has been to investigate how widely power has been distributed and what role students play. This type of democracy,
participatory in nature, is direct democracy in the sense that all stakeholders are actively involved in all important decisions (Marshall, 1994). The debate persists, however, about just how strong the voice of the people should be. And meaningful democratic participation mixes uneasily with existing educational hierarchies and political power structures. A widely-held belief among many theorists is that true democracy impedes progress and decision-making because of the sheer size and the complexities of industrialized society. They argue that society can have organization or democracy, but not both (Pateman, 1988). Although democracy, with maximum participation from all members of society, might still be the ideal, doubts about its feasibility at the action level remain—the old ‘too many cooks spoil the broth’ complaint persists. The emphasis on participation has similarly become suspect, the theory (excuse?) being, that an upsurge of participation by heretofore non-participants, could negatively affect the stability of the democratic system itself (Pateman, 1988). As well, it is commonly argued by some that too much participation promotes dissension, delays, and uncertainty with ensuing pandemonium the result. Thus, educational bureaucracies can claim precedents for their own power structures from political systems whereby the power elite rule as a quasi-collective representative of society with meaningful participation restricted to the finite group.

Like reading, or any other school subject for that matter, democracy is a learned skill in which practice results in competence. It may well be that continued lack of meaningful contribution by students to the educational power structures (of which presently the young remain a disenfranchised part), via the participatory democratic process, is in some measure responsible for the frequency of violence and malaise in our schools. Schools may not only facilitate misbehaviour in students, they may also be somehow responsible for the oppressive
atmosphere that puts students at risk. In Canada, where avoidance of violence even lies behind the national watchwords of *peace, order, and good government*, our democratic tradition embodies certain basic tenets upon which our social, educational, and political existence continues to be predicated (Ungerleider, 1991). These tenets encompass such perceived basics as equality, individual rights, the Anglo-Saxon tradition of common law, sharing in the exercising of power, and due process of law. By definition, people have more freedom of thought and action in a democracy than they do in other political-cultural regimes (Slater, 1994; Osborne, 1991). The perpetuation of a democratic society, though, depends upon a strong sense of commitment and responsibility on the part of its members toward the democratic ideal. Such a commitment must become "a felt need" and it must be "directly experienced; it must be lived" (Slater, 1994, p. 100). To that end, society has increasingly looked to the educational system to play a determinant role in developing the capacities, habits, and attitudes in our future adults that will sustain the democratic dynamic (Ungerleider, 1991; Snauwaert, 1993). But, are schools, in fact, exemplars of the democratic tenet? Educators both teach and champion the value of the democratic ideal, but in day-to-day school management and interaction with their clientele (that is, students), are educators actually practising what they preach? Put another way, if one test of the democratic practice of an institution rests upon its treatment of some of the least powerful, in this case, the students who are compelled to attend these educational institutions (Levin, 1996), how do schools fare?

While studies of violence have approached the problem from various conceptual perspectives like the pedagogue's and the familial, they do not commonly consider that aspects of violence may be linked ideologically to philosophical concepts such as democracy. Yet, Hodgkinson
(1991) regards education as having much to do with the *ideological* dimensions of life. Education seeks, in part, to transmit the cultural aspects of a society of which we function as constituent parts, and to foster and encourage a nationalistic intent in young people who will become our future citizens. In western society, the passing of the tenets of our democracy from one generation to the next is considered, in large measure, the task of education. It may be argued, however, with some justification, that this mode of transferral may be flawed, in that, because educational organizations are institutional bureaucracies they may not necessarily be the most appropriate mechanisms for teaching the beliefs of democracy. But, the point remains that education (and its mechanisms), because of the ability to reach the largest numbers of our population base, remains the most sustained and, arguably, best means of transferring consistent ideology (such as nationalism and democratic ideals) from one generation to the next.

**Rationale of the Study**

The school, the family, and democratic society are three major influences affecting youth here in Canada in the 1990s. Complications and obstacles stemming from one or more of these influences can promote stress in teenagers resulting in unacceptable and unpredictable behaviours, some of which may be considered violent. Because teachers are with students in teaching/learning situations for most of the day, and because unsuitable conduct can negatively

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4Hodgkinson’s other purposes of education, expressed as *aesthetic* and *economic* are addressed indirectly in the preceding Pedagogy Perspectives and Family Perspectives sections. They will likewise be re-visited in Chapter Seven.

5Some would argue forcefully that the media have tremendous influence which, in many instances, supercedes even that of education. The debate will not be continued here, only acknowledged that it is on-going.
affect learning, it is often left to teachers to manage these various misbehaviours. Disruptions steal valuable instruction time and can endanger the safety of students. A recent study has indicated that classroom teachers commonly spend one-third of their time managing students' behaviour (Brand, 1998). Teachers have long recognized that abusive and delinquent behaviour manifested at school may be a consequence of problems at home, at school, in the wider society, or a combination thereof. The response by the educational community to this ubiquitous reality has been creative, energetic, and sustained (Bradley, 1994). Having an obvious interest in preventing differences from becoming collisions, teachers will usually take strenuous avoiding action when collisions threaten, yet, in the eyes of some, the perception remains that the level of school violence is intensifying (Campbell, 1994; Ryan, 1993). During the last few decades, there has been a determination by Statistics Canada (Mathews, 1994), educators (Ontario Safe School Task Force, 1994; United States Department of Education and Justice, 1998; ), researchers (Day et al., 1995; Epp & Watkinson, 1996, 1997; MacDonald, 1996), and the public alike that students are being increasingly endangered by violent and inappropriate behaviours at school. As a consequence, researchers are beginning to probe deeper into the history, structure, and culture of our schools in their quest for answers to the incidence and perplexity of school violence.

Because schooling and attendance at school is compulsory for all students (save in exceptional circumstances), the claim can be made that it is even more crucial that schools provide a safe, comfortable, and stable atmosphere where learning can take place.

The intent of this study is to encourage and foster understanding, as well as to enrich the database concerning school violence. The focus of this study is on coming to some comprehension of the basic assumptions of teacher practices in the resolution of secondary
school violence in two schools. The responses to questions about teacher practices in the resolution of school violence, contextualized by a group of 12 Ontario secondary school teachers from these two schools, may provide some insights into the problem of violence at school. Such insights would likewise provide a basis on which to advance further theory and research on the topic.

**Purposes of the Study**

There are various orientations of background investigation still to come that also inform the objectives of the study; however, I present them here as a practical fore-shadowing tool for the reader, who, naturally enough, may value a road map sooner rather than later. The main study objectives (to be re-visited and amplified in Chapter Three) are:

1. to identify and explore teachers' reactive and proactive strategies for alleviating the incidence of violence
2. to identify and describe what teachers perceive as violent;
3. to identify and describe conditions that teachers perceive as fostering violence; and
4. to describe, from their perspective on violence, how these teachers contextualize their particular schools.

Additionally, this study seeks to document consistencies and contradictions between "teachers' ideas, images, and theories that mystify social reality and block social change" (Kellner quoted in Giroux & McLaren, 1989, p.187), with respect to violence. Thus, the objectives of this study also include the following:

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6 Van Maanen refers to this type of foreshadowing as "intellectual hopscotch" (Van Maanen, 1988, pp. 6-7).
(5)a to document, as articulated by a sampling of the teachers, the consistencies and contradictions of constructions of violence in two schools, one urban, one rural;

(5)b to explore the contradictions between and among:

(i) teachers' general constructions of violence in schools,

(ii) teachers' ideas and images concerning violence in their schools, and

(iii) teachers' particular construction of violence in their own schools using their own articulated definitions as the point of reference;

Organization of the Study

Before venturing into new terrain, I would like to present a brief overview of subsequent chapters, including this one. To set the scene, Chapter One began with an introductory incident, followed by a section outlining three conceptual perspectives drawn from the literature of pedagogy, the family, and democracy that impinge upon my understanding of school violence. Chapter One also presents the study purposes and the rationale for the study in sections just preceding this paragraph detailing the organization of the study.

At the beginning of Chapter Two, I situate myself in the study. What follows is a selected examination of school violence research taken from the literature and a section articulating various definitions of violence (also from the literature) that have been put forward. Still within Chapter Two, I consider the big picture as a "problematic" historically, contextually outlining, in some detail, how, to some observers, the educational system became such a powerful controlling mechanism and how it continues to reinforce its influential and bureaucratic position in contemporary society. Chapter Two also speaks to some supplementary, but still critically important, if derivative issues, subtle interrelationships which, in various indirect ways, have
inter-connections with violence. These interrelationships are (a) power and culture (b) value
theory, educational leadership, and interest, and (c) school change.

Chapter Three, the methodology chapter, begins by setting the scene in an introductory
section followed by a reiteration of the purposes of the research as outlined previously in Chapter
One. Included is a brief section justifying my choice of research methodology. Next are a series
of sections covering procedures, community, and school description from my viewpoint as
researcher, pertinent demographic information, sample and pilot study particulars, interview
processes, study limitations, and matters of bias and ethics.

Chapter Four begins with an extensive discussion of definitions important and appropriate to
this study which were contextualized by the teacher/participants in interviews. Also, in Chapter
Four, teachers characterize their schools with regard to violence and provide accessorial
demographic information.

Chapter Five contains the contextual specifics about violence in these two schools in three
main areas of abuse: verbal abuse, self abuse, and physical assault, with explanatory incidences
and situations gathered from in-depth interviews with the 12 participant teachers. The discussion
to conclude the fifth chapter summarizes the three main abuses in both schools and speaks to
some of the challenges associated therein as articulated by teachers in both schools.

Chapter Six advances teachers’ strategies for managing issues of violence, both in a proactive
and reactive sense. These two main categories of violence management, that is, reactive
strategies and proactive strategies, are each sub-divided into three groups of strategies which are
(1) policy-based, (2) pedagogically-based, or (3) student-centred. Concluding the sixth chapter is
a discussion about the various proactive and reactive strategies that these teachers have
articulated for violence management in their particular schools.

Chapter Seven, the final chapter, sums up the study and speculates about implications for possible future research and theory.
Chapter Two

A Selected View of Violence from the Literature

Many studies have been conducted on school violence both here in Canada and around the world. Researchers have approached the issue from a variety of positions, such as behaviour, discipline, and policy implementation, seeking a diversity of information. As a result, findings may be as disparate as the number of studies, sometimes confusing, and occasionally, even contradictory. As an example, one study claimed that school violence was down (Dolmage, 1996), another found it was on the rise (MacDonald, 1996).

But first, let me situate myself in the context of the study. As a Junior and Intermediate level educator whose first teaching experience was in a small rural community, and later on the Intermediate panel in a large metropolitan centre, I well appreciate the on-going trials of classroom teachers as problem-solvers, peacekeepers, and educators. I, too, encountered disruptions that interrupted the harmonious learning environment of my classroom and threatened the psychological, physical, and emotional safety of my students, and even, occasionally, myself. Often one troublesome issue would be dealt with and another would loom. The challenge to keep the numbers of potentially violent circumstances from leaping out of control sometimes appeared then, as now, a never-ending and exhausting reality. Although I will of course try to minimize the impact of these experiences in the text below, I may as well acknowledge that I regard school violence as a pervasive problem.

That said, allow me now to lay more of the groundwork for my present research with a selected review of what scholars have directly identified about this oftentimes perplexing issue.

Researching violence in Scandinavia in the early 1970s, Olweus began investigating school
bullying to examine the mechanisms which underlie bullying and victimization. Involving more than 150,000 students, his several studies concluded that nearly 10 per cent of that number were victims, while nearly 8 per cent were bullies (Olweus, 1991). A similar study, undertaken at the request of the Toronto Board of Education, also examined bullying, but from the perspectives of elementary school children, teachers, and parents answering questionnaires with questions based closely on those used in Scandinavia. The study results indicated that rates of bullying were significantly higher in Toronto than in Scandinavia, one in three compared to one in seven (Ziegler & Rosenstein-Manner, 1991). Although these are significant studies on one aspect of violence, the sweeping nature of the research may have lost important particularities that a smaller, more in-depth study might have provided. Questionnaires, by their very nature, usually tend to more prescriptive and not as sensitive to other information that a more qualitative approach through interviews might provide. Additionally, interviews allow researchers to contextualize behaviour fostering understanding. This kind of person-to-person interaction permits meanings to be clarified and new ideas to be explored. Further, since the study participants were from two different countries and cultures, the threshold of understanding regarding bullying may not necessarily be consistent, rendering the comparability of results across both studies suspect.

In a qualitative study undertaken in the spring of 1994, a sample of 12 Ontario teachers articulated numerous difficulties and stressors that they perceived as negatively affecting youth behaviour (Galloway-Rintoul, 1994). These may be political, socio-cultural, or socio-economic in nature, or embrace a combination. Virtually all, in some manner, prejudicially impacted the basic family unit. This study was small and of short duration. Perhaps another study, larger in
scope, including visits to the school and classroom observation sessions to corroborate the initial research gathered from teachers, could have yielded more insights and a possible basis for theory.

A 1989 study of violent and delinquent behaviours led researchers to create a developmental perspective on anti-social behaviour. The investigators reviewed several recent studies and concluded that a progression of anti-social behaviour like temper tantrums and aggression in early childhood significantly predicted adolescent and adult offenses (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey). The researchers found that misbehaviours were often an outcome of family stressors and disruptions. It was their recommendation that programmes providing parent-training to improve family management and to teach children social-skills with a view to improving peer relationships may be two means of successfully mediating the progression of anti-social behaviour. These suggestions are fine as far as they go. But, to what kind of family management and training are the researchers referring? How is this training to be accomplished? By whom?

Neither do the researchers address the possibility that a child may understand the appropriate way to behave and interact but chooses an inappropriate behaviour path anyway. In this latter instance, perhaps more would be required to mediate this source of difficulty than family management and the teaching of social skills. Using research already conducted by others precludes the opportunity for the new researcher to experience the data firsthand. Indeed, any relationship with secondhand data may be, in some manner, affected by the lens of others, the researchers who originally administered the study and gathered and analyzed the data. This is not to suggest that successful research must always be conducted firsthand, just that every instance in which the data are used by another removes the empirical particulars that much farther from the
actual context, allowing more chances for interpretation that might jeopardize the original intended meaning (Seidman, 1991).

In 1995, a study conducted for the Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada approached school violence by examining the nature of school-based violence prevention policies and programmes set down as policy at board level (Day, Golench, et al.). Policy studies are typically conducted to provide information for decision-makers (Anderson, 1994). The study concluded that violence prevention policies should be both comprehensive and consistent from Board to Board. Findings also suggested that these policies should be community-focused, but questions about this direction can be raised. By what means should this be or could this be accomplished? Who should prepare these policies? Should community members be involved in the actual policy preparation or consulted about policy content? These facets of the study remain unanswered. Additionally, students were not consulted about emendations to violence prevention practices and programmes. Information from the perspective of students might have provide valuable insights that have been over-looked.

A 1997 study investigated teachers' perceptions of violence in American public schools from third grade through the twelfth grade (Price & Everett, 1997). One thousand telephone interviews were conducted using a 42-item survey with a closed-item response format. Information gathered from the study indicated that the majority of teachers felt safe at school, however, 11 per cent had been a victim of a violent act. There is no indication in the study that details exactly what constitutes "a violent act." The lack of clarity and consistency of terminology is perhaps one significant omission that may have skewed the data results. In closed-item responses, although responses are uniform and therefore easily compared, the list of possible responses may not
adequately express the respondents’ views. In open-ended interviews of qualitative research on the other hand, the researcher is able to ask follow-up questions for clarity reasons and to enhance contextual understanding.

The United States Department of Education has just released the first in a series of annual studies tracking school crime nationally (Portner, 1998). The report indicates that one-third of schools with 1000 or more students reported at least one serious incident a year compared with 0.1 per cent of smaller schools. President Clinton promised increased funding to bolster schools’ police forces by hiring up to 2000 additional officers to work in schools. Increased police presence in schools has not been shown to intervene in the causes of the violent incidences, but rather is a technique used on an ad hoc basis (Gaustad, 1991; Trevaskis, 1994). These "shot-gun" strategies initiated, arguably, to satisfy an alarmed public may be considered by some as more of the same reactive responses that many feel do little to address the underlying aspects of the problem. More appropriate, perhaps, than playing the numbers game with public funds, would be a study to assess how effective the existing strategies have been before they are extended at considerable expense.

Some researchers, however, are beginning to think about the causes of school violence a little more creatively. While many studies focus only on behaviour and discipline at school, especially counting up the numbers of incidents, a 1995 Alberta study advances information about violence at school using student interviews. Because students comprise the population segment most commonly affected by school violence, it seems reasonable that their opinions be actively sought. Seventy-five per cent of 231 students from five Junior High schools participating in the study indicated that they felt safe at school most of the time. Yet, over half the male students said
they had been victims of bullying, fights, verbal threats, and theft (MacDonald, 1996). One in five male students indicated he had been threatened with a weapon at school. Twenty-five per cent of female students said they had experienced sexual harassment at school. If, for example, researchers had just posed the initial general question about safety without asking for subsequent particularities, they might have missed data that was important for contextual understanding and their conclusions might have been quite different.

Another Canadian researcher (Dolmage, 1996) argues that the public perception that youth crime and school violence have substantially increased is not supported by current statistics. It is his position that youth crime and school violence are actually down. He charges that the media is responsible for exaggerating isolated incidents and fomenting panic among educators and the public. Dolmage lumps youth crime and school violence together, not distinguishing between the two, an significant omission. He did not clearly explain that there are many non indictable offenses like verbal abuse, emotional and psychological abuse that occur at school which he did not include as part of his statistics. Youth crime is punishable under the law whereas many incidences of school violence are not commonly indictable offenses. Violent physical crimes punishable under the law appear to be his sole criteria for defining violence. It might have been more useful if he had clarified his understanding of violence. His data is not valid unless he clearly states to what the data refers. As well, other researchers interviewing students indicate that only a small portion of students ever report violent incidences, however defined (MacDonald, 1996). The non-reporting factor was not addressed in the Dolmage research, therefore the data results can not be comprehensive and are, therefore, suspect.

A key problem for all researchers concerns our comprehension of the research term. For
violence: *just what do we include?* As with any research, a clearly delineated understanding of the research term ensures consistency. This section of the study first examines understandings of concepts and terms that form an integral part of the research, revisited from the available literature. Also in this section I will offer my own interpretation of the term. The understanding of violence, as advanced by the study participants, will be forth-coming in Chapter Four.

**Definition of Terms**

*Violence: An Evolution in Meaning*

Historically, *school violence* has been associated with (among others) the destruction of school property, assault with weapons, and aggressive physical contact such as fighting or bullying. As educators and researchers continue to explore this significant issue, thinking on the matter has become more sophisticated and the type of behaviour judged violent has broadened considerably to include a wide range of indictable and non-indictable offenses such as illicit drug use, verbal abuse, as well as psychological and emotional abuse both at the personal and the interpersonal level.⁷ As recently as the spring of 1994, however, research by Galloway-Rintoul found that physical violence like fighting and bullying were still cited by educators as the most recognizable aspects of *school violence*. What also emerged from the teachers' responses in 1994 was the conjecture that *school violence* became manifest as a deleterious progressive cycle that often (but not necessarily always) was initiated by aggressive verbal language. One educator-participant of that study stated with conviction that verbal belligerence and berating are "the

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⁷ Given this re-interpretation, it seems probable that every school-age child will experience violence, not once, but many times throughout his/her school life as either a perpetrator, witness, or victim.
initial stage of physical, racial, and gender-based violence, the three main flavours" (Galloway-Rintoul, 1994, p.15). With the identification of verbal aggression as the most frequent precursor to the type of violence that is most recognizable, physical violence, many educators (Galloway-Rintoul, 1994) speculated that a concerted effort to staunch aberrant verbal wrangling could interrupt and arrest the downward spiral into physical violence. But, of course, this is but one of the many facets of the complex problem that is school violence. Many school boards and teachers, believing that the on-going incidence of school violence will continue to disrupt school and negatively impact learning, ultimately decided to implement a variety of conflated strategies of violence prevention, intervention, and response (Donovan & James, 1994; Kollins, 1994). But first, it was necessary to articulate a precise definition of violence since a mutually-defined understanding of the concept among educators and researchers was by no means presumable.

Indeed, if we examine several definitions of violence from the literature, it will become clear that they are all similar yet somewhat different. For example, Rich (1992) defined violence as a sudden and extremely forceful act that causes physical harm or suffering to persons or animals. Hranitz and Eddowes (1990) suggested a more inclusive definition of violence as a pattern of behaviour that involves direct aggression against another person. They then explicated their definition by adding that it can come in many forms including homicide, beatings, psychological and emotional harm, and forced sex with a person of any age. The Scarborough Ontario School Board in the publication Meeting the Challenge (1993/1994) articulated violence to encompass fighting, threatening, or verbally abusing other students or staff as well as possession of threatening with, or assaulting with a weapon or replica of a weapon. Also understood as violent was any assault of another person that results in an injury serious enough that results in medical
attention (Scarborough School Board, 1994). Another definition focuses on the issue of power as wedded to violence. In the 1995/1996 issue of *trans/forms*, the editorial defines violence as *both systemic and institutional practices as well as individual acts performed by the powerful*. . . such that *violence is a social practice that indexes relations of power between individuals and also within diverse social groups*. Yet another research team working on violence in 1997 has specifically applied the definition of violence to education and its systems. For this team, *systemic violence* (as it applies to education) includes *any institutional practice or procedure that adversely impacts individuals or groups by burdening them psychologically, mentally, culturally, spiritually, economically, or physically* (Epp & Watkinson, 1997). That 1997 more inclusive definition has repositioned the concept of violence in education to encompass economic and even spiritual hardship. In 1998, one researcher specifically articulated school violence as representing *those actual or threatened behaviours or actions that are symptomatic of an unfulfilled need: to belong, have power, seek approval* (for example), *expressed in the form of sexual, emotional, or physical harm, that has a deleterious effect on establishing and maintaining a safe and caring school climate* (MacDonald, 1998).

Many researchers have now recast and expanded their definition to include any procedures or practices perpetrated by teachers and the administration in such a manner that negatively impacts students. Interpolating and extrapolating the definition further, we might conclude that there are different forms of violence experienced by various segments of the community who are made vulnerable because of hegemonic practices of race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, and so on. The inconsistencies regarding the definition of violence could perhaps explain why one earlier researcher (Wayson, 1985), found school violence rare. His criteria did
not include verbal, emotional, spiritual, economical, or psychological abuse.

Of the various definitions of school violence put forward, ultimately the most common definition shared by teachers in my 1994 study stated that any behaviour they *subjectively perceived as hurtful to another* would be classed as violent (Galloway-Rintoul, 1994). So, while the conceptualization of the term *violence* at school among educators has been recast and expanded considerably to include a continuum of disruptive behaviours, carefully planned strategies have been initiated both in the classroom and at Board level to deal with new and more inclusive definitions of school violence. Thus, this last more inclusive definition of violence cast by the 1994 study participants as *any behaviour subjectively perceived as hurtful to another*, is the definition of violence I bring to the present research.

**Our Educational Heritage: A Pattern of Authority and Suppression**

To understand and improve the present, it is often helpful to understand what has occurred in the past. Contemporary education has become a w/holistic endeavour arguably encompassing every aspect of students’ lives, but this was not always so. A sketch of the history of schools may provide some enlightenment. The next two sections are presented more in the nature of "problematics" in that they describe perceived patterns as sources of difficulties repeated over time.

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8 The difficulty here of course, is in the terms ‘*subjectively*’ and ‘*perceived.*’ To illustrate, an example comes to mind, that of *teasing.* Sometimes there can be a very fine line between playful teasing and teasing with intent to be hurtful, that is, malice. What one person may interpret as teasing, and therefore, play, may strike another as hurtful and malicious taunting, and therefore, violent.
Historical Orientation

Much of the structure of eighteenth and nineteenth century American and Canadian society was modelled quite deliberately on the English tradition of hierarchy with a series of upper and lower ranks, each enjoying certain privileges and obligations associated with their presumed place in society. For example, the poor, who were at the bottom end of the scale, were to respect the hierarchy and pay proper deference to those ranked above them. In a time of need, however, the impoverished could expect assistance from those of higher status, such as the church and the elite. The poor were neither feared nor repressed as long as they remained in their allotted station within the hierarchy and fulfilled their pre-determined role (Button & Provenzo Jr., 1983). By and large, reciprocal obligations appear to have been understood by practically everyone. After all, the tradition, rooted in the Poor Law Statutes of England and sanctioned in The Book of Common Prayer of the mid 1700s, had made the needy the public duty of the parish (Button & Provenzo Jr., 1983). Therefore, it seemed appropriate that the practice would continue in the new world. Likewise, if parents abandoned or neglected their children, community members felt it their obligation and indeed their right, to step in and rescue the unfortunates, placing them in other households. Interestingly, cited as one aspect of child neglect was lack of a proper education (Rothman, 1971). It was unthinkable to permit a child to flounder untrained, a widow or orphan to remain homeless, or the aged and sick to suffer unattended. These traditions of social solidarity, hierarchy, and mutual co-operation were hallmarks of both eighteenth and nineteenth century communities.

Midway through the eighteenth century, English society also became concerned with deviant behaviour as a danger both to the cohesiveness of the community and by extrapolation to its
peaceful existence. Early colonists, many of whom were intellectually ambitious and devoutly religious (the Puritans for example), judged a wide range of behaviour to be deviant (Button & Provenzo Jr., 1983). To counter any aberrant behaviour, people looked to the community, the church, and the family for guidance to combat sin and crime. By extension, any deviant behaviour became synonymous with sin (Kaestle, 1973; Rothman, 1971). Families were instructed to raise their children as law-abiding and God-fearing, with respect for law and authority. Members of the community were duty-bound to guide and correct one another at the first sign of deviancy. Soon the mechanisms were put in place whereby the decision-making capabilities of those persons arbitrarily deemed as requiring guidance, could be revoked. Thus public well-being came before individual prerogative as the first part of the solution to the problem of deviant behaviour.

The second part of the solution was the invention, in the 1820s, of an institution to cope with social distress, the penitentiary (Katz, 1975). Its duty was to sever offenders from all contact with crime and corruption while providing training in proper social behaviour and education using regimentation, control, and discipline to ensure the re-habilitation of the misguided and socially outcast (Noguera, 1995; Rothman, 1971). The rationale was that while it was the criminal’s environment that had led him into crime, it was the institution’s that would lead him out.

As a testament to caring but mis-guided communities, these "total institutions" (Goffman, 1961, p.4) were deemed an immediate success. Their numbers swelled in major centres in the northeastern United States and Canada: penitentiaries appeared for the socially deviant, asylums for the mentally insane, the terminally ill and aged (Rothman, 1971), and finally, charity schools
for the poor (Rothstein, 1984). All had much in common: isolation from the community, involuntary but free membership, a regimented and silent existence, a loss of personal freedom, and an unquestioned obedience to their "handlers," with little or no privacy. Each institution was administered and controlled by a single authority (Goffman, 1961). Penal conditions, especially, were deplorable, with coercion by way of physical punishment meted out in varying degrees for minor and major infractions or for no reason at all (Foucault, 1977; Goffman, 1961; Rothman, 1971), all in the name of re-socializing the wayward and educating the indigent to remove the threat to mainstream society. Although these institutions, named variously, asylums, charity schools, and penitentiaries, claimed they worked to "re-patriate" unfortunates back into society, there was never any suggestion or consideration of bettering one’s social position even if an inmate did manage to leave one of these establishments. Once a poor and indigent, for example, always a poor and indigent. And so it went. The class in which you were born was the class in which you died. Your fortunes might wax or wane, but there was no movement at all within the hierarchy of a classed society (Giroux, 1983).

As both Canada and the United States flourished, rapid industrialization and urbanization

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9 The buildings were usually some distance from the community with high surrounding solid walls to both obstruct the view and to bar entry and/or exit.

10 Those considered a danger to society or deviant in some way usually found themselves eventually incarcerated in some sort of institution or asylum (Goffman, 1961).

11 Social control and obedience were prime components of these institutions.

12 The term "handler" seems appropriate because often inmates were treated like animals or even worse. In most institutions it was physically dangerous for a ‘guest’ to speak unless spoken to. When s/he did speak it was with the proper amount of deference and meekness to those in control, otherwise a merciless display of physical force was meted out (Goffman, 1961; Rothstein, 1984).
required an ever larger and trained workforce (Rist, 1973). Factories, in particular, demanded workers with specific skills (Button & Provenzo Jr., 1983). As a result of the apparent rehabilitation of society’s undesirables through the use of asylums and penal institutions as controllers and managers, it seemed logical that these so-called "successful" institutions should become the main influence on the architecture, administration, and organization of public schools (Curtis, 1988; Goffman, 1961; Katz, 1975). When state supported common schools were established near the end of the nineteenth century, they were modelled directly on these early ‘successful’ institutions (Noguera, 1995; Button & Provenzo, 1983; Tyack, 1974) to provide a means by which youth could be socialized and trained for employment within a capitalist society (Rist, 1973).

Under the guise of fostering the creation of an enlightened populace, the capitalist machinery accelerated the construction of schools for the poor, wayward, and immigrant, schools that simulated conditions of the factories at which graduates would later be employed (Rothstein, 1984). Classrooms were built so that persons in authority could see and judge the behaviour of students at every moment during the day. Students were almost always in the presence of staff and confined to certain locations throughout the buildings. Even activity periods were structured so that students could be easily viewed and corrected when necessary. Use of the lavatory was tightly controlled and in lunchrooms tables were situated so errant movements could be easily identified (Tyack, 1974; Rothstein, 1984). However, these schools were attended only by the lower classes, the upper class elite continued to send their children to private schools perpetuating and reinforcing their birthright of power, wealth, and superior status. But when the working classes began to enter high school, the system craftily responded with vocational
schools and various methods of academic tracking (Oakes, 1985) to socialize them (the lower classes) for occupations that encouraged attitudes and skills appropriate for manual working-class status with little or no provision for upward mobility. In this way, the social status quo was maintained (Katz, 1975). With some exceptions, this served to underscore the disparity between the 'haves' and the "have-nots."

Soon institutional hierarchy was the order of the day, with free schools funded by the state and open to the general public. These schools were prescriptive and systematic in nature, with order and purposeful activity being venerated. Such 'improvements' as attendance rolls, salary schedules, uniform curriculums, and standard examinations were but several of the many bureaucratic prescriptions imposed by school authorities (Kaestle, 1973). Students were to be compliant, self-disciplined, deferential, and silent. Routine and regularity was required. Prescribed and timed activity periods were also a part of day-to-day existence as outlined by the authorities in charge of socializing and educating the student populace. A student's every move was carefully overseen (Rothstein, 1984), and this occurred in a democratic society purporting to champion the rights of the individual. But where did the idea come of distributing individuals, compelling them to engage in activity, coercing them to respond to commands, evaluating their performances, and training their minds? These were all common features of the authoritarian ethos of penal (also military and religious) communities of centuries ago, comprehensively chronicled by social historians like Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and Erving Goffman in *Asylum* (1961), to mention but two.

Whether building hospitals, factories, schools, banks, or penal facilities, the people of the nineteenth century in North America were preoccupied with the creation of institutions as part of
nation-building (Katz, 1975). These so-called "free schools" had offered training for poor children "in the rudiments of literacy and in morality to counterbalance the disadvantages resulting from the situation of their parents" (Katz, 1975, p. 7). Despite the term, the schools were only "free" to the poor. It wasn't until parents became dissatisfied with the inferior and variable standards of the smaller private schools that a major re-organization of the educational system materialized, making schools tax-supported and "free" to the masses (Katz, 1975). Mass schooling like the schools for lower classes before them were also agents of social control (Rist, 1973).

These educational establishments were also used to instil in young people the proper moral behaviour of which self-control and gentility were the hallmarks (Curtis, 1988; Noguera, 1995; Rothman, 1971; Tyack, 1974). This "training" and "schooling" increasingly used regimentation and strict discipline (Noguera, 1995; Rothman, 1971) to control and impose "the moral and intellectual restraint" (Prentice, 1977, p. 51) seen as necessary for society's youth. The focus of schooling, at the secondary level especially, became increasingly understood as the preparation of young people for their later work as productive economic members of a socially responsible citizenry (Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Manzer, 1994).

The focus of attention was on the body of the learner to be controlled and manipulated. Students were required to attend a common school, to study a common curriculum, and to behave in a like and deferential manner. Such were the suppressive, repressive, and utterly boring conditions to which active youngsters were forced to adapt and adopt. As a consequence, children were ultimately doomed to fail, as any outward expression of disinterest, disgust, boredom, or other unseemly behaviour like sullenness and muttering of profanities were regarded
as reasons for negative labelling and punishment (Goffman, 1961; Rist, 1973). The objectives of these control mechanisms were declared good both for the student and for society, to create order where there had been chaos (Rothstein, 1984). Thus, when students gave up their doomed struggle against 'the system' and learned to obey the rules and regulations of the existing ideology with complete, immediate, and dutiful compliance, the power and authority of those in positions of control were both strengthened and further legitimated (Ramsay, 1983). Schools became controlled and controlling public institutions where individuals sacrificed a measure of their personal liberty in exchange for the opportunity to learn (Noguera, 1995), but unfortunately there seemed to be no limit to the personal liberty that had to be relinquished. Ironically, the more the coercive powers of the system subjugated the students, the more the system was perceived as successful (Button & Provenzo Jr., 1983; Katz, 1975). Efficient, custodial, educational, and disciplinarian public schools, often acting in a compensatory capacity for perceived familial short-comings, appeared to be the vehicle through which children would become viable members of a democratic society (Curtis, 1988). As a result, the elaborate administrative and institutional power base of the educational organization continued to expand at a brisk pace.

Quite understandably, however, under these repressive conditions truancy in schools became a major problem. But, since funding of education was dependent upon enrollment numbers, by enlisting the aid of the political and legal systems, education authorities continued to broaden their means to retain children in school. As a corollary, salaries for attendance officers burgeoned to heights only dreamed of by teachers (Katz, 1975). Because it was widely believed that the educational system would transform culture for the better and that schools were the agency of
social transformation (Ramsay, 1983), education authorities were allowed to wield their autocratic and coercive powers unchallenged right into the twentieth century (Button & Provenzo Jr., 1983). But the system continued to be riddled with misconduct and political patronage as school authorities attempted extreme forms of coercion to sustain high enrollments and thereby secure as much funding as possible from the state (Katz, 1975).

Into the present, there exist massive all-powerful educational systems with complex administrative structures rooted in 200 years of institutional tradition, not for the lofty aims and ideals of teaching and learning, but rather for the ignoble intent of re-producing the social status quo through forced compliance and coercion. All this is accomplished in the name of viable capitalist economics (Lefebvre, 1973), the chief function of which is to perpetuate the culture and the tradition of the institutional social system itself. Educational system structures have become self-serving, bureaucratic entities essentially unchangeable and ungovernable (Sarason, 1982), and having little about them that serve the needs of the individual. To some, knowledge and its acquisition are being blatantly used as cultural capital for manipulation, a form of social control, to acculturate the immigrant, to reproduce the dominant ideology through indoctrination (Rothstein, 1984), and to distribute skills that will reinforce existing social divisions and class lines (Giroux, 1983; Ramsay, 1983). To survive and succeed even within this restrictive framework requires silent acceptance and compliance by students who are little more than pawns of the dominant classes. In this construction, it is a deplorable form of hegemony which society seems to validate, the rationale of which is apparently that quiescent oppressed school children will produce quiescent oppressed adults for the workforce (Rothstein, 1984). Arguably then, education is not about equality but rather the perpetuation of inequality, as children are being
prepared for an unequal future, a future already pre-ordained by the class and station of their birth (Rist, 1973).

Through time, schools have continued to be austere and forbidding places mired in centralization where children are still classified and tracked largely along class and economic lines (Rothstein, 1984). Students continue to be subject to constant control, conformity, discipline, supervision, regimentation, standardization, and competition. It is little wonder that Rist charges that these conditions constitute a pernicious "educational reign of terror" (1973, p. 19) largely unchanged in 200 years. In part, at least, what this is about is power and the ability to control and punish.

Although the new world order emphasizes a more democratic and egalitarian existence, I would argue that schools have, in reality, failed to keep pace. Times may have changed but educators tend to rely on those practices and strategies that have a proven track record of success (however measured)\(^{13}\), for example, coercion through threat or degradation (Tyack, 1974). It is natural for humans to want the freedom to control their own lives. As children mature they increasingly seek more independence (Edwards, 1993). Considering the freedom in other aspects of their lives such as the family and the larger society, when similar freedom and independence is not forthcoming from the educational institutions, should we be surprised if students continue to display an increasing amount of resistance toward the present system?

\(^{13}\) Largely on the basis of my observations through the years both as a teacher and as an admirer and champion of young people, I would argue, at the risk of over-generalizing, that many students have become successful in spite of the educational system, not because of it. Although schools claim to encourage creative and individual thinking, most students learn quickly that conformity garners approval both in academic performance and adherence to the controlling mechanisms implicit and explicit in school policy.
Arguably, educators and the general public have thus far failed to receive the message that students are refusing any longer to be subjected to violence in the name of education. Is it possible that students are now meeting violence in the name of education with a violence of their own? In some instances, teachers are fearing for their physical safety and the system all too frequently doggedly responds with more crackdowns, more coercion, and a higher level of autocracy. Student involvement in serious incidents deemed unacceptable (such as fighting, swearing, weapons possession, cheating on homework, and so on) can lead to arbitrary suspension and/or expulsion by the administration. Most people would allow a certain semblance of order and safety as necessary for teaching and learning to take place, but somehow discipline, control, order, coercion, and the exercise of power appear to have coalesced to become one of the main raison d'êtres of the educational system. Granted, students are no longer subject to corporal punishment, but is such a high level of control over their minds and bodies really a necessity for learning to take place?

In recent years, educators have made some attempt to address the issue of violence in our schools. Reactive measures such as zero tolerance\(^4\) policies for violence expel the offenders from the school environment but in no way do they help to rehabilitate or address the crux of the problem. Instead, the offender must find a different school to attend in another jurisdiction where the pattern will, in all probability, be repeated. Similarly a suspension by removal from the

\(^4\) Zero tolerance refers to the mandated policies of many Ontario school boards whereby any school violence, as defined within said mandated policy, will not be tolerated. Again, within the policy are outlined a series of step measures that are to be taken when violence occurs. Paper copies of the zero tolerance policy are made available in the appropriate jurisdiction so that students, the administration, and society are cognizant of the action plan and its codicils.
system, albeit temporarily, allows a cooling-off period for all parties involved while the administration attempts to 'sort out' the difficulty. A student is usually re-instated into classes following an apology and a meeting with his/her parents warning that three such incidents of suspension will result in expulsion. Likewise this reactive measure has enjoyed little success since its focus too is mainly punitive in nature.

Proactive measures such as Conflict Resolution sessions, in which students are taught skills to assist them in handling differences, have shown some indications of being helpful. Likewise, Peer Coaching and Counselling encourages students to resolve conflicts among themselves in a non-violent manner. However, these strategies do little to change teacher attitudes toward students of poorer and minority backgrounds.

Although plenty of evidence demonstrates that schools serving white middle-class students also have problems with violence, this has been downplayed in the media and by teachers (Oakes, 1985). Educators continue to equate perpetrators of violence with issues of race, the poor, and the lower working classes (Hanna, 1988). It is true that arrests, suspensions, and expulsions are shown to be more common among these segments of the student populace, but there seems to be an unwillingness to confront the issue and examine why this is so (Noguera, 1995).

As well, the practice of academic streaming and special classes for behaviour and mentally challenged have all been shown to relate to increased incidence of violence (Noguera, 1995). But again, educators largely have failed to address why. If we examine remedial classes for children with unacceptable behaviour, we may begin to understand. When misbehaving children are isolated in a classroom with each other, there are no positive role models on whom they can
pattern their own performances. As a result, wayward habits are not corrected but reinforced, with new ones even added, encouraging certain children to continue their downward spiral into violence.

Early communities were apprehensive about deviant behaviour and adopted measures to deal with it. Society did not, however, expect to eradicate aberrant behaviour as it was considered to be inherently natural (Rothman, 1971). Contemporary society, though, operates under no such comprehension. However articulated, delinquency, violence, or misbehaviour, all are viewed as intolerable. Society is, therefore, actively engaged in their elimination.

**Contemporary Orientation**

Although contemporary society appears to encourage a more participatory, democratic, and egalitarian existence (Snauwaert, 1993; Ungerleider, 1991) for students,¹⁵ the education system has become increasingly divorced from the realities of contemporary democratic society by failing to keep pace. Despite innovations such as student-centred pedagogy which politically claims to give voice to the less powerful (Jadwin, 1997), the perpetuation of schools as hierarchical, bureaucratic, and authoritarian agents of control continues in society’s mind set as a largely unchallenged pedagogical tenet, even to the present day (Harber, 1989; Levin, 1996; Noguera, 1995; Osborne, 1988). Paradoxically, young people are currently afforded more personal autonomy, have more access to egalitarian practices, and have more individual influence in society and within their families than ever before, yet, at school, where they spend

¹⁵ In years past, the idea democracy has encouraged a greater role for teachers in school decision-making. Under the phrase teacher-empowerment, the concept has had somewhat of a resurgence (Fullan, 1991; Levin, 1996). The literature reports that gains have been relatively modest despite increased roles for teachers (Weiss, 1992; White, 1992).
much of their formative years, compliance and the maintenance of control continue to reign supreme (Harber, 1989; Levin, 1996; McNeil, 1988; Snauwaert, 1993).

While the values, ideals, and attitudes of democratic society are taught in curricular studies, schools, for the most part, continue to foster a culture of disenfranchisement, precluding youth from experiencing and practising the standards of due process and natural justice in the active management of their own school-life experiences (Bradley, 1994; Harber, 1989; Levin, 1996; Noguera, 1995). Young people must fathom the paradox of participating in the authoritarian and hierarchical dynamic of the educational system while learning to benefit from, and contribute to, the hands-off dynamic of egalitarian democratic practices. Such a paradox may have spurred Bowles and Gintis in 1976 to ask,

*Why, in democratic society, should an individual’s first real contact with a formal institution be so profoundly anti-democratic?* (pp. 250-51)

Why, indeed? Students might well question the wisdom of learning about democracy when their life experience at school is its antithesis. When young people find that the concrete reality of their school experience is in direct opposition to what they are supposed to be learning about democracy, they often become frustrated, disillusioned, and rebellious (Mathews, 1996; Bradley, 1994; Osborne, 1988).

The perception of this continued inequality can have a deleterious effect, for inequality is by definition almost an inherent aspect of instability, and therefore, it promotes and encourages violence (Huntington, 1969). Lacking practical and reliable democratic preparedness via the

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16 This is not to endorse other elements put forth by Bowles and Gintis in their ‘correspondence theory.’

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educational system, young people may linger in a condition of ignorance whereby a lack of alternative choices appears to foster the usual knee-jerk responses when differences occur. Furthermore, violence, an age-old endemic form of political action, will continue to worsen until perceived inequalities are redressed (Huntington, 1969). Moreover, with little democratic voice in school, teenagers often become alienated from the institutional educational experience itself (Mathews, 1996). But, as members of human groups such as families, gangs, clubs, and so on, youth can, and do, seek respect, the satisfaction of belonging, personal identity, and participation from outside the traditional educational environment (Harber, 1989; Slater, 1994; Snauwaert, 1993; Ungerleider, 1991). Regrettably, these experiences may not necessarily be consonant with the principles of democracy and therefore may be damaging to the democratic health of young people and ultimately to that of society (Kelly, 1995).

Times may have changed but educators tend to rely on those practices and strategies that have a proven track record of success (however measured), including coercion through threat or degradation with the objective of maintaining the hierarchical and authoritarian status quo (Mathews, 1996). Prescriptive behaviour and conformity continue to be demanded for their own sake, rather than from any educational necessity (Noguera, 1995; Bradley, 1994; Slater, 1994; Osborne, 1991 and 1988). For example, students are routinely forced to play the inane game of educational colour co-ordination: a yellow excuse slip to use the lavatory, a pink excuse slip for tardiness, a white note from parent or doctor explaining illness, a blue slip for another "misdemeanour," and so on. The mere idea that we are thinking that such a facilitating practice is really quite harmless and inane underscores just how ingrained these little controlling mechanisms are. This is but one of the many indignities to which many students are forced to
submit on a daily basis. Thus, at a time when young people yearn to acquire empowerment for participatory democratic existence at the action level, education, with its continued insistence on authoritarian control and compliance, no longer appears to be meeting the real needs of individual students (Levin, 1996; Osborne, 1991).

Although participatory democracy implies a mutual proprietorship in systems of regulation, schooling continues to be organized so that things are done not in concert with, but to, students almost as if they were inanimate objects. Consider the example of streaming/destreaming. Active student consultation concerning this controversial issue has not been vigorously sought by the authorities, neither in its implementation nor in its elimination, yet it is the students who are directly affected. And this is but one of the many issues that daily impact a student’s life about which s/he has little or no input. In great measure then, young people remain excluded from active participation in the formulation of the rules to which they must conform (Fullan, 1982; Levin, 1996). Although many pedagogues advocating democracy recognize the necessity for fundamental change, the dichotomy between our theories of what some feel should be done and what is actually being accomplished to give students a meaningful voice in their educational life experiences remains largely unchanged.

In a participatory power relationship, both forces take part in a "strategy of struggle" (Foucault, 1983, p. 225). This struggle is, in many ways, an exercise of participative power, a creative means of arriving at consensus through a dialogue of collective talk, decision-making, and work (Snauwaert, 1993; Heslep, 1989). However, for disenfranchised students, often the only power strategy remaining is that of resistance, frequently characterized by violent misbehaviour (Paternek, 1985). Could it be that it is in active resistance to the oppressive
mechanisms of hierarchy and to the institutional oppression of conformity that many students finally feel a sense of their own empowerment, autonomy, and control? Such resistance may manifest as verbal, emotional, and physical abuse of themselves, their peers, and/or those in positions of authority. If we press on with this thought a little farther, we could view such resistance in several ways, for example, as individual and isolated, or recurrent and more organized, as in vandalism by street gangs. Unfortunately, it does appear that educators have thus far apparently failed to comprehend and construe the message of school misbehaviour, that students are refusing any longer (given the democratic participation they now enjoy in other aspects of their lives) to be subjected to the violence of coercion and conformity all in the name of education.\textsuperscript{17} Predictably, the dilemma has come full circle, for, as student defiance intensifies, their sustained resistance has itself acquired the label violence.

\textbf{Interrelationships}

There are several supplementary derivative issues, which, although not as fundamental as the three major perspectives already outlined in Chapter One, nor as analytically separate, nevertheless have an intertwined history with violence. While linked to each other, they similarly have elements of the three over-arching conceptual perspectives. These three derivative supplementary issues are: 1) the interrelationship between power, culture, and violence; 2) the interrelationship between value theory, educational leadership, interest, and violence; 3) the

\textsuperscript{17} This kind of violence I will call "malpractice."

\textsuperscript{18} Teachers too are caught in a systemic web not of their own making wherein they may feel forced to apply control measures because there appears little alternative strategies available within the confining mechanisms of the present educational system (Epp, 1996).
interrelationship between *school change* and *school violence*.

A look at each of these subsidiary points follows. I should alert the reader that, at times, my discourse, drawing upon certain 'Radical' thinkers will take a sharply argumentative turn. Finally, at times the treatment here will not directly speak to violence but the reader should persevere—the connection will be made.

(1) *Power, Culture, and Violence*

The nature, sources, and functions of the concept of *power* continue to remain a central concern of social scientists, social activists, politicians, and philosophers, among others. Power is what Foucault has called a "strategy of struggle" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 209). Power not only refers to the capacity to realize one's intention against the will of others in a conflict situation, but also it infers a capacity to prevent opposition from arising initially (Glickman, 1997). According to Weber, power concerns the probability of persons or groups carrying out their will even when opposed by others, and thus, power is a social activity (Weber, 1968; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). If we examine Weber's view of power, embodied within the concept appears to be an understanding of intimidation and threat. By inference then, his meaning of power is linked to coercion and violence (Kreisberg, 1992). Infiltrating every aspect of life from birth to death, power continues to be an irresistible enticement for members of society. School-age youth, although desirous of power, continue to be among the most disenfranchised members of our society. The perennial argument has been that our youth are immature and cannot themselves make the right decisions in matters of any import. Essentially, educators postulate that good judgement is only an inherent characteristic of adulthood, that the elder know best. This "teacher knows best approach" was scarcely helpful in preventing a mass murder in
Springfield Oregon in May of 1998. Peers of the perpetrator had even noted in the school yearbook that the youth was "Most likely to start World War III." Similarly his peers were cognizant of his fascination for assault weapons and, moreover, that he had verbally evinced violent tendencies on many occasions. Nevertheless, those in authority did not consider the young people's opinion as meritorious (ABC Evening News, May 23, 1998). When a teen suddenly becomes an adult in the eyes of the law of the land, does such an event automatically confer on him/her good judgement even though s/he has had little practice in decision-making? Even the rock group Foreigner, reflecting everyone's innate desire for power, had a No.1 hit in the late 1980s titled "Everybody wants to rule the world." Although violence has been linked to power, indeed, it has been called power's very essence, it has also been linked to loss of power. Consider, if one must resort to violence, then the power to enforce compliance has been lost. The very act of violence is itself an attempt to regain control lost.

Cherryholmes (1988), too, uses power to refer to relations among individuals or groups whereby certain people are indulged and rewarded, and others are disciplined and deprived. She argues that it is incorrect to use the phrase power relations. Because power is relations, the phrase is redundant. Furthermore, power is always biased (Fiske, 1993; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). Even when power is exercised in apparent harmony with prescribed rules, the architects of those regulations, ostensibly or not, had certain interests that, to some degree, affected the creation of the rules. Within the institutional and bureaucratic settings which comprise education are embedded power mechanisms which inherently have practically everything to do with perpetuating the existing structure of the dominating authority. Our legal system too supports the dominating power of our educational infrastructure by requiring students to submit to
disciplinary and investigative procedures, thus ensuring that authoritarian supremacy remains securely in the bureaucratic hands of the educational elite (Watkinson, 1997). Power, it seems, is also a prop of structural violence.

Similarly, power has much to do with control (Cherryholmes, 1988; Fiske, 1993). Individuals and groups are seemingly never satisfied with the amount of power they have and are constantly searching for the means to acquire more. Those managing to exert the most power, of course, are the winners of more power (Fiske, 1993). In this sense, power, by its very nature, sets up a win–lose situation. If we examine this concept with respect to education, those winning are teachers, the administration, and the other education power mongers already ensconced as part of the controlling mechanism within the institutional bureaucracy. Students, as disenfranchised clients of the hierarchical system, are unfortunately relegated to the other option–losing.

Consider the example of the conflict resolution program. Beginning in elementary school, it is taken as given that children are to be passive, compliant, and obedient. Everything children say and do must indicate deference to the members of the institutional authority. During an evaluation of the Second Step conflict resolution program in Winnipeg\(^9\) elementary schools, "any defiance toward staff" was categorized as conflict (Bergsgaard, 1997, p. 39). Apparently no attempt was made either to define what kind of behaviour should be categorized as defiant, or to clarify the extent of the defiance, the reason for it, or even if it perhaps constituted merely a (mild or strong) difference of opinion. At what point does a difference of opinion become defiance? Is

\(^9\)In the early 1990s, The Second Step conflict resolution program had already been in use in Winnipeg for three years when the research was conducted. The program had been under constant and continual evaluation during that period.
there a generally acceptable norm that interprets what constitutes defiant behaviour? Can such a quality be calculated and be consistent when used and applied for different teachers, students, and school settings? If so, how is, or should it be calculated? Who should do such a calculation? And finally, should anyone be judged against a normative anything?²⁰

As humans, teachers are subject to likes and dislikes. Struggles of power often concern issues of race, gender, status, interest, personal agenda, economics, and so forth. Because it is virtually impossible to keep personalities out of judgements, even conscientious teachers attempting to do so succeed only to varying, and sometimes minimal, degrees. On a gradient scale, what one teacher may cite as defiant might not even make another teacher’s list. Accordingly, behaviour regarded as defiant when exhibited by one student, when exhibited by another may not even earn a reprimand. Indeed, the behaviour may even be praised as an expression of independent experience and creativity. Although individualism is an inherent part of our culture, education remains a conformity-demanding organization. Teachers may say that children should express their opinions, make independent decisions, and give the teacher feedback, but schools are not necessarily geared towards that end (Glickman, 1997). Stated plainly, what teachers are really demanding is compliance and subjugation. Any failure in this regard may be interpreted as defiant, perhaps earning a negative evaluation as a consequence,²¹ not to mention the label

²⁰ Again, we are only taking about overt forms of violence. The Second Step guide for teachers does not include instructions to assist teachers in developing the necessary skills to identify and address the more subtle forms of covert violence. However, the program is a beginning and an attempt to deal with the issue of school violence.

²¹ These negative evaluations often may be written down, accumulated, and passed through the educational system negatively labelling and scarring a child for life as a difficult troublemaker, a non-conformist, and a non-team player.
violent.

Although mighty, power and its twin, influence, are somewhat elusive. A good teacher, for example, is thought to have (among other things) acquired the skills to control a classroom and to influence young minds in a positive way. Of the myriad mitigating factors extant in such situations, loss of ability to control (that is, power) can frequently call into question the excellence of a teacher (Cherryholmes, 1988). Those pedagogues who have acquired the skills deemed necessary in a good teacher (of which ability to control appears to be one) are rewarded. They usually have little difficulty procuring well-paid employment and are made privy to certain advantages by those in other power positions. Power, apparently, begets more power.

Michel Foucault links power with knowledge, presenting them as one concept, that is, power/knowledge, inextricably joined through discourse (Foucault, 1980). For some, being able to exert power means having a measure of control over "the web of unequal relationships" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 185) so representative of society today. Extrapolating from Fiske (1993), we can describe two major forces of this power, imperializing and localizing. Teachers, claiming the right to rule, are recognized to be supported by the law of the land and act in loco parentis when guiding students in their care (Brown & Zuker, 1994). As surrogate parents, teachers function with "implicitly delegated authority" (Brown & Zuker, 1994, p. 158) in the supervision and disciplining of students. An example of imperializing power is in loco parentis power when exercised by teachers seeking exclusionary control through a language of "excellence, efficiency, vision, and leadership" (Weaver, 1995, p. 493).

Localizing power, when exercised by students, seeks to negate the domination of imperializing power (sometimes referred to as the "for your own good" power), by establishing
control over the local social terrain they know they have a right to control (Fiske, 1993). Examples might include style of dress, mannerisms, language, leisure activity, choice of friends and so on. Although teachers enjoy localized power too, in particular, it is their seemingly exclusive hold on imperializing power that continues to sustain social stratification by the reinforcement of the hierarchical status quo (Weber, 1968; Fiske, 1993). Such a state of affairs perpetuates teacher/student friction and promotes feelings of alienation among students at school.

The argument offered here is that power, typically exerted from only one perspective by a dominant elite, obliterates true democratic political practice. Such a unitary stance may actually reinforce the inequalities in education and society (Ginsberg, 1991). Rather than power over, it is power with which comprises the experience of egalitarianism, the hallmark of democracy. While those exercising imperializing power may claim to be acting in the interests of excellence, efficacy, vision, and leadership, these characteristics can just as easily be distinguishing features of co-agency and power-sharing, improving the system for all stakeholders, teachers and students included. For example, a sense of efficacy evolves naturally from accomplishing tasks through mutual support and co-operation (Kreisberg, 1992). An environment of dialogical power-sharing (through mutual exchange of ideas) promotes an atmosphere in which students and teachers learn together and from each other (Beck, 1993). Shared responsibility, reciprocal engagement and meaningful participation within the school-learning community promotes not only students’ well-being but also that of others, and by extension the good health of society (Beck, 1993; Glickman, 1997).

The difficulty here is that in education (as in other aspects of life society), the status quo has inertial strength, that is, teachers are commonly more confident with the tried and acceptable
‘traditional’ methods of teaching and managing their students. To evince change, teachers would find themselves in the very unusual position of reinventing power relations with students. Accountability between students and teachers would suddenly become a negotiated dynamic. When teachers comprehend that true (not token) power-sharing with students will, in all probability, place them in the murky and transcendent waters of co-agency, they may feel uncomfortable and suddenly discover any number of disparate reasons why tinkering with the status quo is inappropriate or unfeasible. Teachers arguing against this rehabilitation of the teacher/student relationship assert (among other considerations) that students are not sophisticated enough mentally, nor do they have the prerequisite social and political skills to entertain such dialogical power-sharing. By abrogating unilateral authority, teachers, as pedagogical heads of classrooms, would immediately and always be accountable to students (Shor, 1996). Such a circumstance may be intolerable to many teachers because it would ostensibly require the jettisoning of teacher control over students, a control which, heretofore, has been regarded by many as the hallmark of sound pedagogical practice and an inherent right of teachers. Clearly, such a stance inevitably begs the question, how can students become knowledgeable, proficient and skilful socially, politically and so on, without the occasion to

\[22\] Although educators claim that their teaching, interpersonal, and management skills are constantly evolving and improving, in the opinion of some observers, any fundamental change in the extant hierarchical relationship between educators and students has not materialized. Educators prevail as the power elite while students remain disenfranchised and impotent.

\[23\] Friends of the fore-mentioned Oregon teen who went on a killing rampage, murdering his parents and several of his peers in May of 1998, had themselves organized several meetings (well before the murders) outlining appropriate behaviours for the up-coming graduation. These are not the actions of irresponsible youth (ABC Evening News, May 1998).
Teachers with vision would likewise comprehend that new student powers come not without a price to students, as they too would have a stake in decisions undertaken in concert with teachers. But because these new powers and responsibilities will be acquired through meaningful and reciprocal involvement concerning their own school life experiences, there is good reason to assume that benefits would accrue to both participants, with teachers and students being accountable to each other. Such reciprocity of authority is provocative in that this kind of power-sharing is but one component of the democratic process. When students have a vested interest in guidelines they help to establish, be they curricular, administrative, or social, another dynamic ensues—students making greater demands on their peers (Shor, 1996). What better means to instil a sense of democratic citizenship in students than through meaningful contribution at the action level in the dialogical creation and execution of those guidelines to which all (both students and administration) must adhere as a function of school life?

The power-sharing juggernaut has at least one rather curious conflict of interest, however. Teachers, to whom we look as agents of the change to educational power-sharing, remain the authoritarian agents of the bureaucratic mechanisms they are about to confute. Manifest change in any real sense will require demonstrable ontogenesis throughout the entire system, not merely at the peripheries between teachers and students. Instead of conceptualizing parents and students as clients, including them as members of the educational community would require us to alter

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24 If one of the reasons for schooling is to learn how to become good citizens in a democratic society, shouldn’t the time to practice such a skill (as we practice language and every other school subject) be available as an inherent part of school curriculum?
our understanding of our institutional bureaucracies so that they are conceived more as forums for collective deliberation by educators, students, and parents (Glickman, 1995; Strike, 1993).

There exists a close connection, too, between power and culture. One theorist claims that culture encompasses all that is socially, rather than biologically, transmitted (Marshall, 1994). Another (Williams, 1990) explains that culture is concerned with a whole way of life: material, intellectual, and spiritual. Carnoy (1989) describes culture as the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought, characteristic of a community or population. However defined, culture embodies values, beliefs, and ways of structuring experience to make sense of our world (MacKinnon & Reicken, 1993).

A dominant group, for example, teachers, functioning as agents of the educational system with their authority sanctioned by the law of the land (Brown & Zuker, 1994), can impose a set of values and norms of their own design on disparate subordinates, in this case, students (Carnoy, 1989). There is an ideology in place to which teachers subscribe, that learning in schools is valuable, that teachers are essential in this process, and that young people need guidance in the acquisition of proper social behavioural skills (Kreisberg, 1992). How much guidance is apparently not open to interpretation as teachers exert their power from an arbitrary position with scant student input. This necessarily sets up a tension in society’s hierarchy whereby youth are discredited and disenfranchised. Absolute power tends to corrupt, spawning distrust and disaffection. Moreover, teacher domination over students appears to be conceptualized as a type of benevolent professionalism in which the teacher espouses that s/he is acting in the best interest of the student. It is a challenge that students, having little practical experience in the political
arena, are unable to refute with any degree of competence\textsuperscript{25}, accepting the dominator's negative assessment of their abilities. Thus, the oppressive mechanism of the existing educational bureaucracy continues intact and unchallenged, apparently with the students' unknowing consent.

As an organizational metaphor, culture came into its own in the early 1980s. Gareth Morgan described organizations as "mini-societies with their own distinctive pattern of culture and sub-culture" (Morgan, 1986, p. 121). It has been claimed that culture provides a common thread which binds the people of an organization with shared meanings, values, and beliefs (MacKinnon & Reicken, 1993). However, the motivation for this interest was not, seemingly, to enrich peoples' working lives, but rather, to capture a larger market share through increased productivity and intensifying managerial control (MacKinnon & Reicken, 1993). Soon, many educational administration theorists began to apply the same concept of culture to schools, linking culture and school effectiveness with "the language of administrative manipulation and control plainly evident" (MacKinnon & Reicken 1993, p. 64). Applied in such a manner, the concept allows that culture is little more than an administrative tool of control manipulating both performance and student outcomes. Students presumably are thought to have little to contribute to the culture of schools as an organizational entity other than continued compliance and conformity so to perpetuate the status quo of the institutional engine. Sadly, such a view truncates any potential enlightenment that a more inspired investigation of organizational culture might disclose.

\textsuperscript{25} The students, of course, are hampered because they lack their own organizational power mechanisms to deal effectively with the great educational bureaucracy already in place.
As the socially transmitted part of human society, culture is embodied at the sub-conscious level, concerned with thought and perception, but it is also a learned pattern of behaviour. By not providing opportunities for the interactive exercising of these behaviour patterns, teachers are depriving students of a valuable aspect of their school life experiences that, when potentiated to their post-school lives, can have negative ramifications both for the student and the democratic society of which they are a constituent part. And still, educational administration (with the administrators) continues its tradition of being essentially monolithic, authoritarian, and impenetrable.

(2) Value Theory, Educational Leadership, Interest, and Violence

Most observers, if queried, would acknowledge that they want to be healthy, happy, and to learn to live the good life as Clive Beck (1993) puts it. Yet tragically, many never achieve that intention. Some discern little glimpses of the yearned-for good life from time to time, but just enough to whet their appetites for more. For others, a state of well-being is forever elusive, like a will-of-the-wisp it lingers frustratingly always out of reach. Just why is this so? In an attempt to unlock the secret of achieving "the good life," Beck (1993) has explored value theory at some length. It is individuals, he claims, as the constituent parts of society, who decide what is valuable and it is the balance of diversity and thought that they provide as individuals that helps to maintain the health of society as a whole (Beck, 1993). Beck has concluded that in pursuit of well-being, it is people’s moral behaviour as individuals that can be the means of realizing the "good life" goal.

Christopher Hodgkinson, too, has examined value theory. Under the rubric of moral leadership, he argues that an understanding of his paradigm, the hierarchical theory of values, can
assist leaders in addressing problems in society: of division, of antagonism, and of conflict (Hodgkinson, 1991). However, it is not in isolation that people effect the good life and make sound moral decisions, but rather through their affiliation and interaction with others.

Regrettably, this interpersonal journey is often tortuous and the obstacles numerous. The principal difficulty in our interrelation with others, as Christopher Hodgkinson states, is that "Everyone experiences the world from a different angle" (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 90). From a value perspective, it is this "different angle," coupled with an actual or perceived lack of interpersonal entente, empathy, and accommodation of this aforementioned "different angle," that is often responsible for the day-to-day frictions that preclude us from accomplishing our intention of leading the good life (Mathews, 1996). Under the present hierarchical structure that characterizes education, the "different angles" of teachers and students spawns unresolved tensions and animosities, with poor emotional and social environments rampant.

For a teacher, or indeed anyone, to become a thoughtful problem-solver (and I am thinking about dealing with acts of violence), it could be useful to have a means of understanding and examining the value orientations and motivations that apparently underscore our own behaviour and those of our fellows. There are attitudes and mores ingrained from our youth that are so embedded in the human psyche as to lurk largely unnoticed. This is a form of bias and the most difficult to counter because often the person holding these types of bias is unaware of doing so, and these biases are likewise held by many other people (Hodgkinson, 1991). To cite one example (as will become apparent in the interview section), people often have biases against other cultures. Rural society is not commonly comprised of nor is it exposed to the rich cultural mix that we have come to associate with large urban centres here in Canada (particularly
Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver). People can have strong biases against the new and unfamiliar. Students from cultures other than that of the predominant group may be labelled as different or weird, and regarded as troublemakers simply because they do not dress, act, or speak like the peer group.

In years past, the rural school, with its typically small enrolment, family atmosphere, and personal relationship with the community, was felt to be largely immune to the kind of urban violence that is currently receiving so much research attention. Moreover, the ethic of rural living continues to evoke images of honest, hard-working village folk, enjoying a simple, yet comfortable and happy lifestyle—the so-called ‘good life’ (Beck, 1993), in which people know, care about, and look after their neighbours. Intriguingly, these stereotypical perceptions do have an element of truth, for studies have shown that rural areas have less crime and violence than their urban neighbours (Rodgers, 1993).

But, to jump ahead momentarily to the study’s data, as one teacher in the urban setting reminded me, “There is more violence per capita in rural areas than in urban. And people just forget that.” The incidence of rural violence is definitely on the rise, however (Astor, 1997; Wilder, 1993). It is unreasonable to presume that country living has been frozen in time when its urban neighbour has been subjected to rapid change. Yet, country living as the cure-all escape from fast-paced city life, is in fact, the image that persists in marketing ads from soft drinks to real estate, from laundry detergent to blue jeans. Although rural life has changed, the changes perhaps have not had the immediacy of those of the urban situation. Smaller and scattered rural population, the enormous geographical distances involved, and the continued self-interest of large urban populations all contribute to rural education remaining largely ignored as a venue for
research and as the last bastion of idyllic bliss, an escape, or sanctuary from the frenetic pace and ills of the big city.

Rural schooling has also been grappling with change. In response to challenging economic times, the ‘traditional’ rural school has come under fiscal attack and, as a consequence, school and board consolidations are on the rise. A new breed of school, the large district rural school, a kind of transition school [which, in its physical characteristics at least, is scarcely distinguishable from its urban and suburban cousins], is replacing many small schools. Like their large metropolitan counterparts, district rural schools of 2000 students or more are not uncommon.

While rural education evokes certain mental images and ideas, there appears to be an abstruseness about what rural education actually encompasses. While researchers agree that rural education is neither urban nor suburban, beyond that, any definitive understanding of the broadly diverse and ‘multiple realities’ of rural schooling can vary significantly (Nachtigal, 1982). For example, rural education may incorporate geographic units with dozens of schools having vast student enrolments or involve very isolated districts, sparsely populated, and having comparatively small enrolments (DeYoung, 1991). At least one researcher concluded that the lack of precision concerning the definition of rural education may be part of the reason why it has often been ignored as an area of investigation (Nachtigal, 1982), coupled with the generally-accepted assumption that school violence remains, for the most part, an urban problem.26 I shall return to this point later.

Unwittingly, the true reasons for directional reactions in problem-solving can be submerged

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26 It is in relation to this last widely-held assumption that the most interesting inconsistencies of this study became manifest.
through years of socialized brain-washing with seemingly perfectly plausible responses rationalized and supplanted in their stead. A teacher having intellectual depth will usually be aware that these influences of bias can colour his/her decision, and s/he should, therefore, use a process of introspection, self-examination, and moral fairness of judgement to reduce the prejudice inherent in these biases. Such tasks as prior review of possible consequences, understanding traditions and norms, and an awareness of the gap between the ideal and the reality that facilitates understanding, can all be useful (Mathews, 1996; Willower, 1973). Many understand good pedagogy as striking a balance, searching for homeostasis, essentially, a sense of well-being, not only for students, but also for the teacher and the school, given the particular circumstances and context. As people work their way through an issue or problem, they look for a means that is consonant as possible with all that is valuable to them. For humans, a receptiveness and sympathy to another's viewpoint, contiguous with a compassionate approach to understanding, would seem to be the prime mover, the catalyst, that fosters moral conduct, such that well-being and the good life become available for ourselves and for others. Such a moral outlook, the tried and true "live and let live" idea, perhaps could substantially reduce the incidence of violence stemming from these biases and bringing the search for the "good life" that much closer.

Unlike Hodgkinson (1991), who views transrational values of principle as having a quality of absoluteness distinguishing them from the subrational values based on preference, Beck (1993) claims that there are no absolute values, even though the basic values of survival, health, happiness and so on, come close to being absolute. Instead, he counsels that values are potentially equal, and therefore, have to be weighed one against the other depending upon the
situation. Very often, exceptions will have to be made with reasons supplied for the sacrificing of one value to another (Beck, 1993). These reasons may vary in their moral validity depending upon the perspective of the person involved.

But, since values, according to Beck, are meant to promote well-being (Beck, 1993), the next question is obviously, whose? There can frequently be conflict over which values should inform behaviour in a specific situation. For teachers dealing with violent situations at school, the interests of the class, the individual, the teacher, and the educational institution may not always be consonant. As humans, the urge for survival is very strong, therefore there is a powerful tendency to act in our own interests (Mathews, 1996). It is all well and good if our preferences overlay or parallel those of others, but when they do not, which interests will be considered expendable and devalued? How will the decision be made? Should the judgement be made on moral grounds or according to interest? Again, much hinges on the philosophy of the individual(s) making the determination (Mathews, 1996), whether the decision will be one of principle (transrational) or based solely on interest and preference (subrational), or perhaps even a combination.

For example, many people are inordinately concerned with their own aspirations and tend their decisions with a view to getting ahead. These aspirations may be motivated by several basic values in Beck’s (1993) system those of fulfilment, self-respect, respect from others, and freedom, to mention only a few. Humans are social animals so it is scarcely surprising that affirmative societal recognition in a variety of guises is valued highly. Often the basic value of making our own way and taking responsibility for our personal and professional life, can override any other motivation. And if, while solidifying our own position, others are advantaged and
their positions also enhanced, the decision may be easier. For an extreme example, administrators may be viewed as successful if their schools seem to be less violent than others. Teachers may realize that they too are applauded as competent if they seem to have little difficulty managing aberrant behaviour. However, might there be certain behaviours that teachers do not report to the administration, wanting to maintain a good record on the ‘violence scale?’ What may be good for the careers of the teacher and administration may not necessarily be the best decision when considering the interest of the student. The rationale behind any decision is buttressed if, conjecturing like Jeremy Bentham, it allows that any determination providing "the greatest happiness for the greatest number," to be a moral one. I would argue, however, that this conclusion may only be gauged as good or moral in a relative sense. For, again, it all depends from whose perspective the decision is viewed (Hodgkinson, 1991).

Quite naturally, the value balance is in a constant state of flux, even conflict, and therefore subject to change (Beck, 1993; Mathews, 1996). Not all decisions are made, nor should they be made, from a particular motivating factor. Each situation provides its own context and should be reasoned and considered that way. Lack of morality and violence perhaps can enter the picture perhaps, if and when, we attempt to shroud our true motivation in the guise of one higher on the value scale (Beck, 1993).

One consideration that seems interesting to speculate about, concerns whether it is of any significance which value is stronger. For example, does it matter whether sense of duty is stronger or weaker than self-aggrandizement? Either, does it matter which of these desires came first? Hodgkinson (1991) claims that knowledge of good (that is, what is desired) comes spontaneously, yet people make decisions constantly to abandon their own impulses in favour of
more nomothetic necessities, so perhaps the order in which the desires achieve cognition matters little. Rather it is the response in totality that is of substantive import.

Differences in moral values have been linked to student violence (Rickard, 1994), and value theory can apply to violence resolution. Teachers are frequently required to resolve differences and disagreements that occur between students and even between teachers and their students. There is a certain code and standard of behaviour to which educational professionals are all committed as members of our democratic society. Yet, it is ultimately left to the administrative officers of schools to ensure that teachers act with morality (perceived as the right way through tradition) towards colleagues and their students. As is often the case in conflicts, multiple versions of events can vary dramatically. Without the contextualization of the natural setting, all action, discourse, and meaning are but a construct or representation of reality (Hughes, 1990), ultimately making the task of untangling even more difficult. Teachers and their administrators are bound by educational policy issues and the values embedded therein (Mathews, 1996). How can teachers rationalize these many value issues to resolve dilemmas responsibly? That question provides a segue into the next area for discussion, that of school change.

(3) School Change and School Violence

In general, the characteristics of bureaucracy include a hierarchy of offices, the channelling of communication through hierarchical levels, files and secrecy, clearly defined spheres of authority determined by general rules and governed by regulations, and the administrative separation of official affairs from private affairs (Marshall, 1994). Bureaucratic officials are routinely appointed from above rather than elected, enjoy life-long tenure, high status, a fixed salary, and a retirement pension. The preceding profile could easily be a description of our
educational system. And, the more dehumanized the bureaucracy the more perfect it apparently becomes (Weber, 1968).

Bureaucracies are, first and foremost, power organizations, the main function of which, is the continuance of the bureaucratic mechanism itself (Clark & Meloy, 1989). Through the imposition of its meaning system, the organizational structure of this bureaucratic mechanism allows the dominant class to maintain its power status without resorting to physical violence or overt coercion (Feinberg & Soltis, 1992). However, the imposition of the meaning system of a group (or individual) onto another group (or individual) is still a form of violence. Feinberg and Soltis (1992) refer to this as *symbolic violence* because it substitutes for physical violence.

Essentially then, if one does not play by the rules of the bureaucracy, corrective measures are initiated such that any behavioural delinquency provokes discipline, for example, forfeit of advantage, or privilege. Failing that, the penalties become increasingly harsh until the imposition of the ultimate weapon, exclusion from the group. This description could be a depiction of authoritarian regimes of times past. But, quite deliberately, it also delineates, to a great extent, the modus operandi of the educational administration system of the present day dealing with violence in which suspension, and finally expulsion, are reserved for our most difficult repeat offenders and so-called unmanageables. With domination over, and control of, individuals taking precedence over any consensual behaviour, respect and consideration for the individual is, at best, minimal.

A re-structuring of the present system of education along participative democratic lines would, of necessity, require an altogether new theoretical framework perhaps encompassing theories of democracy, morality, and education (Heslep, 1989). Thus far, much of the discussion
pertaining to democratic change in schools has focused on teacher autonomy and decentralization as an alternative to control ideology (Hollingsworth & Sockett, 1994). If we are, as we claim, a democratic society, then the canons and tenets of the democratic way should be pervasive in society at all levels, which would, of course, include education. Exclusion is not championed as a principle of participative democracy, yet students, as the prime stakeholders in education, continue to occupy a non-starter role in its processes. Educational change and improvement appear to be driven not by democratic principles, but largely by the economic red ink of a capitalist society (Steiner, 1994) and by authoritarian leadership, whereby the best in education is left to the discretion of the leader (Sergiovanni, 1989). But should economic efficiency be the compelling claim to justify the present bureaucratic state of the educational system? Arguably not (Strike, 1993). Democratic privilege is thwarted when power difference selects that best through unilateral rather than democratic means (O’Hair & Reitzug, 1997). Further, the problem of change in education is fraught with multifarious issues too complex to remain the sole province of so-called leaders, however qualified.

Summation

Students interact with teachers all day. The attitudes and beliefs teachers have about many issues, including school violence are informally and formally communicated to students. To respond ‘appropriately’ to incidents of violence at school, optimally teachers would first have a clear understanding concerning just what kind of behaviour should be characterized as violent. They would also be contextually cognizant of the different circumstances in students’ lives, for example, cultural traditions, environment, economic (in)stability, and relationships between and among family members and with the larger society. These relationships along with many others
somehow are enmeshed with the mental, emotional, and psychological health of a student, all of which have the potential to have some connection not only to how a student behaves and learns in the classroom, but also to what kind of democratic citizen s/he will ultimately become.

Against this backdrop, we are now ready to sharpen our focus, and turn more immediately to the particulars of this study.
Chapter Three

Answering The Challenge: The Unsettled and Unsettling Road Ahead

Introduction

The fore-going discussion informs the current research. The increased self-direction and participation by youth in the active management of their personal and social lives today could be characterized as not having been translated into similar gains at school. At school, students remain largely disenfranchised, subjugated, and devalued by a monolithic educational bureaucracy having little relevance for our democratic society in the 1990s (Levin, 1996; Osborne, 1991). The judgement may seem a little harsh, but there are those who assess that schooling, and students’ place in it, continues, for the most part, as it always has been, with students having little meaningful influence, that is, power, over their own school lives (Levin, 1996; Shor, 1996). The educational system and its agents prescribe and control curricular content and almost every aspect of schooling. Some observers may wonder if it is really an educational necessity to prescribe behaviour and conformity in everything from absentee and late slips, with detentions and bell ringing, to dress codes, lunch, and washroom breaks? Some may see these controlling mechanisms as mere facilitating devices. Such a stance, perhaps underscores just how ingrained, and insidious these processes may be.

Teachers, as front-line agents of the educational institution, are required to attend training segments offered by the Ministry to be introduced or inculcated (depending on one’s philosophical orientation), with the strategies and practices deemed acceptable to teach our youth.

27 Sometimes it is necessary to push the envelope a little to draw attention to what is seen as an injustice.
and so to perpetuate the existing status quo. Child-Centred Learning, Streaming/De-Streaming, 
and Wholeistic Language Learning can perhaps be construed by some observers and educators as 
little more than "red-herrings for manipulation by the educational power elite." The externals in 
education may change frequently but the internal organizational structures appear to continue 
essentially the same. Some could argue that, by and large, education has functioned as a self-
serving, self-perpetuating, bureaucratic entity for so long that those who have managed to 
survive and have passed through the system, have perhaps convinced themselves that, as an 
institution, education is not really all that ill-conceived. At the risk of some overstatement, the 
rationale may run along these lines: Well, I went through the system and I turned out all right. I 
don't remember feeling powerless, subjugated, and so on. One difficulty with that reasoning line 
may be this: that was an earlier time when lack of personal autonomy both at home and in society 
was fairly consistent with a similar sense of personal powerlessness in self-directing our school 
lives. Put plainly, for purposes of exposition here, home, school, and society used to proceed in a 
fairly similar manner, but that no longer seems so widely to be the case. Yet, the status quo has 
inertial strength. It seems reasonable that it may be more difficult to evince change within a large 
entity than a small, especially when the bureaucracy is as large as education. Into the present, the 
structures of society and of the family appear to have become less restrictive and have evolved to

28 In the case of Streaming/De-Streaming, as will be evident in this study, some of the 
teachers themselves charge that De-Streaming was foisted upon them. Some offer cogent and 
passionate arguments explaining why Streaming is superior to De-Streaming. (Teachers find 
themselves caught in the cross-hairs of education, acting both as education's agents within the 
system of which they are a part, and as teachers offering students the best in teaching. These 
latter positions should not be polar opposites, but in the case of De-Streaming, for example, it 
would appear that many believe such is often the case.)
encourage and promote more personal freedom and individual self-direction at the action level than ever before. This increased freedom may have occurred in part, through the changing in familial lives. One can only examine the responsibilities shouldered by many contemporary teens in households where both parents work\textsuperscript{29} or in homes with lives shattered by divorce to comprehend how vast the change has been in that one area alone.

This is not to suggest that there are not other factors that have influenced youth behaviour. The world has increasingly experienced extensive cultural interaction. Technological advances have essentially reduced the world to a neighbourhood. For example, the media is now able to provide instant access to virtually any part of the world and often in space.\textsuperscript{30} Western democratic society has become economically prosperous to such a degree that non-essential pleasures of self-interest and personal gratification, over and above basic subsistence, are readily available to ever-increasing numbers of our citizenry. Almost any appetite that one can imagine can be readily satisfied. Increased personal wealth, rapid technologic advances, peer pressure, and the media, to mention only a few, have all impacted youth's view of their world and their place in it.

The last several decades have opened up the flood-gates of personal liberty, self-direction, and personal responsibility.

\textsuperscript{29} The "Leave it to Beaver" household in which monies are always adequate, mothers work only at home, fathers arrive home from work at 5:00 in the afternoon, and both parents have plenty of time to spend with their children may, in many instances, be little more than a myth presented in a television series. Contemporary life can often be problematic for today's children. Abuses of a physical, emotional, and psychological nature all too often seem to comprise reality for many teenagers (Patterson, DeBaryshe & Ramsey, 1989).

\textsuperscript{30} The events of Desert Storm, the war in the Persian Gulf, for example, were often provided as they happened.
Although some chinks are appearing on the educational front, students seem unable to effect meaningful change in the hierarchical (if this is not too strong a word) school culture to which they continue to be indentured. But, the power of being heard, of being valued, and of finding one’s own way can be an enticing and irresistible lure especially in these rapidly changing times. Railing against disenfranchised circumstances, youth may challenge suppression in a variety of ways. These "ways" may involve unacceptable behaviour, disruption, and/or violence manifested not only towards school, the larger society, its symbols and structures, but also towards peers, family, and even themselves. The nature of the abuse may be physical, verbal, psychological, emotional, or a combination. Because students are at school for most of their waking hours five days of every seven, it is often left to teachers to sort out and deal with these unacceptable and inappropriate behaviours. The challenge is set. If teachers’ responses to misbehaviour are to be equitable and appropriate, they need to have a clear understanding of the problems at hand as well as strategies for their mediation.

Purpose of the Study

Therefore, the prime objectives of this study (revisited from their introduction at the end of Chapter One) are:

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31 A province-wide study of School Councils (in press) will show that although School Councils are mandated to have student representation, in many cases there are none, and in other instances where students are represented, they are often not elected, but appointed.

32 Students have no input in the content of curricular matter they study. Rules which some may find inane, childish, and unnecessary, must be obeyed. Failure to comply may result in expulsion from the educational system they desperately need to acquire skills to secure employment and become economically solvent. They can then be willing partners in the currency trade so fundamental in our society. Is this really the democratic way?
(1) to identify and explore teachers' reactive and proactive strategies for alleviating the incidence of violence

(2) to identify and describe what teachers perceive as violent;

(3) to identify and describe conditions that teacher perceive as fostering violence; and

(4) to describe, from their perspective on violence, how these teachers contextualize their particular schools.

Additionally, this study seeks to document consistencies and contradictions between "teachers' ideas, images, and theories that mystify social reality and block social change" (Kellner quoted in Giroux & McLaren, 1989, p.187), with respect to violence. Thus, the study objectives also include the following:

(5)a to document, as articulated by a sampling of the teachers, the consistencies and contradictions of constructions of violence in two schools, one urban, one rural;

(5)b to explore the contradictions between and among:

(ii) teachers' general constructions of violence in schools,

(ii) teachers' ideas and images concerning violence in their schools,

(iii) teachers' particular construction of violence in their own schools using their own articulated definitions as the point of reference;

**Design and Methodology**

A tentative initial theoretical framework was developed on the basis of the literature reviewed and on prior research conducted on school violence (Galloway-Rintoul, 1994; Rintoul, 1998).

**Methodology Type**

Unlike quantitative research which has a predisposition to objectify social reality by making
generalizations, in qualitative inquiry, reality is socially and contextually construed. For example, quantitative inquiry often contains categories within which the participants must frame their responses (Gray & Guppy, 1994), such as multiple choice questionnaires, which are then used to make generalized statements. Qualitative inquiry, on the other hand, seeks to make sense, understand, and interpret the perspectives of others (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) by permitting the participants to present information in their own way, in their own words, therefore allowing the data to speak for themselves (Greenfield, 1979), that is, the data is presented and it is left to the reader to identify with the information or not. Because I am interested in understanding the everyday experiences of teachers contending with school violence in the context of their schools, recounted in their own way, I considered that qualitative inquiry would satisfy these requirements.

**Procedures**

Initially, to gain permission to conduct the research, the research proposal was submitted to the Superintendents of two Boards of Education, both the urban and rural jurisdictions in which the chosen schools were located. Two readily accessible schools were selected for convenience. Best efforts were made to select two schools that reflected a wide spectrum of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, as well as a broad mix of advantaged and disadvantaged students, both high achievers and low ability levels. Initially, my intention was to interview teachers of one urban school. When access to another school was granted, I reasoned that perhaps here was an opportunity for maximum variation of people and site. After ethical clearance and permission to conduct the research was granted at Board levels, letters were sent to the administrations of both schools seeking permission to engage teachers as study participants. Each school designated a
facilitator, one a vice-principal, the other a department head, to assist me in gaining access to the staff. Staff and administration at both schools were extremely co-operative and appeared enthusiastic to participate in the research.

**Community and School Description**

Teacher/participants were drawn from two secondary schools, one rural and public, the other urban and Catholic.

The rural school, a leisurely hour and forty-five minute drive from a large metropolitan area, is situated in a small picturesque town having just under 18,000 in population. The population is largely homogeneous and white. The recent census indicates that some 16,775 of those are of British backgrounds, with Central European Dutch, German, French, Italian (in descending order) comprising about two-thirds of the remainder. The category "Others" comprises the remaining 435 residents. About 44 percent of the population have some post secondary education (Statistics Canada, 1996).

The town has one high school situated beside a small lake, at the periphery of a residential area. This high school serves a regional population of about 40,000 to 50,000, with those attending the school numbering nearly 2000. The building is a brick, one-floor plan with 20 entrances, about ten years old, now suffering from over-crowding. There are seven portable classrooms needed to accommodate the extra students. Even the staff parking lot is barely adequate for the number of cars. The visitors’ parking area was really part of the entrance driveway to the school. There were always plenty of students crowded in front of the school on
the street, just off school property. The cafeteria area is too small for all students to eat together, and consequently lunch breaks are taken in three shifts of about 600 or so each. Even so, the cafeteria can only comfortably accommodate 300. Assemblies are infrequent, even rare, because no space is large enough to accommodate the complete student body comfortably.

The urban school is situated in a city of about 500,000 people within a larger metropolitan centre having a population of over four million. The population base on which the school draws is highly multi-cultural. There are major representations of East Indian, British, Chinese, Italian, and Black Origins as well as smaller but significant numbers of Portuguese, French, Spanish, Korean, Polish, German, and Greek origins (Statistics Canada, 1996). Lastly, there is a category that Statistics Canada includes as Multiple Origins which comprises nearly 20 percent of the 525,000 population.

The school itself is positioned on a fenced plot of land with large trees near a busy multi-lane highway. The structure is two-storey and brick. With a school population of 1250, the school is somewhat overcrowded, but not quite to the extent of its rural counterpart. There are several (3) portables unobtrusively situated at the back and side of the property. Parking space, at least on the days of my attendance, was barely adequate, but there is, apparently, available land on which to expand. As is often the case with Catholic schools, the Church is beside the school. Several meeting places are outdoors, patio areas with benches where students sit when the weather is pleasant. Several times when I arrived at the parking area, I saw students working on the

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33 According to teachers, students, often numbering 300 to 400, congregate on the street to smoke because provincial legislation requires that smoking is no longer permitted on school property. During my time at the school that number was considerably less, although still substantial, perhaps 80 or 90.
landscape around the school.\textsuperscript{34}

\textit{Sample}

Facilitators (see \textit{Procedures} section earlier) distributed summaries of the research proposal to staff members, and from those who expressed an interest in its subject matter, a purposive, non-random sampling procedure was used to select 12 experienced full-time secondary school teachers, both male and female, from the filtered pool (each having five years teaching experience or more). All those interested in participating in the study were interviewed except two, one initially expressed interest but asked to be excused because of time constraints, the second because of illness.\textsuperscript{35} Seven participants were teachers of a large district high school in a small rural community, and five were teachers of a large urban secondary school in a major metropolitan area. The study focussed on the perceptions of teachers as those who deal with violence ‘on the front line’ and who are the prime implementers of any educational change. Each participant signed a letter of consent which outlined the purpose of the study, the benefits and risks to the participants, and the participant’s right to discontinue his/her participation at any time (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Seidman, 1991).

\textit{Pilot Study}

In the Fall of 1996 I conducted a pilot study of three interviews to test procedures and the effectiveness of the general interview questions developed (Anderson, 1994), as well as to test

\textsuperscript{34} I later learned this work was part of a school beautification project.

\textsuperscript{35} The latter teacher discussed with me the possibility of proceeding, but using a telephone interview format. Because I wanted to keep the method of inquiry consistent, that is, in-depth recorded interviews, I declined and thanked her for her time.
the way I related to, and interviewed, the participants (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The theoretical model and substantive theory were discussed with prospective participants who then could provide feedback and suggestions. I proceeded with the study after making very minor adjustments.

**Interviews**

Seven interviews were conducted at a large district high school of a small rural community, and five interviews were conducted in a large urban secondary school of a major metropolitan area. With the assistance of the facilitators, interview dates and times were arranged to coincide with the availability of each participant. Tape-recorded interviews were conducted at each school, in private, in rooms set apart for that purpose.

A schedule of interview questions (see appendix A) was developed from the research objectives, but the schedule's function was more in the nature of a reference and a guide (Merriam, 1988; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Interviews, sometimes several hours in length, semi-structured and interpretive in nature, yielded descriptions rich in detail (Tierney, 1987). The interview questions were posed in an order that related appropriately to participants' statements made in response to previous questions. Interviews were conducted, moreover, in a conversational style to allow the participants the flexibility to explicate their world subjectively, at their own pace, unhindered by pre-set questions in a pre-set order that might not necessarily have been conducive to good conversational flow. Pre-set order for questioning might also have

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36 Several of the teachers were members of teaching teams and able to remain away from their classroom duties leaving others in charge. Two others had spare periods before lunch and indicated their willingness to continue partly through their lunch breaks.
been inhibiting to the interpretive nature of the responses so desirable in this type of qualitative research. As much as possible, the participants were asked for specific examples to explicate and contextualize their information. Participants were also asked to ground their theoretical statements. In effect, teachers were asked to give a sense of why they think like they do, by parsing grand concepts into their constituent parts to promote better understanding. A sampling of questions used to deepen understanding were: "Could you explain what you mean by that?" "Could you relate an incident which conveys what you mean?" "What has happened to make you think like you do?" Often teachers would cite incidents gathered through years of experience which ultimately have shaped their views. This attention to particulars, I believe, helped to clarify information provided by the participants, boosting edification.

The analysis draws on findings from a study conducted in Winter and Spring of 1996/97. The research study, qualitative and descriptive in nature, was conducted using audio-taped teacher participant interviews and classroom observation, as the main strategies for data collection.

Although the interviews were audio-taped, I kept an Interview Journal in which I wrote any observations, impressions, indeed anything that stood out as being unusual about, or pertinent to, the issues raised in the interviews. This information was jotted down during, and/or just after each meeting. I anticipated that these memos might stimulate critical thinking about matters heard in the setting and how they relate to larger theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Audio-taped recordings were transcribed verbatim by me as soon as possible after the interviews (often the next day), while the substance of the meeting was still fresh in my mind.
Each participant received a typed copy of his/her transcription delivered personally by me, with a thank you note and a request that any amendments to better represent meaning or accuracy be submitted to me within a week of receipt of the transcription. Even so, I spoke with several participants to be sure that each felt the transcription accurately represented what was said.

During the course of the interviews, I selected seven of the teachers for more in-depth investigation by way of classroom observation. The selections satisfied a number of criteria. Included were both male and female participants, representation from both schools (four rural, three urban teacher participants), and from a wide range of subjects and levels taught. Recorded classroom observations can typically provide further insights (Tierney, 1987) into the multiple realities, diverse perspectives, and idiosyncratic behaviours of classroom teachers. Of the teachers interviewed, all, when asked, volunteered their classrooms for follow-up classroom observation. Common phrases indicating acceptance included "My door is always open, come in any time." Not one teacher showed any hesitation or reluctance in offering me access. Classroom observations were typically several hours in duration, not infrequently included most of a morning or afternoon, and occasionally a return visit in the days hence. During the periods of observation, I took detailed field notes in a Field Journal kept for that purpose.

I anticipated that particulars garnered from the perspective of classroom observation would enrich the study by allowing me "as-it-happens" access to emotion, body language, and group dynamics which constitute important aspects of human research.\(^\text{37}\) Thus, the information gathered from these visits was used to strengthen the validity and reliability of the interviews.

\(^{37}\) Such behaviours are available to the observer but are more difficult to convey in an interview which is but a construct of reality (Hughes, 1990).
already conducted (Merriam, 1988). In this study, the juxtaposing of an in-depth interview approach with classroom observation facilitated a higher level of participation and interaction which helped me to contextualize participants’ comments and to comprehend more clearly how they understood and made meaning of their experiences (Seidman, 1991). As researchers, we are primarily concerned with understanding and recounting these “lived actions” (Anderson, 1994, p.153) in a meaningful way, but we also recognize that some interpretation on the part of the researcher is involved in all acts of understanding and recounting the world of others. Therefore, in an effort to ‘get it right,’ additional interviews during and following the classroom observation phase were conducted to further enhance interpretation and to validate understanding of the multiple layers of meaning (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Seidman, 1991; Van Maanen, 1988). As a positive consequence, classroom observation allowed me to comprehend firsthand the intricacies of teachers’ approaches in dealing with incidences of violence and potential violence in the context of their natural setting (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Brief elucidation interviews with teachers followed the observation sessions to enhance understanding of what I had just witnessed.

On-going analysis (Merriam, 1988; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Seidman, 1991) accompanied the entire process to provide illumination and to keep the data and research focussed. Utilizing a summarization process, I categorized the data by theme and topics according to the typology of the research questions and the study objectives. Further, I used a computer software program (WordPerfect 8) always searching for patterns, contrasting, comparing, synthesizing, and

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38 Research tools available with WordPerfect that proved useful were QuickLinks, Hyperlink, Sort, Search, Highlight, and Tracking.

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interpreting the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), so that I could make sense of what I had seen, heard, and learned. Throughout the analysis I constantly referred back to my research objectives, conceptual framework, and definition of terms to maintain my study focus.

After I had completed the interviews, the participation observation segment, and transcribed the interviews, I began to categorize the data utilizing a summarization process, constantly comparing as I searched for similarities and differences in responses, according to the typology of the research questions and the study objectives.

**Limitations**

As a researcher, I realize there can frequently be some difficulty in interviews regarding context. The interview process itself has a certain artificiality about it in that it is taking place detached from the situation or circumstance in which the action itself occurred (Hughes, 1990). With data analysis, further decontextualization would seem destined to render a construct of reality even more distant from that which occurred in the natural setting. Participant observation made this process one step less removed.

As an interviewer it is difficult, moreover, to be certain that my perception of an incident or emotion articulated by a participant is semantically equivalent to the participant's. The open-ended conversational-style interview allowed me the flexibility to ask for elucidation in a non-threatening manner. Participants seemed willing, indeed even eager\(^\text{39}\) to provide additional information and insight, perhaps sensing on my part, a genuine interest and desire for understanding and accuracy. In this process, I was able to return to key issues repeatedly, with a

\(^{39}\) It was almost as if they had been wanting to unload their concerns about my topic for some time.
view to improving understanding.

During the participant observation aspect of the research, I realized that my presence in the classroom could significantly affect the behaviour of both students and teachers, both positively and negatively. My sense was that students were fairly comfortable with this outside observer, introduced (correctly enough) to the class as a teacher and as a researcher-in-training.

The participants in this study were not identified with pseudonyms, but were instead recognized by the subject they taught. Both schools are large enough that many teachers, for example, teach Mathematics and so on. However, my prime interest in characterizing the teachers in such a manner concerns certain similarities of opinion voiced by teachers of similar subjects that are not necessarily offered by others.

It is likewise appropriate to make the reader aware that there may be a skew in the database in that the numbers of teachers interviewed were not equal, that is, seven in the rural setting and five in the urban. Although both male and female teachers were interviewed, the gender number in each setting neither were identical.

The rural school is a Public school, whereas the urban school is Catholic. The Separate Catholic educational system claims to emphasize a higher moral code with a strong link to the theology of the Catholic church. Moral teachings are subsequently reflected in the teachings of the Separate schools perhaps more overtly than is apparent in the Public system (McLaren, 1993). There was some concern that these teachings may indirectly or directly affect the general tone of the school thus impacting the data in some measure. Teachers were given numerous opportunities to address the religion issue and to indicate how and if it might affect student behaviour. But, none chose to introduce Catholicism and its tenets as having an affect on the
morality and behaviour of the students and teachers. In fact, several teachers volunteered that curricular studies and their handling of student behaviours were kept strictly apart from the religious aspects of the Catholic school. This is not to suggest that the Catholic affiliation and the morality that faith encourages have no affect on the incidence of violence at the school presently, only that these participant teachers did not so indicate. One teacher of the Catholic system did refer to the Catholic school he attended as a child as "so tightly-controlled, a very fascist type of administration" that "the violence that comes from the top down actually encourages violence underneath as well." Opinions such as these are supported by research, for example, McLaren (1993) suggests that the efforts of Catholic schooling in helping the poor and oppressed are spiritualised away when Catholic values themselves are invisibly linked to a culture of domination and exploitation.

Further, teachers were routinely asked at the end of the interview if there was anything around and about the issue of violence and their school that they felt I had not addressed or about which they wished to elaborate. Not one teacher took the opportunity to mention philosophies of religion or of the Separate school system and its structures that s/he felt positively or negatively affected the incidence of violence and its mitigation. It is my opinion that the teacher participants were extremely candid, gregarious, and forth-coming and I feel as certain as I can be in such circumstances that if the teachers felt the Catholic aspect of the issue was important in the incidence or mitigation of violence, the subject would at least have been mentioned. I realize, however, that this is effectively taking a response from what is essentially a non-response. Further, such an inference can likewise overlook, however indirectly, any effects that the religious aspects of Catholic schooling may have had on the general school climate over time.
This small discussion is by way of acknowledging the existence of these potentially problematic variables.

Bias and Ethics

I understand that it is impossible to be unbiased and value-neutral. We all have inherent biases of which we may not even be aware. Life is replete with choices and research is no exception. Even initial choices of topic and methodology show preference, like democracy, for example, and can be construed as indicating bias. I made a concerted effort to understand the perspective of each participant, while realizing that as a separate entity I, too, carry my own baggage of beliefs and assumptions (Anderson, 1994; Hughes, 1990). Giving careful consideration to the diverse value possibilities inherent in my study and appreciating different approaches to reality, I attempted an impartial, non-judgmental treatment of participants and their information (Hughes, 1990; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

All transcription and sundry information pertaining to the study are accessible only by me. Hard paper information pertaining to interviews and classroom observation is stored in a locked storage and retrieval system. Computer data on disks are coded and accessible only by me.
Chapter Four

Contextual Understanding: The School/Community Milieu

This section of the study first examines participants' understandings of concepts and terms that form an integral part of the research. The concept of violence has changed over time and here it is re-cast once again from the perspective of the 12 teachers participating in the study. Secondly, teachers situate their particular schools within the community, providing important contextual information to heighten understanding.

All the teacher/participants from the pseudonymous Bishop's Gate Secondary School (urban) and Woodview District Secondary School (rural) in this current study were asked for their perspective of the term violence, in particular, to specify what type of behaviour they would include under the rubric violence. Both the urban and rural teacher/participants of this study (as in the 1994 study) specified physical violence as the first type of behaviour that came to mind when constructing and characterizing violence. This was by no means the only criterion mentioned, however. The descriptors cited by the urban educators in their characterization of violence included:

...definitely physical contact, that comes to mind first, definitely threats, swearing, non-verbal kinds of threats: eye contact; gang behaviour...
...the overt kinds of violence, beating people up; verbal abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse—all that is intimidation.
I consider intimidation a form of violence, I mean direct confrontation, the "I'm going to get you stuff," as violent...
...girls hitting boys and boys hitting girls, punching people in the face, physical violence, but then there's some borderline kind of stuff, horseplay that can turn into violence which in a way is more unpredictable because people can be just horsing around and something happens and it turns into a fight which just comes out of nowhere; if there is a weapon
involved; also verbal assault...

Still another expanded the concept to encompass:

...any kind of unwanted aggressive behaviour—but especially physical violence such as fighting...

Thus, the current construction of violence, articulated by the educators participating in the urban segment of the study, besides the usually cited aspects of violence like physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, is now recast to include new descriptors like intimidation and confrontation. These new, more-inclusive terms, intimidation and confrontation, may include verbal assault and other non-verbal, yet threatening behaviour, like certain incidences of eye contact. With this new delineation come special inherent difficulties. These described behaviours appear to be both broader in scope and more subtle in nature. It now becomes, perhaps, far more challenging for teachers to discern and identify accurately violent acts. For example, constructing the subtleties of eye contact seems fraught with ineluctable and potentially insurmountable problems. Although there are instances in which some eye contact appears to convey malevolence and intimidation, judgement of this fleeting physical eye movement once again brings the issue of subjective perception to the forefront. And, because it is such a small, perhaps barely discernable motion, a consistent and accurate judgement may be even more challenging.

Rural educators too, had much to say in their construction of violent behaviour:

...I think ‘the physical’ first of all. Fights! But any force is unacceptable if the motive

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40 The idea of subjective perception also figured prominently in my 1994 study. See Galloway-Rintoul, unpublished Master’s Thesis.
behind it is to be hurtful or violent, physical things, one kid roughing up another, but verbal violence is the initial stage...

A Mathematics teacher was emphatic that he would include:

*Physical intimidation, verbal intimidation, also intolerance of kids that are slower; verbal put-downs, even kids putting themselves down; self-abuse like poor personal hygiene and not caring for themselves generally or not caring about their academics...Self-abuse happens a lot.*

A general level Mathematics teacher offered this thoughtful commentary:

*I think emotional when we’re talking violence. Verbal and emotional abuse are more of an issue than the physical.*

A teacher of French stated:

*...when I first think of violence I immediately think of physical violence, fists, a weapon and then there are many other kinds—like psychological, verbal, that is, student to student, student to teacher, teacher to student, teacher to teacher, all sorts of things...*  

A teacher of Special Education also of Woodview District Secondary School put a little different spin on his definition of violence:

*...there’s the violence that you can do within and the violence that you can do without, and towards... [for example] there’s chippy, lippy kind of stuff; confrontational "like this is crap man" language; aggressive, attitudinal verbal stuff; swearing and insulting language and other incendiary comments; somebody beating up somebody; things like divorce; kids coming to class drunk or on marijuana...*  

The teacher of Mathematics also in the rural setting expressed his ideas of violent behaviour this way:

*...very aggressive acts that we read about, like a kid bringing a gun to school, with kids being part of a gang; bullying; lots of verbal abuse, a trash-talking mentality like calling a girl ‘slut’ or ‘bitch’ and using the ‘f’ word—any verbal sass; self abuse like being suicidal; physical things like using a Bruce Lee drop kick if someone speaks to your girl...*
Another included:

...well, racial problems and gender problems; physical intimidation, like one kid roughing up another kid or cracking open a switchblade; verbal intimidation: verbal bullying, verbal put-downs like racial intimidation/slurs, derogatory remarks, swearing; pushing, shoving; self abuse like anorexia...

Still another appended her criteria to the growing list:

A boy with a 12 inch knife showing it in the window to students; gender abuse, personal abuse like getting drunk, doing drugs; verbal abuse such as name-calling...

A teacher of Special Education in the rural setting articulated aspects of violence that may resonate with many in the 1990s:

A 'self-abusive lifestyle'; extortion of money [like in the cafeteria]; not respecting themselves and not respecting the people around them; horrible things like going to divorce court and saying the right things so you can live in the right house...physical or sexual abuse.

Pushing the definition even a little farther, one teacher in the rural setting concluded that:

Any force, any force is unacceptable if the motive behind it is to be hurtful...but what happens here is often play fighting, it's not nasty but it happens. But like mother said "somebody's going to get hurt when you play fight," it can escalate...

What becomes apparent rather quickly is that the teachers in the rural setting, like their urban counterparts, have been rethinking and reshaping the term violence in a way that broadens the determination and overall construction of the term. A new, more sophisticated definition, at least from these particular practitioners in the rural setting, now encompasses a wide range of considerations like intolerance, eye intimidation, and self-abuse, which, arguably, even three or
four years ago, would probably not necessarily have been mentioned in the context of violence.\(^{41}\)

Many of these teachers construe the mere flashing of a weapon such as a gun or switchblade to be violent because of the inherent idea of intent. Furthermore, intention and context are aspects of the issue of misbehaviour and violence that continue to be considered carefully by more and more teachers; they ponder specifically—is the intent of the so-called perpetrator to be hurtful or not? The concept of being hurtful appears to be the compelling underlying question that many, but not necessarily all, of the teachers use in their assessment of a situation as violent or non-violent.

Interestingly, one teacher of Home Economics does not necessarily assay swearing as violent, "because it's so common." Her characterization has this proviso: "They'll say 'F---'\(^{42}\) or 'Shit' when they're cooking if they touch something hot or spill." She views these strong expletives as just a means of expressing annoyance or dismay, as another person from a different place in time might utter the milder, and perhaps less offensive (at least to teachers), "drat," or "phooey." If a teacher's perception suggests pernicious intent however, then she would re-position her classification. In this teacher's opinion, if swearing is directed towards another with malicious intent, it is then viewed as violent.

\(^{41}\) This is not to say that intolerance and self-abuse were acceptable; to the contrary, it is simply they would not necessarily have been included under the rubric violence. The teachers of this study themselves suggest that such is the case. This may, in part, have something to do with the labelling of certain types of behaviour as violent and the increased awareness of certain inappropriate actions included under that rubric.

\(^{42}\) My abbreviation.
Once again, the provocative issue of subjective perception\textsuperscript{43}, central to teachers' construction of students' intentioned behaviour, becomes manifest. To characterize intent, teachers must assess each occurrence of troublesome or questionable behaviour. Teachers have the challenging responsibility of making their judgements regarding violence not only with alacrity, but fairly and accurately in a variety of situations that are not necessarily always clearly defined, as in the example mentioned earlier, that of teasing (see footnote 18) or, as mentioned in the course of this study, even certain eye contacts. Therefore, on the basis of the interview data, this study's teacher/participants conceptualized violence as fairly encompassing: it includes any behaviour intended to be seriously hurtful or harmful, whether perpetrated by one person on another or directed towards oneself. Such behaviour can include physical or non-physical acts of psychological, emotional, physical, economic, spiritual, verbal, and self abuse.

After the teachers had identified the kinds of behaviour they would include under the rubric violence, they were asked to consider their own schools with regard to the definition of violence they had just articulated. In an effort to understand how each teacher regards the issue, each was initially asked if he/she worries about violence in his/her school. Teachers' responses varied within and between the two schools.

School Characterization

The urban setting teachers at Bishop's Gate Secondary School, when asked if they worried about violence in their school, generally responded that it was not something they really worried about very often. There was one exception though. Their mainly similar responses include: "Not

too much here. We have had incidents, though."

From a teacher of English came this response, "Well, we've had a bit of violence from time to time but generally speaking I'd characterize this school as being really peaceful compared to other schools in the area. This isn't just my opinion. The police have said so too." Another, shrugging his shoulders, remarked, "I don't worry about it. I've seen it certainly, but I really don't worry about it."

But from a department head of Special Education came this reaction,

_Worry about violence? Oh, for sure! Probably I'm most worried about fights and they usually happen. Teenagers are creatures whose hormone levels go up and down. They get into an argument. They can't get out of it, so they fight. Boys and girls._

A final response from the urban setting came from a former teacher of Religious Studies and English, who stated that he now mainly focusses his attention on Peer Counselling and does only a little teaching. "I'm more concerned lately with the other kinds of aggression. I wouldn't say it's so much violence as acts of aggression." By way of explanation, he continued, "The boys want the girls' attention, so they body-check them into the lockers, knock books out of their hands—what I call the 'goof-boy' syndrome." This teacher, who has initiated the Peer Counselling Programme at this school, seems to be conceptualizing hostile _physical_ interaction as the main criterion characterizing violence even though he earlier articulated a definition of violence that included a wide range of inappropriate behaviours of which all were not necessarily of a physical nature. He apparently sees the 'goof boy' syndrome, although still not permissible, as being more playful and less offensive behaviour than the all-out physical response of a violent and hurtful nature that is so frequently emotionally-charged and ripe to spin out of control.
The following is a sampling of responses from the teachers in the rural setting at Woodview District Secondary School, who in turn were asked if they worried about violence. Their remarks were generally consistent, indicating that neither do they, in fact, worry much about violence at school. As in the urban setting, there was, however, one qualification. The first acknowledgment is from a teacher of Senior Mathematics who offered, "I probably only think of it [violence] in terms of inner city Canada, or maybe not even Canada, maybe only inner city Toronto." This may be seen as a surprising admission perhaps, considering what we already know about violence and its pervasiveness in all schools, in all areas, and among all racial pluralities and economic distinctions.

Again, it was the response from a Special Education teacher this time on the rural front-line that was somewhat dissimilar from, yet in other ways paralleled, that of his colleagues.

*I do [that is, worry] because of the population. I know that when rats get over-populated they tend to, you know, get a little excitable, the hierarchical kind of approach. The general sociological disposition of violence in this community—there's nothing outstanding there. To know about violence, why not go to Toronto. . .we don't really have a violent disposition [here] that can lead to escalation.*

This particular teacher seemed to regard over-crowding and/or sheer large numbers of students as the most likely influences that could potentiate trouble in his rural school. Similarly, the proffering of Toronto as the most likely place to find acts of school violence suggests that some teachers have a certain mind-set or image that appears to view the big city as fraught with tensions and violence. Mind-set, unfortunately, can often be predicated on very little fact and can be very difficult to shift once the mind-set judgement has been set in place. In this study, there seem to be two beliefs by teachers of Woodview: first, that there is little or no violence in their
rural school, and second, that Toronto schools, having an inherent violent disposition (a circumstance which has been by no means been established), are hot-beds of simmering violence ready to erupt.

Then, there is this response from a Family Studies teacher at Woodview who, when asked if she worried about violence at school, replied, "No, because the kids are busier in 'foods' [Food Studies]." It is her contention that any physical activity, in this example, the physical activity of preparing food, helps to relieve some tensions by redirecting some of the extra energy that could have the potential for fomenting a violent circumstance.

From a teacher of French came this response:

I don't worry about it [violence], but every so often an incident will crop up in the school. Considering the number of students we have in a confined space I think we do a pretty good job, but we don't have the problems of city schools. Twenty years ago they were mostly farm kids, but no more.

Most of the rural-setting teachers apparently view their situation as non-violent when, in their own mind, they compared it to the large metropolitan city of Toronto, and claimed not to worry about violence at their school at all. Several Woodview educators conceded that occasionally an isolated incident will occur, but in their opinion, violence in Canada remains, by and large, a problem of the urban setting, specifically Toronto.

It is intriguing that many of these rural teachers voluntarily proffered Metropolitan Toronto as the urban setting in which they felt teachers commonly would, or should, be concerned about

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44 The inference that farm kids are less sophisticated and not as 'street-wise' as their urban counterparts is not something new. Although a widely-held belief, it is not necessarily an accurate one based on fact.
violence at school. These statements, voiced by the majority of the rural teachers of this study, are intriguing, especially when juxtaposed with the information they furnished during the course of the interviews. As the interviews proceeded, there were also marked differences between how teachers’ generally constructed violence in their particular schools and the image of violence that emerged in response to the in-depth interview questions. Although the urban educators’ assessment of their school in regard to violence was somewhat more severe than the actual description of their school’s violence would seem to indicate, using their own definition of violence as the point of reference, it was reasonably consistent with their actual accounts of violent and aggressive behaviour that the interview questions elicited. When rural teachers’ responded to the interview questions, however, their general constructions of violence in their particular rural school setting varied considerably from the actual accounts of violence in their schools, again using their own definition of violence as the point of reference. The image that most of the rural educators generally constructed of their large district rural school more resembled an idealized vision of a small rural community school in a pastoral village of earlier times where seemingly everyone knew everyone else, cared for each other, and where ‘apparently’ nothing violent ever happened. These Arcadian images contrasted dramatically with the teachers’ actual constructions of violence in their schools, as elicited by the in-depth interview questions. Many of these contrasting constructions of violence were also corroborated

45 This finding may be suspect in that, although the teachers articulated their criteria for violence, it appears unclear if they actually use their own stated criteria when characterizing their school according to violent incidents. Their mind-set appears to be still mired in the old concept of violence being most commonly equated with combative physical contact and indictable offenses.
during consequent classroom observation. Recurring responses depicting violence in the rural school setting were invariably amended by a variety of comments, all similar, such as "Well, I know it doesn't sound too great, but I live here and I know these kids ... this isn't the big city you know..." This strand of the discussion concerning these rural setting teachers and their images of their schools will be considered in more depth as interview data are explored further.

Even though all of the urban educators in the study allowed that there had been incidents of violent and aggravated misbehaviour at their school, only one teacher, a Resource teacher who teaches Special Education, declared that she worries about school violence. Similarly, only one rural educator, also a teacher of Special Education, conceded that he was mildly concerned about violence and the escalation of misbehaviour, but rather in the general sense, citing his outlook that the sheer number of students in any large school can, of itself, be a provoking catalyst.

At Woodview, the Administrator of Programme Services declared, "It tends to be Special Ed. kids who misbehave to cover up their academic inadequacies. The biggest bully in the school is the person who can't read." It does seem plausible that Special Education teachers might tend to be more concerned about certain types of violence than their colleagues, for they usually encounter a more divergent range of student behaviours and ability levels than is oftentimes apparent in the so-called regular classroom. Further, it is not uncommon for students who have difficulty learning to seek other avenues for self-gratification and these may include a extensive range of socially unacceptable behaviours, including violence in its many forms. As well, Special Education classes can be a frequent repository for students who are seen as disruptive, self-abusive, having poorly-developed skills for interacting appropriately with others, having problems maintaining emotional self-control, and/or having difficulty learning. These challenges
(and a myriad of others) can negatively impact the atmosphere so necessary for effective student learning to take place. The requirements of these students may well be beyond the scope of what a teacher is effectively able to supply within the confines of the usual classroom situation. Hence, children, whose aberrant behaviour requires moderate but repetitive correction, are frequently dispatched to the catch-basin of Special Education, perhaps for want of a separate facility. Accordingly, it seems logical and reasonable to accept that teachers of Special Education, above others, are, in some measure, more likely to be concerned about violence and all its dimensions (including self-abuse), since they are more likely to deal with a greater variety of misbehaviour incidents and loss of control on a continuing basis.

**Demography**

The participants were questioned about the social and cultural characteristics of their school population, and in particular, any associated family challenges that could negatively impact student maturation, learning, and behaviour. The urban setting educators were consistent in describing their school as having an eclectic mix of students representing quite literally a global variety of cultural and economic backgrounds. Even the teachers themselves were representative of a wide variety of races (including visible minorities), and cultural heritages. Once again, the responses by the urban educators were mainly similar. A Resource teacher situated herself in the demographic description providing her sense of the changes over 20 years:

*This school, situated as it is in Bishop's Gate, has a real cross-section demographically. It's a whole conundrum of backgrounds. We have kids from some quite well-to-do homes in some cases. Their parents are professionals and we have kids from the other end of the spectrum, kids that are from Ontario Housing, single-parent families, welfare recipients, and so on, living on child welfare support of one kind or another. So there's quite a nice spread throughout. When I first came here 20 odd years ago, the place was all white.*

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There was one brown kid in the place and he was a little Indian kid from Angola or someplace. Now it's about half and half, that is, half Caucasian and half Other. And there is some clash from time to time, usually between Blacks and Central American kids. We get a lot of kids from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, some Peruvians—all different cultures. Probably about 40 percent of students in the school come from broken homes. So there may have been remarriages and blended families but in the remaining 60 percent I'd say most parents do work. Very few, maybe a dozen I know of, have the parents staying at home.

Another teacher spoke to the broad cultural diversity at the school:

Generally, working class, but I hate that term: blue-collar, hard-working families, hard-working people, trying their best in these hard economic times. Ten years ago the predominant ethnic group would have been the Polish because they settled in this area. But now it seems to be Sri Lankans, Pakistani, and Spanish certainly. Still heavily Polish but more of an addition of those other groups. It's a whole conundrum of backgrounds. Both parents work. It would be rare if one parent stays home, especially not in fiscal times like these, are you kidding?

This next comment came from the study participant who has been at the school the longest:

From a racial and ethnic point of view it's very diverse. When I came here in 1974 it was pretty well a Northern European, British Isles background. Now it's like a United Nations and I think we're lucky in the sense that there is no really predominant group. We've never really had the gang kind of phenomena. There's never been one sizable group with some other counter group that would be in opposition to them. So that's helped a great deal. Most of the students come in oriented to advanced level courses, usually thinking about university. Probably, that's unrealistic. Most often it seems to be a function of a parental kind of pressure and influence.

Several teachers mentioned economic concerns affecting both family and school life.

The population is pretty evenly split, male and female. The family situations in the last year or two—economic concerns have begun surfacing, parents losing a job, or companies being down-sized, and the consequent pressure of possibly losing their homes, or having to move to less expensive homes. Kids (are) feeling responsible, and having to
get jobs and so on. For the most part it's two-parent families. We get most parents working. Probably more than half the two-parent families have both parents working. [There are] a number of single-parent families, mostly the mother, but some fathers. Some ping-pong families. Kids spending a week with one parent and then a week with another.

This next teacher offered economic information and how the economic downturn has affected many of the families. She makes frequent home visits (on her own time, I later learned):

*It's a caring community here, but developed over years. The school has a combination of students from a whole lot of different backgrounds. My habit is to make home visits on occasion. And so I've been into the homes of a lot of the kids and they've got upper middle class to upper class type homes, privileged. I don't know what the stats would be on the percentage of families with both parents working, but I think most have to have both working. We're looking also at a lot of single parent families as well. Some of the single parent families, both parents are very involved with the kids. That varies as well. Most are with single mothers and some are living with grandparents with the single father paying more attention than the single mother, which I find very strange. I haven't seen that too many places. I had one student who had both parents and neither one of them had parenting skills. Both parents were trying to do better by their children but the children couldn't quite cope because I think that the parents, when they were back in their home town in their place of origin, had a community around them. But here they were alienated, they were separated from their community and they were used to relying on other people to pick up the slack, and here, they don't have anybody to do that. So what I noticed in the families, there was the tendency to get pregnant, go on welfare and jump out of school before 16, which is really bad.*

According to the Special Education teacher at Bishop's Gate School, communal networks of support groups for many of these new Canadians, similar to those which would have been in place in the towns and villages of their homeland, are either unavailable here or not developed to a level whereby they provide concentrated and recurring assistance. The support of which they speak has little to do with the social safety net so often debated by politicians, but everything to do with the informal over-the-back-fence and/or next-door variety of neighbourly and inter-
family sustentation. It can be described perhaps, as an informal network of reciprocity that occurs when people live and manage their affairs within a society characterized by an atmosphere of mutual support after having known one another and their respective families very well for long periods of time. Lacking these reassuring and supportive relationships, at least, in the opinion of these urban teachers, many new Canadians seem cast adrift as lost souls in the big city, without the informal social safety net to which many had become so accustomed in their homeland. This is but another life-deficiency underscoring the alienation many feel, directly placing undo stress and strain on family members, left to resolve life’s complications in relative isolation, their very existence, often compounded by economic hardships, ineffective communication skills, and new and unfamiliar life courses. Because Canada has made a concerted effort to increase her population base through immigration, and because large numbers of these immigrants settle in large urban areas such as Toronto, Vancouver, and the like, feelings of estrangement and dislocation can be widespread and a very serious concern in those areas heavily populated with new Canadians.

When the rural setting educators were asked about the cultural and social characteristics of their school, their responses, particularly with respect to cultural composition, were markedly dissimilar from those of their urban counterparts. According to the study participants at Woodview, though, in the main, students appear to be fielding home and family challenges similar to those of their urban counterparts, if to varying degrees. Commentaries by teachers characterizing the students and families of their rural school and setting include,

*It's pretty WASP-y, lacking in multi-culturalism. Very diverse, full spectrum economically, and full spectrum academically. If you're in a general level classroom,*
chances are you have a very high percentage of broken homes, but if you're in an advanced level the percentage of broken homes drops dramatically.

The teacher’s comment appears to equate, to some degree, the increased incidence of broken homes with lack of academic achievement, claiming that advanced level children generally have a more stable home environment. In a general sense, much research supports this view (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989; Price & Everett, 1997). Another teacher refers to kids with "tough backgrounds" as not being "university-bound." He continues:

*We’ve had kids from pretty tough backgrounds. The kids I teach [in Special Education], are not academic, or university-bound, the tell-me-what-I’ve-got-to-do-and-I’ll-do-it kind. 'They tend to be the general population. Parents that you want to interview don’t show up. At this juncture in Woodview, generally speaking, we don’t deal with psychopaths, we don’t deal with sociopathic personalities, we don’t deal with really hard core junk. We’ve just got a nice sociological mix, you’re not dealing with kids that are basically drunken, angry. We do have those kids here and what you see is (sic) broken homes, molested girls, but I don’t know, I don’t have access to that.*

He feels that, at Woodview, they have been fortunate in the profiles they are dealing with despite the fact that stresses and tensions being brought to bear are ever-increasing.

A Family Studies teacher in the rural setting lays the blame for much of the impropriety and ineptness of students to sustain constructive and peaceful interpersonal relationships squarely on the lack of traditional family values in contemporary rural life. Under no illusions about the so-called consummate country existence, she charges that the allure of a tranquil rural lifestyle, at least, in this particular setting, is little more than an enticing romantic illusion obfuscating an oftentimes dysfunctional reality:

*My husband, being from Woodview, I think I can say with a fair degree of certainty that*
there have always been drugs in the area. It's not just a sleepy little town.\textsuperscript{46} Every kind of drug is around. Whatever is popular, is here. There is a lot of drinking. People seem to think that's the only way they know how to socialize. The 'food and family' thing is not that intense around here. For the most part there is not that open, loving, comraderie or whatever. It seems to be somehow lacking. There are a lot of broken homes and even some of them that aren't, they should be, fractured at least. Parents leave at 6:00 a.m., come home at 6:00 p.m. Then they have to relax, so they go out to play hockey or ball and the kids are left alone a lot. I've heard that parents almost give up when the kids are 13 or 14. I've heard that they don't know what to do with the kids when they reach that age. They almost expect teachers to take over. I wonder how many of these kids sit down and have dinner with their parents?

Comments questioning the lack of a vital family-life ethic are curious because (as several teachers mentioned) many of these country dwellers are displaced urbanites searching for an improved life-quality that has long been romanticized as the cornerstone of traditional rural society. In many instances, these country dwellers have deliberately relocated to rural settings searching for a respite from the social ills that they feel are rampant in large metropolitan situations.\textsuperscript{47} It would seem, however, that for many, the halcyon promise of the quintessential country life has not necessarily reached the lofty heights of expectation.

Another rural teacher sees community life as evolving multi-culturally over the years, but still not approaching the breakneck pace of the multi-cultural phenomenon in large metropolitan settings such as Toronto. She reports this example:

\textsuperscript{46} Her emphasis, judging by the emphatic tone in her voice.

\textsuperscript{47} There may also be an economic dimension to country living, as real estate and property taxes are commonly less. There are, however, increased food, clothing, and gasoline prices, which may factor heavily if the place of employment is quite a distance away. This type of daily travel can soon put many miles on vehicles which may have to be repaired and/or replaced more frequently.
We're still a very Waspish rural community in a lot of ways, but that is changing. And I especially can see that over the [30] years I've been here. I can remember when there was only one Oriental boy in the community. Everybody knew him. His parents owned the Chinese restaurant. He never had any friends and nobody ever had anything to do with him.49 None. That was violence too, probably, but people just ignored him and left him alone. He was a nice guy and everybody loved [to have] him in the class but he never said anything. Now the people who own the 2 or 3 Chinese restaurants in town [had] wonderful, wonderful kids who, still, 20 years later never had friends in the school but were better accepted. Yet last year the one boy was beaten up after coming out of work at midnight from the restaurant, by local kids. He was the most beautiful kid who I'm sure never provoked, but it was the same kind of 'picking on' another race and colour.

This same teacher, the Administrator of Program Services, articulated current troublesome social issues in this community, similarly noted by others, that she sees as typical of the times:

*How we thought of booze on a Friday night, that's what they [the students] now think of drugs. Some are from broken homes but lots from ordinary homes too. And I think kids by and large find it's part of their lifestyle. The community...it's a nice sleepy little town, so it's a central area for distributing drugs. It's a big testing ground. A lot of it [the problem] is broken homes, kids have been abused by their parents, marriages ending. But by and large they are wonderful kids.*

In direct contradiction to the Family Studies teacher who declared that the rural community was "not just a nice sleepy town," this educator, the Administrator of Program Services, ironically using many of the same words but with an entirely different meaning, views this same rural community as just "a nice sleepy little town." It is curious that both teachers have such divergent opinions of their school setting and community. It may be worth mentioning that the

48 Many of the rural teachers here seem unaware of the new and more politically correct terms to address people of different cultures, for example, Asian instead of Oriental.

49 There is no indication that teachers made any special effort to integrate the new-comer into the community. The position seemed to be one of non-involvement.
Family Studies teacher, although living and working in the community now and for the last 14 years, has not been there as long as the Administrator of Family Services who has lived there 30 years. The latter teacher has been a constituent part of the community since her early teenage years, essentially growing up with the community. Consequently, she may not be as aware of its failings and difficulties or, at least be more accepting of them than the teacher who, as a grown woman, arrived in the community regarding it with fresh, and solely adult eyes.

Yet another teacher (of Mathematics) views this rural setting as one component of a problem that he sees as peculiar to any rural area which depends on larger, yet somewhat distant metropolitan centres, for family employment. Parents, whose work is located in these larger centres, are forced to leave early in the day to arrive at work on time, and necessarily arrive back home later than those who both live and work in the same community, be they urban or rural. Such a lengthy workday typically leaves children unsupervised for much longer periods, both before and after school, than those who do not travel great distances for employment. This circumstance also reduces considerably the available parent/child time together per day. Parents who must leave early for distant employment are perhaps less able to get their children off to a good start in the day, less able to make sure that they are well-fed, properly clothed, and ready to function and learn successfully at school. At least one rural teacher noted that students frequently complain about being hungry soon after they arrive at school. She in turn complains that she must stop her teaching and decide if the problem is serious enough to warrant sending

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50 Although many of today's youth can responsibly care of themselves physically, many still need a guiding hand. The possible emotional and psychological trauma associated with awaking alone and having to prepare themselves appropriately for their day at school, can over time, have a lasting injurious effect.
the student to the cafeteria for a muffin, before trying to pick up the threads of her lesson.

Another problem one teacher mentioned concerns the alarming number of single parent families, a situation he, as both a parent and teacher, finds particularly distressing. His sketch of the school population paints an all-too-typical picture of family relationships starved for togetherness time, a fact that he obviously finds troubling and which, as a conspicuous consequence, negatively impacts the children of the affected families. He comments, however, that in a general sense, most families are:

Fairly homogeneous, like your White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. I hate talking like this but it's the best way to explain it. There are some minorities of Orientals, some East Indians, some Blacks but mostly Whites. What I find very disturbing and discouraging is the number of kids who go home to one parent. I have found even when my son started in Kindergarten, there were 20 kids, 10 of which went home to one parent—in kindergarten. The one thing is the single parent; the other is that living up here is slightly cheaper, but they [the parents] are leaving so early in the morning to go down to Brampton or Toronto or Mississauga, so some of these kids don't make themselves breakfast. They come to school hungry, they sleep in, they watch television, come to school late. Then when you want to contact a parent they're not home till 6:00 or 7:00 at night. They've had over a 12-hour day and the last thing they want to do is hear from me.

Summation

The school culture at Bishop's Gate urban school and the rural school Woodview appeared to me (as a visiting researcher) to be quite different. My first impression of Bishop's Gate Secondary was that there was a palpable sense of community within the school walls. Students opened doors for each other and their laugh-filled conversation was accented with a sense of comraderie. Students were assisting those who were physically challenged to negotiate the

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51 At least, it is typical in the mind of this particular teacher at Woodview school.
crowded corridors. I walked alone through several halls and staircases at various times during which occasions students offered, "Good morning," held open the doors, and politely asked if they could assist me. Several asked, "Are you lost?" Not once did I hear teachers shouting down the hall at students, but several times while in the company of students I did hear polite salutations to those I was with and I often received a nod of the head myself. Needless to say, I was favourably impressed by the esprit.

On the other hand, even gaining entry to the parking lot of Woodview District Secondary was a challenge because students smoking cigarettes were constantly milling near the periphery of school property. Achieving access to the school through the main front doors provided some insight into the overall tone of the school. Students sometimes refused to move to allow me access. When I asked, "Excuse me," I only received a mere glance. Later, I was instructed by the administration not to walk any distance through the halls alone, "because the school layout is so weird." The approachability of the helpful and co-operative staff of Woodview made me welcome, although before commencement of classes there was often a raucous almost out-of-control atmosphere punctuated with the constant crush of students slamming lockers and each other as they pushed through the halls. This school is, admittedly, about 35 percent larger in population than its urban counterpart which is also bulging at the seams. But, the hallways of Bishop's Gate seemed, if anything, even more crowded than Woodview, yet I did not feel this same malaise. In both schools, necessary portables are available to support the over-crowding.

Commentary by Bishop's Gate teachers indicated that in their urban setting the racial and

52 New rules forbid them to smoke on school property, so they obey the letter of the law and smoke just off the property line.
ethnic mix is widely diverse with Northern European, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Polish, and Spanish well represented, while the rural setting teachers of this study indicate that their ethnic mix at Woodview District Secondary remains primarily white and homogeneous with only very minimal numbers of Asians, East Indians, and/or Afro-Americans.53

Teachers of both the urban and rural schools characterized their settings as having a preponderance of families in which two parents need to work to maintain current lifestyles. From the interview data, it would appear that, in general, the rural setting has more families whose economics are in crisis than the urban setting. The Administrator of Programme Services in the rural setting recounted a story of an excited teen who "had just about saved enough money for a down payment on a CD, not a CD player, but a single CD." According to the teachers of both settings, there are a significant number of single-parent families. Of necessity, they feel that this places undo stress on the parent left to ‘do it all,’ emotionally, economically, and psychologically for their children. Although the rural setting perhaps affords cheaper housing and land prices, costs for food, gasoline, and other staples, like clothing, are often higher. This necessarily hits those on the poorer end of the economic scale because commonly it is the poor who are fiscally unable to be home owners. They therefore find themselves unable to benefit from the cheaper land prices commonly available in more rural areas.

Another added stressor, apparently characteristic of families in the rural school setting of this

53 There have been racial incidents springing out of control at both schools but Woodview students, on the basis of the interviews, are poorer at practising racial tolerance. This state of affairs may be, in part, attributed to the school population not being exposed to other nationalities on a grand scale: thus the opportunities for teaching, learning, and practising tolerance may be fewer.
study, concerns a significantly longer working day for parents because of the additional travel time to and from the metropolitan centres where employment is available.

As well, there is some suggestion by teachers, most noticeably rural setting teachers, that the lengthier work-day also has the very real potential to negatively impact the relationship between parents and teachers, at least to the extent that teachers have difficulty gaining access to parents. After experiencing a long and exhausting day, parents may not necessarily be predisposed to talk rationally with teachers. What is more, the longer work-day is thought to directly and negatively impact children in the affected homes, in that the window of opportunity for parent/child quality time is reduced significantly compared to that of the urban families in this study. The six-to-six syndrome, that is, leaving before six in the morning and arriving home after six at night, means that a sense of community and family is probably harder to achieve and sustain. Other related problems cited include company-downsizing, job loss, and the generally poor branch-plant economy. In addition, two snippets of valuable information gleaned from several comments by Woodview educators indicate that there are, seemingly, plenty of illegal drugs available and used in this rural community, and that drinking alcohol to excess is an ongoing social concern. As a result, children, who may be left unsupervised for longer periods of time than those whose parents work nearer the home-site, may be more likely to succumb to the temptation of drugs and/or alcohol. A teacher of grade nine Mathematics summed it up this way:

54 This, in spite of widely touted statistics and rhetoric about Canada’s booming economy, to the contrary.

55 It may be that plenty of drugs are available in the urban setting as well but that issue of drug and alcohol misuse was not mentioned by these particular urban practitioners as impinging in any major way on the social and cultural lives of the particular families in their urban setting.
With no one to watch over them, and it doesn't mean that someone has to have their thumb on them, if someone is not asking, "Do they have their homework done?" or "Did you do this or that?" because there's no one there, the temptation is... a 14 or 15 year-old comes home and thinks "I've got homework, but I can watch TV, mom and dad won't be home for awhile, I can go to the pool hall, I can go suck face, I can go skateboarding, I can..." well, you know, what Mr. G. is saying in front of the classroom is important, but all these other temptations like computer games and so on, are like electronic opiates waved in front of a kid's face.

The same teacher refers to electronic games as "electronic opiates," part of the vast explosion of the media which, along with the ubiquitous presence of television, and other distractions like skateboarding, and the pool hall, serve to lure teens away from school-related activities, for example, homework and organized sports. When coupled with the lack of parental supervision, he argues that the result is potentially problematic and may lead to violent incidents.
Chapter Five

Teachers’ Constructions of Violence in their Schools: Abuse

In this next section, teachers begin to divide school violence into its constituent parts within the context of their own schools. Three key areas of abuse that the teachers articulated as being particularly troublesome are: verbal abuse, self abuse, and physical assault. Verbal abuse is viewed by all teachers as being something of a catalyst fuelling the incidence of others kinds of violence, but also as a stand-alone abuse having incredible destructive effects on others.

Verbal Abuse

Once the discussion of school violence had been broached, teachers both in the urban (Bishop’s Gate Secondary) and the rural (Woodview District Secondary) settings generally agreed that verbal aggression/intimidation/abuse was especially significant in that, not only is it a concern in and of itself, but also it can be the manifest initial stage of other types of violence. It is at the level of verbal aggression, many teachers asserted, that educators have an opportunity to prevent an escalation in the intensity and variety of violence. Verbal violence has a distinct status, in that, although it may be the demonstrable, tangible expression of other types of unresolved conflict, it can also be an end unto itself; that is (as several teachers maintained), in many instances, verbal violence is the extent to which a student intends to take his/her aggression. This is not to abjure the seriousness of verbal abuse/aggression/violence, for educators in both the rural and urban settings overwhelmingly contend that students participating in offensive verbal skirmishes can become quite vicious with their tongues and can say "incredibly nasty, destructive, and hurtful things." Furthermore, teachers understand that students
with already fragile self-esteem can be so damaged both psychologically and emotionally by verbal violence that they can potentially become suicidal.

A department head and Resource teacher from the urban setting, when asked to comment about verbal abuse/aggression/intimidation, indicated that it is frequently accompanied by physical misbehaviour underscored by loss of control. She explained:

_Profanity is a way of life with teens in terms of good stuff and bad stuff. Just joking around, it's profane with peers. But this kid threw a desk, not at me, not at any kid in the class, but threw a desk. So I said, "You need to be outta here because there are other kids in danger." So I sent him to the office and then I came down and talked to him and the principal said to me, "What do you think should be done?" And I said that it was improper behaviour and he should be suspended so he told the principal to "f--- off." and slammed the door._

Invariably, the students prone to these inappropriate verbal outbursts appear to have low tolerance of others and poor self-control. It seemingly takes very little to start an altercation.

_Somebody looks at somebody the wrong way, they're teenagers after all. Somebody says something maybe about somebody's girlfriend, or boyfriend, or sister, or brother. It's usually, somebody says something about somebody: boy/girl things, girl/girl, boy/boy things, you know. . ._

When asked about verbal violence, a teacher of English, also at Bishop's Gate, stated:

_Verbal assault, yeah. It goes on amongst the students but the culture of the school really tends to frown on it. It does happen, but by and large I don't think it is the kind of thing which is countenanced by most students no matter what colour, background, or ethnic group they belong to._

The urban setting teacher, who heads a Peer Counselling Programme, had this to say about verbal abuse and swearing, _"There is some. It doesn't seem to be intended seriously nor taken seriously."_ He immediately qualified his response, however, suggesting that such is not always
the case. He illustrated his point by recounting an incident of verbal intimidation that quickly deteriorated into aggressive physical contact.

I came across a sexual assault case three years ago. A guy was pushing this girl around, threatening her and so on. He was trying to break her up with her boyfriend. "I'm richer than he is, I'll be better for you, you'll be better off with me, I can buy you things." That was the start of it. When he was rebuffed, he would smack her just going down the hall. He did it to one of her friends who had been in Peer Counselling and because I'd laid this whole trip on about what was acceptable behaviour and so on, and what isn't, she came up right away and had found out that the friend was the victim of a similar thing. So I got the vice principal up here and we got the police involved and he was arrested right in here. It was the first time I'd ever seen anybody arrested.

This incident refers to the Peer Counselling program that has been in place at Bishop's Gate for many years. As a tool to undercut violence, it will be examined more fully in the Violence Management section of Chapter 6.

Yet another incident taken from the urban setting involved a boy who said to a female teacher, "F-- you, you bitch." He immediately ran out of class and slammed the door. The teacher involved happened to see the head of Peer Counselling just outside in the hallway and quickly gave him the details of the incident. He (the head of Peer Counselling) approached the teen who denied that he had said or done anything untoward. When the teacher pressed him, the boy admitted, "Well, she upset me." The Peer Counselling director continued:

So I said, "Maybe we should go downstairs and straighten this out with the vice principal?" And I put a hand on his elbow. "Eh, don't touch me!" And I'm thinking, oh God, we've got one of these. I said, "Look, you just can't wander around out here. Why don't we go downstairs, tell your story to the vice principal and straighten it out some way." So he says, "I'm not going down there." So I said again, "You can't wander around here." So he says, "F-- k you, you f-- k." So I said, "Oh for God's sake what are you saying? This is like pouring gasoline on a fire to put it out. You're not getting anywhere
with this." He (the student) pulled out a lighter and said, "I'll burn you man, I'll burn you." Right away we figured it had to be something else. In the course of things we found out his parents were in detention in immigration. He and his sister were living with somebody and his parents were detained.

The boy was understandably upset and frightened. His acting out was perhaps an expression of his stress and an sub-conscious call for help. The teacher added a thought-provoking comment about inappropriate verbalization that seems particularly pertinent in this instance:

*It becomes more of a judgement call, you know? What constitutes verbal harassment? How much of it is inferred and how much of it is real? Initially, part of that judgement call is by the teacher, so you may have varying degrees of good judgement. Personally, I think a lot of those moments are good teaching moments.*

A Special Education teacher in the urban school also spoke about verbal abuse:

*It's all intimidation, the f--- you! and this kind of stuff that they go through. As a teacher I've had it spoken to me. Heads of groups of kids who have their status to protect will say it, but if the student is verbally abusive to the teacher or to other students, they will be called on it pretty quickly, and usually eliminated [that is, suspended/expelled] eventually. A person like that, if they keep it up, they aren't welcome. The majority of students don't like it, their gang members may, but most don't.*

Moreover, the Special Education teacher claimed that girls are becoming especially bold in the case of verbal abuse leading to threats of bodily harm. For example, the teacher had arranged for one student to tutor another struggling in Mathematics. A contract was drawn up and signed by the teacher and the two girls. It seems that the student requiring help had a terrible attitude and would not even do her term work. When looking at her work book, the teacher explained, "We can't mark you on something that hasn't been submitted." There was a time frame within which the student was required to hand in her workbook and that deadline had already passed.
The student sullenly passed in the book anyway and the teacher, trying to give the girl every chance to succeed, said she would evaluate what was there. The teacher continued:

*As I was going through the book, her stress level got to be so high that she was verbally abusive, not only to me but she threatened this young girl [the tutor] and we had to call the police. She was even telling her other teachers that she was going ‘to get’ this girl. We followed it up with police officers because it was really bad.*

When the teacher finally gave the student her mark she explained that because of her threatening verbal behaviour both to her and to Angela (the tutor) she was severing both relationships and she would not receive any more tutoring in Mathematics. The girl interrupted her saying. "I can speak to Angela any way I want to!" The teacher very calmly replied:

"*Well, you may think that you can, but I’m not happy with the situation and what happens is my decision. We agreed and you contracted with us to get help in Math because you couldn’t get help anywhere else. We did not contract for abuse." You could see her eyes widen and you could see that she was very much affected because she and I got along very well, which was why she sought me out to help her in Math. Now the responsibility was hers to make other arrangements. The situation was back in her lap.*"

The teacher told me that this girl has been getting away with this kind of behaviour at home. Her father is feeling guilty because he was separated and divorced earlier and didn’t pay much attention to his daughter for many years. "Now that he’s re-married he took her on, but she’s been raking everybody over the coals because she felt she’s been badly done by." The teacher went on:

*My impression is that here is a really, really bright girl, capable of completing university, trying to make a decision whether she’s going to go down the gang leader path. She is gang leader. She’ll get people to vandalize teachers’ cars. She had a run-in with the vice principal and he knows for a fact that she had a friend take a key and run it down his brand new car. When I finished this assistance with her, I had cigarettes butted on top of
my car. She's a dangerous, dangerous person who works very surreptitiously in amongst the students. She has that kind of potential to be a criminal mind, in my opinion. She was doing things, the body-piercing, the pink hair. Now I notice since Christmas, her hair is back being properly clipped and the right colour, her colour, she's taken the ring out of her nose and out of her lip and she seems to be trying harder.

The teacher also mentioned that the girl "hasn't been flooring anybody or slamming doors lately. Her misbehaviour hasn't been as overt." The teacher refused to speculate whether calling her on her poor behaviour had anything to do with the positive change in the girl's behaviour. Other teachers have picked up the slack and the girl's course relationships appear to be going well. The teacher does add that if the student approached her maturely, indicating that she "had messed up" and asked for help, she would assist her again. "I really go out of my way for kids and that's why she came to me in the first place. She wants the fruits of whatever, but she doesn't want to work for them." The issue of girls being grudge-holders surfaced as part of this incident. The teacher declared that this type of nasty behaviour from girls, peppered with plenty of verbal abuse, is definitely escalating.

The rural teacher/participants of this study likewise view verbal violence as an on-going, thorny problem. A teacher of French in the rural setting related an incident of misbehaviour that was apparently incited by verbal goading:

*It was a difficult class, one of those classes that I felt I couldn't do anything unusual because they always reacted in some really strange way. They would get kind of hyper and I'd have to calm them down, get control, that kind of thing. One day we were having a seminar and we were sitting in circle and the best student in the class was doing her 'thing.' All of a sudden this gentleman, and I use the term loosely, and this happens in a split second, turns his butt to the class and drops his trousers, moons the class, and sits down! Well of course things are dead, nobody seemed to react. I threw my pencil down and said something like "I can't believe this" and sent Peter to the office. The outcome of*
the incident... another girl had mouthed the words "Kiss my ass" at him in response to something, and I hadn't picked it up.

Since this incident occurred during the tenure of another vice principal several years ago, the teacher felt comfortable describing it to me and voicing her criticism. She found that particular administration to be weak, indecisive, and ineffective, but ultimately, the student received a suspension when she, the teacher, insisted. After the expiration of the suspension, the student returned in tears with his Mother, who suggested that her son's behaviour was "not the most terrible thing that could happen." For her part, the teacher vehemently declared both to parent and student that one more incident would mean expulsion from her class. It is her contention that when administrations are wishy-washy, that students are aware and will 'push the envelope' a little farther.

A teacher of Mathematics in the rural setting, transferred from Physical Education, had several examples to share regarding insensitivity for others:

_I remember kids in Phys. Ed. class arguing and fighting over whether a kid was good enough, or saying "You made a stupid pass." Or a kid may be overweight and someone may not want him on their team because he's "Too fat." All this kind of stuff goes on. Then, the poor kid finally snaps and you've got a situation on your hands._

He continued with an example of remarks made by a student the sole purpose of which seemed to be the initiating of trouble:

_A lot of stuff just sort of pops up, for example, a kid comes in late and someone will voice "Oh, you're late," and get their goat right away. Kids like to push buttons and get each other's goat. Someone will be walking by someone in the caf (cafeteria) and see someone listening to something and another will say "Turn that shit down!" Another thing I'll notice is that the kids will attack someone verbally for their hair colour, their hairstyle, the clothing they wear, for example, wearing a Toronto Maple Leaf hat, someone may say_
"Leafs' suck!"

According to the study participants in the rural setting, this type of verbal harassment is so prevalent and commonplace that even the teachers themselves have been subject to it. Often they have to stop classes and conduct mini life-lessons on the nature of appropriate interpersonal behaviour. Here is one recounted example:

I'm a big Montreal Canadiens fan. My wife and my kids will buy me Montreal Canadiens stuff for my birthday and someone will say "Canadiens suck." And I'll say "Excuse me?" They want the response "Uh, oh you suck" and then the whole thing will blow up. So I have to stop and say "I wear this because it's a gift and my family knows how much it means to me and secondly I'm just expressing what I like... If you wear a certain style of shirt or you wear a 'happy face' or a Nirvana shirt, it's not an invitation to say "Nirvana sucks. I like Nirvana and I'm expressing what I like. If you like it too, that's okay, but if you don't, it's not an invitation for you to put me down..."

These social etiquette lessons, although at the secondary school level, still seem to involve teaching the most fundamental of interpersonal life skills. A Family Studies teacher, who has also been subjected to verbal harassment, declared, "I won't let someone call me a bitch. One student did and immediately I went to the vice principal. I was outraged and won't put up with that."

A teacher of Mathematics at Woodview describes what he calls a "trash-talking mentality" between boys and girls.

There's definitely this male-female... with verbal abuse of the female. But it's almost as if the girls like it because it's attention, it's a sign of status. It's beyond immaturity, it's become a way of life in the sense that it's the person they develop into.

When asked about bullying and threatening using verbal harassment as the weapon, a Special Education teacher in the rural setting, replied, "I, we, uh I don't think of that [verbal harassment]
as violence, yet it certainly is. It's too bad, but violence other than the physical, we accept that more." She picked up the thread of her remarks, disclosing an incident of verbal violence, specifically name-calling, that was apparently racially motivated.

_We had a wonderful boy in our class. He was of Greek heritage and he was the most prejudiced character in the school. They had lived in Brampton. The family had moved up here to get away from others. Well, the others were East Indian. "We don't like them, they smell, they make fun of us. We don't want to have anything to do with them." And so every chance they got, it was "Paki this and Paki that." There are a few East Indian boys and a couple who wear the turban. One day there was this great commotion and the Greek boy was having a fit. What had happened was one of these boys wearing the turban had walked down the hall. Then Anthony [the Greek boy] and this other kid who was kind of sucked into this [he wasn't really the perpetrator, they were drawing things on other people's paper], well it was turbans they were drawing. So we nicely began to confront this saying 'This is another person, just the same as you etc. etc.' We had a couple of sort of friendly conversations but then the resource teacher in the Science class and in Special Ed. class said it continued. It wasn't stopping! They were drawing the pictures and when the Special Ed. teacher did [taught] immigration, if an Indian person was shown there was great laughter and comments 'They are Paki,' although it kind of cooled itself for awhile. One day the teacher was doing stuff on immigration. He asked them to do an exercise whereby he had the criteria of how many points you need to get into the country, to be a person [trying] to get into Canada. He wanted the kids to play themselves and to see if they were looking to come into the country to see if they would be accepted. It was a really good exercise. Of course the kids had trouble understanding it. They thought he wanted them to play somebody coming in. A third boy, my friend Anthony, and another who is always stirring things up said "Oh, you want me to pretend I'm a Paki." And of course there was great laughter. At this point I thought _enough_. I brought the three of them down here. The deal was with the father [Anthony's], if there was another incident

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56 Although this teacher immediately qualified her remark, her statement may suggest that even though many understand and know that the scope of violence reaches far beyond the physical, the teachings and beliefs ingrained from long ago which associate violence only with the physical, have not yet been completely up-dated in their consciousness.

57 Said with sarcasm, the word 'wonderful' here meant exactly the opposite.
we were to 'phone home. So fine. I 'phoned the one innocent, well comparatively I guess, boy's home. It was really interesting. The mother was quite annoyed with me and the father came into the school to complain about me. So the ante kept going up until we went to the VP and she contacted home.

The teacher continued to recount the incident, explaining that she soon experienced first-hand how the seeds of this kind of racial discrimination are sowed at home and firmly take root in the off-spring. When she talked to the parents, after having little success at school stopping the boy's racial slurs, a possible reason for the boys' remarks became clear.

I 'phoned the third boy's home. It was really interesting. The mother was quite annoyed with me and the father came into the school to complain about me to the principal for daring to phone home and bother his wife about "A piddly matter." When I had said to the mother "Oh your son has used the word Paki." She said "Well? What else would he use?" And I had said "You don't refer to them by that, it's a slang term and it's prejudiced." She said, "Oh, that's what we refer to them at home all the time. He wouldn't know any other word." So it's not what they're learning here, it's what's going on at home. That kid could not understand what the problem was. He couldn't understand it! Oh well, then we let him off because he was playing innocent, or he was innocent, but then, when Anthony's father came, we met in the back room and he came storming into the room. He was going to tear our heads off. How dare I? He'd come to this country and he worked hard, and these people weren't doing anything and he'd moved here to get away from them and his son could call them whatever he wanted. So we said "You should understand this better than anyone." He went on about people making fun of him when he came here, so we said, "Exactly, then you should understand what we're getting at. You should understand how this boy feels when he walks down the hall and your son calls him a Paki."

The teacher was unclear whether any of the parents actually "got the message" the rural school was trying to instil. Anthony's father did apparently "cool his heels" and said he understood. The school, however, decided also to deal directly with Anthony, the instigator, who was told,

"We're not trying to change your values, but you can't come to school and do that (make
racial slurs). You do whatever you want at home but not here." The Greek boy knew it was on the line, that if he did it again he would be sent home. There were a few times that you could see him holding himself. But it was near the end of the year.

What seems rather curious about this whole incident, is that although the teen was told to discontinue the racial slurs, the reasons 'why' were not really delineated for him as the vice-principal had tried to do with the parents. The school may have thought that he understood the racial violence he was committing. By way of a brief critique, considering his background and the admission from the parent that he "didn't know any different," perhaps analogies could have been made and a teaching situation set up to promote understanding, to correct misconceptions, and to teach acceptable interpersonal and interracial skills.

The teacher of Family Studies also in the rural school sees the old male/female stereotypical prejudices rear their ugly heads in her food preparation classes in the form of verbal skirmishes and put-downs, abuses that are gender-rooted. "With gender abuse... I see it happening... they (the boys) will fit them (the girls) into categories. 'Like you're the girl, you wash the dishes. You're supposed to wash the dishes, that’s woman’s work'." Although she insisted that the general level girls will readily accept this sexist behaviour, the advanced level girls are affronted and will not. They immediately and vociferously put up a challenge with their own gender-based response. "I'm not doing that, stop being a jock!" And they raise their voice to get their point across. "If you don't vocalize, you're not going to get the message across. I think the guys keep pushing until someone says 'No'.'"

A teacher of senior Mathematics in the rural setting indicated that verbal aggression/abuse has many tentacles. He sees it as a tool of threat and intimidation, a method of initiating social
hierarchy among students through sheer physical size and strength. He cited an incident that occurred right at the beginning of the school year.

It was in a general level class, where, on the first day of class, I tell them, "Tomorrow when you come in, you can choose your seat and first come, first serve." So, second day of class, in walks this littler fellow on the lefthand side of the classroom. Near the back, walking into the class a little later is a bigger guy who wants that seat and says to Derek, "Get outta that seat." Derek packed up and moved. I call this intimidation, which I don't like.

The Senior Mathematics teacher, wondering about the nature of the persistent perpetrators of verbal and emotional abuse, had an interesting perspective on, and question about, the phenomenon of verbal revilement.

Verbal and emotional abuse... I don't know whether these can erupt into the physical. Maybe some feel that if they can get someone with their tongue they wouldn't think of hitting somebody, maybe that's why they think it's all right. Is verbal abuse progressive? Maybe these people don't realize how cruel they are being!

It is intriguing that only one teacher voiced this query. Most of the other teachers seemed convinced that students know exactly what they are saying during these verbal skirmishes and that often the intention is to be hurtful or inflammatory.

Aggressive verbal encounters with underlying malevolence, many claim, is typical and prevalent among and between the genders. A Special Education teacher in the rural setting recounted this example of female confrontational verbalizing saying, "Girls can be almost more vicious than boys. The name-calling and ganging up and 'I'm going to get you after school.'"

When asked what kinds of issues these exchanges were usually about, she replied "Boys, almost

58 Verbal abuse and intimidation by girls was also mentioned as prevalent in the urban school setting.
always boys." She went on to give an account of what is seen, by many educators in both school settings, to be a fairly recent, but alarming trend: verbal harassment leading to physical assault.59

She contends that female-to-female assault and intimidation typically has a much longer period of malignancy before it dissipates than the male-to-male variety. She warrants that female verbal abuse, once begun, frequently deteriorates into vicious physical assault.

Girls have really come into their own in fighting. That's a real problem, a very big problem in school. It starts with name-calling. "You slept with him, you f--ked him, you're a bitch, you sleep with everybody in town." This kind of stuff is how it starts. Girls never used to fight. If girls fought, it was a real event. More fights now are with grade nine girls. Your friends get together and my friends get together, and we meet in the parking lot after school and we beat the sod out of each other. And then it becomes very intimidating. With boys, if there is a fight it's usually over, then and there, but with girls it's not over nearly as fast. With girls, whoever loses is really afraid to come to school because of that kind of thing, because they are afraid they will get jumped. One girl even ended the whole semester at home, wouldn't come to school, and it was [because of] a fight over a boy. She was on home instruction for the rest of the semester. She had a mother who really pushed and said "My daughter does not see school as a safe place and she insists she have home instruction." She came back the next semester and everything was okay. That's girls though!

The teacher appears to be suggesting that girls, once their emotions are negatively evoked, tend to hold a grudge longer and also that their sustained animosity toward their antagonist is of a much more malevolent and visceral nature than that which is usual with boys. But her final remark, "That's girls though," seems to indicate her tempered acceptance of this behaviour. Some may find such an attitude troubling.

Much criticism was levelled at the vast explosion of the media and the ubiquitous presence of

television for what many see as a deviant and skewed portrayal of the human condition. There is
tremendous peer pressure on all teens, and girls certainly have their share. From how they should
dress to the nearly impossibly slender body required by fashion magazines and their peers, girls' competition for male attention has become a serious all-consuming issue. A grade nine
Mathematics teacher from the rural setting recounted this incident between two girls:

*With kids here, what causes spats, especially what will make girls fight, is rumours. Kids freak out over here about insane rumours. It just blows me away. Bizarre stuff, "Did you hear, Karen's sleeping with a goat!" You go off and tell someone else. It will finally get back and blown way out of proportion. Even I remember this one. For example, I might come up and pinch your bottom, your boyfriend finds out, he comes to beat me up and my friend steps in and says "Over my dead body!" Your boyfriend gets a broken wrist and this kid gets a broken nose and I've pinched bottom and I'm fine. Honest to God that happened, all over a pinched bottom! I've had kids almost go into fisticuffs — "She looked at me, but it's the way she looked at me!" I sometimes say to the kids "I call it a Beverley Hills 90210 $17^2$ to 14th power or whatever that show is called, mentality." Now maybe this is wrong but if they see kids hopping bed to bed to bed ... somebody says something, it gets blown out of proportion, he beats up her, dumps her...whatever... if they see that... if they see this on TV or some other way, and they haven't talked it out with somebody who has, I hate to say this, experienced this and says, "This is crap, this isn't the way it should be," then the only example or role model is what they see on TV or in a movie theatre.*

Sometimes, according to another teacher in the rural school, girls will just verbally needle one another with no apparent motivation, maybe through boredom or just because they know they can get someone else riled up:

*These three young ladies, sitting in divergent corners of the classroom, they just picked up on each other and fed off each other, were verbally making comments and disrupting the class, on an on-going basis, and the rest of the class was getting pumped up.*

The verbal bedevilment apparently spills over into relationships between the sexes too.
Although the most common kind of boy/girl altercation involves what one rural setting teacher refers to as "verbal sass," he recalls an incident where the verbal berating resulted in physical fighting between boyfriend and girlfriend.

*He slapped her, [there was] lots of yelling in the hall, he slapped her again, and she screamed at him and slapped him back. The term "Slut" was used quite often in the conversation. It was after class so the hall was cleared out. There was myself and another teacher across the hall involved in it. Because he [the boy] was the one going at it, we separated them. Mark was just yelling. He was really mad. He had a history of physical violence. He gets mad and strikes out. The unfortunate part is, this girl and him had broken up a number of times and gotten back together. In this instance they had broken up, [because] he had seen her with another guy and that's what this issue was.*

It is interesting that the teacher broke the interchange up because it was the boy "going at it." One wonders if he would have as readily broken up the fight if the girl had been overpowering the boy rather than vice versa? The idea of boys beating up girls as the only scenario seems to spill out occasionally, indicating a still strong adherence by teachers to the traditional and stereotypical—that boys are still the only real physical aggressors and that girls need to be protected from them.

A teacher of grade nine in the rural setting had a somewhat philosophical attitude to swearing, characterizing it as an abuse of the language. He has a different outlook about profanity, the so-called shock words.

*The swearing and the 'f---' word, well they just don't want to use the energy to select a more articulate word. I don't really think they mean it in most cases. It's just to offend. Sometimes I'll throw it back at them and they'll be shocked or act it. I'll say, "Well, look, if you're going to say it to me, then I'm going to say it to you!" Whatever kids give to me, I chuck right back in their face. "Do you like it?" I say. "No!" "Then don't say it to me!"*

According to this teacher, there appears to be somewhat of a double standard here in that students
are manifestly chagrined when teachers use harsh street language, but cannot comprehend why similar language is likewise inappropriate for their own use.

The role of the verbal as a tool of abuse toward others is said to be gaining momentum and scope. A Special Education teacher in the rural setting confirms that verbal intimidation, insinuating the threat of physical abuse, is rampant, even to the point of extorting money from fellow students. "Oh, yeah, you see that in the cafeteria. Kids will wait at the end of the line and say, 'Give me some money and I'll pay you back.' And they pay up because they don't want to be beat up." The teacher added that of course the perpetrator and the victim both understand that the money will never be repaid.

A Food Services teacher, about swearing and verbal hassling between and among the sexes, does not see it necessarily as violent. As she says:

Well, swearing, no, because it's so common. I just say 'No, I don't need to hear that. Try to find other words.' And pretty much they will do that. When you [they] are working in the kitchen and touch something hot, you'll often hear the 'F---' word or 'shit'.

Seemingly, the intent, as perceived by the teacher, has much to do with whether an exchange will be labelled as violent or non-violent. She also related this incident which she does classify as violent, an occasion which was precipitated by a heated verbal exchange that rapidly deteriorated into violent physical contact.

There was an incident last year where there was some pushing. One young man was in grade 10 and the other young man was graduating. They are in the same class [Food Studies]. The kitchen areas are just so close. The young man was giving the older man verbal insults, so the older man had just had enough and physically threw him on top of the counter.

A teacher of French indicated that abusive language among and between boys and girls is
rampant. She claimed that in one day it is not uncommon to hear "ass-hole" shouted 20 times, and other words "20 times worse than that," as well as girls using the term "bitch" constantly.

She declared that:

*Girls are becoming much more aggressive. I'm not sure why, but I see it in my own daughter who is 14 and phoning and asking a guy over. We would never have done that, never! There's nothing maybe wrong with it but it's a different ball-game now. I think maybe they've been taught in elementary school to stick up for themselves. They know their rights. For example, they'll often say 'You can't tell me to do that. I'll get my lawyer. You can't make me stay after school.' And even my own daughter will say 'You can't make me come home at that time, I'll come home when I want to.' So they've been told a point past which you cannot step. It's different now, really different, very different.*

The senior level Mathematics teacher contends that he, too, sees much more physical aggression between females.

*I see much more aggression, girls chasing other girls home in a gang to beat one up. I see more of that. I was never aware of it happening 20 years ago. I'm much more aware of it now when I see violence between girls. Now girls are fighting in the halls. Maybe this is part of equality, I don't know.*

When asked what he thinks might be behind this apparent increase in physical aggression, he replied:

*A combination of things—difculties at home and so on. There's smoldering anger ready to go off. We aren't privy to a lot that goes on, except when we try to call home. A lot of it has to come from the home. I see them for 76 minutes a day. That may be more than they see mom and dad. It may be more or a lot less. I do know mom and dad have a lot more years to influence them than we do... Often you call home and can't reach them. The kids answer and say mom and dad aren't home.*

These teachers portray verbal abuse as frequently escalating into full-blown physical violence like gang beatings, and even, as in this case, among girls. Again the issue of parents having very
long workdays appears to have a deleterious effect on student behaviour, with girls being especially affected.

Teachers of both settings are worried that girl-to-girl violence has quietly reached near epidemic proportions in this rural setting and to a somewhat lesser degree in the urban. One Woodview teacher spoke about a particularly volatile and troubling incident.

*This girl had annoyed one of her friends and they sent this other girl, almost like a hired gun, to straighten her out. She just walked up and started to beat the tar out this other girl. When I got there, there was actually one other teacher standing between the girl being beaten, who was our student, and this aggressor. She had obviously hit the other girl who was on the floor and in tears. I intervened to get the aggressor out of there. I just said that the police had been called even though I didn’t know whether they had been or not. I said "What’s your name, we’re going to the office." She responded, "F--- off! I don’t go to this school anyway. I’m going." I was aware that I couldn’t grab her and restrain her. There was no percentage in doing that, so it was just a case of walking and talking and saying "You’re making a wrong move here. They’re going to find you eventually, so why not make it easy on yourself?" I think she was wavering ‘the should I, or shouldn’t I’ but then said, "No one knows who I am." And she disappeared. We gave the police a description, and within a week, in a small town like this, the police had her, even with information from other students. She was charged with assault, it was a police matter.*

Again there appears to be ample evidence that many young people, to a greater extent in the rural school, often have difficulty mastering the art of self-control and self-discipline. The initial manifestation of this inability to maintain personal control and mental discipline over one’s own demons often seems to be exemplified first by aggressive verbal harassment directed towards others.

**Self Abuse**

Among the rapidly-growing and special types of aberrant behaviour included by the teachers
under the rubric violence is that which is turned inward as mistreatment of one's own body. One

Mathematics teacher in the rural setting dealing with anorexic teens states that

The role models are there from the teachers and that means they have to do this, and this, and this—but hey, that could take a long time, and [they think], "if I lose weight quickly and dress like a tramp I've got friends, or if I do drugs I've got friends." Kids want immediate gratification—they're not looking at the big picture. Kids are looking ten minutes ahead if you're lucky.

Another teacher, head of Special Education, declares:

Of the grade nine kids, I'll bet more than 50 percent have tried drugs. That's what's so upsetting to me. When you try to do anything with drug prevention or try to help them out, it's "What's your problem lady? We do this. You don't go out and not have glass of wine, so we don't go out and not have what we want." The kids, by and large, find it part of their lifestyle. Some of them just handle it better than others. They don't go anywhere to party unless there are no adults. Ever since high school [started], by and large, there's never a parent [at parties].

This teacher's own 16 year-old daughter is one of those attending un-chaperoned parties and she admits that:

Since grade nine I can be sure that every party she goes to has plenty of drugs and booze available. I don't think her friends have a horrible problem with it and most of her friends are from pretty ordinary families. I hope and pray she doesn't do drugs. I know she drinks and has done since grade nine. She doesn't get drunk. I can smell it when I pick them up to drive them home. If the kids want it, it's there.

She appears to envision today's teens as different than the teens of her day. Unlike other teachers at her school, most notably the Mathematics teacher, this teacher/parent appears to accept the view that drinking is "a lifestyle choice," not an abuse. This may not be the whole story, however, when she, by way of further explanation, states "So where's the threat? So you get to stay away from school. Is that a threat?" She continues:
She's [her daughter] been doing that [going to un-chaperoned parties], and here I am her mother vowing it would never happen, but she's been doing it since grade nine and she's in grade twelve now. We talk. We've got a good thing going. What can you do short of barring the bedroom door which leads to nothing. She has to make those choices.

Another teacher, formerly of Physical Education who now teaches general level Mathematics, believes that part of the problem concerns the incredibly low self-esteem that is epidemic among most teens today:

I won't even let kids put themselves down. It's as if they're abusing themselves before someone else can, and I'm not comfortable with that. Self abuse can show up through not caring about personal hygiene, not caring about their academics. Unfortunately, kids look at their lives and their academics as disposable. They see how easily they can throw a candy wrapper or a chip bag out and how quickly a father can walk out on a family.

One teacher stated that smoking and street drugs are rampant in this rural school of Woodview:

The no-smoking policy came along, and we offered help to stop smoking. You can no longer smoke on school property. Same goes for staff. If they're smoking in their car they are gone for the day. So now kids smoke on the sidewalk, along the side of the road— it's a mess. You get 300 or 400 kids out front and it's a mess, but they're off school property. Drugs, they go over to the arena. This is the front-line for drugs to other towns. Highway # – [the main street] is the main conduit to northern Ontario. Drugs are a big problem. Marijuana is prevalent, very free and easy to get. Have you seen those tattoos? You can't identify it as drugs because it looks like stickers or something, so it's now the drug of choice. The kids lick them and it's impregnated with acid or something. My sense is that drinking is even more of a problem because it is freely and more easily accessible. Mom and Dad not home so "Let's go home for a liquid lunch."

The urban setting school also has had some limited troubles with marijuana and alcohol. The Resource teacher indicated that the drug problem was not widespread, "Well, it's not a huge problem. There is access [to drugs] if you go digging. We have had kids come to school high on
marijuana and drink." She immediately began to speak about procedures:

_The procedure is very clear. The kid stays healthy. There will always be health aspects first. You make sure if the kid needs a hospital or whatever. That is always first. Then, you deal with consequences, which is usually suspension for such an infraction._

A Special Education teacher from the urban setting stated that female students can be manipulative especially when they are on drugs:

_There's a core of manipulation and females are survivors in difficult times. Some of these females really hold their families at ransom. It's quite amazing. "You're not going to tell me what to do." And they're into games and some are doing very unusual things. They're into drugs and one girl came in one day and was really scared saying a guy came around with a knife and was going to kill her and she jumped out this window. They're in vacant buildings and doing weird things._

The alcohol problem quite literally spills over into the school and classroom. A Mathematics teacher in the rural setting related this:

_I saw a kid sharing his water bottle with another boy. I was talking to this kid and I could smell it [alcohol] on his breath, so I hauled him out of class and said, "You've been drinking!" And immediately he responded, "It wasn't me, it wasn't me. Josh gave me the water bottle." Now of course while I'm talking to Sam, it's clicking with Josh that 'uh-oh it must be the water bottle.' So he downed the whole thing and it's mixed strong, not like a shot or so, maybe 50/50. He downed it all so there wouldn't be any left. So now, how long is it going to take for this to kick in. I sent him and the bottle to vice principal in the office. In several minutes they call and he hasn't arrived. Soon a knocking at the door, Josh says, "I'm sorry I didn't go to the office but I wasn't feeling very well." Of course he'd been in the loo [washroom] up-chucking. Alcohol is definitely a problem. Whoever threw up on mom and dad's couch on the weekend is the hero of the moment._

Once again, it seems the issue of being the star of the group, initiated by peer pressure, is what inspires certain teens to try things that by themselves they normally might not have attempted.
Predictably, the results were not very pleasant physically and the student frequently showed remorse for acting unsuitably.

**Physical Assault**

It is extremely difficult to subdivide aberrant behaviour into categories like verbal abuse, physical violence and so on, because, in many ways, they are linked and intertwined in paths so complex that they are nearly impossible to separate into constituent parts. There does appear to be one area of violence that merits special mention. Rural setting teachers of this study are citing examples of seemingly unprovoked incidences of physical assault. A senior level teacher at Woodview recounted this incident:

*I can think of this one fellow, Justin, a pleasant enough kid, always in trouble for something but just a happy-go-lucky type of guy. I came in one day and his face was all messed up. I said, "What happened to you?" "Oh some guy jumped me." "Who jumped you?" "I dunno, never seen him before in my life." "Where did this happen?" "Over by the fire station. I was just walking along and he jumped me." Of course, you never know if there's more to the story or what else happened, but he was really messed up. Apparently this guy had rubbed his face into the sidewalk. I find it hard to believe that a guy just comes up to you out of nowhere. I know Justin's mouth can get him in trouble, but he insisted he didn't know who the guy was.*

This could perhaps have been another example similar to that mentioned earlier whereby a so-called ‘independent’ or ‘hired gun’ is sought for retaliatory purposes. This type of behaviour, if it is in reality as portrayed, is particularly intimidating and frightening for students because they never know when something said, whether purposefully hurtful or not, will result in

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60 Teachers suspect that some of these incidences may not be unprovoked but can uncover no information suggesting otherwise and, therefore, are left with only their suspicions that all may not be as it is reported.
retaliatory and pre-meditated physical assault. Consequently, since neither the perpetrator nor victim appears to know one another, the possibility for mistaken identity is always a concern.

The possibility that many teens are living their lives in terror, fearing calculated well-planned gang-like reprisals, seems particularly reprehensible.

The particular urban setting of this study does not appear to have this sort of singular behaviour, rather the issue of "gangs for protection from gangs from other schools" is much more of a problem according to one teacher. This seems logical since, in rural areas, the distance between secondary school would necessarily be much greater than that in urban areas.

Additionally, that this school is Catholic may have some influence on student behaviour. For example, students are required to wear uniforms and to attend Roman Catholic religious instruction classes. To what extent the Catholic aspect influences behaviour may be difficult to ascertain, but some have suggested that when students dress alike, the peer pressure and competition that students endure about wearing ‘in’ clothes, may be somewhat alleviated. Similarly, religious instruction may address, directly or indirectly, problem areas in students’ lives, providing a forum for discussion. I mention the Catholic aspect here as a possible influence that the reader might consider.

From the urban setting came a story about physical abuse by a male student on a female student:

*We had a case several years ago of a guy who used to beat up his girlfriend and a lot of students knew about it. It was murder trying to get her to come along and let us know what happened. The other kids would tell you but we were trying to get it firsthand because you’re dealing with a lot of hearsay. The English teacher started telling the kids, "I’ve got a play for you. It’s a play in two lines. It’s called LOVE." He, "I love you so much I have to hit you." She, "I love you so much I have to let you." The End. The kids*
would just stop. He asked them, "What do you think of that?" And they'd say "It sounds really dumb."

Unfortunately, the staff never did get the response they were hoping to get from the girl in question. Finally her parents were called and alerted that abusive behaviour may be taking place. She was living with an older sister and her parents were in Barrie, a smaller city two hours north. The parents removed her from the scene by taking her to Barrie to split them up. In the end the boy was suspended several times.

From the urban setting, a Special Education teacher recounted these incidents which involved physical harm related to gang behaviour;

Over here, there have been a few cars that have made it over the bluffs and one guy didn't make it out of the car, playing chicken. This is what the groups and gangs do. We have had gang warfare going on in the neighbourhood and we've had one boy at lunchtime stabbed six times. It was about a year and a half ago, but he survived. His girlfriend got her hands all cut up from trying to protect him from the knife.

She was quick to note that the boy was South American, not African American. She made this clear because, in her opinion, as soon as you speak of gang warfare people think it must be connected to the Black community. She spoke of another stabbing of a South American boy:

It was seven times around the heart apparently. He survived. The people who attacked him were big-time serious about it though. Kids don't talk. They won't tell you what the real reasons are. But sometimes there is an undercurrent of what's going on... there's an awful lot of girls that are involved in fighting with other girls over boyfriends.

According to many of the teachers interviewed, the increase in the incidence of girls fighting each other over boyfriends, both in urban and rural schools, is a troubling trend.
Discussion

Teachers of both Bishop’s Gate Secondary School and Woodview District Secondary School agree that verbal abuse, whether characterized as inappropriate use of the language, as ‘cool’ adjectives of communication employed merely to converse, or used to incite, goad, and/or hurt another, continues to be prevalent among teens as an integral part of their teen communication system.

Excessive and confrontational verbalization likewise seems to be a common initial response by youth in situations where the incident has as escalating violent potential. An off-hand remark or even a glance can precipitate a stream of vitriolic verbal abuse. Often it is a seriously intended verbal attack, yet at other times it is meant as joking. Swearing and profanity, even in non-confrontational conversation, generally is the "in" thing with youth and their peers. Teens generally are very dramatic in their language and actions. As one Woodview teacher said, "Everything is always such a big deal." Many would agree that the teenage years do tend to magnify every little nuance of life. One acne pimple can be conversation fodder for hours, it seems. Therefore it seems safe to say, that although their language seems radical, improper, and in extreme poor taste to adults, it may perhaps be little more than the over-dramatization that so often characterizes these years of puberty. The complication comes when teachers, who are of a different generation from their students, have to assess this behaviour contextually, the import of the circumstance, the language, the intent of the verbalization, and even the manner in which it is accepted by the recipient. There will, of course, be occurrences when the deciphering process may be relatively clear-cut, but in many more instances, the event will be widely open to contextual interpretation. As the head of Peer Counselling at Bishop’s Gate remarked, "Much is
heterosexual play, neither intended seriously, nor taken seriously." This is not always the case, as many students, teachers claim, are ready and, apparently, willing to trample on another’s ego. For example, they will shout, "turn that shit down" when they hear music they don’t like, or, when playing football, one verbally assailed another shouting, "You’re too fat," and "You made a stupid pass."

Neither are teachers exempt from experiencing nasty, truculent remarks targeted at them. As my research attests, even female teachers have been called "bitch" and told to "F— off." Regrettably, these offensive epithets are not an uncommon occurrence. Thus, verbalization is another predicament of contemporary education that teachers are finding increasingly challenging to identify, and de-mystify using their judgement as best they can.

What is new about these certain words that some claim to find offensive, however, is that one of the teachers on the receiving end of these denigrating remarks is returning the ‘favour’ and vocalizing the same words back to students, a practice almost unheard of just a few years ago. It is intriguing that the students often seem quite affronted by this new "in-your-face" practice by teachers, but it does serve to arrest their attention. An English teacher at Bishop’s Gate informed me that one student became very indignant, "You can’t say that to me. I’m going to the principal to tell him what you said." The youth seemed not to realize initially that it was his own similar rudeness that prompted the teacher’s response. This kind of repudiation by teachers may render the desired result for now when students are shocked by hearing words from teachers that they

61 This practice is condoned neither by the teachers themselves nor the administration, thus its use may suggest that teachers are becoming fed up with what they feel is insolent and abusive language, and are at their wit’s end trying to truncate this ubiquitous behaviour.
heretofore never expected to hear. However, there is the potential, at least, for these verbal exchanges between students and teachers to rage out of control. Teachers of both settings routinely use these occasions, and others similar, as ‘teaching moments’ for open discussions with students concerning the merits of exhibiting verbal respect for each other and the need to follow the "do unto others" Golden Rule. Teachers generally feel that these on-going verbally combative exchanges set up tensions whereby the culture of the entire school is negatively affected. The atmosphere remains at fever pitch whereby any additional remarks can potentially flare situations completely out of control. Astonishingly, students often claim they do not realize their remarks are being offensive and could potentiate trouble.62

Many teachers articulate a growing sense that, in their minds at least, a student’s "fight or flight" flash point is closer to the surface than ever before. Frequently, when students are chastised for unsuitable behaviour their responses appear totally irrational and out-of-control. When, as related earlier, one student was sent out of class to the vice principal for telling a teacher "F--- you," the student reiterated the epithet several times shouting it at another teacher/counsellor who was in the hall and had decided to assist in mediating the incident. On the face of it, such a behaviour pattern seems illogical and perhaps malevolent, but can be, as the research demonstrates, an emotional plea for help.

A teacher/participant of Bishop’s Gate was proud to say that he believes the students in his

62 In and of itself, the sincerity of this statement is difficult to gauge. Students may indeed not realize how offensive they are being or they may be cleverly saying the appropriate words to get themselves out of a problem situation with their teacher. If we give them the benefit of the doubt, then perhaps there are many other behaviours which we, as adults, view as inappropriate, but which are considered acceptable behaviour among youth. Again, value and context are core.
school feel safe enough to "act out." When students misbehave, teachers and counsellors have an opportunity to discover any underlying problems that may have precipitated the "acting out." The female student at Bishop's Gate, who threatened her peer tutor, had evidently been a child victim of her parent's apparently nasty divorce. She was, perhaps, still angry and emotionally insecure, so she acted out at home and at school to see how far she could push and punish everyone because she felt she had been treated unfairly.

The head of the Peer Counselling program at Bishop's Gate, who characterized verbal harassment as a judgement call by the teacher, wondered aloud, "How much of it (verbal violence) is inferred and how much of it is real?" He has articulated what I would argue is the fundamental complication inherent for teachers assessing verbalization: interpretation and contextualization. What may strike one person as verbal abuse and therefore unacceptable, may seem to another as little more than acceptable social interplay. The interpretation can depend on many things: the value baggage the teacher him/herself brings to the occasion, the students involved, the nature of the incident in question, the culture of the community, and even, how s/he is feeling about life and his/her place in the world at that moment in time. For example, if the unacceptable behaviour is perpetrated by a student who is rarely, if ever, in trouble, the teacher may treat that student less harshly than someone who is always requiring castigation and remediation. Similarly, at the end of a seemingly long and stressful day or week, a distraught teacher may be less tolerant than when under the influence of calmer, less emotional and less stressful conditions. School communities that are concerned about the extreme behaviour of their students and which also have had a recent rash of violent incidents may not be as tolerant as another, quieter setting. Alternatively, one setting may be quieter than another because the school
community is not tolerant of these little misdemeanours and may move to truncate them in their early stages. Additionally, there may be complete differences of opinion—some teachers may believe that the shouting of epithets between students is never acceptable and address them accordingly, but others may view these boisterous exchanges as an integral part of being a teen in the 1990s. These are but a few of the myriad influences that can impinge upon how teachers both construct and respond to misbehaviour.

Another disposition that may be gaining popularity, according to several teachers, concerns a practice termed "the hit" wherein one student contracts a "hit" on another as payback for a real or imagined affront. The "hit" commonly involves a severe physical beating with fists, without warning and, in the eyes of the victim, without justification, for they complain that they know neither why have been attacked nor the person who delivered the beating. As one Woodview teacher said, "It's like the Mafia." This practice is especially troubling to some because the perpetration of these acts of violence may have shifted to include a wider venue out of the realm of the local school community, making control more difficult. These "hired guns" are considered extremely dangerous because they will often come brazenly inside the school and proceed to pummel their victim and frightening on-lookers with what is claimed to be unprovoked brutality. These young "gangsters" are ordinarily not known to the teaching staff as they usually attend others schools. Because both teacher and students have generally considered their schools as havens of safety, incidents of this nature can place their comfort levels in jeopardy. No one wants schools to become like armed camps, with teachers and students requiring escorts when arriving or leaving school property.

Girls, as perpetrators of physical violence, are now seemingly as active and as scrappy as
boys. Teachers, remembering that when they went to school girls never fought each other, seem especially disturbed by what they view as an alarming trend towards physical violence between and among girls. Several of the teachers interviewed actually stated that they believe girls and their malevolence can be particularly nasty and sustained. Unlike my 1994 study, which indicated that girls perpetrated physical violence only occasionally, at the present time, fights involving girls are, seemingly, nearly as commonplace as those involving boys.

Teachers of both schools agree that the most contentious issue leading to physical altercations between girls concerns arguments over boyfriends. Girls are becoming serious about defending what they see as their ‘property’ (their boyfriends) from the clutches of other girls. Teachers in both the rural and urban settings said that when boys fight they will, in most cases, stop when a teacher intercedes but girls often will not. The only way is to "strong-arm them" (girls) through separation and even then, after they have been disciplined, they will often find a means to perpetuate the physical altercation outside school grounds. In my earlier study, teachers then indicated that girls as early as grade three were pushing and shoving other girls aside in an attempt to keep certain friends for themselves (Galloway-Rintoul, 1994).

Although teachers insist they will not tolerate misbehaviour, the research seems to show that unsuitable conduct is not necessarily met with nearly as severe a response as it once was. While an observer in one class at Woodview, I noticed a youth arriving just as the bell sounded, signalling the commencement of classes. Negotiating the diagonal of the room by walking on top of the desks from one corner of the room to the other, he was ignored by the teacher who scarcely gave him a glance while she continued her opening remarks to the class. Later, when I queried the teacher about the student’s conduct and her non-response, she calmly stated that, in
her mind, all the teen wanted was attention, so she chose not to acknowledge his misbehaviour. Particularly, I recalled that neither did his peers appear surprised by his actions, the implication possibly being that this was not the first occasion for this nature of behaviour. I am not suggesting that walking atop desks should be considered violent, rather, it is but another indicator that certain kinds of behaviours although still regarded as unacceptable, are now often tolerated by both teachers and students alike. At least one teacher suggested that "You have to know what to make an issue of." It would appear that the level of tolerance has, arguably, expanded somewhat, at least according to the longitudinal information garnered from my two small studies.

In the 1990s, youth are under pressure to be the best, so they can successfully compete for prizes and awards at school, to conform in physical appearance to that considered as "cool" with their peers (and in a myriad of other ways) lest they suffer the ridicule of their friends and censure from their parents. Stories of teenage girls suffering poor health from the effects of anorexia, boys and girls smoking and using drugs such as the new drug of choice, "the tattoo," are not uncommon, at least according to participants in this study. Girls, seeking attention from boys, will often tolerate abusive behaviour by them because they feel the boys find them attractive. One teacher actually referred to this acceptance of male dominance by the girls as becoming a way of life for many, a mindless acceptance he found troubling. This kind of behaviour could possibly be another search for approval from those lacking it in other aspects of their lives, home and/or school.

Another potential difficulty that has proved a challenge in some schools concerns visible minorities and cultural difference. What seems clear from the present research is that, at Bishop's
Gate, the school with a broadly cosmopolitan cultural mix, the incidences of racial discrimination are fewer than at Woodview which is more culturally homogeneous. In the case of Woodview, racially-discriminating views verbalized at home by parents were echoed by their children at school. Strangely enough, according to the teachers, the parents implicated in the discriminating behaviour were themselves discriminated against as a minority culture, an understanding they (the parents) did not consider germane to the present disputation. People expressing such conditioned reflexes may often have difficulty comprehending parallel circumstances, even when they are clearly explicated, as in the case of the Pakistani and Greek families. These Greeks understood the Pakistanis as little more than ethnically peripheral and inferior. Exemplars of bias and discriminating behaviour, evidence of cultural ignorance and part of people’s belief systems, can be very difficult to mitigate in any lasting way.

Teachers of both school settings claim that students either seem incapable of controlling their misbehaviour, or misbehave deliberately because it is "cool" with peers. The youth who dropped his pants and mooned the class in response to a remark from a female student, is, perhaps, a good example. He knows how to conduct himself, but instead went for the ill-conceived shock value, not considering what problems such action would cause.

A Food Services teacher spoke to me briefly about the issue of homophobia. An example came up peripherally while she was showing the class videos of chefs demonstrating cooking, which indicates that the negative stereotype about gays are still perpetuated:

_The kids hate videos and make fun of the chef. They think they are all gay. They won't say that though, it's, "He talks funny. He dresses funny." They will ask if it's Chef Alexander and they will groan and say, "Ugh, him."_
Teacher/participants of both schools did not speak about extensive gay-bashing characterized by the use of derogatory epithets. Only the Food Services teacher mentioned it, indicating, "I just tell them what I want them to get out of the video and go on."

There still is much stereo-typing between the sexes, with both girls and boys hurling sexually-loaded remarks at each other. There are epithets bandied by girls to other girls, but, on the basis of the data in this study, there does not seem to be the same incidence of this type of conduct between boys.
Chapter Six

Violence Management in Schools and Classrooms

Unless, in the judgement of the teacher, an incident is of sufficient magnitude to require the assistance of the administration, it is the task of individual teachers to manage a wide variety of interpersonal collisions and school skirmishes. Consequently, teachers attempt to address incidents of misbehaviour in such a manner that escalation is averted or kept to a minimum so that learning can continue to take place in a safe environment. Strategies for dealing with school violence range from ‘ad hoc’ reactive responses designed to curtail aberrant behaviour already under way, to more complex proactive responses configured to alleviate the incidences of violence before they can begin. I asked both urban and rural teachers (of Bishop’s Gate Secondary School and Woodview District High School respectively) just what strategies they use (a) to manage troublesome situations when they do occur and (b) to prevent violent incidents from arising in the first place. Teachers’ responses were classified into two broad categories: reactive and proactive strategies.

Violence Management Strategies

Reactive Strategies

In reactive situations, many teachers in both settings use multiple and progressive intervention techniques depending on what, in their opinion, is necessary and appropriate to mediate a given incidence or circumstance. My research findings indicate that these reactive strategies, for exposition purposes, may described as measures which are policy-based: continuity of response, threats, and expulsion; pedagogically-based: curricular penalties,
innovative pedagogy, humour, and professionalism; and student-centred: rational intervention, separation, and school databases. Although I have categorized reactive strategies into the three main groups just outlined, they are by no means definitive but rather, very fluid because many aspects of the strategies mesh and intermingle across groups.

**Policy-Based Reactive Strategies**

(1) *Continuity of Response*

Several teachers mentioned the importance of consistency in dealing with inappropriate and disruptive behaviour. Some voiced their belief that the penalty should likewise be appropriate for the nature of the misdeed. A Mathematics teacher at Woodview offered this example:

> I remember a couple of years ago that a teacher buzzed down to the office and said "There's a kid here with a knife." The vice principal had zero reaction. The same day one of my kids called the vice principal a faggot and the guy tried to have the kid expelled. In that case, there was no consistency. Thankfully, all those individuals are now gone from the school.

He continued with another illustration that was potentially more serious:

> I remember the case where a couple of kids dropped LSD [the hallucinogenic agent lysergic acid diethylamide] into a teacher's coffee. The teacher tripped out. She was within two years of retiring and it could have killed her because she had a heart condition and all that. I couldn't believe it. Then, within two days, I had a letter from these kids' attorney [asking] "Would I be a character witness on their behalf?" I think the punishments should be harsh.

(2) *Threats*

The strategy of separation to buy some "cooling off" time, according to the information offered in this study, often seems to include the "threat" of further retaliatory measures for any non-compliance. Such schemes, although, perhaps achieving the desired short-term outcome on
some occasions, might tend to exacerbate matters when dealing with disenfranchised students whose main grievances are predicated on the autocratic imposition of rules. This particular scenario could be laced with volcanic potential, such that an agitated student who has made a disruptive stand against the regimen of the classroom, and the control and regulations therein implied, is unlikely to respond positively to more authoritarian measures, except with even more outrageous and volatile misbehaviour. Further, any budding rapport that has developed between teacher and student will, in all probability, be negatively affected.

(3) Expulsion

A teacher of French claims that the ultimate reactive strategy beyond suspension is to declare, if the situation is bad enough, that she, as teacher, won't have a student back in her classroom:

'It's too disruptive or whatever and it sometimes happens. I had a student about whom I said "That's it, I've had enough." He wasn't necessarily violent but just totally inattentive, demanding attention constantly by banging the desk, waving his arms about, yelling, saying "I'm not doing nothing." Then he throws his hands up and every time you said anything to him you had the impression that he thought it was because he was black, as we have so few black students here. I just said that I'd tried everything. We tried the time-out thing, giving him extra work for a half hour that had to be checked. He was one that was not ready at that time in his life to do this. All he wanted to do was screw around.

Although she indicated her action was a last resort, it seems such a waste of a student, who, "was a likeable kid and quite bright underneath it all, who could do 80 percent in this course."

She added, not mentioning any particular incident "I could pin-point 50 or 60 examples. They have problems in their families or whatever. . .not just an inability to cope in school." In sum, her response appears somewhat troubling and scarcely adequate. Apparently no effort was made to
sit down and have a meaningful discussion with the youth, or to transfer him to a different classroom situation and different teacher with whom he might have related better.

Bishop's Gate Secondary School, according to the Special Education teacher there, "is quieter than most because the administration will act quickly." That safe and quiet environment, though, can also include expulsion. She presented her own interesting idea with respect to the concept of expulsion:

_Sometimes people from the outside think that it's a bad thing, getting somebody expelled, and having the student go find another school. But sometimes that's really good because they get away from their power base, are separated from the group that feeds them with that kind of cheering on._

Obviously, she has considered the idea of expulsion from various angles and agrees with it in certain circumstances. The other end of the spectrum has the perpetrator simply replicating his inappropriate conduct elsewhere. Again, of course, context is central.

**Pedagogically-Based Reactive Strategies**

(1) *Curricular Penalties*

Another rural setting teacher indicated that she unashamedly uses marks as her lever. "The only control at this point in time is the mark, and this is what I say to students. They know it up front." She was the only teacher that specifically mentioned that disruptive and unseemly behaviour can, and will, impact the course grade.

(2) *Innovative Pedagogy*

A teacher of English at Bishop's Gate (urban setting) believes that sometimes all the usual reactive strategies in the world will not alleviate an incident. In cases like these he cautions that teachers must think creatively and react with alacrity, yet wisely. Recounting this incident that
occurred earlier in his teaching career he added:

This kid had his feet up on his desk, his hat on, and he was doing all kinds of things in class, so I said, in a very low key kind of way, "Take your hat off, put your feet on the floor, you know the rules." And he said just loud enough for the students to hear, "F--k you." Now, I can read lips and it's not hard to tell what that was even from 30 feet away, and I looked at him and the students got very quiet. You know, it's one of those little watersheds in the classroom, and I said, "No Peter, F—you!" Well, he got very upset and said he was going to the principal to tell him what I'd said to him. And I said, "You go down, get his attention, let him know I've got a lesson to set here, and I'll be down in five minutes, okay?" And he gets all across the room to the door, puts his hand on the doorknob, and he starts to think, shook his head, and came back and sat down. We were friends after that. I don't know whether he was testing me or what. He's kind of a moody sort of kid and it's hard to tell.

Although the teacher and the administration, too, for that matter, certainly don't condone profanity in the classroom, in that particular situation, according to the teacher involved, it was equally important how the rest of the class was going to react. As he indicated, it was a "watershed moment" perhaps setting the tone of the classroom for some time to come. The students were:

A little surprised, their eyes widened. You could tell they had never had a teacher say anything like that before... hey, this is a new tack. But when the student backed off and came and sat down, they basically said, "Forget it." There was a collective exhale of breathe and we just went on.

As a teacher he tries to provide a safe learning environment for his students and stemming these types of inflammatory incidents before they can spin out of control is part of maintaining an environment with a certain comfort level of safety for teachers and students.

(3) Humour

Urban setting teachers and their rural counterparts try to use humour to douse potentially
volcanic situations which are frequently initiated by inappropriate verbal skirmishing. A teacher of English at Bishop's Gate Secondary offered this:

_I use humour, wit, a disarming question. Sometimes I repeat back to them what they've said, breaking it down into its component parts, taking it out of their mouths and putting it in a different context, for example, "Did you really mean f--- me? And in what way did you intend that because I don't understand. As an English teacher I'm obviously fascinated with words and I don't know what you were trying to get across because that word seems to cover a great deal of area in the English Language. So, could you elucidate on that?" They get baffled by bull-shit. They don't really know what to do when they see it [the profanity] didn't have the effect they intended._

He claims that this kind of approach works well, as it takes little time and invariably the students will laugh, thus diffusing a potentially troublesome situation. "It's the ultimate thing, diffuse it by diverting the effect, or neutralize it."

The head of the Peer Counselling Program stated that in the case of verbal abuse "If you happen to be there in that place and time, you can deal with it fairly quickly in a fairly efficient way, and it need go no further." Again, the light-hearted approach seems to be the action of choice. "It can be done in a joking, humorous kind of way."

The head of Peer Counselling told another story which emphasized again his rather off-beat method for dealing with problem situations:

_Several years ago we had a principal who fancied himself a junior cop or something, so we had to be deployed each day to different corridors where there might be potential trouble. One set of doors seemed to be the focus point. Teachers were complaining about all the kids that were gathered there at the end of the day so I went down. The kids were at their lockers and I went walking by just shooting the breeze with them. Somewhere behind me I heard a kid say, "Oh, yeah?" and another kid say, "F--k you." So I turned around and just bellowed out, "Did I hear one of our students say 'F--k you' to another student? I really hate it when students tell each other to 'F--k you.' It's really impolite_
and rude. Can you imagine telling someone 'F--k off' in your own school." Things just went dead silent and kids started leaving. I think if they're convinced you're crazier than they are, they go away. Something gets their attention.

Although a little unconventional, the ploy worked, the students moved on, and after all, that is the goal in these situations—diffusion.

A Woodview District Secondary School teacher indicated that she also uses a sense of humour, when she can, to dispel student-initiated disturbances. Knowing how easily unseemly and excess verbosity can flame out of control, she attempts to keep such interruptions from inciting fractious responses from others. She spoke of one student who is constantly verbally disruptive in class:

Shanna is a lovely girl, but she doesn't work, she yaks and yaks, talking during class. I'll say "Shanna, turn around." And it's got to be sort of a joke. I just use a sense of humour "There she goes again," and the class would just crack up, so I guess that's my form of discipline, a sense of humour.

The teacher in charge of the Peer Counselling program at Bishop's Gate school likewise tends to use humour creatively to diffuse violent situations if he can. He described this inventive response to an already highly-charged situation:

I was sitting in my office at the end of the day making up appointment slips when I suddenly heard these growling noises and though "Oh, it sounds like a fight." I came out of my office and in the corridor to the left beyond the doors was a circle of guys. I went through and there were maybe 15 guys, two guys in the centre and they are kind of squaring off, just at the pushing and shoving stage. All I said was "Are you boys touching each other? You know it's pretty scary when boys start touching each other." And it was like reverse magnets. They just bounced back and all went away. And I continued, "I really hate it when boys touch other boys because nobody is paying any attention to the girls and it puts a lot of pressure on old guys like me who might have a cardiac arrest." I just kept making noise and it all dissipated.
At that particular moment the teacher seemed to feel that it was important to terminate the inappropriate behaviour however he could, before it erupted into something wildly out of control. There would be time later to try to sort it out when cooler heads had prevailed. This incident may also perpetuate another set of stereotypes, that everyone is heterosexual. For those students who may be struggling with their homosexuality, comments such as these from a teacher may be construed as bias and injurious.

(4) Professionalism\footnote{For the term professionalism here, I refer simply to the habit and practice of using those qualities and skills that are typical features and stated values of the teaching profession. These would include not only the academic particularities of teaching and learning but also other personal services involving confidentiality, morality, equality, honour, and trust.}

An English teacher at Bishop’s Gate Secondary added, "My feelings are never hurt." He counselled, "That’s the trouble with most teachers, they take it personally. And you absolutely can’t. These are adolescents and they’re goofy. Don’t descend to their level." Claiming that he often digs into his repertoire from Dramatic Arts to solve incidents of confrontation, he elaborated his response when students throw epithets or insulting language his way:

\begin{quote}
In Dramatic Arts you're teaching people to play games, complicated games of the imagination. It's not acting training, but having had the experience with someone trying to play games with me in the classroom, usually I'm going to win the game because I can identify the game faster than s/he can. I know what it is before s/he even knows what it is. So then you can turn it around and make it into a little scenario. You don't turn the class against each other, although I know teachers do try it. Heck, I've even tried it once or twice and it's not all that satisfying. So, I'd say, "I'd like you to get up here with me and we'll go through that again. I'd like to replay that scene because I'd like everyone to understand what just happened because there are going to be some consequences arising out of this and I want everyone to know. I want them to be able to explain. So explain to me how you feel about this. See if you can put into words what it was that triggered that
\end{quote}
remark: was it my facial expression, tone of voice, was I being too nasty to you?"

He also tries to avoid a showdown with a student in the public sphere of the classroom. Often he senses that a student is looking for some kind of confrontation. Such signs as: "an elaborate body language, elaborately not paying attention, digging in briefcases, talking while you're trying to get a point across," are all possible indicators that a student may be seeking a public encounter. Rather than responding angrily, he will, "ask once, twice, three times, in a reasonable tone of voice saying, 'Would you please pay attention, you're distracting people.' You try to focus them right back to the task at hand rather than [saying], 'You're hurting my feelings.'" He recommends that teachers need to step aside mentally and look at the larger picture in order to comprehend what might have precipitated any unacceptable behaviour. "It can be all kinds of things: hormones, daddy was on a rant last night, it could be for a million reasons." He cautions that teachers, as competent professionals, must remember to act adeptly and thoughtfully, not to take these minor affronts personally, and to put their training and education to good use.

**Student-Centred Reactive Strategies**

(1) **Rational Intervention**

A teacher of Family Studies at Woodview, when responding to an incident of physical violence in the classroom wherein one boy threw another on top of a counter, used a combination of strategies addressed both inwardly to herself and outwardly to those directly involved in the altercation. She explained:

_I went over and asked them to calm down and to sit down, and I calmed down because my adrenalin escalates and also because my reaction is to yell and scream and I know that's not right. So, then I went over to them and spoke to them individually. They agreed with me that it (the behaviour) was foolish and that they had to keep their distance from each_
other. They both wanted the credit (for taking the course) and they both wanted to participate in classroom activities. My threat was that I could give them written work outside the classroom or they could come in here and work together. And that’s what they agreed to do. I tried to give them some options.

The teacher tried first to strike a chord of reason with the teens while at the same time applied pressure by suggesting unpleasant alternatives if the students proved to be less than willing to acquiesce and co-operate.

The gambit of offering students a variety of options in response to misbehaviour, is a strategy that many of the teachers use, but few articulated it as such. Several proposed that the options they offer include a method whereby the student can (1) remove him/herself from the classroom to work in isolation (if that is the student’s wish), (2) have a consultation with an administrative official, (3) accept the downgrading of a course grade or loss of course credit (potentially) if expelled from the class, or (4) improve behaviour such that the student becomes non-disruptive. In most cases, though, teachers contend that students will usually opt for remaining in class, participating, and behaving appropriately. Students are, apparently, reluctant to be segregated from their friends.

(2) Separation

One Woodview teacher indicated that if he senses that an exchange between himself and a student is dangerously close to spinning out of control, his strategy is to put distance between himself and the student by sending the student out of class (usually to the office) allowing them both to regain their composure. He explained:

What usually happens is something between me and a kid. If it goes on and on, I’ll usually walk up to the kid and say "Hey, it’s not working, I want to talk this out with you,
but right now, you're uptight, I'm uptight, please go to the office and come back at the end of class. . .you cool off, I'll cool off." What happens is, well, you don't want to get caught in a situation where I've got to win or the kid's got to win. I always give the kid an out. Come and see me the last minutes of class. But I'll let the office know they're coming in case the kid doesn't show up. They have to fill out a form and state what happened. I say to them that if they don't show up there will be even worse consequences. Then we'll set a time when we can work this out.

Urban educators, too, have reactive strategies that they feel work very well most of the time.

One Bishop's Gate English teacher likewise employs the separation technique:

If you detect that the person could get loud or violent and physically abusive, then you have them step out into the hall. And there usually is a point where you start to feel the adrenalin, and I feel as if there is a confrontation coming—a fight or flight moment, you know? I'll say, "Just step out into the hall and I'll be with you in a moment. Now don't go away as I'll be right there." And I usually give it a minute or so, finish up what I was doing and tell the kids, "I'll be right back." Usually in the hall, away from everybody, the whole thing breaks down, the mask comes off, and it's "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know what I was saying. My Dad's bugging me." It's usually some kind of personal problem having nothing to do with me.

Although the scenario just related is somewhat similar to the type of incidents reported by the teachers in the rural school setting, this urban setting teacher did add a comment, saying "This is a place where I think they feel safe enough to act out."

I've seen a lot in my classroom. The kid will not act up at home and the parents are surprised by the fact that the kid will act out at school. They are afraid of the punishment and consequences. Who knows? I'm not a counsellor, so I don't try to dig into things too deeply.

When I queried him about his rather interesting footnote about students not being afraid "to act out," he hypothesized his theory: the school administration of today is light years away from the autocratic and oppressive administration in schools when he was a youth. He explained:
The kind of school I went to as a boy, from about grade three on, was a very fascist type of administration. When you press down on the top, stuff squeezes out the sides. The violence that comes from the top encourages violence underneath as well. Whereas here, we’ve, generally speaking, had a much more relaxed kind of thing, so there’s less tendency to react violently because there’s less violent repression. Also we have a lot of student involvement in Peer Counselling Programs for the social, emotional, and academic things that crop up.

(3) School Databases

Several teachers mentioned the Ontario School Record cards (OSR) and the computer database at school as valuable tools to aid teachers both in a reactive and proactive sense. These information instruments can give teachers worthwhile insight into the types of challenges and difficulties that may impinge on student behaviour. Teachers, at their leisure, or when they feel it is appropriate, can access these OSRs and school databases if they sense the potential for complications with a student or if they feel their reactive and proactive measures are not achieving the desired results. As one teacher put it:

_If you have a really big problem, you can go up to the VP and say "You know there’s something not clicking with this kid. Is there more here than meets the eye?" Usually, it’s amazing. They’ll punch his name in and all of a sudden it’s "Look at this! Late in English and History as well! Have you received reports on him for that as well?" The one teacher who follows the rules more will hand in the first report of deviant behaviour notation or excessive lateness, and maybe none of the other teachers will have done that. That often happens. You may find it (the behaviour) rampant in all classes, in some cases. So then, you can dig into it._

64 There is one potentially troubling aspect of these databases that I would like to discuss. There may be the possibility that teachers could pre-form their opinions and pre-judge students based on information accessed in these data systems. It is a challenge for teachers to know when to access such information because failure to acquire certain valuable data may mean that teachers are not privy to information that could potentially be of great assistance, especially that (continued...)
The teacher added that, of course, she does not include lateness, in and of itself, as an act of violence, but it can telegraph that something of greater concern may be occurring. Often a simple database check on a student who is consistently tardy can turn up a variety of more serious behaviour such as drug dealing or sexual abuse. As she says, "Then you can dig into it."

But, a Special Education teacher, also at Woodview, indicated that he never reads the school documents about students unless another teacher tells him something. Instead, he attempts "to create an atmosphere that is worth coming to, that kids will choose to come to." He tries not to bring baggage from students’ records and similar databases into the classroom as pre-conceived ideas about students, because in that way he can resist the temptation to pre-judge.

**Proactive Strategies**

Teachers from both settings claimed to be proactive in their strategies for alleviating the incidence of violence. For purposes of description, these proactive strategies, like their reactive counterparts, have been loosely categorized as policy-based, pedagogically-based, and student-centred. The categorization again is somewhat fluid, in that, many have aspects that could comfortably place them in more than one group. Included in **policy-based** proactive strategies are: diligence, rule enforcement, and zero tolerance. Those grouped as **pedagogically-based** proactive strategies are: curriculum, innovative thinking, focus time, experimentation, and extra-curricular activities. Finally, those categorized as **student-centred** proactive strategies are:

\[...continued\]

64 which details personal troubles that may affect the student’s behaviour and/or learning. It is a challenge that teachers face daily: to show respect and morality to each student equally. Teachers too can be affected by likes, dislikes, and so on; therefore the constant challenge is to err on the side of accommodation.
rapport, environment, positive reinforcement, counselling, communication, student participation and involvement, and participative democracy and school change.

**Policy-Based Proactive Strategies**

(1) Diligence

As part of their school duties, most teachers are required to take their turn at some form of hall patrol. Teachers consider that just their presence in the corridors helps to prevent the initiation of some misbehaviours. The general consensus among rural setting teachers was that actively challenging students on small misdemeanours helps to keep minor issues from jumping out of control and becoming major problems. Stated one teacher:

*I find a number of times in the hall I’ll stop a kid for swearing, pushing, shoving, throwing something in the cafeteria, making derogatory comments. There are certain spots in the hall where the kids hang out. I find a certain group—the Lacrosse, hockey teams hang out, there’s a certain mentality where the jocks hang out. They may go there and verbally intimidate people. They’ve even done it to teachers. I remember one of these kids who played Lacrosse. I was wearing my Canadien’s shirt and one of them said, “Canadien’s suck.” I just turned to him, and I knew which one it was even thought here were ten or twelve in the group, and just said to the group. “Hey! Whoever said that is obviously a wimp and a coward because you don’t have the guts to say it to my face while you’re making these derogatory comments to me.” They just look down like a puppy dog.*

He states, however, that he has become "tired of saying ‘don’t swear, don’t do that, what the hell do you think you’re doing?” He feels that much of these problems can be attributed to "the inadequacies of the home," yet does not lay all the blame on the home-front by any means. He continues:

*We’re having to teach all those social skills, teach responsibility, respect, tolerance. We’re having to teach that. That should be taught at home. If that is taught at home, I wouldn’t have to be dealing with this violence crap as much as I do. I personally believe*
that. I don't think we'd find we'd have to be tolerating that.

(2) Rule Enforcement

A rural setting Mathematics teacher has what he calls his Two Rule System that he implements the first day of school in the Fall. By his own admission this strategy is authoritarian and somewhat confrontational, but he feels it has its merits because it stipulates boundaries. He explained:

First day of class I always tell my students, no matter what class I teach, that there are only two rules—you know, they are so bombarded with rules—can’t do this, can’t do that, rule # 1: I’m the boss, rule # 2: if there are any problems, go back to rule # 1. And the kids go [say] "What?" I say, "Put your feet down Joel. Why? Rule # 1, if you don’t like it go tell your Vice Principal." That’s it and I find if the first two or three weeks are like that then you can start easing back. I find that school is often like being a referee. If you walk in with these two rules and the folks know them, then this is it. They know who is in charge. I’m always there and with me being there, the classroom is set up, and it all says "I’m here, I’m ready to go. If you don’t want to come along, there’s the door."

He advises that this regulatory methodology of letting students know exactly where they stand within very narrow boundaries and parameters does seem to help, especially if a student’s home life is without direction and in turmoil. Thinking back to his own childhood, he offered this thought, "I liked someone looking over my shoulder because it made me get things done because I knew there were consequences. Also, I do so with humour."

(3) Zero Tolerance

On the afore-mentioned issue of zero tolerance as a strategy both to reduce violence proactively and to deal with violence reactively, rural setting teachers of Woodview District

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65 See Chapter Two for a definition of Zero Tolerance.
Secondary had plenty to say about these kinds of policies which have been adopted by many school boards in Canada. Although most agree in principle with the concept of zero tolerance, many expressed a variety of reservations, some arguably more serious than others. Some see zero tolerance as unenforceable. A teacher of Visual Arts at Woodview declared, "I think it's a line (to cross), right? I thought initially that it would be difficult to enforce, but I agree with it in principle because I don't condone violence. Any force is unacceptable." She does believe it is enforced at her school because, "That's why we're encouraged, as teachers, to walk down the hall, and that's where we see the teacher's discretion." Regrettably, it is her opinion that the idea of zero tolerance, when taken literally, does not necessarily allow for teacher discretion.\textsuperscript{66} She continues thoughtfully,

\begin{quote}
\textit{What do you say, "Keep your hands to yourself, or get down to the office, right?" Is it escalating? What's the underlying cause? Is it in fun? Most of what happens here is play fighting, it's not nasty, but it happens. But like your mother said, "Somebody's going to get hurt when you play fight," and it can escalate here too. Somebody punches too hard, then somebody punches back too hard, and they're off. I think they just need to keep their hands to themselves. If the motive behind it is to be hurtful or violent then it's an issue that will involve the office.}
\end{quote}

The discretion to which she is referring, represents, first of all, an on-the-spot judgement to determine whether the perceived misbehaviour is intended or taken seriously. Then, the teacher considers what response, if any, the witnessed misbehaviour merits. This initial judgement is necessarily made quickly and tries to be appropriate to the circumstance of the offense and the students involved. Ultimately then, it is left to individual teachers to decide if a distinct single

\textsuperscript{66} See Chapter Two, the \textit{Definitions} section, for earlier further discussion about subjectivity.
event falls under the prescription of violence. Because these assessments are necessarily subjective, responses may vary from teacher to teacher. A teacher may determine that a particular misdeed is a minor breach of rules requiring only a reprimand, or, alternatively, that the infraction is of a more serious nature warranting a visit to the administration to sort out the matter. Further, most zero tolerance for violence policies, for example, stipulate that bringing a knife to school is an act of violence, but such a specification does not necessarily allow for the variety of reasons in which bringing a knife to school could be considered acceptable (for work in Art, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, and perhaps in set-making for Dramatic Arts, to name a few).

The rural setting teacher does, however, see a benefit for students within the concept of non-tolerance of violence. "I think the students feel it makes a safer place for them. And that’s my opinion too."

Alternatively, another teacher thinks that subjectivity is inherent in the concept of zero tolerance. She alleges that interpretation can be a problem though, when different perspectives meet. Rather than applying the rules autocratically, she considers context crucial:

Some teachers get angry that kids are late or absent. But there are circumstances why kids are late, and the administration has to make that call. Subjective is the word...they have to look at the whole picture individually. Some parents don’t know proper parenting techniques. There are too many things happening in the world. I think our administration knows more than we know.

Yet another rural setting teacher has a personal view about the zero tolerance policy. He finds it "quite useless." It is his contention that often the imposition of rules are subject to political manoeuvring of the system by parents and trustees. His own child was subjected to racial slurs
because of his darker South African skin colour. One student became especially abusive, chanting that the boy "wipes his bum and spreads it on his face." Finally, after waiting in vain for some action response and redress from the Board, as a teacher and parent he decided to take up the issue with the administration. As he noted, "Something’s supposed to be done: a warning, something, but nothing." Apparently the offender was from a "problem family, a family of divorce and had been suspended at least two or three times before, for kicking a teacher and swearing." He went on with his grievance:

That’s fine, and I know it’s one more thing to add to the kid’s scroll of misdeeds, but whether it’s a short list or a long list, what’s the use of this zero tolerance stuff? I actually had it out with one of the trustees. She said, "Oh, I said it’s a crock of shit." Well I went nuts. In this zero tolerance policy there is stuff about racial slurs, derogatory comments, physical handicaps, race, colour, creed, the whole gamut. It’s all in there. As well as the stuff about if you do violence, it’s a one-day suspension, and if you do it again we get the police, it’s a five-day suspension, then after that it’s a month.

While he narrated this incident, he appeared visibly upset and claimed to be frustrated with a zero tolerance system which, when put to the test, failed his son miserably, at least in his opinion. He seems to be suggesting, like numerous others, that Zero Tolerance "is a line" in the sand, but with few teeth. He argues, for example, that in rural areas especially:

I may suspend your son or daughter for doing blah, blah, blah, but also, because you know so-and-so and play bridge with the Director, you have strings you can pull. And I find that happens, not frequently, but I find that it’s an influence on decisions made.

He then vehemently stated:

I think the punishments should be more harsh. We need to toughen up the rules. The only kids I know who were expelled were the ones who dropped the LSD. Personally, I haven’t even taught any. I would like to hit them hard, right between the eyes right away. I know there will be exceptions to the rule, but if kids realize that we won’t tolerate...
stop what's happening outside my classroom, but you don't do it here. It's unacceptable.

It is his belief that the only place in which he can be sure that the rules of fairness are observed is in his classroom.

He claims that parents and trustees are not the only ones who try to use the rules of zero tolerance for their own advantage. He contends that it is because these rules are set down so clearly that they become fodder for manipulation by trouble-making students intent on fomenting dissension while avoiding retribution themselves. He noted that students can become adept at obeying "the letter of the law if not the intent." For example, one important and well-publicized aspect of zero tolerance policies states that physical altercations will not be tolerated. Routinely, the person who initiates the physical exchange should expect to experience the lion’s share of the censure. He believes that students use the zero tolerance regulations to achieve their own ends, playing a strategy word game of taunting and teasing until the victim becomes thoroughly exasperated, loses his temper, throws the first punch, and thus commits a strongly-punishable offense. Through exploitative imposition, not necessarily the intention, of the rules, a student may rightly claim that s/he didn’t physically "hit anyone." In the hubbub of the cafeteria or assembly, teachers often do not see an incident unfolding; rather, their attention is arrested when something blatantly physical, like shoving or a thrown punch, occurs. Certainly, teasing with harmful intent is not acceptable, however, it often happens outside the hearing of teachers. The situation then becomes a he said/she said situation. As well, even if the verbalizing that led to the

\[\text{\footnote{Psychological and emotional bruises, although not manifested as a visible scar on the body, can have their own serious implications. These concealed wounds are much more difficult to detect and assess and can linger long after the outward manifestation of a visible bruise has healed.}}\]
altercation was heard by other students, it may be difficult to prove harmful intent. The teacher claims to be somewhat discouraged by all this exploitation and what he views as manifest loopholes in the zero tolerance regulations. He continues:

\textit{It [Zero Tolerance] is like the Young Offenders Act. Kids know all the right buttons to push and all the rules to break, bend, or whatever, so they don't get caught. They push and push another kid until he blows up and gets in trouble. Then they'll say "I never touched him." So the other kid is caught spitting or making a derogatory comment. They know every nook and cranny.}

\textit{Pedagogically-Based Proactive Strategies}

(1) \textit{Curriculum}

Several teachers advocated interesting, stimulating, and well-planned lessons "to get, and keep, the students involved" as the most obvious proactive strategy for preventing many of the misbehaviours that can lead to violence. Many teachers were quite clearly convinced that excellent lessons can dramatically reduce inappropriate incidents in the classroom by diverting students' interest away from disruptive behaviour and towards mentally challenging activities and concepts.

An urban setting Resource teacher declared that she tries to be innovative, not only in her approach to lesson planning but in her approach to the school day. For example, she might:

\textit{Make Friday a different day, a day when we do no written work, or it may be a day with no talking and you have to communicate by sign language. We still do work, but we may watch a video about course content. We may tell a story, or they may do a group presentation.}

Said a rural setting teacher who is trying to manage his classes creatively, "I'll do whatever works." As a teacher of Mathematics, he advocates keeping students stimulated and interested and
in class, rather than allowing them to become bored and behaviour problems, and ultimately, drop-outs. He remarked, "I'll tell the kids that the only thing consistent about me is my inconsistency." He explained that some days he'll ask for homework, some days not. Some days he'll spring quizzes, other days he'll put the homework on the board. On yet another day, he'll ask for homework for marks. He hopes that the kids are learning not to procrastinate and to be ready with their work.

A teacher of French in the rural setting proffered:

_I think the key is to keep the kids extremely busy. I do a lot of oral work in French and if I see them getting bored I quickly move to something else, perhaps a dictée or writing sentences. It just calms them right down._

She believes in experience because, "Of course the longer you teach, the easier it is." She also credits the relatively small French department (as compared with other departments at this school) as being a positive in that she sees each student more often and therefore becomes more familiar with each.

(2) Innovative Thinking

The Peer Counsellor Teacher/Trainer himself has been known to exhibit unusual behaviour just to forestall any negative action from students. He told this story:

_This kid came in and he's muttering under his breath. I could pick up swearing. The other kids were all "What's happening?" I said, "Class, Sean is not having a good day, behold, he is sitting over here having a bad time." He was in the third row from my left. "Our task before we begin the other things we are going to do today is to cheer Sean up." So then I went over and said, "Sean, are you with us or against us?" Well, he's still determined to be miserable. So I climb over the first desk. "Sean, we all want you to be with us today because if you're in a bad mood we won't get much done that is helpful to anybody." He was still muttering. I crawled over the second row of desks, so now I'm about a forehead_
apart from him and thought, Oh Hell, I’ve gone this far, what else is left for me to do? So I leaned over and kissed him on the forehead. Well, he just broke up, the class broke up. He always used to come and see me after that and rant and rave about his Science teacher. His mother understood because she was a good teacher but tended to go after him about certain things which he inferred as nagging, which is what he and mommy argued about. It sure did diffuse the situation though. You may as well be experimental, what else is there?

He readily grants that there is a great deal of "belligerence" and rebellion circulating in schools against any voice of authority. The task of keeping the brew from boiling over continues to require creativity and a quick mind. He acknowledges that there is always the temptation "just to blow up and lose your ‘cool,’ but then, you’d have a real situation on your hands." The rewards for being inventive, even spontaneous and zany, at least for this teacher, seem well worth the extra effort.

(3) Focus Time

Another strategy a Bishop’s Gate resource teacher employs concerns the length of time allotted for lectures. "I don’t lecture for longer than 20-minute span of time with the grade nines and tens. You don’t want to spend all your time screaming." Along with this 20-minute span of time for lessons, she includes, "a whole co-operative learning thing. Everyone has a task, a role, a time. A lot of work is set up. They do a lot of group work."

Woodview’s Special Education teacher also has a set time limit for tasks. He regards 30 minutes as the optimum work period. "After 30 minutes, if we’ve really been focussed, we’re probably ready for a five minute break." He believes that students have less trouble keeping on task and interested in their work if time focussed is kept within certain parameters appropriate to the class. The two classes just mentioned are special sessions and do not reflect the usual 60 to
75 minutes for subject class time in Ontario secondary schools.

(4) Experimentation

As the Special Education teacher at Woodview, one educator claims to be "interested in learning and the process of learning." Special Education, he feels, gives him the opportunity "to zero in on people's strengths." He tells his students, "Special Education is special because of what's special about you. Let's find it and you can be responsible for it and it will help you over hurdles." He has become absorbed in the various learning styles and teaching strategies that boost people's interest in life. He said that he tries "to teach to the best in the student." And he reiterated, "What's the person's strength and how do we marshal that together?"

In an attempt to gain access to the general feeling in place, he often uses what he refers to as Anonymous Poker. He described how it is "played":

I say, "Write down the most exciting thing that happened to you this summer, and write it down anonymously. And because I'm not the best reader, I may have difficulty reading it, so if you could do it in your best writing, and just fold it over once. It's just to get a feeling of how the summer went for us." I ask them not to be incendiary in their comments, not to use names. "I can't read swearing and I won't read names." In this way you can read stuff that the kids really believe.

Unlike one of the other participants who says he gives as good as he gets, this Special Education teacher claims that he is responsive to, and unwilling to trample on, students' feelings.

He remarked thoughtfully:

If someone hates you the easiest thing to do is to hate him back, hate him back even tougher. There is no percentage in that. I don't want to promote that in learning. That's what I want to get away from. How do we learn to be human in a way that's most constructive to ourselves and to others around us?
Encouraging an atmosphere of trust is part of his way of "defraying violence." A variation on Anonymous Poker is, "called First Impression Poker because we’ll mix up the cards, the names aren’t on them, and I don’t know who they are." He will read out the responses and the students have five seconds to decide to whom that description might apply and give him their first impressions. As he tells them:

First impressions—we all make them. Why? Because we can’t leave you as a question, I have to have you as an answer, everybody is an answer. I have to make you something I can deal with. A question is something I don’t know about and it might come up and hurt me or kill me. The animal in me makes you into something I can deal with. In the process you’ll be what I want you to be. Why is this First Impression Poker? Because you don’t want people to know how you really feel. It’s amazing the stuff that comes out of it. And it’s easy to get them not to be too rough.

He suggests that he is teaching the kids about life. Even when they play the game, he’ll tell them to keep a "poker face, because we don’t give ourselves away." As a participant observer in this Special Education classroom, I was intrigued when the teacher suggested that they "play" Anonymous Poker "for their guest."

Another time, teacher and students play First Impression Poker such that if an identity is guessed then that person has the option of identifying him/herself. A modification on First Impression Poker is To Tell The Truth. The "tell the truth" part only comes after the students know each other well. Students put their names on their work but only the teacher sees it. Before the piece is read by the teacher, he will ask the author (as yet unknown to the class) and two others to come up to the front. Students try to guess to whom the anecdote is referring, just as on the old television show To Tell The Truth. He indicated that he gains tremendous insights into what is going on with the students. One day he said to them, "Write down the sneakiest, foulest
thing you have ever conceived of." He remembers vividly one response from a grade ten girl, "getting high on dope and going to class." He added, "Remember these are just kids, but they are doing such adult things. You see a component of kids, somebody beating up somebody, divorces, there are all kinds of blank spots though." He believes that these "games" assist him in discerning what is happening in student’s lives away from school that can impact their school lives.

On the day I participated, we were asked to play Anonymous Poker and First Impression Poker rather than To Tell The Truth so, as he told me later, that students would not have to worry about being embarrassed in front of a guest if the students admitted personally to being involved in certain anecdotes. But, what he told the class was "so we don’t embarrass our guest." I found him to be very empathetic of students and caring of their sensibilities. Each person had the option of not joining in (and he reminded them of that fact before we began), but certainly, on that day, all were eager participants. Not only does he believe he gains useful insights into the lives of his students, but also he regards these exercises as composition, spelling, and writing lessons. I sensed that these students really like and trust this teacher. He seems to have a kind, firm, and highly original approach that, on the occasions when I visited, appeared to resonate with his students. That he was well respected by his students was apparent even during the short duration of my attendance.

(5) Extra-Curricular Activities

A Resource teacher in the urban setting indicated that in her opinion, her school is the best for avoiding problems and at building community, saying "I think that this school could be used as a model for many of the other places that I’ve seen because they offer the kids a reason to be here." She went on to describe that aspect of her school program:
There are tons of extra-curricular sports, all kinds of things like Drama, Art, Music, everything that you could want to do as a kid, practically, is here. They’ve got clubs, contests they can enter. Each department really works overtime to do this sort of thing. There’s a group in the Science department that takes kids on what they call an Outers Club. They go once a month and take them to unbelievable places: camping in the wilderness for example. Last year I went with two of the Science guys to Florida to the Science School and the Marine Biology School with a group of 22 kids. We went to the Everglades and we rode in air boats, saw alligators. And we did that in our March break with just two additional days off from school. It was an unbelievable experience. I’ll never forget it and the kids will never forget it.

She admits, though, that even with this kind of spectacular activity, "There is that fringe group that you don’t reach." She would like to see much more "going on" during the period when classes are closed such as weekends and evenings, because she feels that "kids get bored easily".

**Student-Centred Proactive Strategies**

(1) Rapport

A Mathematics teacher in the rural setting theorized that this next strategy for keeping the peace is so simple he’s surprised more teachers don’t use it: he tries to establish a good rapport with his students so that when he "flips out," or punishes the whole class instead of part of it, he’ll come in, and admit that he’s made mistake. In his words:

> The kids find out you’re human. There is a drawback though, they can take advantage of you. They don’t mean to, but they’ll suck you dry. I find they enjoy being treated like the adult they’ve always wanted to be. And often they don’t get this chance at home. Because the parents just give them the back of their hand or the kids get "Don’t bug me, now!" I find I do my best not to analyse something too quickly. "Sean, great, let’s get the show on the road, we’ll talk later." Now I’ve learned that if I say something wrong I’ll come back later and say "Hey, I messed up. We all have bad days." It’s very important for the kids to know you’re human.

The Resource teacher at Bishop’s Gate Secondary has a seemingly small strategy that has
evolved into a practice that appears to be working well for her:

I don't start teaching right at the minute the bell rings. I have a five-minute break. They don't know that, I don't know that, but we talk about what they did first, who they kissed, what movie they saw, whatever. This kind of gets them settled and sets the tone. Five minutes is all it takes. It depends on the class. Some classrooms are so connected that it happens all through our lectures. We have some classes that are small so you can work and talk at the same time. But you have to have that atmosphere, so you can say, "Oh, by the way, I saw Denzel Washington in a movie," but you can still get stuff done and get back on track.

As an observer/participant in her classroom, I noticed how effectively this strategy coalesced the group into an attentive unit. The students all were keenly interested to hear the "goings-on" of their fellows since the time they last were together the previous day. They also seemed avid to contribute their own information to the rest of the group. The exercise was extremely interactive, but short-lived, allowing the teacher to transfer to work-related tasks rather smoothly and seamlessly. According to the teacher, this type of strategy encourages students to bond with each other and that connectedness may well spill over into regular classroom activities such as group work and peer help.

A Special Education teacher at Woodview claims that a series of strategies he has put together for classroom management have made him less confrontational when dissension threatens. He counsels that "if we have proper classroom management we don't have to get into personalities and psychological profiles." He works to develop what he refers to as "a Corporate Thinking System in the classroom, a kind of collective IQ so that each student can benefit from one other." He tells his students, "How can everybody be organized in here so that your behaviour is not a problem?" To me he suggested, "There is a real opportunity here to preserve
the learning environment." By way of explanation he offered this incident:

_You get called to the Vice Principal and he says, "One of those kids stole another kid’s shoes." I’m told that if he doesn’t return the shoes, well, World War III is gonna happen, parents, everyone in trouble. Now I don’t think the kids really want this to escalate and we don’t really have to involve the parents, so I suggest, "Why don’t we leave and let the guys return the shoes? Will two or three minutes be enough? And nothing else will be said." I’m trying to take care of everyone’s dignity here because was it really a psychopath who stole the shoes? Was it really an evil rotten thing or is it a matter of saving face? And when we came back, the shoes were there. There was really no need for someone to roar in like Genghis Khan. A gentle voice turneth away wrath._

As a teacher he tries to be protective of his students and is prepared to stand against the administration for them. He advocates non-confrontational choices to resolve certain situations, for example, when students’ self-esteem is at stake. In this instance, the shoes were returned without the necessity of battering anyone’s self-esteem or resorting to name-calling.

Another Woodview teacher claims to use every avenue to arrest and channel student attention. He warrants that sometimes even a small thing can make a difference:

_I never wore a tie in teaching till last year. Now I wear a different novelty tie every day. I’ve got Mickey Mouse ones, Star Trek, Donald Duck. Sometimes kids will ask where I got that tie. Then at a certain point in the semester I’ll ask "How many ties has Mr. W. worn this year?" I’ll tell them when my birthday is and say that my wife and kids won’t buy me presents and someone’s got to. The kids see that as great fun. I’ll channel their attention. I had one kid come to school just to see what kind of ties I wore. I’ve got to get them here and get their attention and I’ll do whatever it takes. He sees the tie, he’s here and figures "Well I may as well do something anyway."

A Resource teacher at Bishop’s Gate School had her own spin on the issue of rapport. "I bank a lot of relationship stuff with the kids so I don’t have to scream and yell at them. It’s like money in the bank. This, I guess, is one of my strategies for managing kids." Immediately, she went on
to illustrate what she meant by describing a situation in which this ‘banked’ rapport helped her deal with a volatile situation:

_In this case [instance], it was summer school. I didn't know the kids, nor how to get a handle on them. Big Fight. The kids came in and told me about a huge fight going on outside and of course I went out there. It was huge fight with a huge circle of kids. I broke through and there was a really bad fight going on and I didn’t know what to do. It was vicious, but no weapons yet. There were two boys really pounding each other. Stupidly, I jumped in the middle and tried to pull them apart. They didn't hurt me but they were so angry that I thought that accidentally they might. Two of my huge favourite dudes, big basketball players grabbed one by the collar and the other one and pulled them apart. Then I saw a knife. I sent a kid to the office right away to get the principal and to call the police. The boys were suspended and kicked out of summer school and that was that. It was the rapport that I had built up with those kids that helped me out, but just the same it was a stupid thing for me to do going into the middle of those fighting boys._

She also suggested that day-to-day violence management benefits from establishing a good rapport and from using a humorous approach in tandem. She has various strategies that she uses to entice students away from perpetrating disruptive behaviour.

_Because I build rapport, it's very rare that they won't do as I ask. But if they get snarly then I use more humour. Then I get blunt saying, "Now look, you've been asked, now you're being told to sit down, be quiet, take your uniform off, and where's your homework?" If they are still snarly, I'd pull them out of the classroom and say, "Okay, what's the problem here? Tell me what's bothering you." And that usually seems to help me. If the behaviour is of a nature that it's disruptive to the rest of the class, then I'd send him/her to the office._

For her, sending a child to the office is very serious and she won’t undertake it lightly. She expanded on her experience:

_That's the only way I send a kid to the office. If a kid sits in my classroom and sulks and isn't disturbing anyone, I let him sit and sulk and deal with it after. But if he's throwing_
things and heaving desks, then down to the office. I’ve only sent someone down twice in 16 years. Because they know me so well, they usually will just keep the kid quiet and wait until I can come and talk to the kid, which is what I prefer.

Further on the issue of rapport, several teachers proposed that students with whom they have a good rapport will be less likely to initiate trouble, knowing that a teacher that they like and admire would disapprove. They admitted that this approach requires constant effort on the part of teachers and a genuine fondness for students. One rural setting Mathematics teacher argues that the benefits that accrue to both teacher and class are well worth the extra effort. He celebrates student birthdays by giving the birthday person a French fry coupon. He insists that he spends 80 percent of his energy on prevention as opposed to resolution.

An urban setting Resource teacher allows students to have food in the classroom and to use headphones while they work. She believes she has a rather progressive attitude towards these things. "As long as they do their work...they say, ‘I could do a lot better if I could have my headphones.’ And I say, ‘Okay, let’s try.’" She claims that:

*We must keep up with the times. It’s a new world. We’re not working in little offices and cubicles any more. I’ll do anything that’s legal as long as they get their work done. Nowadays, we’re working from our cars, our bedrooms, our bathrooms, anything. It’s the wave of the future and you’re going to work with everything around you. You have to learn to be focussed in any environment. You need to learn to be focussed on a task.*

The response I received most often from rural teachers dealing with violence was concerned with various methods of violence prevention and that includes the idea of rapport just mentioned. Said one teacher:

*I’ll bring anything to show them I had troubles, the certificates that I won after one teacher helped me. I want to show them that they’re not alone and that I’ve been there.*
was nearly 300 pounds, was not doing well in school, only had a 55 percent average—that kind of thing.

Thus, as many teachers mentioned, a great deal of violence prevention involves being available and approachable. The "approachable" part only comes with the establishment of a good rapport with students over time. This state of "getting along" reaps dividends in many ways, they feel, the most important of which being the intercession by the teacher to diffuse situations before difficulties get out of hand.

(2) Environment

One rural teacher declared unequivocally that from his perspective the school student population of Woodview District Secondary is far too large. In his mind, a proactive strategy that would assuage stress both for students and teachers would be a smaller ratio of students per teacher and a much smaller school population overall:

_I wish this school were smaller. Like over 2000 kids is too many. You get a hot, muggy day with 2000 kids stuck in the hall. Kids are like rats in a cage. Of all our problems, if you want to say there's a problem, could be alleviated if we cut the population in half. Two thousand bodies is just too much. Because of the number of cutbacks, from what I gather, some of the advanced courses and the OACs [Ontario Academic Credits] will get 35 kids. It's just too much. In Communications class I've got 18 and that is starting to push it._

A Special Education teacher in the urban setting likewise believes that "classroom size and facilities could be improved tremendously." As she explains:

_It's worth your life to be out there at dismissal. You can't walk by without getting hit by a school bag. They carry those big things on their backs. It's very dangerous, actually. We could have wider hallways so kids could congregate and talk by their lockers. I think you could have more meeting places. We have a student lounge downstairs that could be used but there has to be someone supervising it and there's nobody except a teacher who can._
Improvements such as these, she asserts, might make life run a little more smoothly and therefore might reduce the incidence of inappropriate behaviour. She fears that, unfortunately, there does not appear to an end in sight to the heavy economic cutbacks to which everyone, including students, have become victims.

The Special Education teacher at Bishop's Gate would also like to see someone, counsellors perhaps, run activities at lunch time. "This would give the kids something to do and a place to "drop-and-flop" so they don't have to fool around in the hallways." She went on to mention that although they have a cafeteria, "not everyone wants to be in that loud, noisy place. The sound bounces all over the place." She sees a real need for congregating areas, because "some of them want to play a little floor hockey or do this and do that and they're playing it in the hallways with tin cans and they're getting into trouble." She counsels that students have energy that needs to be properly funnelled. To emphasize her point, she added:

In good weather they can go out. The grounds are magnificent, and we don't see behaviour as a problem. But in winter it's deadly for these kids. There's no place for them to go. Some of them retreat to the Chapel to think, but others retreat to "other activities." We have to be vigilant in all aspects.

(3) Positive Reinforcement

Another strategy used freely is the "tried-and-true" reward system. When a group has been well-behaved, one Woodview teacher said he will:

Let them play cards or I'll let them read. I've also got some games, some mind teasers. Unfortunately there are no computers, not in the portables because they'll get stolen. The thing is, the small rewards are great, the other thing is, maybe once a month, "You've done a great job, let's wrap up this, tidy things up and I'll bring in some music." The kids absolutely love Disney music, so I have soundtracks for most of the Disney stuff and they're humming along while they work.
This same teacher also thinks that while a sense of humour is important, the ability to laugh at yourself should be a large part of it. By his own admission, he decorates his classroom like a bedroom:

*My whole back wall is covered in Star Trek posters, Star Wars stuff at the front, and then I have cartoons covering other walls. On Mondays I’ll put up three new cartoons all making fun of school, whether it be the teacher, students, buses, cafeteria, whatever. We can laugh at ourselves. I have a whole board dedicated to the kids: stars and stickers. It’s got Spider Man and Batman and Robin on it. I give them (the stickers) for a whole bunch of things.*

He’ll ask in class "who’s tough?" But he explains to the class that the truly "tough kid" is the one who isn’t afraid to say he doesn’t understand something. When a student finally stands up in class and says that something is not clear, he’ll give stickers to him or her put in notebooks.

When I asked him if the kids like this practice, he responded:

*God, yes. The grade elevens think they are so sophisticated, and they’re the worst. They’ll say, "Sir, are we doing stickers today?" I’ll get whatever I can get free, McDonalds, Disney stickers, Mickey Mouse, Scratch and Smell, and I’ll get them anywhere… then at the charity stuff in the Mall I’ll buy maybe $10.00 worth. Bernstein stickers—everyone gets one the first day of school.*

Another teacher runs a retreat, a special benefit for advanced level students who have been nominated for this experience by their teachers:

*All the kids that are involved in leadership, student council, athletics, academics, the cream of the crop. It is a four-day retreat. I’ve been doing it for ten years. The last four years it’s been set up so it’s all student led, student run. We’ll do 80 this year. Twenty of those will be student leaders who have been there at least twice before. For another 20, it will be their second time through. For another 40, it will be new to them. You know, I don’t like to differentiate. They get hurt when they don’t get asked back or to be one of the 20 skill builders. We’ve approached some of the General level kids and they don’t want to go.*
The general level students apparently regard the retreat with some disdain, as it caters to "high academics, athletics, and student council members. . .mostly the latter." Interestingly, this teacher does not really agree with the criteria for choosing students. "I don’t want to talk about this retreat because what I get to do is take 80 of the cream of the crop of the school." He feels that the retreat would be more wisely employed addressing the needs of problem kids. He did not say if he had attempted to change the admission criteria.

(4) Counselling

Another Woodview teacher involved in counselling claims that:

_guidance is taking on such a different role. It’s being pushed towards career. And it should be because it’s very important stuff. But in a small town there are very few people to come and chat with—the social counselling kind of stuff, personal counselling, there isn’t a whole lot of time for that. Annette and I were the ones the kids would come and talk to. We have one centre [crisis] but there might be a wait time of six months. But the kid who has a crisis in the hall won’t wait, he’ll deal with it on his own.

It has been her experience that there is much expected of teachers who, more and more, are taking on the role of parent to make up for what they regard as family shortfalls. She added, "Any good teacher wants to do it too." She understands her availability to students and her willingness to listen as a kind of release valve for those in whom the pressure to strike out is building. These informal chats act as a preventative, a kind of venting system, to help keep emotions from festering and finally erupting at inappropriate times and in destructive ways.

Similar thoughts were expressed by another Woodview teacher who is amazed at the level of despair in some of the kids.

_There are desperate kids who need help. One phoned me from home. He was in grade 13, well-respected, a good student. It was a compliment that he called but I remember
being just dumbfounded. He said he had a $5000 Cocaine problem. I had to think about going to talk to this total stranger. That was really troublesome to me. He was in big trouble because he owed all this money and he didn't have that kind of money. He was desperate and needed help. I got him to the drug and alcohol people. And I've had others. Maybe half a dozen of them have ended up in psychiatric care. Those types of kids will pay the price if the social net isn't there for them anymore. And so if there is somebody in their school that they trust that they can talk to, 'cause if they go into a class mad as hell, and it blows up, and they get kicked out of school.

The teachers insist that they are being forced to enter the realm of the psychologist and professional counsellor, venues in which many feel uncomfortable and unqualified. Many complain that they are already over-worked and to accept even more responsibility will necessarily weaken teaching when time is drawn away from academics. As one stated concerning counselling, "It's outside my job description." Because guidance has become increasingly career-oriented, many would argue for more qualified full-time personnel to whom students can turn in times of stress. Several rural setting teachers mentioned that lacking this service, the school has experienced an increase in the number of violent and disruptive behaviours among students unable to cope alone.

One Woodview teacher, who believes she has a good rapport with students, likewise indicated that trying to "be there" for students is somewhat of a complication in the classroom, in that it takes time away from the teaching/work that she also feels is more in line with her true job description:

*Kids tell me stuff. Sometimes they want a response and sometimes all they want is an ear. I really try not to be judgmental. Usually I listen and say "Who have you talked to? Have you talked to your guidance counsellor? Have you been to the Birth Right Clinic [in the case of pregnancy]?") Then I ask if they have talked to their parents? In a couple of cases the parents were supportive, in a couple they weren't. In one instance, the parents were...*
the last to know. It's a real hard reality for kids and parents. Is it such a shock now as it used to be? There is a real social issue. Some days I just wish I could teach Art, but these are kids with social concerns and some days you can't. There's a lot of stuff going on. You have to be aware. If they think I'm approachable...then that's okay, but usually I steer them toward someone who can deal with them professionally. That's not my area and I don't pretend to be an expert. I'm the first line of assistance and I tell them "You need to talk to someone who can help you, I can't really." Often they are sexually active and under the delusion that they are really in love...the White Knight in Shining Armour and this is the person they'll be spending the rest of their life with.

She understands the need students have for someone to counsel them but would instead prefer "to stick to teaching" the appropriate subject matter in which she has been trained. As well, she indicated that neither does she feel qualified to address the more serious issues and stressors that students have presented to her. She is concerned that she may not have good advice, or at least, may not have the "best advice."

One teacher claims that even parents will secretly approach him about a problem. He explained,

Something came from a parent contact. I had one of those quiet students, a sort of nerd type who had bought into the way I do stuff, and it's the first time he had opened up in years. He's always done well academically, but now he's learning how to interact. I had parents say, "So-and-so is saying this, they're putting him down." So I'll talk to the classroom in general. What I say is "Hey gang, I met a lot of parents last night and a parent had a concern...and so on." The kids will say, "Why are you looking at me?" So now I look at the Star Wars stuff on the back wall. Then I'll say, "Did everybody get the message? I'm not looking at anybody you know. If the message is for you, you'll get it."

(5) Communication

A teacher of OAC Mathematics likewise uses humour as a tool in his rural setting school, but says he also deliberately changes his whole personality when issues threaten to erupt.
Do it with humour for one thing. And I make sure I don't yell. I normally yell and scream all the time, so I tell the kids that if I come within six inches of your face and talk very quietly, you're toast. "David, get your ass outta here!" They're used to me yelling "Get to work, shut up, you good for nothing..." They're used to that. It's all very friendly and joking when I'm noisy. But look out when I'm quiet. I haven't thrown a kid out in over two years.

Some may find his approach a little troubling. After having sat as an observer in this teacher's class, I found him to be extremely gregarious, animated and yes, noisy. His dynamic style did seem to resonate with his students, however. They seem to have generally adapted well to his "storm the bastions" manner and to work hard for him, apparently sensing that his raucous style is well-intentioned. His style may not be for everyone, though, especially the very sensitive student. I was not, however, present during one of his "personality changes."

He claims not to be without sensitivity, something he apparently learned the hard way. He related this story, which, although somewhat lengthy, I present here:

My very first year of teaching I was pretty puffed with myself. Hah, I was full of p--s and vinegar. This girl came in late. I looked up and said in my usual shouting sarcastic manner, "Hey, you're late!" Hey, I'd showed her, and she sort of whimpered and stuff like that. She didn't say anything so I said "Do you have a good reason for being late?" You could see she was a bit teary-eyed, but I plunged on to really nail her and show her how tough I was. "No, I just came back from... here's a note." I said, "Did you sign it?" And she said, "No." and I said "Why not?" And she said, "Why don't you back off?" But I said, "Oh, by the way, here's all the work you missed from last week so get your ass in gear." Then she really started to lose it and said, "You don't know what kids have to go through." I respond, "Oh right, I don't understand what kids are going through, look at me, my wife's pregnant, I've got a house, I'm going to be unemployed shortly because I'm going to be laid off. You don't know about life being a grown-up." She screamed, "F-- you," and ran out of class. When I got down to the office after 4:00 p.m. I was politely told that she was 14 years old, was away last week because of her abortion, and that what I did was not right. I learned very quickly not to make any assumptions. So if so-
and-so walks into class I say politely "Hi Susan, glad you made it." Then once things get going, "Is everything okay? You didn’t just sleep in? Okay, that’s cool. Do you have your note? Okay." I make no assumptions at all. That was an awful lesson to learn. You know that girl wouldn’t come back to class. There was only two weeks [of school] left and that girl refused to come to Math class, and I don’t blame her!

He admits to being an inexperienced and insecure teacher whose lack of self-confidence and self-engrossed attitude portrayed him as devoid of any empathy for students in his handling of this early career incident. Although he felt the administration rightly took him to task for his behaviour, perhaps the severity of the incident might have been reduced or even avoided had he been privy to the circumstances surrounding the female student’s absence. In fairness though, when telling the story to me, he did not offer excuses, but rather took the blame and vowed that such behaviour on his part would never recur.

(6) Student Participation and Involvement

Many teachers believe that students could be more fully involved in areas of schooling which heretofore they have not been allowed access. An issue that was advanced as the interviews progressed concerns the question of increased student participation in conflict prevention and conflict resolution (areas that this present research addresses), as well as in the academic aspect of schooling.

Most of rural setting teachers eventually spoke to the issue of conflict resolution from the aspect of Peer Counselling. The verdict of one who is in favour of this kind of programme is:

Students help each other where kids who were in trouble a lot or those who were involved in violent incidences were put with a better type of student to help them. It’s not a bad

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68 I say "appears" because this teacher indicated that, as a beginning teacher, he lacked empathy and was too self-absorbed and insecure, a state of affairs that was remedied soon after.
idea at all. I haven't had a lot of firsthand experience on it, but I think it's a good idea to use the students that are positive, because students are probably able to communicate with their peers better than we are. We (the teachers) are like the mommies and daddies and I'm sure they (the students) often think "Yeah, right!" So, I think maybe students can do that just as well as we can.

The urban setting school, Bishop's Gate, as mentioned earlier, has a successful\textsuperscript{69} Peer Counselling Program that is both well-organized and well-established. All the urban setting teacher/participants stated quite definitively that in their opinion the main reason for the relative infrequency of violent incidents is directly a result of this programme. Further, in circumstances that may already be brewing, despite their best efforts to forestall problems, they contend that the programme catches and diffuses much of these potential eruptions before they can become red-hot and boil over. Said one teacher, "When we have blow-outs, it's usually something going on elsewhere that surfaces here. Often, there's not enough family caring, not enough attention."

He adds, "Even kids who are quite ill or troubled in the community are not in trouble here." He believes that the good humour and rapport among the 70 or so staff members has filtered down to the students. Students see how easily staff members mingle and how well they get along with each other. This kind of behaviour is infectious. The kids "sense it."\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{69} The 'success' is an expectation of the teachers' stated remarks about the programme. I did, however, sit in on one session and discovered that the students interacted in a relaxed atmosphere but did, indeed, appear to take their roles as Mediators very seriously. I found the session to be pretty much as the Peer Counselling leader indicated it would be. My visit was invited but unannounced, therefore I feel reasonably confident that what I saw and heard was largely an accurate representation of the programme.

\textsuperscript{70} While at the school I did notice an attitude of politeness and calmness. This urban school did not seem to have that heightened tone of fever pitch excitement that I sensed was just beneath the surface mood at the rural school.
A rural setting teacher likewise touched on the idea of strengthening student involvement:

*We try to involve students. We have a code of behaviour. We try to involve students on the committee that evolved that code, but I think it's a token effort that allows them some input. At least, between you and me and the table, it's a nicety rather than the practical. From our perspective, we listen to them, take their input, but usually there's already an agenda.*

He readily admits that students of this rural school continue to be given only a token voice in regulatory matters to which they (the students) must adhere:

*I think the students probably take it seriously though. They tried Peer Mediation. I like the concept. It hasn't been a great success here though, probably more because of logistics than anything else. There's certainly room to expand it. The Vice Principal says "You have a choice: Peer Mediation or a three-day suspension."*

The second sentence of this quotation "They tried Peer Mediation" perhaps speaks to a lack of commitment among the teachers for the Peer Mediation Program in this rural school. He did not say we tried Peer Mediation. It would appear then, in his mind at least, the reason for the lack of success of the Peer Mediation program lies not with the students who, by his own admission, "take it seriously" but rather with teachers who already have "an agenda" they expect to implement without real student input. The resolve of the teachers advocating the Peer mediation program at Woodview may be more tenuous than those in the urban setting outlined in this study. He continues:

*For a lot of these kids I envision that they need someone to talk to and if they could just vent some of this to someone like a bartender, "That guy really messed me up." You get into what to do if the kid says "I'm so angry I could kill someone, or kill myself." The student has to be trained to the point of knowing that they should bow out of this. It's difficult to get it up and running with training. There is someone in guidance that got ten volunteers. There are certainly students who are willing to do it. It's just getting the*
logistics of getting it operative. We went to a conference in Toronto. At some of the schools in Toronto, they are mediating six or seven conflicts a year at a big school. The number is so small and we were just floored.

A Woodview teacher, when asked to describe how the Peer Mediation Program should operate, responded quickly and summed up how, in a general sense, he feels the programme should work. "Sit down at a conference with the peer mediators and the combatants and hammer out a contract to resolve the dispute, and it's open-ended. The Peer Mediators report to a faculty advisor." When asked whether the faculty advisor changed from time to time he responded:

Don't know, it just started last year. You've got 2000 students here. Mobilize 20 percent or 10 percent of the kids who are talented, gifted, and capable of listening and helping others. Give those other 20 percent who need someone to listen to, that opportunity. The fear again is "What are we getting into?"

Perhaps a more appropriate question would be "What will we be getting out of Peer Mediation?" not "What are we getting into?" The latter seems to carry a heavy negative connotation, arguably unfounded in light of the considerable documented success of similar programmes in other schools, most notably in metropolitan Toronto which, by his attribution, is violent.

One resource that the senior Mathematics teacher of Woodview considers largely untapped, is the student council. He offers his thinking on the matter:

How could the student council mobilize towards a more positive point of view? You know, kids figure janitors get paid to clean up in the cafeteria so "Let's throw the stuff on the floor." We know the power of advertising, so let's get pride in our school back. I'm a firm believer that there are a lot of good people here who vastly out-number problem students. If we could just get them to be more vocal and say "Hey you, don't write on that locker because it's my school and you're making a mess of it. If everybody writes on a locker we're going to have..." They etch their notes to each other on these lockers, can you believe it? Why do they do this? They [the school board] just painted these lockers at
Christmas. And the first day back they kick the lockers and write on them and scratch them, ding them. It bothers me and it would be great to get students to be more aggressive in correcting their peers and do it in a gentle way.

He advocates increased communication between students and the administration, increased benevolence and rapport among students and teachers, and more respect for people (substitute teachers, for example) and the furnishings of school property (such as lockers). He seems to link these together as generally setting a positive or negative tone for school behaviour:

*I’m not a rah, rah guy and I’m not sure how you go about generating it. Keep the school clean, show respect for each other, show respect for staff. I get fed up. As soon as a supply teacher comes, their [the students’] eyes light up and again it’s just three or four turkeys in the class, but the rest sit and let the turkeys do it [that is, make life miserable for the supply]. They know it’s wrong and I have this mentality that they are equally to blame because they didn’t stop it. The hardest thing a student has to do is to say to another student, "You’re acting like an idiot, sit down and let’s just give this [supply] person a break.”*

He also comprehends the lack of communication and the lack of student-run activities within the school’s student population as a whole, as another negative condition preventing the unification of students and the establishment of a beneficial school spirit:

*We had a school newspaper last year that was beautifully done, but it only came out once a year, as students were basically learning the process in class. There’s no weekly newspaper or anything. The daily announcements are their only real communication.*

Another teacher at Woodview Secondary agreed that there is need for a unifying mechanism:

*Oh, the public address, well, anything major that comes across through that from "big brother" and the students turn right off. It’s such a big school. We don’t have facilities, obviously, to put all the students in one assembly, so we have to split them. There is a major problem getting them in and out of the cafetorium. There’s no permanent seating so they are all on plastic seats so they don’t have a designated seat. It’s a real problem.*
We have plans for a new school but they have been shelved because of money. Many kids don't know how to act in an assembly, so the assemblies tend to be chaotic, sometimes, but not always. It's getting better. We're simply too darn big.

She reiterated that students really do not have much contact with the administration unless, "They are bad enough to be sent to the office." Ostensibly, after the first week of school, the principal rarely comes around to the classrooms. The situation has reached the stage that "Kids don't know who they (the administration) are."

The Woodview teacher who runs a retreat for academically excellent students stated that he only mentioned the retreat to illustrate his point concerning inappropriate classroom conduct during the time of his absence, when a substitute teacher is in residence:

I'll give my expectations on a Wednesday. And I know that Thursday or Friday one of my classes will have blown it. I always ask the supply teacher when I come back and I just know that one of them will have blown it, probably the grade 10 group. I'll know the two or three kids. They usually leave the names and I'll talk to those two or three and say, "That's not the way you behave in grade ten, blah, blah, blah." But then I'll address the whole group and say, "If you allow them to act that way then you're as much to blame as they are."

A teacher of Special Education in the rural setting has activated a strategy of what he terms "participative management" to "defray a lot of the confrontational stuff." He permits the students to take control of small issues that allow them some measure of personal autonomy. He says, "I have washroom breaks and washroom passes so instead of asking, they each have three passes that say...or they can hand them in for one per cent at the end of the year."

He is the same teacher who claims that work is accomplished most efficiently and with fewer disturbances in 30-minute sections. At the end of that time, he asks if anyone is interested in a 5-
minute break. During that break the students can eat and talk, but can not leave the room. As he states,

Everybody has an opportunity to relax and maybe have the best five minutes of the whole class... to talk perhaps about something actually meaningful. Now that allows all kinds of behavioural things and I have a strike system of Three Strikes and I go "Strike One" and at "Strike Three, darn, we just lost our break." Strike One is a one minute detention, Strike two is a two minute detention, Strike Three is a three minute detention. So it's an attempt to build a peer mentality. The Peer group is so important that you'll see that most kids don't want to screw up everybody's break.

In this way, he asserts, the whole class becomes involved. He claims that his participative management strategy embodies a diversity of issues. He remarks:

Most kids would like to participate in things we all care about, like drugs or whatever you're talking about [as a teacher], most kids would like to do that. So, most kids that are really disturbed, you can talk to the whole group. I talk to them and say "Look, we need him. Personally I've had it up to here with him, but we need him, we need this guy. You know we've all profited from him being here. He sees things that we don't see." So you try to meet them on some sort of intellectual level.

He argues that "the whole corporate group-learning stuff is really critical." Also, he feels that:

There's a lot of organizational stuff, in terms of buying into what I'd like to do... workshops and stuff. It involves classroom discipline stuff. Initially, they sit where they like, and I try to sell them on classroom management, and why it will assist us. And I do, I try to sell it, and they will say "Oh, all right, yeah, sure, we can do that, it's good for us." So they buy into a kind of package deal that includes classroom discipline, organizational stuff, coloured folders, teams, developing movement so that you know how to defuse some of these things like when someone say "F--- you!" Well now, how did he get to that point?

He gives this thoughtful commentary:

It is sad because if we were so smart as human beings we would have learned everything the best people had to say and we'd be a much better human race and we wouldn't be
kicking the crap out of each other. How come this hasn’t changed us? It must be somewhere in the way we’ve been sharing each other. Somehow, the way we’ve been sharing the territory doesn’t work. So how can we share the territory to avoid "might is right?"

This particular teacher is seeking to look beyond the reactive and external proactive perspectives of school violence, beyond the here and now to the larger inner picture of the human condition and the common, repetitive practices cemented in place for decades, which may, in large part, be reinforcing why people act the way they do. Even the language he uses "sharing the territory" underscores his inclusive and less confrontational way of comprehending the complex issue that is school violence.

Using participative involvement accentuated by patience, he appears to be taking a genuine, if initial measure, to empathetically redress their disenfranchised state. The strategies he employs he admits are not earth-shattering, but rather are small, limited, but empowering steps that attempt to ameliorate how students feel about themselves and each other. Involvement via small but meaningful gradations may affect, for the better, how students view the teacher as a leader. He does understand, too, that unfortunately, not all students want to participate. For these students, he says that he as teacher:

*Has the option to pass. If it's out-and-out confrontational, like "This is crap man," in this school we’re able to say "That's not acceptable, the language is insultive, and go out the door." For some other kids you say "You’ve got a time out." But it's the preventative stuff I'm most interested in, the proactive. All I’m saying is I’m trying to prepare a room here that has to do with stewardship of character, to do with sharing of authority, and I can’t all of a sudden pull the patriarchal routine. I have to learn to be the gentle voice in that... and realize that not all kids are going to want to find their gift for learning.*

Another rural setting teacher spoke of a Mentoring Programme. Mentoring usually involves
pairing a student with an adult, in this instance, a teacher on staff. Because the Mentoring process involves teachers meeting students one-on-one, teachers may often be alerted to any manifest or potential conditions that could negatively impact students’ lives. Because the concerns are often addressed in their initial stages in concert with the student (and others as deemed necessary)\textsuperscript{71}, the negative impact as a result of these distresses may be moderated. In these times of two-working-parents households, many teenagers can feel somewhat alone and cut loose from discourse with parents who may feel too frazzled at the end of a long work-day to address the wide-range of adolescent stressors. Teachers, in their roles as mentors, may help fill that void.

The rural teacher, however, sees little value in programmes such as these:

\textit{We have a Mentoring Programme, on a volunteer basis, usually with grade nine and ten. A teacher will be assigned one or two students to just keep tabs on them. To be quite honest, I had it once, and the thing is, I found that the kid just didn’t want to have anything to do with me, because the thing is, I taught his sister and then his sister got very sick and died from lung cancer. Because I was in contact with her I’d given her one [cigarette]. Every time I came near, he just stopped me. I tried for three or four months and finally just let the whole thing slide. I find that these kids don’t need mentoring.}

The Mentoring Program, as described by this teacher, does not appear to have been a success, nor does it appear to have had the commitment either of the teachers or the students. To "have it once" and then to give up may seem to some as perhaps a little short-sighted.

Even academic mentoring within a de-streamed class has apparently not been a great success at Woodview, he asserts:

\textit{You know, de-streaming was a way of saying that the strong would help the weak,}

\textsuperscript{71} Some of those "other" may include parents, the school administration, psychologists, clinics for unwed mothers, and so on.
independently as well as with assistance from the teacher. I personally think de-streaming is a farce. I find that the kids who are weak even if you try to pair them up deliberately or not, most of them will only come to me. Misery loves company. The weak kids will stay with the weak kids, the strong with the strong. Maybe it's because it's been going like that since kindergarten, I don't know. I've really been frustrated with de-streaming because I know what I can do with a classroom full of weak kids. The middle to weak kids love it because they buy in that somebody cares. Maybe it's my style that doesn't work. I don't know.

The teachers of Bishop’s Gate, on the other hand, regard a coordinated mentoring program as an invaluable aid for students. A Resource teacher in the urban setting considers, "a serious Mentoring Programme as crucial in any kid’s life, especially for grades one, eight, and nine." She stated, "Certain grades are watersheds in a student’s life and therefore, more critical. I think of these times as periods of transition." She believes that "getting committed teachers who are willing to be with a group of kids for a whole year," is best. In this way, a teacher can follow students through time to assess how they (the students) are managing their lives. She would also establish a schedule whereby students could see their teacher/mentors for 40 minutes every day, or at a minimum, every two days. She indicated that in light of the already-packed academic day, the program could function before or after school. She frequently calls kids at home and she knows she’s not the only one who sees students after school. As she states, "Coaches see kids after school for all that fun stuff and comraderie. It's great. Lots of teachers do" (that is, think it’s great).

It is her opinion that almost all students want to talk to someone. It’s just a matter of finding the person with whom the student is most comfortable. Initially, she would set up the selection and matching process randomly. Unlike Woodview District Secondary, a school of 2000
students, with really only one guidance person who deals only with career concerns, Bishop’s Gate, with its 1250 students, presently has five guidance counsellors who do not handle discipline problems in the strictest sense. Rather, they assume "the more serious stuff, like if the kid is suicidal, teen pregnancy, home stuff, drugs, all that." She added that there have been students who have committed suicide at her school. She believes that most large schools have, on average, one suicide a year, but unfortunately the teachers usually have "no sense of what precipitated it." Apparently, there are also significant numbers of teen pregnancies and that continues to be of great concern. She wondered aloud:

_We have lots of pregnancies. Some carry to term, some abort. I think the whole issue of why there are so many teen pregnancies is worth examining, especially when we’ve got adequate birth control and it’s free. Birth control is not available in the washroom because this is a Catholic school._

Some might speculate that the lack of readily available birth control at school may be one factor that, in some measure, negatively affects the pregnancy rate.

At Bishop’s Gate Secondary, a Special Education teacher agrees with several Woodview District Secondary teachers that in Family Court "judges really need to have a bit more power with the Young Offenders Act. It has devastated things. And the Courts need to take a look at more retribution." She advocates that kids are more street smart than they once were. "They know what’s what. After all, they’ve grown up on the street. They know from television and their parents what their legal rights are." Much of the present ineffectiveness she lays at the door of the 1960s decade, "when parents were in a confrontation with teachers and threatening, ‘You can’t touch my child. . .you can’t hit my child.’ They took the strap away, they took this away, they took that away." She argues that now the only mechanisms available to teachers "are the ones
that are legally available to us." She suggests, "Schools are a reflection of what society wants. When society wants permissiveness, the schools have to give it. When they (members of the community at large) want structure, the schools have to give it."

She perceives that the present condition of schools is regarded by the public with a mixture of approval and scepticism:

*The parents are in a confused state, so are the schools. Some parents want to take their kids out and put them in private schools because they don't think there is enough structure, and others think everything is quite fine and to "let my son roll along. He'll find out when he hits work that it's difficult, and my daughter will know how hard it is to get a job. It's best they learn the hard way." So, there are all sorts of responses out there.*

A Woodview Visual Arts teacher describes sessions whereby student seminars were used as a tool presenting contentious issues around the issue of violence in an atmosphere where students, with teacher help, could address the issues rationally and thoughtfully. She especially approves of the manner in which students were given examples of groups portraying the appropriate way to behave in certain situations. Three she mentions are SAVE (Students Against Violence Everywhere), PAVE (People Against Violence Everywhere), and TEEN EXCEL (an offshoot of PAVE). Her thoughts about these programmes:

*Teachers were involved more as facilitators. The teens were the leaders. That seemed to have a good effect. It led to lots of good discussion back in the classroom. First of all it gives them information about what is appropriate behaviour, say, sexually about violence, and gives them some strategies about communicating. Kids will come up with catch phrases. We've been trying to come up with buzz phrases that will stick in their heads, so that when they are considering the pros and cons of their actions, perhaps something will click in, you now "arrive alive, don't drink and drive." Kids are slogan crazy and it does seem to work as they are a product of an advertising age and television. One of the seminars did approach it on the level of a TV show. They were talking about shows like Family Matters and whether they are real and does that stuff really happen,*
and is there anything you can apply. It was done with the grade nines and it worked out okay because they can relate it to their favourite TV shows.

His response points to another strategy: the use of student counsellors. He explains his motivations for introducing another person, a counsellor, into the situation:

If it's a little more than I'm prepared to deal with or should deal with, I'll send the kid to a counsellor. It's not my job to be a shrink, and I'm not, any more than I'm a cop. I'll say, "Look, I think this is going to take more than ten minutes to talk about between classes here in the hall, so I think maybe you should go see one of the counsellors." I recommend them all equally, but they'll usually go if I suggest it.

The students needing and seeking counselling are also allowed to select the counsellor. "Sometimes the kids will sort of shop around. They'll talk to one counsellor about some kinds of things, and others to someone else, depending on the problem: sexual, personal, emotional." He reasons that both boys and girls are given equal opportunities to become counsellors and receive training from the school's Mediation Programme. He offers this additional comment:

Their brief is not to get involved in something while it is happening. It's after or before. While it's happening we get one of the very large men on staff, and the police, too, have been very good about it. They are effective at stopping things.

This teacher believes that Peer Mediation and Peer Counselling Programmes alleviate the incidence of violence because all the students know that other students are involved in these programs to a great extent. Apparently, more and more students are taking the Peer Counselling course, which is fortuitous considering that:

You are getting more and more kids who are out of their own heads, if you like, at the age

I have included this particular type of counselling in this category to emphasize the participative and student-centred aspects.
of 15 or 16. They’re actually picking up body language, picking up attitudinal kinds of
things that otherwise might be allowed to drift or even not be noticed.

He goes on to note that students who have taken this programme have even come to him with
information on potential problems:

I’ve taught a couple of kids that I would classify as budding sociopaths, and I’ve had
people come to me and say, “You better check out so-and-so because he’s been bugging a
particular child who is a bit unbalanced to begin with anyway. Get him to back off.”

Because students socialize with each other as peers, they are more likely to be aware of little
issues causing their peers distress. He claims that students "pick up" on things from their peers
all the time:

A student came to me the other day. "So-and-so won’t be in to class because she’s having
some problems with a family thing at home and she’s taking it very hard." She’s from a
Polish background, highly strung, sort of romantic, and not to characterize the family,
they tend to take things extremely hard. I think it’s a cultural thing. "She won’t be in class
as she’s too upset to even think about it, and can you just let her go?" I said, "Certainly,
that’s fine." I knew that the student who came to tell me about it was involved in the
Programme.

This final comment reveals that the Peer Counselling Program at Bishop’s Gate is respected
by many, teachers, administration, and students alike. He states:

Now this [students acting as a conduit between their peers and teachers] happens
frequently, a couple of times per month to me personally. They aren’t just approaching
me because they think I’m sympathetic or something, they approach all the teachers. I
don’t know how well it’s received by some of the teachers, but I think the Programme has
gained a lot of credence over the last few years. Harry did a doctorate on it and is one of
the originators of it in this part of the world. This goes back about 20 years or more.
Anyway, it’s become extremely popular here with kids clamouring to get into the
programme.
He credits the amelioration in student behaviour to this particular type of Peer Counselling Programme rather than the other types of Violence Mediation Programmes that are currently available in grade school. I wondered aloud in what way(s) he thinks this programme is better. He suggests that students really have to be a certain age to understand this "cognitive skills education, the idea of looking at behaviour and asking questions. Where is this behaviour coming from?" He offers a plausible line of questioning that these teenage peer mediators might employ:

*Why do you feel like that every time you see this person? The kid will say, "I dunno, I just hate him, I hate him, I hate him." And the Peer Counsellor will respond, "Well, hate's a pretty strong word. What do you mean by hate? Do you dislike, dislike strongly? You don't like the way he looks or dresses or talks?" And this breaks it down and you get those questions happening. They are taught those questioning skills and so it isn't so much taking them aside and holding their coat while they weep, although that does come into it. But it used to be that was all that was going on. One girl would weep in the bathroom and four or five others would help her weep.*

He declares that the old arrangements such as the latter one he has outlined whereby no constructive exchange occurs, caused many problems for others. For a start, having nearly half a dozen people out of class can negatively impact lessons and learning. As well, he feels that the old method was:

*Just reinforcing the problem, the suffering, the passion, not giving any kind of outlet to slow it down, whereas the counsellors help troubled teens by putting feelings, emotions in words, which is the most difficult thing you can do. If you can do that in a kind of objective, verbal way, saying how you feel, what you feel, then you can go on. Then you can think about your feelings. The thing is, maybe the feeling itself isn't bad but the way you're dealing with it isn't the best way. That has alleviated a lot of social pressures and problems in school that might otherwise have arisen.*

Wanting to learn more about this Peer Counselling Programme I spoke with the founder
(who still heads the Programme) who told me he introduced Peer Counselling to his school in 1975, after being part of a seminal research programme on it two years previous. In 1996 he implemented a course in Peer Help and Human Relations. At the present time, the course has 145 trainees and another 120 in the school who have already been trained. Students wishing to participate in the Peer Mediation Programme must have parental consent on a signed form especially drafted for that purpose. The form sets out the mediation programme in such a way that parents have a clear understanding of all it encompasses. Potential mediators are given then given a 26-page handbook that is the foundation of the Peer Mediation course. At this point in time, the course embraces a ten to fifteen session training program depending on the group response. Of the 18 groups this year, the head of Peer Counselling Program will himself train 13, and another female counsellor in the department will train the other 5.

Evidently, the programme has been humming along efficiently since its inception several years ago, and so he doesn’t worry any more about linking students up. He indicated that "They (the counsellors) do it (the link-up) informally and naturally for the most part." He did add that with the incoming grade nines in the Fall, often the Peer Counselling Program will receive requests for a link early in the school year. In cases such as those, he uses a list of all the trained counsellors to choose one that he feels may be appropriate for that particular issue. He will then link the students, but again, informally. Once they are linked, it is up to them to arrange the convenient times when they are going to meet. Some will do it at lunch, some will do it after school, others before school. It may be twice a week, once a week, or whatever happens to suit both parties. At an invitation from the Director of Peer Counselling, I attended a session of the programme and found the discussions to be free-wheeling and highly interactive. The mediators
appear to regard this programme very seriously indeed, yet, the tone of the seminar was
decidedly light-hearted and convivial. The homework for the previous day had been to develop a
scenario requiring remediation and possible appropriate responses to it. The information the
students offered was inventive and their responses varied and creative. All were able to express
themselves well and appeared to understand the concept of peer mediation, their role in it, and
the benefits that could accrue to the students, teachers, and the school environment. As a strategy
to assuage the incidence of violence, from all reports so far, it would seem to be a successful
well-orchestrated venture.

A Resource teacher also from Bishop’s Gate is adamant that she, too, would "Get the kids
involved." It is her opinion that mediators, peer counsellors, student groups, and peer conflict
resolution should all be strong parts of the school community. She states that:

I'd incorporate all those things. If we can get parents and students involved in helping
each other to go through what is high school... I'm not talking about getting them to
behave or a little tribunal where kids come in. I think that if a kid gets into serious
difficulty with anger or violence and the repercussions are suspension, then I think there
should be a step in-between where they talk to a peer.

It is her credo that "They (the peers) should have no authority but be trained how to handle anger
and explosive situations, how to calm and mediate as well as how to prevent situations. And it
works!" She believes, moreover, that there are many students who are "naturally gifted that
way." She describes the qualities of these students:

They don't lose their cool. They are very calm. They use humour. They are very warm.
They don't hold a grudge and other kids listen to them. We need these kinds of kids and
there are at least 200 in every school. This is a real resource we're not even tapping.
Instead we're straining ourselves. A kid will say, "I'll talk to him, Miss, he'll talk to me."
(7) Participative Democracy and School Change

A Special Education teacher from the urban setting believes there is a place for increased student involvement around the issue of violence. She would like to see:

Kids from junior kindergarten and all the way up involved in school council and have it be a meaningful thing, a school council that would be governing body that would make decisions regarding academic, regards to selection of books, in regards to all sorts of things. I would like the students involved in the choices that are made.

Having herself done graduate level studies on brain research, she warms to her subject:

If you have a person and you want to maximize the whole brain you put them in a choice position because that will put them in the frontal lobe and they'll have access to both the creative side of their brain and the logic side of their brain. I think that many of the activities we do in school curriculum are geared to left brain work. We don't do enough to integrate left brain and right brain. The Rudolph Steiner Institute or the Waldorf School are the best I've ever seen looking at left brain/right brain integration.

Even in the early grades the teachers at the Steiner and Waldorf schools do an hour of physical activity a day with young kids on brain integration.\textsuperscript{73} She believes that the graduates she has spoken to and the sons and daughters of people that have gone through seem to be well-rounded community-oriented kind of people. She does admit, however, that without doing some serious testing it is hard to know whether this type of teaching is superior. She claims that considering what she knows about brain research and maximizing potential, there has to be appreciable differences for the better.

Pulling herself back from her introspection, she next discusses school councils. She still feels

\textsuperscript{73} For example, with these younger children, the teaching staff will do activities such as weaving with pictures and the kids create as they go such that they invent pictures from the right side of the brain and use logic and Mathematics to count the stitches.
that, although school councils have been adopted in her school, they are run in "an autocratic fashion." As is happening in the rural situation, she argues that, "They're changing the externals, like they so often do in education, but underlying it all, the structure is still the same." She argues that students are asked for their input, they give it in good faith, and then it's tossed aside and ignored. Instead, she strongly counsels that students' perspectives should be honoured. She expands upon her hypothesis:

*I would like to see a real serious effort made to listen to kids. And sometimes that's all they need, to have somebody listen, true involvement. Also they have an opinion that you or I couldn't possibly have. We're looking at it with adult eyes. We're not looking at it with the eyes of a person who is living the situation. You cannot say you know more than that person. If you were to talk to 30 kids, it's amazing what they will tell you.*

She reasons forcefully that such a shift in student participation would positively affect student interaction and therefore, behaviour. Students, in her opinion, are almost completely disenfranchised at school. "Students are expressing all kinds of feelings, 'Well I can't do it, so why say it. I can't do anything anyway, so why bother. I'm stuck here.'" She adds:

*Young people are powerless, that's why they go for power. They go for control, they go for manipulation because that's the only way they can subvert the power that exists. You find it in the world in the Mafia. They subvert government. It's another government under a government. What we have here with gangs is a government underneath a government.*

Then, she declares, rather pensively, it seems, her tone and eyes dropping:

*You know, we have students in school all these years and we systematically take away their feelings of power. Like with the Mathematics thing. It's not an accident that people don't know how to manage their money. We scare the hell out of people with regard to Math.*

Again, she maintains that schools have much to answer for regarding the ills of society:
They (people of main-stream society) wonder why people don’t show up at the polls to vote. Why would they show up to vote. We haven’t even ingrained that as a habit in the youngsters. We keep them in a confined situation longer than any mammal on the planet. And then we wonder why they are doing as they do. (We are) telling them to make choices, take responsibility, and we never give them any responsibility or practice in the making of choices. We are very, very foolish.

Further, she insists that although children seem to have more freedom in society and in the family, often, "It is because the parents aren’t there." She expresses her feelings that, "To some people it’s normal to give kids a lot of leeway and responsibility. And the kids respond with taking care. But at school, it doesn’t seem to be happening. We’re at a little bit of an impasse."

As in the example of rural school retreat, she charges that the gaining of responsibility as open only to the "honour’s club," a mistake in her opinion.

Continuing, she illustrates what she means by relating what happened on a Florida trip that students of all academic levels took, as part of their course work:

*Now, when we went to Florida, we gave the kids a ton of responsibility. And they cooked for themselves, and they did this for themselves. They responded. They knew there were rules and that they had to abide by them, and they were very good. They didn’t disappoint us once. And we were in situations where they could have gotten into serious trouble and we could have been up the creek.*

Perhaps once again this anecdote proves the old adage "You get what you expect." In this instance, the teachers expected appropriate behaviour from the students during their time spent in Florida. And the students delivered. She feels this episode proves that students know how to act responsibly and can live up to expectations. The next obvious question is, of course, "Why is this standard of behaviour not carrying over into day-to-day life?" The answer may be as simple as understanding that the Florida trip was an exceptional occasion. The incentives to behave well
were high; the alternatives were unthinkable: sent home in disgrace, separated from their friends.

Launching another thorny issue, she wondered aloud why students aren’t included in the academic "stuff" of decision-making at school. Answering her own question she offers this:

People see change as a trap. Teachers will emulate the teaching style and perpetuate the training that they had from a teacher who they felt was really good. Even the teachers right from Teachers' College who have been taught with different methodologies don’t put those methodologies into practice because that’s seen as different from the training that they had.

The difficulty, as she understands it, is that:

You can relate to people for different reasons. Your learning style may be a particular style and therefore you’ve adopted that style because that happens to be your best way of learning. There are all kinds of people with different learning styles that you have to pay attention to, but no, it’s too much work, it’s too hard, too much to think about. And that person doesn’t naturally gravitate to other styles and so it’s harder for them to do it. I think you need a co-operative teaching situation. I like to work in a co-operative situation. Like with Anna down the hall. We swap kids and change things. If I don’t get along in a situation, she’ll take over, or if she’s in an unwanted situation, I’ll take over. Many teachers on this staff have teamed up and you get a synergistic effect.

She believes that even more teacher involvement in teams should be encouraged by the administration. She feels that in elementary school, the teacher functions more like a parent does in a household. They take a "mother-hen approach to the students." The teachers in elementary school look on the principal like a father figure who will solve everything if need be. "They’re not really behaving in an adult model, in my opinion," she says. In high school the environment is "non-symbiotic. They relate differently, more like a person in society." She feels that:

Teachers are going to have to take responsibility, not just for union-type activities but for their professional development and for their own personal sanity and growth—to form partnerships: to share students, to share problems, to share challenges, and to ask students to share with them.
Furthermore, she warrants that as educators we need to look at this sharing and partnership idea and see how these young people can become involved in the main-stream in such a way that we are not always trying to be punitive or reactive. She champions a more proactive student role to make the school community into a truly participative community. Although a student council exists at her school, because students are not involved in all aspects of power-sharing, the council elections are, "little more than popularity contests, such that if you’re well-known, you’re listened to." Alternatively, it is her opinion that if all students were a true part of the decision-making mechanism, they wouldn’t rail against the system so much because they would know that they might be the next person in those shoes as leader. She reasons that "people feel differently when they’re an integral part of the determination process."

It is also her belief that vice principals and principals should be back in the classrooms. She advocates having all teachers rotating through positions of authority. For example, she suggests that a person be a principal for only a short time, then back teaching in the classroom. Everyone would rotate through the jobs because, as she elaborates:

You can’t know a person unless you walk a mile in their moccasins. You can’t know what they are facing, so if everybody had an opportunity to lead, to direct, then they would know what it’s like to take the reins of power and to live with the consequences of their decisions.

It is her position that urban living has changed in many ways:

There’s a lot more going on, a lot more people, a lot more frustration, people feeling less and less power in their life, angry with their lot in life, thinking that someone ought to rescue them. By continuing our present educational practices we are destroying initiative because students haven’t learned to be proactive.

She protests vehemently that "initiative just to get the work done in what teachers say they
must do" is not enough. She is speaking about real initiative and democratic participation such that students help shape the future through meaningful involvement relating to that future, but in concert with others. She argues, for example, that course subject matter should relate to something. As a means of explanation, she uses the Mathematics programme:

_In elementary school we teach Math in a top-to-bottom format. We add the vertical, as we multiply in a vertical sense. Then we sit them in grade nine and we do everything horizontally. Is it surprising they’re confused? Mathematicians have been telling us for 20 years that the Math system needs to be revised because we’re not teaching kids to think, we’re just teaching them rote stuff. Then we upset them [students] with another whole pattern of coding, that’s all grade nine and ten Math is, a different code that scientists use and it’s shorthand. Instead of a multiplication sign they use brackets. Do you know how long it takes to figure that out?_

She believes that in all her 31 years of teaching, at both the elementary and secondary levels, that democracy for students in schools is only "a titch better." She reiterates that she would like to have "teachers become guides, [the] people to counsel kids, work them through the subject matter, but with a view that the subject matter relates to something." She also insists that "schools are more violent than they were," a situation she blames largely on increased population numbers and because school pedagogy and structures haven’t changed enough to accommodate changing times.

**Discussion**

Teachers indicated that they try to impress upon students the necessity of keeping their emotional and physical selves under personal control. In some instances, teachers will attempt any strategy that might work in the mediation of violence. In one instance, a teacher stated that he "would try anything," even to the imitation of students’ poor behaviour and inappropriate
language turning it back on the students themselves, in an effort to demonstrate how offensive and counter-productive such behaviour really is.\textsuperscript{74} In violence management, the strategies teachers employ are both reactive, which, in a general sense, are courses of action to truncate violent behaviour already initiated, and proactive, which are commonly efforts concentrated in violence prevention, designed and put in place ahead of time to forestall incidences from (ideally) occurring at all. The teacher/participants offer strategies categorized as reactive or proactive, with each category having policy-based, pedagogically-based, and student-centred strategies. A strategy listed as being within one group need not mean exclusion from another. For example, innovative and stimulating lessons is a proactive strategy that is pedagogically-based but may also be student-centred.

When violence or inappropriate behaviour occurs teachers’ reactive strategies run the gamut from humour and innovative pedagogy and separation from the group, to threats of consequences, punitive curricular responses, suspension, and expulsion. As many teachers attested, however, even though they feel they react well to violence, the problem of violence continues largely unchanged, in that it is just delayed until the next occurrence of misbehaviour. This is not to say that reactive strategies have no place, just that by their very nature they apparently tend to be ‘ad hoc,’ used at the single instance, rather than employed as an attempt to change the underlying behaviour motivation. Reactive strategies, because they are necessarily chosen quickly from the brain’s database, often as an involuntary response to a perceived need, can be a bit of a gamble, not necessarily always achieving the desired intent. For example, if a

\textsuperscript{74} This strategy is one that some may find has little positive value.
nasty shouting match breaks out while the teacher is speaking, often the first instinct is to raise
the voice and shout over the noise to truncate the angry exchange and re-focus student attention.
This strategy may achieve the desired results once or twice, but the problem may be a recurring
one. With each recurrence, it may be more difficult to stop the aberrant behaviour, regain student
attention, and keep it, because students may just choose to ignore the teacher’s shouting.
Concurrently, a more proactive response might give consideration to changing the seating
allocations of the instigators, or having a discussion about proper behaviour when the class is not
under the stress of an on-going incident. Times when emotions are high and the tenor of a
classroom is agitated may not necessarily be the most appropriate moments for a calm and
reasonable discussion about behaviour expectations. By stealing valuable instruction and
learning time, repeated interruptions can be very frustrating for teachers and students who want
to learn. Unfortunately, people tend to rely on those practices that they have used before,
successful or not, especially if they have little time to thoughtfully make a new choice.

Teachers also advocate and use a range of proactive strategies. Some are based in rules and
regulation, like zero tolerance for violence. Others stem from sound pedagogy and establishment
of student-teacher rapport, and student-driven initiatives. Proactive strategies as strategies to
reduce violence, however, appear to fare much better than reactive strategies. Sometimes,
though, even a rational proactive approach may not achieve the desired result. I am referring to a
recurring situation related by a rural setting teacher who runs a retreat for academically excellent
students. He reminds the students who will be left behind at school, about his expectations of
their behaviour during the time when he and some of their classmates are away at the retreat, and
the substitute teacher is in attendance. He complains that he "just knows" that "one of them will
have blown it." His approach to student behaviour in his absence seems to expect poor behaviour.

When his negative expectations are realized, he invariably seems to address the difficulty in the same ineffective manner that he has always done, instead of initiating something new and creative to effect the behaviour he desires. The students who do not go to the retreat may feel cast adrift with all the good students and class leaders away. By the teacher's own admission, not everyone has the ability to be a leader. Perhaps, though, other student leaders could be invited to join his class during the time he is absent, or a team-teaching situation could be effected whereby the students left behind have an interesting activity of their own to anticipate. An even more student-centred approach, whereby students are included in the activities planning, might yield exciting new possibilities. In any event, the idea of this rural setting teacher/camp director talking to the students ahead of his departure seems a good strategy that perhaps just needed a little something extra. It is not expected that one teacher alone will have workable solutions for every problem, but as part of a teaching staff, to get access to new ideas he probably has only to ask. By brainstorming with other teachers, a solution to this repetitive and unacceptable behaviour may be easily found. Working this carefully out ahead of time, in concert with others, while giving consideration to students' perspective, may effect the desired behaviour.

Other proactive techniques, like student-centred Peer Mediation Programmes, are much favoured by teachers and, apparently, students (if their participation and enthusiasm is one

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75 Some may argue that asking for ideas and help from colleagues is generally not done, however, I would argue that with the advent of strategies such as team teaching, teachers are encouraged to interact more with each other rather than functioning in relative isolation.
measure) of Bishop’s Gate urban school. The Bishop’s Gate teachers believe that once the programmes have been initiated and are running smoothly, they can be left largely in the hands of students, with faculty in an advisory capacity only. Proactive programmes such as these are accessed repeatedly to avoid incidents from commencing and if an occasion arises in which violence occurs despite best efforts to the contrary, the strategies can often interrupt the violence cycle, diffusing incidents and preventing them from swinging completely out of control. Teachers at Bishop’s Gate attribute much of its decrease in the level of aggressive behaviour directly to their active Peer Mediation programme.

Additionally, a mix of proactive and reactive strategies such as rapport, separation, and humour which many teachers of both settings creatively employ in tandem, continue, in their opinion, to serve them well. The urban setting school seemed especially proficient in that regard. For example, recalling the incident of two boys fighting at Bishop’s Gate, the teacher who intervened imaginatively and humorously asked loudly, "Are you boys touching each other?", a choice of words which immediately effected the desired result—cessation of the physical scuffle.76 Admittedly, this reactive response does not address the root cause(s) of the problem, but there are mediation programmes in place to deal with these issues once the physical altercation has been curtailed. The Director of the Peer Mediation Programme claims, moreover, that many of these physical altercations, although appearing to be of an incendiary nature, often dissipate once the combatants are separated.

On the face of it, proactive initiatives seem to have a better chance to address the root causes

76 I did not sense that there were homophobic undertones here, but that does not mean that there were not.
of violence. Nevertheless, there are potentially many instances during a school day which require reactive strategies as a diffusion aid. Choosing just the right response to diffuse a situation that may have the potential to spin out of control rapidly can be a challenge for any teacher. Complicating matters further, the teacher may have only a short time to "choose and use" his/her strategy. Proactive strategies can be considered carefully, designed, and put in place over time, their efficacy gauged and the strategy modified as required.
Chapter Seven

A World Turned Upside Down?

Preamble

This study was intended, first as an exploration into constructions of violence from a sampling of 12 urban and rural setting teachers in two schools and second, as a source of insights into current directions in teacher-based violence-response and violence-prevention strategies. Specifically, I looked at initiatives used by educators to interrupt the cycle of violence to thereby maintain a safe learning environment for children. Strategies were seen as either reactive or proactive in nature stemming from ideas based in policy, in pedagogy, in a student-centred approach, or a combination thereof.

In this final chapter of the thesis, I begin with a summary of teacher/participants’ constructions of violence in these two schools and offer a representative definition of violence derived from the commentary of the 12 study participants. I re-visit the main conceptual perspectives of the thesis: pedagogy, the family, and democracy, but through a consideration of how the supplementary and derivative issues of value theory, power, culture, interest, school change, and leadership all intermix with each other. Put another way, I claim that these core and derivative concerns intertwine around and about the issue of violence in schools and in these two schools in particular.
Thesis Summation

Constructions of Violence

As a review of the literature has indicated, constructions of school-based violence have evolved to become more inclusive over time. Constructions of violence as construed by the study participants have experienced a similar qualitative change. On the basis of the present research, this definition is offered as representative of the study participants’ current conceptualization of violence: *any action perpetrated with the intent of being hurtful to another or oneself can be considered violent.*

Teachers’ general constructions of violence were found to be remarkably consistent between and among the two urban and rural school settings. There were marked differences, however, in teachers’ constituent views positing the prevalence of violence *in their own schools.* Although the urban teachers at Bishop’s Gate allowed that violent incidences occurred, they generally conceptualized their school as non-violent with occasional disruptive and choleric overtones, an assessment largely validated by the research data of consequent in-depth interviews and classroom observation.

Like their urban counterparts, Woodview teachers (save one) conceived their school as mostly non-violent. Intriguingly, however, this construction did not seem to be confirmed either by their responses (elicited in consequent in-depth interview questions), or by the research data garnered during subsequent classroom observation sessions. Rural setting teachers described a wide list of aberrant behaviour on-going in their school including bullying, racially-motivated abuses, self abuse related to drugs and alcohol, incest and sexual assault, verbal abuse, and fighting. Yet, one teacher still stated, "We’ve been fortunate here that we’ve not had a lot of
violence at all." When asked what she would include under the rubric of violence, she responded, "I think physical first of all." Then she immediately added, "Oh, on fights, we can hold our own. We have a significant number of fights." The continuity of this strand of thought may seem rather curious and even, on the face of it, somewhat contradictory, especially in light of her detailed descriptions of a wide range of violent occurrences at her school. Could there be something else impinging upon her construction that her school is non-violent? This provides a segue into the next area for discussion: value theory.

Value Theory

An individual's cognitive perception of both environment and culture forms patterns and structures embedded in the subconscious as belief systems. These are accepted as true by many who also hold similar impressions. As humans change themselves and the world around them in a continual and reciprocal process (Giddens, 1993), an individual's perception of reality constantly changes in the ebb and flow of these shared processes (Tierney, 1987). Because our world is socially constructed, the layers of meaning incorporated within that reality may be mediated by a myriad of implicit influences both subjective and objective, for example: the culture of the organization, historical tradition, current situational contexts, and individual perception about how one thinks life should be or how one wishes it to be (Tierney, 1987).

Just how, and to what extent these (and other) influences impinge upon meaning is impossible to predict. Meanings, after all, are mental constructions that reflect the infinite interactions, circumstances, and events of human experience (Tierney & Lincoln, 1994) and largely depend upon the individual and the experiential baggage one brings to that occurrence. Moreover, the extent to which these contingencies interact may vary profoundly among
individuals. To illustrate, a teacher’s response to a violent circumstance may not be necessarily
determined by the specific incident itself, but rather by the image the teacher has constructed of
that school in that particular setting, the nature of the people involved, or even how the teacher
perceives his/her own life experience at that particular moment. Can we apply this thinking to
this study?

On the basis of the research findings, violence and the potential for violence is still a
ubiquitous problem in both of these rural and urban settings. Several of the rural setting
educators voluntarily cited large metropolitan areas, specifically inner city Toronto, as "probably
the only place in Canada to look for school violence." In part, this belief may be a result of the
repeated wide-spread publicity and attention given to school violence in Toronto. Urban centres
are common sites for research especially if their population is large, and school violence
continues to be regarded as an important and timely topic. When incidences of violence occur in
schools and are reported in the media, parents, who expect their children to be safe at school, can
become concerned and demand action. In areas of greater population, that demand will usually
have a stronger voice. The more the problem of violence in urban areas is investigated, the more
the association between urban schools and violence becomes solidified in our belief systems.
This is not to say that there is not plenty of violence in urban schools, just that not every school
sustains the same level. Context is key.

Now, if we return to the apparently contradictory commentary by a rural setting teacher in
our previous section Constructions of Violence, we might conclude that her observations were
informed, to some degree, by her conceptions of violence embedded in the mental imaging of her
belief system many years ago, when violence was commonly equated only with indictable crimes
like physical assault and weapons offenses. Her own locution may actually support this claim. When asked about violence she states, "I never come to school worrying about guns or knives." Even though she articulated violence contemporarily as also encompassing a wide range of non-indictable offenses, her belief system has seemingly not really modified her long-held conceptions of violence as related only to offenses like assault causing injury and crime. The difficulty, then, may be encapsulated in the notion that once a school or community has gained a reputation as a place where violence flourishes, that mental image begins to coalesce and become embedded in the sub-conscious as part of a belief system, reinforced over time until, ultimately, it is accepted as a given or fact. This thoughtetrain may, to some degree, be part of the reason why many rural setting participants particularize inner city Toronto is the only place to look for violence in Canada.

*The Urban/Rural Dichotomy*

As the interviews proceeded, it soon became apparent that two contradictory strands were emerging. On the one hand, there was the supposition by Woodview teachers that rural settings, geographically isolated from large metropolitan areas, were somehow also insulated from the alleged ravages of violence which, many argued, is almost exclusively a phenomenon of urban society. On the other hand, some of these rural setting educators were of the opinion that there is something almost indefinable in the mystique of rural living itself that lulls people into an impractical and specious sense that 'real' violence couldn't happen there. Paradoxically, it was often the same people who held both impressions.

It *is* curious that at the rational level the study participants in the rural setting seemed able to weigh the virtues and limitations of country life, but, at the psychological level their emotions
and senses could not accept country living as anything other than the ultimate idyll of perfection as romanticized in their mental imaging. These incongruous notions may have everything to do with their own search for "the good life" (Beck, 1993) and wanting to cling to the cognitive conception of country living as a pastoral culture, the ultimate idyllic escape from the harsh realities of life. It may, likewise, be part of the explanation why so many of the rural setting educators of this study are seemingly unable to comprehend that there is violence in their school even when their axiomatic responses to in-depth questioning clearly testify that there is. The idea that because teachers know the students committing certain actions and because these actions are conducted in a rural setting does not exempt unacceptable behaviours from being considered violent even when using the rural teachers' own definition of violence as a point of reference.

Indeed, several teachers seemed to suggest that because their school setting was rural it was, therefore, non-violent. However, the empirical evidence did not really substantiate this view. A feeling of security based solely on the belief that because an environment is rural, it is necessarily immunized against violence, may, for some observers, be somewhat misplaced. Perhaps their comments were not meant as baldly as they appeared, but the idea of a rural environment being equated with safety does seem to impinge, to some degree, on how they view their school with regard to violence. Thus, this conception of rural schooling may likewise account, to some extent, for one teacher's comments when his attempts at mentoring were not as successful as he might have wished: "I just let the thing slide. I find that these kids don't need mentoring." Yet another statement that seems to support the belief of Toronto as violent may be illustrated by a rural setting teacher who attended a conference in Toronto on Peer Mediation who claimed to be shocked that some schools in Toronto were only mediating a half dozen
conflicts a year.

*School Change, Leadership, and Interest Revisited*

Although the face of education has evolved over time, a large percentage of the rural educators particular to this study perhaps have difficulty rationalizing their idealized mental image of the small-town, traditional rural community school with the new reality of their large rural district school-in-transition that, in almost every aspect, save geographical setting, has assumed many of the characteristics of its urban counterpart. Further, there appears to be an unwillingness to allow that perhaps it is worthy of some attention that the so-called gap between rural school violence and that of urban schools may be closing. In some instances (such as this particular study), rural violence may even have surpassed that of its urban counterpart.

The rural educators’ notion that there is a dichotomous difference between urban and rural schooling with respect to violence does not really stand up, at least when considering these two schools. Part of the reason may be related to the change in school size. Many of the rural participants, with some justification, consider 2000 students too many in one school, especially in over-crowded conditions such as they describe. One Woodview teacher summed up the situation this way, "You get a hot muggy day with 2000 kids stuck in the hall. The kids are like rats in a cage." Perhaps it is time to abandon the long-held belief that violence in a rural setting cannot approach that of the urban setting, at least in the context of these two schools. A reconsideration of the rural school within the context of its population numbers' alone could be

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77 There are several other contextual factors affecting this rural school that make it different from its urban counterpart, for example, the fact that Woodview is Public, not Catholic like Bishop’s Gate.
helpful for those trying to effect real progress in the mitigation of incidences of violence in their school community.

The rural school of nearly 2000 students has one full time Guidance Counsellor, yet, the urban school with a student population 1250 students has five full time Guidance Counsellors. That having been said, the urban educators may still comprehend their school as more prone to violence than do their rural counterparts. Both beliefs may be based on the same embedded mental imaging whereby the rural schools are considered not as prone to violence as urban schools. Pushing that thought a little, is it not possible that these beliefs may be responsible, to some extent, for the active and successful Mentoring and Peer Mediation Programmes at Bishop’s Gate and the less than successful efforts (by rural teachers’ own assessment) at Woodview? Even so, a recent study has shown that early childhood is the best time to intervene and attempt to break the cycle of violent behaviour (Brand, 1998). Advancing that idea, it seems reasonable to argue that behaviour prevalent in secondary school will be much more difficult to modify than if it had been addressed from the perspective of active prevention and mediation in elementary school. Thus, the assessment of their schools as non-violent, in part, because they are situated in a rural community could be a disservice to both the children and society, both as perpetrators and as victims.

Another point that may have some relevance to the evident contradictions between these rural setting teachers’ characterization of their school as non-violent and their testimony in the in-

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78 This is not to shovel the blame to the elementary schools, just to put out the thought that the more often a behaviour pattern is repeated the more difficult it is to mediate. Therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that the earlier the cycle of violence is broken, the better.
depth interviews may be related to the perception of schools. Private schools, funded as they are with private money, have an interest in keeping violence out of their schools because they know the negative impact it can have on learning. Thus, if we consider that private schools commonly push out the unruly and violent, then those educators can perhaps more easily capture an image of having a very academic milieu for learning.\textsuperscript{79} While it is important to acknowledge that inputting the motives of others can be very challenging and unreliable, at best, might those who claim that their settings are non-violent (for whatever reason) be sub-consciously trying to project themselves and their schools as serving, and being part of, the academic elite?\textsuperscript{80} Only intense introspection and honest self-examination of motives might perhaps yield an answer, but it is, nevertheless, a thought worthy of some consideration.

\textit{Power and Culture Reconsidered}

The prevailing belief that only teachers have the answers and remedies to school violence is still espoused by many of the study participants, especially those in the rural setting. They argue that because youth are immature they do not yet have the necessary experience to make appropriate "adult-type" decisions. Certain observers may be unconvincing of the validity of their self-endorsement, viewing it perhaps as narrow-minded, uncompromising, and even elitist. There may, however, be some comprehension of how such inflexibility came to be. It may be argued

\textsuperscript{79} This comment about private schools is merely cited as an example of the variety of motivational factors behind actions, rather than as any direct comparison to either of the schools in this study, neither of which are private.

\textsuperscript{80} The so-called ‘academic elite’ to which I am referring is a perception to which some subscribe, that because a school is private and selective in the students it accepts, it somehow is judged to be better. A discussion about this perception will not be continued here, only acknowledged that the debate is on-going.
that this stance has roots in decades, even centuries, of authoritarian power wielded by teachers as the autocratic standard-bearers of educational bureaucracy. One Woodview teacher notes that students regard any offer of student participation in the educational decision-making process as a serious commitment, giving well-considered responses, but because they are without real power and influence, their participation, and therefore, their responses are considered of little value by the rural educators and their administration. Moreover, we appear to have a case of double jeopardy, in that, because disenfranchised students do not have power or influence, they do not have the voice to effectively make themselves heard in any kind of determined way. According to the testimony of one Woodview teacher, an agenda, orchestrated by educators, is already in place (at Woodview) with token student participation paying mere lip-service to the concept of real student empowerment.\footnote{Perhaps, this is an example of the "tried it once—don’t like it, it’s no good" syndrome.} Again, the argument is made that powerless students continue to be manipulated to serve pragmatic ends.

Some teacher/participants, particularly those of Woodview, continue to charge that students cannot be entrusted with even the simplest responsibility, unless shored up with an amplitude of authoritarian instruction. They argue that when students are allowed to act unilaterally, they "mess up." Youth can be guided from an early age to make thoughtful decisions and to learn to accept the consequences of those decisions. But, there might be something else "in the motives, states of mind, or personality configuration of teachers that makes them wary" (Townsend, 1967, p. 7) of championing a more empowering and democratic approach for students. Part of the answer may be simplistic: teachers may find the participative approach too much a time-
consuming and energy-draining process. Changes often do not achieve desired success levels overnight. Mistakes and errors of judgement have always been part of learning. Like other schooling, good judgement and self-determination are complex skills, learned and made better by practice. Unfortunately, when students are not given enough opportunities to practise these learned skills, why then are we surprised when their abilities prove less than proficient?

Several study participants, most notably of the urban setting, are advocates of increased meaningful student involvement in all aspects of schooling. It seems reasonable to argue that if schooling is a practical socialization process preparing youth for entry into adult democratic society, then meaningful participation in all aspects of the democratic process should be part of that afore-mentioned process. An achievement of increased student participation and involvement, gathering ever more momentum at Bishop’s Gate Secondary, is an innovative programme of Peer Mediation. Initiated by a teacher several years earlier, the project head has transferred much of the programme’s structures and operation mechanisms into the hands of the Peer Mediators themselves. Once the mediator trainees have successfully passed the graded course programme requirements, the director/trainer’s main function after programme coordination, is more in the nature of a trouble-shooter and advisor to the student mediators who “run the show.” Taking the initiative in their mediation duties, these trained students have become, by and large, self-regulating mediators linking up with troubled peers who require competent assistance to face the innumerable challenges of teenage years. The Peer Mediators

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82 Teachers cannot be expected to undertake this task of increased participative democracy alone and in isolation, however, there are changes, admittedly small, that teachers can initiate as a beginning.
fulfil a special need, in that students who are perhaps unwilling to speak with teachers will often readily confide in peers. Furthermore, teachers, by their own admission, are ostensibly over-worked. Peer Mediators are able and willing to step into the breach and meet the summons.

Into the present, the dissemination of this student-driven initiative within the school has been excellent. Regrettably, the rate of penetration of similar student-driven enterprises into other schools, according to the Director of the programme, has been poor. The programme of Peer Mediation, set up in the manner of Bishop’s Gate, is initially very teacher-intensive. This may be a part of the reason for its lack of dissemination. Although a Peer Mediation Programme has been initiated at Woodview on a volunteer basis, its organization, teacher commitment, and effectiveness are somewhat suspect. For many teachers and administrators, because change, except in a superficial sense, requires time and real dedication to forge, it may be easier to slide along with the status quo still firmly entrenched.

Of the two schools involved in this study, Woodview, the rural setting school, is by far the more culturally homogeneous, yet it is, arguably, also the school with more verbal abuse of culture and physical violence against culture. Although the rural setting teachers, speaking about these dangerous cross-cultural misbehaviours in the interviews and reproach the discrimination as intolerable, there has apparently been no organized teaching strategy to address and overcome this type of racially inappropriate and unacceptable conduct. Consequently, the issue of cultural difference appears to have been relegated to the bottom of the remediation pile.

The fact of the matter is that schools, generally, have been intractable to meaningful systemic change. The promise of a progressive humanitarian education in our lifetime has yet to be realized (Cremin, 1961; Usher & Edwards, 1994). Those controlling education appear to place
retention of their positions within the educational system of bureaucracy ahead of any commitment to participative democracy for students. We have perhaps lived with the culture and the controlling organizational complexities of our schools for so long that we may fail to consider that problems in the system (such as violence) may be rooted in such fundamentals as perceived social status, attitude, interconnections or isolations, customs, tradition, and language (Wyner, 1991). Furthermore, postmodern social theory understands culture as more distinctly complex than its singular conception in times past with its emphasis on shared meanings and understandings. Such sharing is no longer appropriate because, as Giroux (1983) and others have shown, culture is essentially a struggle over meanings and about meanings and, I would argue, about experience, symbolizations, and interpretations. There is no longer a monolithic unitary culture but a multiformity of diverse cultures, alternative cultures, sub-cultures and oppositional cultures, and so on (McLaren, 1991) which should be, and are being, continuously negotiated rather than traditionally pre-determined and static. Culture’s voice is polyphonic and the dominant classes, the social and political power weavers and wielders (like educators) could consider ways to give voice to and legitimate the struggles of different cultures and their subordinate groups to facilitate the social transformation that some observers feel is now becoming a necessity. The benefits that would accrue not only to the students, but also to the teachers, could be significant.

Several teacher/participants in the urban setting, cautioning that students are still largely disenfranchised from the democratic process, advocated the need for meaningful student participation at the action level, for example, in the selection of academic texts and the meaningful contribution of suggestions for academic content. According to these few teachers, if
students could comprehend where teachers are headed with academic content, by acting as constituent agents contributing to its creation and direction of learning, perhaps they might then feel a sense of empowerment and self-determination in their own education.

Another participant’s hypothesis recommended that teachers should function more as guides for students as they think and discover, rather than as autocratic commanders spouting Socratically from their towers of power. An opinion offered by another urban setting teacher argues that students manipulate and "act out" as a strategy "to subvert the power that exists." She feels that oppression perpetrated and perpetuated by educational bureaucracy is forcing youth to become, in effect, power scavengers, seizing and manipulating both power and influence wherever and whenever they can, in attempts, often disastrous, to redefine their own social positions. Similarly, student gangs could be considered as functions of the disenfranchised, snatching their share of power, in a kind of "Everybody wants to rule the world" scenario.

"Every social institution is undergoing radical shifts, and educational systems must prepare our youth for a very different world" (Houston, 1991, p. 2). Could it likewise be time for schools undergo fundamental changes in alignment with those of society? For, if our schools fail, then society and by extrapolation, global society, will fail. Schools have, in fact, not changed very much in a hundred years, at least not in any elemental and innovative sense, from the perspective of our youth. There exist many how to writings promoting, encouraging, and advocating change for people, policies, and practice in education; however, some observers argue that genuine progressive change which specifically speaks to the role of students within the educational system has largely been ignored or been essentially superficial. Yet, participation in the meaningful ownership of school change, its ideology and vision, along democratic lines could be
seen, for students, as a welcome breakthrough indeed. Empowerment would allow students a more dominant role in deciding what schools should do now, toward the Millennium, and beyond. Such a contingency could help re-orient schools and their inhabitants towards improved academic excellence by encouraging discourse from a central, yet presently disenfranchised, segment of the school population.

We might conjecture how the present system could change if we were to replace control with empowerment, domination with freedom, authority with consent (Clark & Meloy, 1989), and to make regard for, and nourishment of, the individual the central concern. This fundamental and structural change toward participatory democratic practice and inclusion could potentially change the administrative face of education at all levels, but especially at the student level. Democratized school governance has the capacity to be more responsive to the needs of students who are, after all, the ostensible reason for the educational system in the first place (Goldstein, Harootunian, & Conoley, 1994).

In a recent book concerning student aggression, both its management and prevention, the authors offer a list of potential solutions. Democratized school governance ranked in the bottom third of recommended administrative changes, well behind reactive measures such as skilled conflict negotiators and school administration-police coordination (Goldstein, Harootunian, & Conoley, 1994, pp. 14-16). But, there have been many studies over the years pointing squarely at school administrative organizational structures, their practices and controls, as important contributing factors to delinquent and disruptive behaviours (Elliott & Voss, 1974; Goldstein et al., 1994; Kelly, 1975).

Arguably, teachers could re-think their role as the champions of classroom law and order.
They are not, nor should they necessarily be, educational police. New and creative methods signalling a high level of engagement from a learning perspective may be the motivational impetus that promotes more acceptable behaviour. These methods may include some of the minor suggestions that educators have offered in this study. What these alterations could also include, however, is what some educators in this study appear to fear most: the more wide-sweeping internal infra-structural changes at the very core of our educational belief system: increased meaningful student involvement, democratic practice and shared authority with, not over students. So often in these schools, and possibly in others, the externals may be changed but underlying it all, the internal structure, the institutional engine propelling the bureaucracy endures, unchanged.

Although the construction of violence has evolved over time, the construction of acceptable behaviour appropriate for the new world order, has not, in any formal sense, been widely studied. Most would agree that there are certain standards of appropriate student behaviour, but also that behaviour deemed acceptable has evolved to become more inclusive over time. But, one question that could be raised is this: what are these standards and who has designated or should designate, their articulation? Perhaps, a new construction of "acceptable behaviour" could be redefined in concert with teachers, administrators, and students such that all parties comprehend and concur with the parameters of acceptable conduct. This decision, by consensus, may discourage reversion by teachers and students to the older denotation as an satisfactory option.

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83 This new world order refers to our contemporary society and the freedoms enjoyed therein. These new freedoms have, arguably, resulted in a more interactive, participative world, yet the educational system continues largely unchanged, at least in this sense.
For, as one teacher put it, "It's a new world out there." What was an appropriate standard of behaviour a century or even decades ago may not necessarily be appropriate for the 1990s and beyond the Millennium. Because, according to several study participants, students have a different and important perspective and because the purposes of education are centred about students (Hodgkinson, 1991), it seems reasonable to expect them to help recast and re-shape heretofore existing life dimensions to be more in line with their perspective of our world. Some may see it as unfair for youth to be cloistered by timeworn behavioural expectations not synergistic with the contemporary world. They may argue that young people, with their interpretive approach (from the perspective of their youth) to a structured and bureaucratic world, are the ultimate expression of postmodernism. Youth traditionally have found their own way, often rejecting and railing against education, that enduring cornerstone of modern era bureaucracy. Inevitably, a tension can develop between young people’s determined quest to chart their own way and the teachers and administrators who support the existing controlling mechanism that is education. At the risk of some hyperbole, some may fear that as the suppressive bureaucracy pushes down from the top, the generated heat and unrest can often explode out the sides as violent, aggressive, and abusive behaviour.

There are educators of both study settings who seem able to establish a rapport with their students and accomplish differences of race, class, and experience without the use of force and coercive discipline. Between these educators and their students can dwell an atmosphere of mutual respect and support "in the pursuit of higher personal and collective goals" (Noguera, 1995, p. 206) fostering a sense of respect and co-operation through increased participation and involvement. Such efforts can be directed to promote a more humane school environment for all.
Several teachers, more notably in the urban setting, appear to have stepped back to reconsider the whole picture. It is their view that to reconstruct school culture, such that it encompasses not only a respect for learning (Dalin, 1993) but also a respect between and among individuals, might require a fundamental attitude modification on the part of some of the teachers to whom we look for leadership and society under whose auspices the present system has been willfully developed. Unfortunately in the frenetic pace of the new world order, for most, there seems scarcely an opportunity to consider change so basic and of such magnitude. Realistically then, in the minds of many educators this means a continuation of existing practices which like band-aids on a cancerous sore just covers but not cures the ulceration.

As this research indicates there is more to students’ sense of security and their schools as "safe havens" than being free from physical violence. Students are at risk at school if their personal, communal, and societal needs are being not met. Aspects of these needs central to a healthy and happy life for our youth (and, indeed, for anyone) include a sense of belonging and community, dignity, respect, self-esteem, power, accomplishment, positive relationships and so on (Stone, 1998). These intangibles, these inner needs of security are never completely satisfied, for they are on-going and compelling (Stone, 1988). Intriguingly, if we examine these facets of security, it is demonstrable that the needs of dignity, respect, power, and so on are not achieved alone, but are communal needs, all achieved in concert with others.

Consider, for a moment, the example of power. What is power but the ability to control?

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84 This is not to suggest that teachers are not trapped within the same system as the students. Teachers, however, have power strategies (like the ability to strike), available to them to encourage system modification. Admittedly, modifying existing structures may not be easy, but neither is it considered an impossibility.
Even power over one’s own body is a denial of the right of others to have that power. Teens will often not eat a healthy diet even though they are aware of the necessity for proper nourishment and despite the pleadings of their parents. In an extreme example, when teenagers feel completely disenfranchised at school, in society, and at home, it is not uncommon for them to mistreat their own bodies through the use of drugs/alcohol or starvation (the latter leading to anorexia), in attempts to "have power over" something, even if that power proves detrimental to their health, and perhaps, even fatal. In the case of anorexia, several teachers stated that youth (more commonly, girls) know that because "thin is in" they can starve themselves to re-shape their bodies and gain the approval of their peers that they need (approval they may not be receiving in other facets of their lives). They are attempting to satisfy an essential, the need for power, by extracting a terrible toll on their bodies. In reality the "power over" motivation they long to satiate may not be a true "power over" dimension; rather, it is a cultural and communal one, the approval of their outward physical self by peers. The starvation of the body is just the means to that end, to demonstrate that they, as young people, can number themselves among the powerful.

It seems reasonable, then, that if young folk begin to enjoy a sense of security, using what I will call positive power, accomplished through an active and real voice in the determination of their school lives, then they may be less likely to resort to the deleterious dimensions of negative power. Negative powers like self-abuse, violence towards others, and violence against society’s infrastructures lurk as destructive mechanisms that become manifest when the opportunities for attaining positive powers are denied. What I am advocating here is a means to reduce the incidence of negative power (that is, the types of violence articulated in this study). Two teachers
of the urban setting noted that by acting proactively we can encourage and advance student empowerment through participative democratic practice in all aspects of school life. Perhaps if we foster the essentials of dignity, esteem, accomplishment and so on in every school-age youth,\textsuperscript{85} then the necessity and justification for "acting out" will be severely impeded. As this research suggests, there is much teen abuse directed not only inwardly upon themselves but also outwardly towards other people, towards the demands of society, and also society's "tangibles," the elements of societal infrastructure. Students may become hurt and/or angry, and may signal their displeasure through a wide variety of unacceptable behaviours, from self abuse, to verbal abuse, physical violence and so on, when these human essential needs are not met.

Most would agree that schooling, which comprises a large part of life in children's formative years, should be a satisfying experience, with a sense of happiness and well-being, achieved from accomplishment and personal fulfilment. For some, schools seem to be forbidding and frightening places where social control is the goal. The alternative choice to these chaotic and violence-ridden institutions are friendly havens where the joy of learning and mutual respect are venerated. Given an honest chance, a relevant and meaningful school experience for all can be realized in our generation through thoughtful consideration and compassion for all learners, seeking, like everyone else, equality of participation, fulfilment, and their own sense of subjectivity and honour. Children can learn to be responsible not only through tasks like completing assignments on time but, more importantly, through the exercising of free will,

\textsuperscript{85} So often it is the accomplished student who is singled out for praise, but perhaps the students who need encouragement and support the most are those for whom schooling, for whatever reason, has not been an unqualified success.
through the opportunity making of choices and learning to be accountable for their decisions. This perpetual cycle of disenfranchisement can be severed if students’ roles are recast as meaningful and integral parts of the educational and democratic process at the action level. Such an eventuality would necessarily rattle the core structures of the educational bureaucracy itself. Turning the world of education upside down does not have to be a prescription for disaster as many doomsayers would have us believe. Rather, the light of renewal and rebirth could galvanize education such that its tenets are consonant with the contemporary democratic world. Admittedly, this is neither a task for the faint of heart nor one to be undertaken trivially. The enormity and importance of true reform cannot be overstated. Can we afford to rend the present system to such a degree? The real question is perhaps, "Can we afford not to?"

Implications for Future Study

The present research has focussed on the voices of teachers as those dealing with school violence on the front line. But students, as equally important stakeholders in education as teachers, also have to deal with school violence, but from a different perspective perhaps, than teachers. A study, focussing on school violence from the students’ perspective, articulated by the students themselves, may penetrate the issue in new, exciting, and creative ways. This present study has examined only two schools and results, although interesting and intriguing, are really only applicable to these two schools. More research needs to be undertaken before the results

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86 Certainly, some children appear to have little self-regulating ability. This apparent inability prompts teachers to impose more control and more guidance. This can lead to more rebellion of students followed by more control by teacher, a vicious and non-constructive cycle (Edwards, 1993). If our thought-train returns to Chapter Two for a moment, we can recall that historically, punishment is how society has dealt with infractions.

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would in any way allow for generalizability. But in this particular instance, the lack of congruence between the idealized vision of the rural school and the recounted reality as it pertains to school violence could have serious consequences for school and community if, because of certain factors and conditions, teachers fail to consider seriously, issues of violence in schools.
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Appendix (A)

Schedule of General Interview Questions

1) Would you give me a little background about yourself and your situation? How long you have been teaching, what subjects and so on?

2) Could you characterize the student population of your school, articulating such areas as advantaged/disadvantaged, family situation, ability levels, anything you feel is relevant to give me a clear understanding of your situation?

3) Do you worry about violence at school?

4) In a general sense could you briefly indicate what types of behaviour you would include under the rubric ‘school violence’?

5) Have you ever encountered violence at school?

6) Has your pre-service and/or in-service training prepared you for your experience with school violence?

7) Select some particularly troublesome situation and tell me what you did.

8) Would you do the same thing again?

9) Hypothetically, if you were in charge of the whole school, what would you do to manage school violence?

10) How does that compare with what you do now?

11) Are there things you would like to do that school policy does not permit?

12) Can you speak to other productive measures that might have an impact on the incidence of school violence?

13) Can you see a place for more student involvement around this issue in schools? In what way(s)?

14) Is there anything about this issue that I failed to address in the interview that you wish to discuss?
I am conducting a qualitative study to explore teachers’ strategies and practices dealing with school violence. The incidence of school violence and student misbehaviour are issues that many teachers have to address at some time in their teaching careers. The study will have three research phases: teacher interviews, participant observation in the classroom of selected teacher participant volunteers, and follow-up interviews with the teachers whose classrooms were involved in the observation part of the study. Therefore, I am seeking your permission to engage in participative observation in classroom settings as outlined above.

For your information, a summary of my research proposal containing the salient points of confidentiality and anonymity is enclosed. As an experienced and qualified Ontario teacher I anticipate that two to three days of observation in classroom settings with each teacher will enhance and enrich my study of school violence, allowing me to comprehend and view firsthand, teachers’ practices and strategies when confronted with these various misbehaviours.

All data collected from the study will be confidential, locked in secure storage and retrieval system, and raw data will be seen only by me as the primary researcher. At the completion of the research study, the raw data will be destroyed. Every effort will be made to guarantee the anonymity of all participants.

Prior to the preparation of the final reports, participants will be given an opportunity to discuss the findings of the study.

Thank you

Please sign both copies to indicate you have received a summary of the project and consent to the undertaking of this research.

Heather M. Rintoul Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Phone (416) 923-6641

Administrative Consent

I hereby willingly consent to the undertaking of this research at _______________ and acknowledge that I have been advised of full confidentiality both for the school and the teachers. I also understand that any teacher may withdraw from participating in this study at any time. Furthermore, the school as a research site may be withdrawn.

Administrator’s Signature ____________________________ Date ___________________
Appendix (C)

Teacher Participant Consent Form

Dear Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this qualitative study concerning teachers' strategies and practices dealing with school violence. You are, of course, free to withdraw from the study at any time prior to its completion.

All data collected from this study will be confidential and raw data will be seen only by me as the primary researcher. Names of the participants and specific locations will be disguised in the final reports of the study. Because this study is qualitative in nature I am unable to guarantee anonymity for participants among their colleagues at school. Although we have discussed the project in detail and issues associated with your personal privacy, I wish to specify a number of details in writing. You have already had an opportunity to read a summary of the research proposal containing the parameters of confidentiality and anonymity for your information.

At this point I am asking for your consent to provide personal interviews. From the outset, records will be coded and your name will not appear on transcripts. If you wish, you will have the opportunity of reviewing transcripts of your formal interviews and may make editorial revisions. The information I collect will be stored in secure locations known only to me as the primary researcher.

Prior to the preparation of the final reports, you will have the opportunity to discuss the findings of the study.

Please sign both copies to indicate that you have received a summary of the project and are willing to participate in the research. Return one copy to me and retain the other for your records.

Thank you

Heather M. Rintoul Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Telephone (416) 923-6641

I agree to participate in the study of "School Violence: Teachers Strategies and Practices" conducted by Heather M. Rintoul (OISE).

Signed__________________________________________ Date__________