

Invisible, Alone, and Alienated: Experiences and Perceptions of
Socially Neglected High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the lifeworlds of socially neglected high school students. Adolescents who are members of this peer social category are described in the literature as those who exhibit passive behavior; make few attempts to initiate social interaction; do not engage in anti-social or aggressive behavior; and appear to be the most isolated students in schools. Almost overlooked by the research on adolescent subcultures, these labeled "nobodies" go virtually unnoticed by their teachers and their peers. This study was designed to increase our understanding of how these adolescents perceive themselves and their peers, and develop their own accounts and motives for explaining their actions.

This six month ethnographic study utilized symbolic interactionist theory to shape the research questions on how socially neglected students experience, interpret, and construct their interactions with peers. Five grade 12 students and three grade 10 students were identified through a lengthy process of on-site behavior observation assessment and judgmental sampling. Once identified, participant observations, interviews, and conversations were ongoing throughout the study. The data consist of 63 transcribed separate participant interviews of 45 to 60 minutes; transcribed notes from participant observations and conversations; as well as transcribed notes from observations and conversations with peers, teachers, counselors, office staff members, and administrators.

This study, which appears to be the only qualitative inquiry to focus specifically on socially neglected high school students, contributes to the literature of this understudied peer social category. The emotional and behavioral risk factors for these children are relatively unknown because of the paucity of research and lack of longitudinal studies. The findings suggest that the majority of the participants were verbally and/or physically abused by their peers during elementary school. These early school experiences and the

way parents and teachers handled them taught the participants not to trust their perceptions of people and to hide or deny their feelings. Their stories about their lifeworlds at high school present a bleak picture, which is confirmed by the observational data. Various descriptions of aloneness or alienation, such as "ghost," "dead-like," "loner," "invisible," and "phantom" are used by the students to convey the images that they have of themselves and of how their interactions with peers have affected them. They consciously utilize barriers, such as "zombie" face masks, a "look of death," or "shyness" to keep their peers at bay. They describe layers that they have built up around themselves that separate them from other people, which are invisible to others but not to themselves. They do not focus on the present, they worry about their futures. The participants suggest ways that parents and teachers could have intervened when they were younger and ways they could assist them now. Many of these teenagers report finding their alienation increasingly difficult to bear. If they have not already harmed themselves or others, either emotionally or physically, the data gathered for this study sound a clear alarm that there is potential for this to happen if they continue to be ignored. Implicit in the literature is the view that socially neglected students are not as at-risk and in need of intervention as socially rejected students because their status is associated with a lack of social involvement but not with deviant behavior. The findings leave no doubt that this assumption needs to be re-addressed and reconsidered.

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DEDICATION

To my dearest John~

Thank you for your love,
your tremendous support,
and for your wonderful belief
that the "Mediterranean shades of blue"
are possible and worth striving for.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

What is it like to be a high school student? . . . to enter a large building of corridors and classrooms every morning, where one is expected to be in homeroom at 8:05, English class at 9:00, then on to gym or history or perhaps home economics, math, or mechanical drawing, finally to the cafeteria where one eats his lunch with noisy and excited friends before rushing off to another class with another teacher? (Cusick, 1973, p. 1)

The above questions that introduce Philip Cusick's Inside High School: The Student's World, prompt me to ask, "What about the student who spends every lunch hour sitting alone on a deserted corridor's linoleum floor? What about the solitary figure who walks the school's halls or its grounds with only a sandwich for a companion? What is high school like for those students?" As an educator I remember observing students who did spend their lunch hours in the "alone zone" throughout their entire school year.

When I continue reading Cusick's study, I learn that during his six months of attendance at a high school, he does encounter students who do not share their lunch break with "noisy and excited friends." In fact, several students are mentioned as not having close friends and who are also denied

follower status in any of the various groups at the school. Cusick calls these students "isolates" and notes the following about one of them:

I watched her later and she behaved as did other isolates. In the halls she would not stand and talk to anyone, but kept moving and was seldom seen "standing around leaning against the wall." That was understandable. If you keep moving and act as if you have somewhere to go, no one will notice your aloneness (p. 164).

In his study on high school subcultures, Cohen (1979) describes socially isolated students as being unpopular, marginalized, and failing to participate (p. 497). Clark (1962) identifies a number of this marginalized group at the school where he conducted his inquiry on adolescent subcultures. He refers to them as "nobodies" and says that the "pure type" within this group "is the almost faceless student who never speaks up, goes unnoticed during the school hours, and vanishes after the last bell--drifting through school unengaged by adolescent values" (p. 269). One 16 year old student in Campbell, Lewington, and Walker's (1999) article, "The Pain of the Teenage Outcast," is quoted as saying, "It's so weird because you don't even realize that you haven't spoken a word the whole day until you get home and somebody asks you a question about how your day went" (p. A1). This adolescent appears to be similar to Clark's description of a "pure type of nobody." However, she does not seem to be unengaged as he suggests socially isolated students are because she describes her days at school as being painful to her.

The lifeworld of adolescents at a secondary school is a relentlessly social one. Cusick (1973) says that even the remarks and behavior of the isolates "affirmed the fact that the students' world was group- and friendship-centered" (p. 175). Adolescents are constantly being reminded of their status and group affiliation through their daily interactions with their peers. Some of these interactions take place in sanctioned activities in classrooms, gymnasiums, or on the school's fields. Others occur before school, during classroom lulls, official breaks in the day, or after school. Many of the peer interactions are verbal exchanges while others are body acknowledgments or messages. For many of the students, the interactions are welcomed; but for some that is not always the case. What each interaction does have in common though, wherever they occur and in whatever form they take, is that to the majority of teenagers they are vitally important. Cusick notes that it was substantiated time and again that the adolescent participants in his study considered the interactions as being both time consuming and important (p. 65). In her ethnographic study on adolescent life in a high school, Chang (1989) says her participants emphasized that peer interactions were of utmost importance to them and that relationships with their peers were more important than any other human relationship (p. 132). Eckert (1989), who spent two years researching the social categories in a high school, stresses the tremendous impact that peer interaction has on adolescents. She states, "Although an individual may be strongly influenced or even transformed by one teacher at some point in life, the average adolescent

probably learns more from peers than from any other category of people" (p. 184).

The literature appears to be unanimous in suggesting that adolescents place a great deal of importance on peer interactions and peer relationships. It also points out that psychological theorists, such as Piaget, Sullivan, and Erickson, postulate that social interaction, especially with peers, influences children's development and is significant to normal growth (Hall & Lindzey, 1978; Rubin, LeMare, & Lollis, 1990; Rankin Young & Bradley, 1998). However, the majority of the research attention has been on the benefits of peer interactions and relationships rather than on the consequences of a lack of them (Rubin, 1985; Rubin, Hymel, & Mills, 1989). Rubin, LeMare, and Lollis (1990) suggest that since the research recognizes peer interactions and relationships as being important forces in children's development "one could well posit that children who do not interact with their peers, who withdraw from their social community, may be at risk for problems in the social-cognitive and social-behavioral domains" (p. 218). This particular area is beginning to be explored, however, and is mentioned in the studies that focus on peer relationships (Eder, 1985; Coie, 1990; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990; Kinney, 1993). The majority of these studies suggest that those students, who are considered "outsiders" and who are not affiliated with a crowd, experience low self-worth. These studies also link self-esteem with the position of one's crowd on the peer-group status hierarchy ladder (Brown and Lohr, 1987; Coie, 1990; Kinney, 1993). Steinberg (1999) states, "Being unpopular has negative

consequences for adolescents' mental health and psychological development" (p. 179). Entwisle (1990) suggests that youngsters, who are rejected by their school peers, are at higher risk for dropping out of school and that there is more delinquency among them (p. 218). Savin-Williams and Berndt (1990) find that unpopular adolescents are "the groups who are most likely to be aggressive, to drop out of school, to engage in criminal behavior during adolescence or adulthood, and to show mental illness in adulthood" (p. 292). Carlson, Lahey, and Neeper (1984) state that children's low social status is linked to higher suicide rates, juvenile delinquency, and dropping out of school (p. 188). Newcomb and Bagwell (1996) point out, "Friendless children evidenced significantly better adjustment in young adulthood than did chumless children in the domains of school, family, trouble with the law, and overall adjustment" (p. 315).

In addition to the paucity of theory on socially isolated adolescents in a secondary school setting and the effects that such isolation has on them, there has also been little research attention on an adolescent's perspective of his or her social competence (Blyth, 1983; Rubin, Hymel, and Mills, 1989; Feldman & Elliott, 1990; Gottlieb, 1991; Hymel, Bowker, & Woody, 1993). Carlson, Lahey, and Neeper (1984) indicate that while a number of studies using various research approaches have produced meaningful results, "they all collect data from an adult rather than a child perspective" (p. 188). Cusick (1973) believes, "If we are to have any understanding of what individuals make of their lives, then we have to make a genuine attempt to see and understand their world

as they see and understand it" (p. 4). As Coleman and Hendry (1999) point out, "The ways in which young people understand and perceive themselves, their own agency and personality, have a powerful effect on their subsequent reactions to various life events" (p. 53). Feldman and Elliott (1990) stress, "Learning how to elicit information on what adolescents think and feel about themselves, about events in their lives, and about their understanding of what they are doing would be an enormous benefit to research" (p. 503). They suggest that the processes by which teenagers acquire their social values and expectations are poorly understood and that the potential insights that may come out of such studies, such as using diverse research approaches or working with a few individuals quite extensively for a long period of time, would justify considerable effort.

Cusick's (1973) study is one of the few that attempts to understand the world of a student inside a high school from an adolescent's perspective. He says that he would have liked to have known the few students who had no close friends and who were not even allowed follower status in any group, but that he had to choose his associates carefully. He points out that he was not at the school to focus on isolated students exclusively and that if he had associated with them, he would most likely have been rejected since students judged him according to the status of his participants (p. 163). Other researchers have also voiced their concerns about gaining access to the various adolescent groups if they had been seen associating with unpopular students. For example, in his dissertation on adolescent identity formation

and change within socio-cultural contexts, Kinney (1990) credits his choice to contact and interview the leading or popular students first as being crucial in facilitating his entree into the different crowds at the high school where he was conducting his research (p. 25).

Like Cusick, I want to get to know the adolescents who are socially isolated from their peers at school. Unlike Cusick's study though, my inquiry does focus exclusively on these students. My study, which employs an ethnographic approach that is based in symbolic interactionism, attempts to understand the lifeworld of peer socially neglected students at a secondary school. How do they perceive themselves? How do these adolescents interpret and structure their interactions with their peers? How do these labeled nobodies experience life in a secondary school setting?

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In sooth I know not why I am so sad.
It wearies me, you say it wearies you;
but how I caught it, found it or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn.

William Shakespeare
Merchant of Venice

Introduction

Kenneth Rubin's (1985) introduction to a chapter reviewing the literature on the characteristics of socially withdrawn children in Children's Peer Relations: Issues in Assessment and Intervention states, "Since the data available are scant, the review will be brief" (p. 26). A search of the current literature on children who are "socially withdrawn" from their peers or, as they are now identified, "socially neglected" indicates that the research on them is still "scant" sixteen years later.

In considering the paucity of research on the social status category of peer neglect, I will first offer a review of quantitative and qualitative studies whose focus is on children's social status categories and peer groups. There are far more studies that employ quantitative methods to research these topics than there are ones that use qualitative methods. However, reviewing

both types of inquiries not only helped to situate my research topic within the literature, it was absolutely instrumental to my understanding of peer social isolation; and it was upon this base of knowledge that the framework of my study is built. Following this review, I offer an examination of the research findings on socially rejected and socially neglected students, which are the two categories of peer isolation that the current literature recognizes. This examination is important because it clarifies the distinct differences between the two categories, and thus contributes to a deeper awareness of the phenomenon of social neglect. The next section focuses specifically on a review of the literature on peer social neglect. In the last two sections of the chapter, I discuss the risk and resilience factors that the research suggests there are for children who are members of this social status group and then summarize the chapter.

Social Status Categories and Peer Groups

Early Studies and Our Own Experiences

August B. Hollingshead's (1949) landmark study, Elmtown's Youth, which he refers to as the "social action patterns of young people," suggests that the peer groups that exist among high school students of a midwestern American town of ten thousand inhabitants reflects the hierarchical social class structure that exist among the adults in the community (p. 7). He indicates that Elmtowners openly state that there are three classes in the community: "upper," "middle," and "lower;" and that these class distinctions

were similar to the ones found at Elmtown High School: “the elite,” the “good kids,” and the “grubby gang.” In contrast James S. Coleman’s (1961) highly regarded study of adolescent values and lifestyles in ten Chicago high schools in the late 1950s, The Adolescent Society: The Social Life of the Teenager and its Impact on Education, suggests that adolescents’ hierarchical class ratings are not derived from the larger cultural system. In his study, Coleman maintains that high school students have a distinct social system with its own rules and values and that it is distinct from adult society. Even though Hollingshead’s and Coleman’s studies were conducted many decades ago and their findings differ in regards to social classes, their inquiries continue to be cited in many research studies because their data offer considerable insight into adolescent class segregation; peer groups; and parental, teacher, and community influences.

It is likely that we can remember the social status system and the various peer groups that existed at the high school we attended even if that period was during the research times of Hollingshead (1949) and Coleman (1961). As Kinney (1990) indicates in his ethnographic study on how the peer group structure of a high school shapes the identity of adolescents, “Related sociological and social psychological studies of secondary schools during the past four decades have consistently found that the most salient aspect of the social world of teenagers is the existence of a variety of distinct peer groups (p. 9). Ennett and Bauman (1996) state, “Virtually all observational studies of adolescents have shown that the clique is the most prevalent and important

friendship structure for adolescents" (p. 196). It is also probable that we can still recall the names that the various groups went by. They are relatively easy to remember since, as the research unanimously points out, they described a particular way that members talked, dressed, or behaved. In my school, we had the jocks, the druggies, the fast crowd, the cool crowd, the populars, the hippies, the brains, the nerds, and the greasers. While the names for groups may have been different in other high schools and for different time periods, it is likely that members shared the universal characteristics of the cliques in the school that I attended. In addition, as Brown (1990) points out in his discussion of peer groups and peer cultures, the range of crowds may shift across time, but a standard set of groups, such as the jocks, the populars, brains, delinquents, nerds, and alienated youth, seems to flourish in all historical eras (p. 189).

It is highly probable that we knew the social status of each of the peer groups in our high school, and that we knew which group our peers placed us in. Brown (1990) states, "Students' sensitivity to their place in the crowd system--that is, their ability to predict accurately which crowds peers would place them in--also seems to increase with age" (p. 188). We recognized who the high social status groups were and could name most of their members. Coleman and Hendry (1999) maintain that these top ranked adolescents are eminently visible and are perceived as being socially and academically competent (p. 150). Most likely, we knew who the bottom rated groups were as well. However, Coleman and Hendry suggest that we may not have

known the individual names of students in these more negatively viewed cliques as their members tend to have the lowest level of involvement in school activities.

Current Research

The current research on adolescence indicates that it is now believed that this age group's social world is far more multifaceted than was previously held by earlier researchers (Brown, 1990; Youniss, McLellan, & Strouse, 1994; Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Steinberg, 1999). In addition, the research cautions us about utilizing our own experiences in high school in attempting to relate to school "as it really is." Eckert (1989), whose ethnographic fieldwork for her study on social categories and identity in the high school took place over a four year period, reminds us that we are members of an entirely different social world. She says that our "ignorance about adolescents leads us to trivialize their experience," and adds that "our efforts to take them seriously are frequently misguided by our stylized notion of their social relations" (p. 184). Eckert suggests that one of the major problems with translating and applying our own experiences in adolescence is that we tend to focus on surface issues and fail to concentrate on the social and political processes that are common to the current generation. As Coleman and Hendry (1999) point out in the third edition of Nature of Adolescence, changes in the social and political landscape over the past two decades have been considerable; and these shifts, which include alterations in the family structure and the labor market as well as societal attitudes towards gender and race, have had a

profound impact upon the lives of young people (pp. 2 -7). Asher (1990) indicates that peer relationships play an even more important role in today's society because mothers and caregivers are working outside the home and there are increasing numbers of single-parent families (p. 3). In her review of changes across the grades and in different school environments, Epstein (1989) argues that more children now utilize day-care facilities. She believes that this increased usage has influenced the way youngsters interact with their peers throughout their formal school years (p. 182). Steinberg (1999) states that because of social contextual changes, teenagers now spend more time in peer groups than adolescents did in past eras and that these cliques now play a more prominent role in today's society. He adds, "In many regards, the world is a far more stressful place to grow up in now than it was in the past" (p. 157).

Recent research indicates that the boundaries of peer groups are constantly being reinforced by its members. This reinforcement defines those students who belong and those who do not (Brown & Lohr, 1987; Eckert, 1989; Kinney, 1990; Chang, 1992; Youniss & Haynie, 1992; Kinney, 1993; Coleman & Hendry, 1999). Group membership is based on reputation and stereotype, and provides the feedback that adolescents seek to determine their comparative status with their peers. Studies link teenagers' self-esteem with the position of their crowd on the peer-group social status hierarchy ladder (Brown and Lohr, 1987; Coie, 1990; Kinney, 1993; Steinberg, 1999). Eckert (1989) finds that many students remember being plagued by the need to be popular in order to

have their status confirmed on this pecking-order ladder (p. 86). Cairns, Leung, Buchanan, and Cairns (1995) state that "children tend to associate with others who are similar to themselves in sociometric status" (p. 1331); and Brown (1990) indicates that this peer association factor is the same for adolescents. Brown points out, however, that teenagers do not actually select a crowd to join as much as they are thrust into one by virtue of their personality, interests, background, and reputation among peers (p. 183). Some of the qualities or values that have been reported in the literature as being important for peer prestige and acceptance are material possessions, "right" friends, athletic prowess, physical attractiveness, and being attentive to the current fashion styles (Snyder, 1972; Hallinan, 1980; Miller & Gentry, 1980; Hymel, Bowker, and Woody, 1993; Brown, Mory, & Kinney, 1994).

The current research also indicates that during late adolescence there is steady decline in adolescents' rating of the importance of belonging to a group (Brown, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1999; Steinberg, 1999). Brown and Lohr (1987) and Brown (1990) also note that students with marginal association with a peer group place less importance on membership; and that jocks, populars, and druggies place significantly greater credence on membership than unpopular adolescents do. Brown questions whether unpopular students lack the social-cognitive sophistication of other groups, such as the jocks, populars, and druggies, or whether they ignore the undesirable identity labels that their peers place on them (p. 188). Scantling (1998) suggests that "closeness is especially risky for someone who feels they have no 'self'" (p.

210). She says that if one's sense of self is poorly defined, then there could be a fear of being "swallowed" up by other people. The research findings of Brown and Scantling are of particular concern in regards to socially isolated adolescents because much of the literature on self-identity supports Cooley's reflected-appraisal theory. This theory, as discussed in Chapter One, suggests that people define themselves by how other people define them and that their self-identity is largely derived from how other people regard them. As Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) emphasize in Being Adolescent: Conflict and Growth in the Teenage Years, "The self requires others to confirm its existence" (p. 187). The literature on adolescent self-identity draws on the reflected-appraisal theory to support its findings that adolescents use peer groups as a basis for their self-identity. For example, Steinberg (1999) states that membership in a clique is often what an adolescent bases his or her identity on (p. 169). Denzin (1992) contends that research should also focus on how the structural and interactional context of the postmodern family may be influencing the emergence of the self (pp. 145-146). Considering the research on self-identity though, what is particularly surprising is that a child's own perspective on his or her social situation is notably absent in the studies on social status and peer groups (Asher, Parkhurst, Hymel, & Williams, 1990).

Limitations of the Literature

According to the literature, the research on social status categories and peer groups has primarily focused on pre-school or elementary aged children (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; French, Conrad, & Turner, 1995; Jarvinen

& Nicholls, 1996). Eckert states, "There is a shocking lack of literature on adolescent social categories" (1989, p. ix). This attention on young children's social status categories is surprising considering that there are references throughout the literature that social category affiliation is important to adolescents. In addition, the research maintains there is solid evidence that there are distinct differences between younger children's and adolescents' peer groups (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990). In his discussion on closeness and conflict in adolescent peer relationships, Laursen (1996) says, "Given the widespread recognition of social changes during the adolescent years, the paucity of knowledge concerning friendships and romantic relationships is somewhat surprising" (p. 186). Hatzichristou and Hopf (1996) point out that studies have found "that there are age-related differences in children's perceptions of their peers' behaviors" (p. 1985). For example, Duck (1983) concludes in Friends for Life that as youngsters' develop, their perception or "focus shifts from 'Me and what you can do for me' to 'you and Me and what we can do together' to 'Us and how we can help one another to grow as people'" (p. 148). Dunphy's (1969) theoretical and empirical study of adolescent group life in a large Australian city finds that children's peer relationships begin to extend in adolescence from unisexual dyad or small cliques of friends to larger and less defined groups consisting of males and females. Coleman and Hendry (1999) support the findings that there are age related differences between children and adolescents, and suggest that peer groups have an especially significant role as contributors during adolescence.

They state, "Friends are important in childhood, but they become more central during the adolescent years as the young person seeks social support outside the family" (p. 155).

My review of the literature indicates that researchers continue to stress that the societal construction of how gender impacts a girl's social status and the gender differences in behavioral profiles and peer groups remains missing from the literature. For example, in 1970 Hartrup said, "Our knowledge of peer influences and group behavior among girls is appallingly weak" (Savin-Williams, 1980, p. 361). A decade later, Savin-Williams noted that natural observational studies on social interactions are still almost non-existent for female adolescents. And in 1996, Hatzichristou and Hopf emphasized that there remains a lack of investigation in the relevant literature of gender differences in the behavioral profiles of the sociometric groups.

The literature suggests that boys are more likely to be social isolates than girls (Urberg, Degirmencioglu, Tolson, & Halliday-Scher, 1995; Ennett & Bauman, 1996; Cole & Hendry, 1999; Steinberg, 1999). Hatzichristou and Hopf (1996) report that in secondary school boys are more likely to be selected to the socially neglected group than girls are (p. 1099). However, it is important to point out that the vast majority of researchers have focused on the rejected category and that their participants have been elementary male students (Cohen, 1979; French, 1989; Rubin, Hymel, & Mills, 1989; Coie, 1990; Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; Steinberg, 1999). Steinberg (1999) indicates that a

possible explanation for the predominantly male focus is that boys usually exhibit more overt aggression than girls, and that this characterization may have led researchers to examine the social relationships of boys rather than girls (p. 178). As French (1989) states, "We know very little about the characteristics of girls who experience difficulties with peer relationships" (p. 2028).

The literature suggests that much of the data that are available on adolescent social status categories and peer groups are dated. In their study of 450 seventh and eighth graders on peer rejection in middle school, Parkhurst and Asher (1992) state, "The little existing work on the behavioral correlates of sociometric status in the adolescent peer group was primarily done more than three decades ago" (p. 231). Parkhurst and Asher also point out that the majority of studies do not distinguish between "socially neglected" and "socially rejected" children. An example of the type of study that Parkhurst and Asher refer to is the one that Mussen, Conger, and Kagan (1969) conducted on socially isolated adolescents. The latter's research findings do not take into account the distinction between socially rejected and socially neglected children; and many of the descriptors that they use to characterize the least admired and most likely teenager to be rejected (i.e. timid, over-aggressive, nervous, conceited, withdrawn, self-centered, tackless, inconsiderate, and contributing little to the needs of others) conflict with each other (p. 663). In his review of the literature on social skill training programs for unpopular students, Asher (1985) emphasizes the importance of

articulating the differences between rejected and neglected children and for the need of future studies to define their focal population more adequately (p. 168). It is somewhat reassuring, considering Asher's argument, that the fifth edition of Adolescence maintains that social scientists are beginning to acknowledge that it is important to distinguish between the different types of unpopular adolescents (Steinberg, 1999, p. 178).

Comparison of Peer Status Categories

Ennett and Bauman's (1996) study, which analyzes the social networks of 1030 ninth graders at five secondary schools, finds that the patterns of linkages identify adolescents as either clique members, liaisons, or isolates (p. 194). It defines cliques as "individuals who interact more with each other than with individuals in other groups;" liaisons as having "at least two links with either clique members or other liaisons, but are not members of a clique;" and isolates as having "few or no links to other adolescents" (p. 202). Ennett and Bauman indicate that while most adolescents interacted with peers as either group members or liaisons, a substantial minority of them were in relatively isolated social positions. The literature supports their finding and suggests, as previously mentioned, that there are at least two categories of children who are socially isolated in a school setting. The students, who are physically and/or verbally aggressive and are actively disliked by other students, are categorized as being "rejected" by their peers; whereas the ones, who are shy, withdrawn, but are neither liked nor disliked

by other students, are categorized as being "neglected" by their peers (Coie & Dodge, 1983; Duck, 1983; Rubin, 1983; Carlson, Lahey, & Neeper, 1984; Asher, 1990; Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990).

Steinberg (1999) claims that there is a third type of socially isolated adolescents, whose behavior he identifies as aggressive-withdrawn. He says that these students are like rejected adolescents because they have trouble controlling their hostility, but they are also similar to neglected adolescents because they tend to be nervous about initiating friendships with their peers (p. 178). The majority of the literature, however, does not refer to this third category of peer social isolation.

Younger, Schwartzman, and Ledingham (1985) state that their study on 325 first graders, 356 fourth graders, and 298 seventh graders indicates that with increasing age, the categories of "aggressive" or "rejected and withdrawn" or "neglected" become even more distinct (p. 74). By adolescence, according to Coleman and Hendry (1999), socially isolated students are categorized by their peers as being low in social status, socially isolated, and immature. They suggest that these teenagers are caught in a cycle of rejection, harassment, and aggression (pp. 151-153). Steinberg (1999) describes rejected adolescents as being those students who are likely to be involved in antisocial activities, get into fights with other students, and that they are often involved in bullying. He suggests that neglected students are exceedingly shy, timid, inhibited, and that they are likely to be victims of bullying.

Studies on peer social isolation have typically focused on rejected children rather than on neglected children who have been observed to be much less aggressive than all other children. In their review of the research on peer group behavior and social status, Coie, Dodge, and Kupersmidt (1990) caution that socially neglected children are much less easy to characterize than rejected ones. They add that this character elusiveness is not surprising considering "they are defined sociometrically by the absence of notice by peers" and that "not much is learned about them from peer and teacher report data" (p. 51). Coleman and Hendry (1999) suggest that adolescents in this socially isolated group are not aggressive or alienated, but rather "are simply unpopular, ignored--and shy" (p. 152). However, my review of the literature, as well as my own research, indicates that there is nothing simple about these teenagers.

Socially Neglected Peer Status Category

Terms Found in the Literature

The term "social neglect" is used in this inquiry to refer to children who are passive, make few attempts to initiate social interaction, do not engage in anti-social behavior, are involved in a high frequency of solitary activities, and are thought to be the most isolated in a school setting. This term is the one that is generally recognized in the research to categorize students who fit the above description (Carlson, Lahey, & Neeper, 1984; Laemmel, 1985; Hatzichristou; 1987; Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; Terry &

Coie, 1991; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). Social neglect, however, is often interchanged with other terms in the research on peer social status categories and has led to some confusion regarding findings. As Rubin, Hymel, and Mills (1989), who conducted a longitudinal study of children in kindergarten through fifth grade that originally consisted of 111 students, state:

The study of social withdrawal is fraught with conceptual confusion, methodological difficulties, and inappropriate conclusions. Perhaps the major difficulty appears to derive from the many different conceptual meanings and definitions of social withdrawal in childhood. For example, the construct has been variously labeled behavioral inhibition, social reticence, shyness, social isolation, sociometric neglect, and sociometric rejection (p. 240).

However, while it is important to point out that label discrepancies exist in the literature, careful perusal of the studies finds that their participants fit the description of socially neglected children offered at the beginning of this section. Their findings, therefore, will be included in this review of the literature. For example, Rubin et al. use the term "socially withdrawn" to categorize children who are shy, fearful, and tend to engage in solitary activities; Hymel, Bowker, and Woody use "social inhibition" to refer to children who engage in nonsocial passive solitary play (1993, p. 883); Younger and Daniels use "passive withdrawal" to describe students who are shy, oversensitive, and have social anxiety (1992, p. 959); Steinberg uses "withdrawn" to describe adolescents who are exceedingly shy, timid, and

inhibited (1999, p. 178); Rankin Young and Bradley use "introverts" to categorize those teenagers would like to approach others but are unable to do so because their attempts are blocked by their anxiety (1998, pp. 22-23); and Csikszentmihalyi and Larson identify adolescents who spend most of their time at school by themselves and at home in their bedrooms as "consistent loners" (1984, p. 193).

A few studies argue that there is too much discrepancy in the literature to conclude unequivocally that "social neglect" can be interchanged with "social withdrawal." Rubin, LeMare, and Lollis (1990), who admit to using the terms social withdrawn and social isolates interchangeably in their inquiry of social withdrawal in childhood, state that some studies suggest that withdrawn students interact with peers much less frequently than is the norm for their age-group, but they are not necessarily neglected by them. Their own study supports this suggestion in the research, but also finds that children who do withdraw have a high probability of achieving socially neglected status among their peers. Hatzichristou (1987) says that while some studies indicate that socially neglected children are not withdrawn in their behavior based on peer perceptions, his own study on the classification and differentiation of socially isolated children that employed teacher, peer, and self socio-metric ratings, finds that peers do perceive neglected children as withdrawn and avoiding or unwilling to face social interactions (p. 57). However, there is also some concern expressed in the literature about the ability of students, particularly in the lower grades, to be able to assess social

withdrawal in their peers (Younger & Daniels, 1992). As Hatzichristou and Hopf (1996) point out:

The profile of neglected groups still remains puzzling. Based on the discriminate analysis, neglected students were found to be the most easily misclassified. One can assume this is mainly due to the low visibility of this group, which makes it more difficult for others (teachers, peers) to detect subtle differences in their behavioral patterns (p. 1098).

My review of the literature indicates that the majority of the research does support the finding that, as Dodge, Murphy, and Buchsbaum (1984) succinctly state, "The characteristic behavior of neglected children is withdrawal" (p. 171).

Attributes

The literature indicates that while socially neglected children are not necessarily disliked by their peers, it is highly unlikely that they would ever be nominated as a best friend (Asher, 1990; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). In their study of 346 fourth and fifth graders, Hyman, Bowker, and Woody (1993) point out that even though these type of children tend to exhibit prosocial qualities, such as cooperativeness, good adult relations, and appropriate behavioral conduct, they are more likely to be left out of the peer group than rejected children are (p. 892). The research suggests that socially neglected adolescents do not possess the personal qualities or exhibit the values that are deemed as being important and that these factors contribute to their being

ostracized by their peers. For example, Wentzel and Asher's (1995) study on 423 sixth and seventh graders indicates that socially neglected students' compliant conduct behavior and ability to get along with adults are possible contributing factors; and French, Conrad, and Turner's (1995) study on 501 eighth graders implies that this social status group's association with low alcohol use "may also contribute to their isolation from peers as it reduces their range of common interests with others" (p. 870). In addition, the vast majority of the research that I reviewed states that peers evaluate these children as unattractive and lacking in style in relation to average children. It is worthwhile to note that the literature also suggests that unpopular students know the characteristics and criteria that are needed for popularity and group acceptance (Cusick, 1973; Brown, 1989; Youniss, McLellan, & Strouse, 1994), but it does not indicate whether these pupils consciously reject them, are unable to conform to them, etc.

The research on sociometric status and peer relationships in high schools indicates that athletic and social success are the most reliable routes to becoming popular with peers, and that these two routes contribute more to a child's social status than academic success does (Steinberg, 1999, p. 156). Eder's (1985) two year ethnographic study on social categories in a high school finds that male students obtain status primarily through athletic achievement while female students, if not given the same opportunities to excel in athletics, obtain status from social success (p. 154). In regards to this popularity route, however, studies indicate that peers rate socially neglected

students as being athletically incompetent but academically competent (Hymel, Bowker, and Woody, 1993). Wentzel and Asher (1995) report that peer status and relationships are related to children's academic lives at school. The results from their study of 423 sixth and seventh grade students indicates that socially neglected children tend to earn higher grades than those of their average status peers. They say that their "present data suggests the possibility that, at least with respect to academically relevant characteristics, socio-metrically neglected children develop competencies not found in average or even popular children" (p. 759). Their study finds though that neglected children were not perceived by their peers as being particularly "good students," and suggest, therefore, that these youngsters' academic achievements are not responsible for their negative status (p. 759). Wentzel and Asher also point out that compared to average children, the neglected children report higher levels of school motivation and that teachers express a liking for them because they are considered to be more independent, less impulsive, and give more appropriate respect to classroom regulations than other children. However, Coie, Dodge, and Kupersmidt (1990) find that while socially neglected students are more often alone and on task in classrooms than other children, they do not achieve better grades in school than their more gregarious and popular peers. In addition, Vargo's (1995) research suggests that teachers contend that these children have lower academic achievements and are more inattentive than their sociable peers (Rankin Young & Bradley, 1998, p. 22). It would appear though that the majority of the

literature does support the research finding that peers regard socially neglected children as being academically competent and on-task. However, it would also seem that the evidence is too sparse for any conclusions to be drawn on whether these students actually achieve higher academic grades than their average peers do.

Hatzichristou's (1987) findings indicate that the language achievement scores of socially neglected students were significantly different from the scores of popular students. He suggests that "neglected children lack some qualitative aspects of verbal communication" (p. 62). Hatzichristou notes that other studies have also reported that popular students were better able to communicate to a listener what they were talking about in different situations than the unpopular ones were. Duck (1988) suggests that a possible reason for these children's lower linguistic scores could be that they are not as verbal in their interactions with peers and teachers. He adds that there is an unfortunate assumption that a person's view of themselves affects their verbal fluency. For example, people assume that verbally fluent speakers see themselves as being competent; while verbally inept ones see themselves as being incompetent and worthless (Duck, p. 55).

In "Toward a Theory of Peer Rejection," Coie (1990) sides with the research that nonbehavioral factors, such as appearance, style of dress, perceived academic achievements, and verbal fluency have an undeniably important impact on peer evaluation. He suggests, however, that unpopular children are not disliked because they are deficient in these areas but because

of the way in which they handle themselves over issues related to appearance, dress, and the like. Peers serve as control agents and reinforce or award appropriate behaviors and punish or ignore abnormal ones (Coie, 1990; Rubin, Lemare, & Lollis, 1990; LeMare, and Lollis, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1999). Coie explains:

Children who are inept at games will be chosen last on teams and may be ridiculed for their awkwardness by some of their peers. Those who respond with tears or anger will have a difficult time socially, as will those who attempt to compensate by cheating or bragging about other accomplishments. Children who react good-naturedly or are generous in their positive comments about the skill of others do not have the same problem with peers (p. 366).

Peer evaluations also indicate that socially neglected children do not possess a sense of humor (Hymel, Bowker, & Woody, 1993). Parkhurst and Asher (1992)'s finding suggests that coping with teasing and distinguishing it from ridicule is a central task in adolescence. They suggest that a lack of a sense of humor and ability to take a joke are predictors of low status for teenagers (p. 239). Duck (1983) and Hatzichristou's findings (1987) indicate that when socially neglected children are confronted with aversive behavior, they often respond by withdrawing or ignoring the confrontation. The literature also states that these children's group entry behavior, which it describes as being shy, fearful, and newcomer-like, is viewed negatively and that members of

this social status group are frequently ignored by peers (Putallaz & Gottman, 1981; Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990; Rankin Young & Bradley, 1998).

Stability of Category Membership

A number of studies on elementary school aged children suggest that membership in the socially neglected category is not stable and that these students often move into different groups as they progress through their schooling (Coie & Dodge, 1983). However, other studies on adolescents do not agree with this suggestion. Ennett and Bauman (1996), who studied the social networks of 1030 ninth graders at five high schools over a one year period, indicate that adolescents who were isolates in high school were likely to be identified in the same social position twelve months later. They suggest that this finding is not surprising considering "that adolescents not integrated into peer groups may have difficulty either establishing a network of peer relations or breaking into already existing networks" (p. 210). Steinberg (1999) also maintains that adolescents' positions in their school's social network is relatively stable over time" (p. 163). However, Coie, Dodge, and Kupersmidt (1990) warn that unacceptable peer behavior tends to take more complicated forms in adolescence, which makes it difficult to determine status stability (p. 52). The majority of studies indicate that stability is also difficult to assess because there is lack of longitudinal data on social neglect. While it is important to attempt to establish whether membership in this peer social status category is stable, it is essential that the research endeavors to

determine what the risk and resilience factors are for socially neglected children.

Risk and Resilience

According to Coleman and Hendry (1999), the two primary research questions on risk and resilience are:

1. What are the factors that are associated with increased risk for poor adjustment in later life?
2. How do some individuals, in spite of exposure to adverse experiences, such as parental and peer abuse, poverty and economic difficulties, and family conflict or breakdown manage to escape any serious consequences?

It is difficult to determine what the risk and resilience factors are for socially neglected children because there is a near absence of longitudinal studies on them, which means that the long term consequences remain virtually unknown (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996). What the research tends to support though is that socially neglected students are not as at-risk and in need of intervention as socially rejected ones are (Asher, 1983; Coie & Dodge, 1983; Terry & Coie, 1991). Wentzel and Asher (1995) suggest that the reason these children are not considered as at-risk is because they have not been related to socially undesirable outcomes, such as aggressive and delinquent behavior (p. 759). Coie, Dodge, and Kupersmidt (1990) state, "Neglected status is associated with a lack of social involvement but not with any overtly deviant behavior"

(p. 30). However, Coie and Dodge (1983) point out that their study on 96 first graders and 112 third graders' social behavior and social status across a five year period suggests teachers may not be aware of the frequency and duration of children's solitary behavior as they attempt to cope with the more visible and distracting actions of socially rejected children. Coie (1990) stresses that we need to get beyond the current emphasis on socially disruptive behavior and aggressiveness (p. 396). He feels that researchers, teachers, and administrators may be overlooking socially neglected children's at-risk behavior in a school setting because of their seemingly compliant behavior. Rubin, LeMare, and Lollis's (1990) review of the findings from studies employing different means to identify withdrawn children, such sociometric measures of peer neglect, peer assessments of withdrawal, teacher assessments of withdrawal, and observations of isolate behavior, indicates that these children are often anxious, deferent, and unsuccessful in managing their milieus. Unfortunately, they also indicate in their study that much of what is known about these children stems from data concerning three, four, and five year olds; and very little is known about the behavior of socially neglected youngsters during the middle and later years of childhood (p. 241). In addition, Rubin et al. state that "there is also a lack of information concerning the characteristics of children who remain withdrawn" and little effort has been given to discover why and how they become withdrawn (pp. 240-241). Asher (1983) states, "The highly withdrawn child who does not give offense but lacks the ability to form close relationships should be of concern"

(p. 1430). He argues that while these children may be a minority, they should not be overlooked in the research.

Risk Factors

The literature indicates that socially neglected students' compliant behavior, as discussed in the previous paragraph, is the reason for the lack of research concern on their social status peer categorization. While this explanation would appear to be a plausible, I suggest that the scarcity of studies still remains puzzling. For example, there is a societal perspective that social solitude is a "symptom" of internalizing difficulties, such as poor self-esteem and depression (Rubin, Hymel, & Mills, 1989, p. 240); and the research indicates that socially neglected students are more solitary than any other group of children. In fact, the literature even supports the suggestion that children categorized as being neglected by their peers may be at risk for internalizing difficulties. The research, such as Hymel, Bowker, and Woody's, draws on a significant number of studies to support the conclusion that the results "point to an increasingly consistent pattern of findings regarding the internalizing outcomes associated with social withdrawal" (1993, p. 893). Jarvinen and Nicholls (1996) point out that the research suggests that socially neglected adolescents also may be more at risk for internalizing problems later on in their life (1996, p. 435). Steinberg concurs with their statement on the research and says that the literature proposes that being isolated from peers "is associated with subsequent depression, behavior problems, and academic difficulties" (p. 179), and that "experts agree that close

peer relationships are an essential part of healthy social development during adolescence” (p. 321). Coleman and Hendry (1999) maintain that researchers indicate that an absence of social networks for adolescents “leads to impairments in their mental health, social behavior, and academic performance” (p. 152). Coie (1990) points out that the research suggests that children’s failure to establish a place in their social world is both a reflection of and a precursor to individual maladjustment (p. 368). If studies, such as the preceding ones, all suggest that solitary children may be at risk for internalizing difficulties, why then are socially neglected students not more of a research concern? Considering the above findings, is it not rather ironic, in fact, that the literature suggests that these children’s tendency to internalize rather than externalize may be the reason why there is a lack of research focus on their social status categorization (Rankin Young and Bradley, 1998)?

Coleman and Hendry (1999) maintain that socially isolated children’s avoidance of peer relationships and peer group encounters means that they miss out on experiences that are essential to becoming skillful in social situations. Newcomb and Bagwell (1996) agree that children with friends are more socially competent and evidence significantly better adjustment in young adulthood than the ones who do not have friends. Asher, Parkhurst, Hymel, and Williams (1990) indicate that a lack of friendships has been construed in the research as the outcome of negative peer experiences. They stress that it is important that future researchers ask “about the instigational or motivational effects of feeling lonely, as well as the implications of such

effects for intervention efforts" (p. 269). In regards to a lack of friendships and peer groups during adolescence, Coleman and Hendry (1999) state:

Because friendship and acceptance in the peer group is so important during this stage, those who are isolated or rejected are at a particular disadvantage. Loneliness can be difficult to deal with, especially when everyone else appears to be part of a group (p. 156).

Asher (1990) finds that socially neglected children are less likely to express an interest in being helped with social relationship problems than rejected students are and that even though they lack friends, they appear to be reasonably well liked and are less likely to report loneliness and feelings of depression than rejected children are (pp. 5-6). In fact, in "Children's Loneliness: A Comparison of Rejected and Neglected Peer Status," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in 1985, Asher and Wheeler argue that neglected children are no more lonely than other students (Coie and Dodge, 1988, p. 828). Parkhurst and Asher (1992) indicate, however, that there is also evidence in the research that suggests withdrawn students express significantly greater loneliness and social dissatisfaction than either the average or aggressive-rejected students, and that they are often judged to be "usually sad" by their peers (p. 239). Bukowski, Newcomb, and Hartrup (1996) indicate that a possible reason for the discrepancy in the literature is that many of the studies on children's friendships are difficult to interpret. In addition, Asher, Parkhurst, Hymel, and Williams (1990) point out that little attention has been given in the

research to the actual role that a lack of friends or loneliness may play in the social lives of children. Bukowski et al. agree and suggest that more extensive longitudinal studies are needed before the developmental significance of being popular or unpopular with peers can be established (pp. 5-6).

Rankin Young and Bradley (1998) state that there is a pervasive belief in our society that popularity equals happiness (p. 31). In her ethnographic study of a high school, Chang (1992) finds that many adolescents believe that being on one's own at school is a hindrance to peer acceptance, and that they feel compelled to interact with peers in order to avoid the reputation of being loners. Coleman and Hendry (1999) assert that in order for teenagers to be popular, they must play the right roles in social settings and follow the prescribed rules for those situations (p. 52). Apparently, passive, withdrawn, shy, and sometimes oversensitive behavior is not one of those "right" roles. While this type of conduct is not viewed negatively in very young children because it is quite common, with increasing age it becomes more salient, and eventually, is associated with social neglect (Rubin, 1985; Coie, 1990; Rubin, LeMare, & Lollis, 1990; Parkhurst & Asher, 1992; Younger & Daniels, 1992; Hatzichristou & Hopf, 1996). Byrnes (1983) points out in "Life Skills in Solitude and Silence in the School" that if children continue their preference to be alone, quiet, or inactive, they are thought of as weird, alienated, or maladjusted (p. 96). Rubin (1985) says, "The bottom line is that continued isolation into the later years of childhood is likely to become associated with adult and peer perceptions of abnormality" (p. 136). Csikszentmihalyi and

Larson (1984) point out that "a reclusive teenager makes peers uneasy; they make fun of him; they suspect him of being a weirdo, a maladjusted outcast" (p. 178).

There is a perception among children that some socially neglected students refuse to be influenced by their peers. For example, they believe that these students' choice of clothing indicates that they are ignoring the prescribed "rules" for fashion. According to Perry, Kusel, and Perry's (1988) study, which assessed the degree to which 165 third through six grade students were subjected to direct physical and verbal abuse by peers, this apparent disregard of the rules tends to provoke verbal ridicule or physical attacks from the other children. Eder (1985) says, "Any behavior can have several potential meanings and can thus be misunderstood, but the act of ignoring someone provides even fewer cues and is therefore even more likely to be misinterpreted" (p. 163). Perry et al.'s study indicates that physical attacks for these children decline with age but that verbal abuse remains high. Chang (1992) suggests that peer reactions, such as verbal and physical attacks, function as powerful sanctions against any perceived display of extreme individualistic behavior.

Resilience Factors

The overall view in the literature on peer status is that social neglect is a negative categorization and there are certain risk factors involved with being a member of this category. However, there are studies that indicate some students within this social status category are resilient to these risks. A

few studies indicate that socially neglected children are awarded a certain amount of respect from their peers. Hymel, Bowker, and Woody (1993), for example, find that unpopular children "who exhibit withdrawn but non-aggressive social behavior possess certain positive qualities that are recognized by their peers" (p. 890). Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) state that many loners in high school are publicly ridiculed and ignored by their peers, but are often secretly respected and envied by them as well (p. 181). Chang (1992) suggests that these solitary peers may appear to have a certain degree of "inner-directedness," which is accepted by adolescents as indicating individuality and self-confidence (p. 890). Larkin (1979) indicates that some of these adolescents feel that school is not central to their sense of selfhood and that "the internalized self exists in *opposition* and in *contraction* to the social order" (pp. 154-155). He states that while these children accept school as necessary, they withdraw emotionally from it and live for the "free time" in which they indulge in pleasures and experience themselves as "authentic beings" (p. 160). McLaren (1999) suggests that for some adolescents secondary school is a place where their imagination and individuality are suppressed by parents, teachers, and the tyranny of teen social hierarchies. She argues that for these students, self-alienation is not a form of rebellion but a survival technique (p. D2). Perhaps for some socially neglected teenagers, such as the ones that are discussed in this paragraph, the word "resilience" can be interchanged with "survival."

Bukowski, Newcomp, and Hartrup (1996) state that there is no broad model to explain why some children may be less desirous of friendship than other children (p. 11). They suggest that current research on friendships during childhood and adolescence indicate that some children have the knowledge and skills necessary to interact normally with their peers but lack the motivation to do so. Rankin Young and Bradley (1998) identify these socially neglected adolescent as "stable introverts." Their research indicates that these teenagers are not interested in social interactions and that they feel no need to socialize with peers (p. 22-23). Brown and Lohr (1987) use the term "independents" and suggest that adolescents in this category acknowledge being outsiders but attach little or no importance to being part of a crowd (p. 52). They find that the self-esteem of these students is not significantly lower than that of any of the higher-status students, and that it is considerably higher than those who felt it was important to be part of a crowd but recognized that they were not. Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) suggest that this type of adolescent does not appear to suffer from their social neglect, and that these students "appear to have adjusted to solitude as a way of life" (p. 194). However, it can probably be argued that, just as Rubin, LeMare, and Lollis (1990) find, children who withdraw have a high probability of achieving neglected status among their peers, and that students who appear to be less desirous of peer relationships and seek solitude may be in danger of eventually being socially neglected by their peers as well. It needs to be acknowledged though, in regards to this hypothesis, that there has been far

less attention in the literature given to the possible effect of a lack of peer interaction and solitude than it has on the benefits of peer relational experiences (Rubin, 1985; Rubin, Hymel, & Mills, 1989).

Coleman (1974) states that solitude has not received anything more than passing attention in the research. Byrnes (1983) says, "We rarely consider the importance of solitude" (p. 96). Coleman indicates that, while the literature suggests that the ability to enjoy or make use of solitude comes in adulthood, the adolescents in his research say that time spent alone is constructive. Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) suggest that older adolescents who spend more than the average amount of time alone have future goals based on personal values and standards; while those who are rarely alone have future goals in terms of conventional values like success and reward. They state their findings indicate that adolescents in this group spend most of their leisure time at home and in their bedrooms; and that they study more, read more, and also spend more time thinking (p. 193). The findings from Larson's (1997) study on 483 European American fifth through ninth graders, who carried electronic pagers for one week and provided reports on their experiences when signaled at random times, suggests that their "results do not contradict the findings of other studies that solitude is a more lonely and less happy part of daily life" (p. 89). However, their findings do suggest that solitude becomes more voluntary and used more constructively with age. Csikszentmihalyi and Larson point out, "Adolescents feel less self-conscious alone; they concentrate more and with

less effort. At the same time, they feel relatively free, in control, and intrinsically motivated" (p. 187). Larson adds that unless an adolescent has the capacity and the intelligence to structure his or her own attention, their "solitude will be nothing more than a frightening vacuum" (p. 195). Coleman's (1974) findings indicate that girls appear to have more ability to tolerate solitude than boys. He acknowledges that this finding is contrary to what was expected due to the research findings of Kagan and Moss (1962) and Douban and Adelson (1966), which indicate that girls have a higher level of dependency than boys. Coleman suggests that "since girls are more advanced in some areas, this may apply also to the ability to tolerate solitude" (p. 38). Brynes suggests that the accepting and valuing of "solitude as an experience indispensable to human maturity may be the needed catalyst for the healthy development of children" (p. 99). However, as Larson points out, "solitude is valuable, not as an end in itself, but as a *strategic retreat* from an engaged and happy social life" (p. 90).

Conclusion

My review of the literature has deepened my understanding significantly about social status, peer groups, and children who are members of the socially neglected peer status category. However, my review also indicates that little attention has been paid in the research to an adolescent's perspective of his or her social status and social competence within the research literature (Blyth, 1983; Rubin, Hymel, & Mills, 1989; Feldman &

Elliott, 1990; Gottlieb, 1991; Hymel, Bowker, & Woody, 1993). Montemayor and Gregg (1994) point out that theorists and researchers interested in peer relationships, pressure, and conformity have been primarily concerned with describing the adolescent peer culture (p. 327). Feldman and Elliott (1990) stress, "Learning how to elicit information on what adolescents think and feel about themselves, about events in their lives, and about their understanding of what they are doing would be an enormous benefit to research" (p. 503).

As high school students, our social lives probably consisted of discussing topics that were of particular interest to our peer group, such as other boys and girls, school and social activities, clothing fashions, concerts, records, music groups, film stars, movie releases, sport results, and television programs. The research suggests that today's adolescents also talk about similar subjects with their peers. For many of us though, and perhaps this is the same for adolescents today, we never wondered about how it was to be "friendless in a friendship based society" (Cusick, 1973, p. 171). The following chapter discusses the research methodology that I employed to obtain some possible answers to this question as well as to ones on how socially neglected adolescents "think and feel about themselves."

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

If one boy out of a hundred finds a way to get along splendidly with his parents, this is something that hardly warrants mention in a statistical description of what teenagers are like. But this one-in-one-hundred finding can become the most important fact if we wish to understand what adolescence could be like (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984, p. xv).

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology that I used to research socially neglected adolescents in a secondary school setting. The first section in the chapter presents the theoretical orientation, which guided my inquiry. Fetterman (1998) and O'Brien (1993) suggest that all research is theory dependent and that no study can be undertaken without an underlying theory or model. As Fetterman points out, "The researcher's theoretical approach helps define the problem and how to tackle it" (p. 5). Following the section on theory, I offer an overview of the research methodology. The subsequent sections in the chapter give a detailed description of the fieldwork approach, method, and techniques, which are: gaining access to the research site, data sources, immersion into the community, gaining access to students, participant identification, participant data gathering process, data analysis, and presentation of the research findings.

Background that I Bring to Study

I would like to acknowledge the personal and academic background that I bring to this study. As Ueland (1987) suggests, "The only way ever to have an intelligent understanding of anything, and a true interest in it, whether it is writing or art or aviation, is to do it yourself" (p. 73). I have always been interested in the phenomenon of being alone and have experienced it for varying lengths of time and in different settings and ways, such as solitude, loneliness, isolation, rejection, alienation, and withdrawal. In addition, I researched the phenomenology of solitude for my Master of Arts degree. In that study, I combined descriptions from the literature with interview data from people who live in a remote community, people who have careers that necessitate that they work alone, people in an educational organization that include "solo" experiences in its curriculum, and my own lived experiences. I have also spent several years writing papers for master and doctoral courses on children and adults who either chose to be alone and were content with their decision or were isolated and lonely because of the situation they found themselves in. I am now nearing the completion of two and a half year's worth of research work on the social status category of peer neglect. In this period, I have written and defended two papers on social neglect for my doctoral candidacy examination, written my doctoral dissertation proposal on the topic, researched the subject for six months, and have completed the research process of transcribing data, analyzing it, and

writing the findings from the inquiry for this dissertation. It is impossible to fathom at this point how many hours I have spent alone pursuing an understanding of how it is to be alone. I have, as Ueland puts it, "a true interest in it." Furthermore, as she also suggests, I believe that my endeavors and experiences have contributed significantly to my understanding of peer social neglect and to my research approach.

Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical tradition that guides my inquiry is rooted in the "symbolic interactionist tradition." Symbolic interactionists focus on interpersonal interaction and believe that the meaning of social behavior can be understood through careful observation of the ways in which individuals interact with one another (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Baker, 1988). However, as Reynolds (1990) points out, there is considerable diversity within the "camp of interactionism" (p. 3). Denzin (1989; 1992) argues though that the majority of interactionists share key assumptions or beliefs that guide their work. Reynolds suggests that since Denzin's assumptions about contemporary interactionists are well known and fairly widely agreed upon, they constitute a solid starting point in summarizing interactionist guiding theories (p. 120). Denzin (1992) states that interactionists believe society is lived in the here and now and thus is always changing; grand or global theories are not useful; reality is a social production; people produce their situated versions; and people are constrained by what they construct and

inherit from the past (pp. 22-26). He states that interactionists try to understand "how humans develop their own accounts and motives for explaining their actions to one another" (p. 24). According to Burgess (1984), the distinction of the interactionist perspective is that it seeks to understand what meaning and what significance the social world has for the people who live in it. He suggests that many of the studies that involve a phenomenological perspective in which researchers attempt to study situations from the participants' point of view and to understand the meaning of events for people in particular situations, owe much to interactionism. Interactionists tend to study the "marked, deviant, stigmatized, lonely, unhappy, alienated, and powerless people in everyday life;" and they write about their struggles to make sense of themselves and their life experiences (Denzin, 1992, p. 25). Fetterman (1998) suggests that "people act on their individual perceptions, and those actions have real consequences" (p. 5). Cusick (1973), who employed interactionism in his own work in a secondary school, supports Burgess's suggestion, and states that a researcher cannot stand outside and make judgments but needs to get close to the social situation from the participant's point of view. Blumer (1966), who is also widely quoted in the literature on symbolic interactionism, recommends that the study of action should be conducted from the position of the actor in order to understand the way the actor perceives the situation. He states, "The actor acts toward his world on the basis of how he sees it and not on the basis of how that world appears to the outside observer" (p. 542).

The symbolic interactionist perspective shaped my research questions on how socially neglected adolescents experience, interpret, and construct their interactions with peers in a school setting. Denzin (1992) indicates that interactionists ask “how” questions, such as how an experience is structured, how it is lived, and how it is given meaning (p. 24). The research questions that I selected for my study are:

1. How do socially neglected adolescents perceive themselves?
2. How do they perceive their peers?
3. How do they think their peers view them?
4. How do their peers interact with them?
5. How do they respond to peers?
6. How do their interactions with peers affect them?

While these six questions formed the base of the study, the majority of the interviews with participants were semi-structured and took the shape of conversations. During the meetings, the students were encouraged to discuss their interests as well as to inquire about anything that they had questions about. As Fielding (1993a) points out, interactionists “assume that no fixed sequence of questions is suitable to all respondents, and allow respondents to raise considerations that the interviewer has not thought of” (p. 151).

Overview of Methodological Approach

There are several reasons why I chose an ethnographic methodological approach for my study. The first reason is that this type of methodology is

compatible with symbolic interactionist theory. Fielding (1993a) suggests that interactionists, like many ethnographers, favor open-ended interviews that allow participants to utilize their own particular way of defining their world; and Denzin (1992) indicates that interactionists write narratives about how people do things together, and that they take the form of small-scale ethnographies (p. 23). The second reason is that ethnography allows participants to offer their own interpretations of their experiences and construction of reality. Burgess (1984) emphasizes that we need to attempt to understand what meaning and what significance the social world have for the people who live in it; and as Eder (1985) points out, ethnographers examine perspectives and behavior from a participant's point of view (p. 155). The third reason is that I feel an ethnographic approach suits my particular research strengths and my personal background.

Ethnography concentrates on studying and interpreting the cultural behavior of people in everyday contexts. The ethnographer observes and participates in the daily activities of the people being studied, and the research data are gathered through these activities as well as through different types of interviews or conversations (Cusick, 1973; Goetz and LeCompte, 1984; Prus, 1994; Wolcott, 1995; Steinberg, 1999). The researcher listens to what individuals are saying, watches what they are doing, and interacts with members of the community. The ethnographer attempts to assume an "emic perspective, or the insider's perception of reality" (Bannister, 1996, p. 160); and moves "back and forth between his or her own place and understanding and

that of the other" (Fielding, 1993b, p. 163). McNeill (1990) feels that the stages of ethnographic research are less distinct from each other than social survey methods, which obtain statistical data from a large number of people in a relatively short time. However, like the majority of the literature, he argues that certain phases can be identified in ethnographic studies. The phases of my study are offered in the following eight sections of this chapter.

Gaining Access to the Research Site

Official permission from school district administration is required for a school-based study to be sanctioned. In order to gain access, a letter and "research package" must be submitted to the school district's superintendent. The letter (see Appendix A) and research package that I forwarded to a number of school districts included the focus of my research, the reasons for undertaking it, the methodological design, the University of Victoria Ethics Committee's approval for the study, and the informed participant consent letters. Within two weeks of sending the research request, I received a reply from the School District of Geraldton stating that my study was approved and that district principals would contact me if they were interested. I was both delighted and relieved when the principal of Chamberlain Secondary School, Ken Atkinson, telephoned and said that he thought my inquiry was worthwhile and that he supported my research approach to observe, converse, and interview the students at his school. Eckert (1989) says "her relief knew no bounds" when district administrators indicated that they liked

her proposal and that she “was the first researcher in their memory who wanted to talk to students rather than administer tests or questionnaires” (p. 27).

Ken Atkinson suggested that I present my proposal to conduct a research study to the other administrators and to the teachers at the school’s next staff meeting. He felt that a short presentation would be an appropriate vehicle to introduce myself and to explain my inquiry. Ken believed that it would also give the educators an opportunity to ask questions or voice any concerns about such an inquiry being conducted at their school.

On the day that I was to present my proposal to the staff at Chamberlain Secondary, everything seemed to go astray and I realized that I was far more nervous than I thought that I would be. When I walked into the school cafeteria, which is the only room in the school that has enough tables and chairs to accommodate almost 90 educators, I saw a long line of adults with empty mugs dangling from their hands. They were queued up behind two large stainless steel urns. I noticed that the majority of them were “eyeing” the plates of cookies on the table in front. The scene reminded me of my years of teaching at a secondary school and of how hungry I was at the end of each school day. I also remembered that, for the most part, we listened politely to speakers and supported their requests, which helped to abate some of the nervousness that I felt. The two male administrators were occupied with getting the sound system working, which was necessary in order to amplify a speaker’s voice over the humming from the row of pop machines

that was competing with the noise from the high velocity fans whirling over the fat food fryers. Nobody offered me a seat or indicated where to sit, so I choose a vacant table with four empty chairs around it and sat down. After a few moments, the administrators decided to start the meeting even though the sound system continued to emit high pitched squeals at intermittent intervals. I was listed under "Research Project UVic" and was the second item on the agenda. When the first item had been discussed, Ken introduced me to his staff and I gave a brief summary of my proposed study on socially neglected students. At this time, I also described the type of adolescents who would fit into the peer social category that was the focus of my inquiry. When I had completed my presentation, I inquired if there were any questions. One teacher asked, "Will we get to read it?" I replied that they would, waited a few moments to ascertain if there were any more questions or concerns, thanked the educators for their time, and then sat down.

As the third item on the agenda was being presented at the staff meeting, Rebecca Thompson, who was the principal's secretary, passed me a lined piece of paper. I had met Rebecca earlier in the day when I had introduced myself to the staff in the main office. During our introductions, Rebecca had informed me that she had been at the school for a considerable length of time, was going to retire in two years, and that she did not suffer fools well. As she spoke, I had noted that her desk was positioned so that you were forced to squeeze by it before you could enter the principal's office; and reflected on the fact that there are never just one or two hierarchical "starting

points" of entry into an institution. I had obtained the district superintendent's and the principal's permission to undertake my inquiry, but I had not yet received Rebecca's. As I looked down at the message that Rebecca had written on an upward slant across the top half of the page, I knew that the words would give some kind of indication whether the gates to Chamberlain Secondary School were going to be opened by this formidable gatekeeper. I read, "PAULA FITZGIBBON will you need a mail box?" and a surge of relief flowed through my body.

Immersion into the School Community

After access had been gained, my next step in the fieldwork was immersion into Chamberlain Secondary School's community. Throughout this period, as well as for the remainder of the study, I was at the school every week that classes were in session on nearly every single day from Monday to Thursday. I occasionally went into the school on Fridays as well, but found that the shortened timetable on that day created a hectic or rushed atmosphere that was not particularly conducive to observations, informal conversations with students and staff members, or scheduled interviews. Most days I walked in with the students in the morning and left about an hour after the final bell had announced the end of the school day. I used the time when the students had vacated the hallways and classrooms to complete fieldnotes or to "chat" and have a cup of coffee with teachers in the staffroom.

I followed the advice of Fetterman (1998), who says that most ethnographers employ a "big net approach," which involves mixing and mingling with everyone at the beginning of their fieldwork (p. 32). He states that this type of immersion ensures a wide-angle view of events before the research focus narrows to specific participants and the microscopic study of specific interactions begins. During this immersion period, I attempted to understand how different factors might impact or influence the participants in my study. These factors included: the three municipalities that the school serves; the school district; as well as the school's geographical location, physical structure, organization structure, community, curriculum, students, administrators, teachers, and support staff. As Cusick (1973) states, "Student behavior does not take place in a vacuum but in a definite, organizational setting which has a number of complex forces" (p. 36).

During this phase of the study, I began to determine the type of phenomenon that I would record. The literature points out that it is impossible to record everything that is happening in the community and with subjects (McNeill, 1990; Fetterman, 1998). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) suggest that ethnographers should "accept the more achievable goal of recording phenomena salient to major aspects of the topic they have defined" (p. 112). Wolcott (1995) advises:

When you are not sure what you *should* be attending to, turn attention back on yourself to see what is it you *are* attending to, and try to discern how and why your attention has been drawn as it has. What

are you observing and noting; of that, what are you putting in your notes, at what level of detail; and at what level are you tracking your personal reactions to what you are experiencing (p. 96).

The advice from other researchers, such as Goetz and LeCompte and Wolcott, was beneficial because it kept me questioning, "Why am I recording this?" and "How could this contribute to my research?" It was interesting that questions such as these not only kept me alert and focused on what I was recording, they also helped to sustain my motivation throughout the research period.

I employed different levels of participation ranging from "passive" to "moderate" to "active" in the immersion phase of the research. For instance, in some classes, teachers introduced me to students and encouraged my participation in discussions and activities; whereas in others, teachers did not introduce me and I tended to sit mutely at the back of the room.

If there were people present during this phase, I recorded my observations and impressions by shorthand in order to maintain confidentiality; but if I was alone, I recorded data by long hand or dictated it onto a hand-held audio tape recorder. I did not record conversations during the immersion phase of the study. The tape recorder and other research equipment are described in the "Participant Data Gathering Process" section of this chapter. My written notes and recorded comments were destroyed after being transcribed on a personal computer and stored on computer disks.

The immersion into the school's community gave me an opportunity to observe students and to converse with them in a natural setting. It also offered me an opportunity to empathize, listen, and build a relationship of trust with the students. As Fontana and Frey (1994) point out, gaining trust takes a great deal of time and effort and is essential to a study's success. Fetterman (1998) states, "Trust can be an instant and spontaneous chemical reaction, but more often is a long, steady process, like building a friendship" (p. 41). Cusick (1973) also agrees that no matter how researchers present themselves or what attitude they attempt to adopt, it still takes time to gain acceptance and rapport.

Gaining Access to Students

There are two opposing views on how to gain access to adolescents for research purposes. Many studies on adolescent social status and peer groups stress that it is important to avoid any association with the world of adults or official functions of an institution in order to gain access to the adolescents' world, (Cusick, 1973; Eder, 1985; Eder & Parker, 1987; Eckert, 1989; Kinney, 1990; Chang, 1992). They suggest that children feel the need to break away from adult models and values during adolescence in order to gain control over their lives and to search for new relationships, ideas, and idols (Schmiedeck, 1979; Kinney, 1990; Youniss & Haynie, 1992; Kinney, 1993). However, Eckert (1989) says that most adolescents prefer a researcher who has not only adult competence but also adult credibility. After reading several

ethnographic studies that focus on adolescents whose social interactions and practices deem them as societal "outsiders," such as Anne Campbell's (1984) The Girls in the Gang, I decided that I would take advantage of any offer to introduce me to students or to staff members at the school.

My decision to accept adult introductions proved to be the right one in regards to gaining access to students. In fact, I suggest that adult introductions in school based research may now be essential considering the recent violence and tragedies that have occurred in schools. For example, I was a "stranger in their midst" in the initial stages of the study and the students told me that they perceived the adult introductions as being evidence that the inquiry was officially sanctioned and there was nothing, therefore, to fear from their interactions with me.

Concern about being accepted and developing rapport is also noted by researchers in several school based studies on adolescents (Cusick, 1973; Chang, 1989; Kinney, 1990; Griffiths, 1995). I based my decision to act as naturally as possible on their findings and on my knowledge of this age group, which was gained from teaching in high schools for ten years, from being familiar with the literature, from having researched and written several papers on adolescents, and from being a parent of two teenagers. I smiled at students as I passed them in the hall, made inconsequential remarks, such as "That looks good" when I saw them eating something during lunch, and wore fairly casual clothing. While teachers had been instructed to tell students that a university student was conducting a study on

how teenagers interact with their peers, I thought that it was essential that students could easily identify who I was in order to help alleviate any concerns about a stranger being in the community. With that need for identification in mind, I wore a plastic coated name tag that had "Paula FitzGibbon, University of Victoria" printed on it; and always introduced myself if I overheard someone ask, "Who's that?"

As I walked the halls, sat in on classes, and wandered the school grounds, I began to recognize various individuals or groups and made a point of giving them a verbal or non-verbal greeting. I was surprised that within a relatively short period of time, students started addressing or approaching me first. Some asked, "How's it going?" and others offered me a french fry or onion ring. The majority of researchers on adolescents report that a number of students also wanted to talk to them during the initial stages of their studies. Eckert (1989) suggests that a non-judgmental adult looking for people to talk about themselves is a rare and seductive thing in a school (p. 34). Kinney (1990) notes that the students seemed to enjoy conversing with him and told him that it was "like talking to 'a new kid at school'" (p. 34). Cusick (1973) and Chang (1989) suggest that it is usually the deviants and excluded students who approach strangers first. However, the girls and boys who spoke with me or offered food were outgoing and appeared to be popular with their peers.

Participant Identification

The four research approaches that are generally used to identify children's social status are sociometric measurement, peer assessments, teacher assessments, behavioral observations, and judgmental sampling. For the most part, studies on peer acceptance in a school setting have utilized sociometric measurement, which was pioneered in 1934 by J. L. Moreno (Miller & Gentry, 1980; Renshaw, 1981; Bukowski & Hoza, 1989). Using this type of measurement, children are asked to name peers whom they would or would not like to play or work with. Students are then categorized according to the number and type of nominations that they receive. Popular children receive the most positive peer nominations, socially rejected ones receive many negative votes, and socially neglected youngsters receive very few positive or negative votes. The research indicates that socially rejected children receive numerous votes because they are actively disliked by their peers; whereas socially neglected ones receive few if any votes because they are overlooked by them (Rubin, 1983; Carlson, Lahey, & Neeper, 1984; Asher, 1990).

Sociometric measurements are considered fairly effective in establishing an overall picture. However, the literature contains a number of reservations about this type of methodology. Recent qualitative studies on adolescent peer relationships argue that sociometric measurements of peer neglect depend upon a preconceived theoretical framework, which could prove to be incomplete or inappropriate to the research setting or to the

participants, and that this type of measurement does not take into account variables such as the moods of participants and researchers (Eder, 1985; Lesko, 1988; Eckert, 1989; Kinney, 1990; Chang, 1992; Brown, 1996). In addition, these studies imply that sociometric techniques do not attempt to understand peer relations from the perspective of children and, therefore, run the risk of simply recording stereotypes. For example, the questions are produced by adults and there is no opportunity for children to offer input or perceptions that differ from the ones that are asked. The ethical issue of employing this type of identification method is also important to consider because sociometric ratings require children to name peers who they would like or not like to play with. Terry and Coie (1991) state that some investigators are now voicing objections to this form of identification because "such methodology requires children to be asked about their negative sentiments towards peers and thus entails the risk of reifying unspoken biases toward peers" (p. 867). However, they do add that empirical investigations of the consequences of administering sociometric nominations in the classroom have not yet documented any evidence that it adversely affects children's interactions.

The second type of approach used to identify isolated peers is peer assessment, which requires that children name peers who fit certain character descriptions. Using this type of identification, the socially neglected children are the ones selected as being withdrawn or shy (Rubin, LeMare, & Lollis, 1990). However, recent research now questions the ability of children to

assess peers, particularly socially neglected ones who they supposedly ignore and do not notice (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; Younger & Daniels, 1992; Hatzichristou & Hopf, 1996). In addition, Eder (1985) suggests that adolescents have a tendency to apply and consequently to accept broader stereotypes of their peers, who they have little contact with and who are further away in the overall ladder of peer hierarchy. She adds, "The stereotypes in turn often served to prevent contact and therefore limited the amount of information that students received--information that might have challenged the stereotypes" (p. 161). For instance, in my own research and practice I have repeatedly heard adolescents suggest that the reason "brains" do so well academically is because they do not have a social life and that they go right home after school and study. Elliott and Feldman (1990) point out that usefulness of peer assessments is also dependent on the willingness of participants to answer thoroughly and honestly.

The third type of approach is teacher assessments. Rubin, LeMare, and Lollis (1990) suggest that this type of method provides a perspective on peer status and behavior and may possess useful information "about infrequent but critical events that relate to a child's status in the peer group" (p. 234). They indicate, however, that the two major disadvantages of utilizing this type of participant identification are that teachers provide an "adult" perspective on peer status and behavior; and while teachers may be good judges of aggressive behavior, they may not be aware of well-behaving, nondisruptive, but withdrawn children" (pp. 234-235). Carlson, Lahey, and

Neeper (1984) also point out that teacher ratings, which have been used to study the social behavior of neglected and rejected children and have produced meaningful data, "collect data from an adult rather than a child perspective" (p. 188). The majority of the research suggests that teachers may be overlooking socially neglected students because of their seemingly compliant behavior (Coie & Dodge, 1983; Coie, 1990; Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990). In addition, Hatzichristou (1987) says that children engage in different kinds of interactions with teachers than they do with their peers (p. 18). Asher (1983) also argues that the highly structured world of the classroom is not always the best place to observe behavior as students "are often constrained by the nature of activities, seating arrangements, surveillance by authority figures, and so forth" (p. 1428). Eder and Parker (1987) maintain that classroom interaction is usually so structured that students do not have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way (p. 210). Cusick (1973) indicates that although he was a secondary school teacher for several years, he did not understand the student perspective. He states, "I thought I did--most teachers think they do--but I didn't and neither do they" (p. 240). I concur with these concerns about utilizing teacher assessments and perspectives in regards to participant identification. When I observed the students who had been suggested by teachers, either their aggressive behavior made it obvious to me that they belonged to the socially rejected category or else their clothing style and mannerisms indicated that they were members of a clique who had adopted a particular style of dress and type of behavior that

indicated that they were rebelling against “the system.” Kinney (1993) points out that teacher assessments often do not consider adolescents’ self-presentation techniques or role identities within specific contexts, such as the social world of the secondary school (p. 22).

In considering my theoretical orientation, methodological approach, and immersion into the school’s community, I decided that student behavior observations and judgmental sampling were the best identification processes to identify socially neglected adolescents. My goal was not to identify all the students at Chamberlain Secondary who were socially neglected but rather to ensure that those selected for the study were, in fact, members. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) explain that “criterion-based selection requires that the researcher establishes in advance a set of criteria or list of attributes that the units for study must possess” (p. 73). I derived the characteristics of socially neglected students from the ones that the literature recognizes. These characteristics are:

- exhibits passive behavior;
- makes few attempts to initiate social interaction;
- does not engage in anti-social or aggressive behavior;
- appears to be one of the most isolated students in the school.

When I first began my study, I understood that behavior observation assessment and judgmental sampling demanded a great deal more time than other assessment procedures. However, I was not aware of just how critical this factor was until after my first attempt at participant identification. I had

noticed a student who seemed to be always sitting by herself in front of her locker throughout the lunch break. After observing her lunchtime ritual for a few days, I approached this student and started up a conversation with her. She confided that she did not have many friends and that she considered herself a loner. The student stated that she was in grade 11 and that she did not have any friends during elementary school or junior high school either. I discussed my inquiry with this adolescent and she volunteered to be a participant in the study. However, during the first scheduled interview, it was evident from the girl's responses to the research questions that she was a socially rejected adolescent rather than a socially neglected one. I met with this student for two scheduled interviews because I did not want her to think that I was rejecting her contributions to the study after only one session, and also because I found her comments helpful in furthering my understanding of Chamberlain Secondary School's community. After this experience with the "first" participant, I ensured that I observed potential participants in a variety of situations over a substantial period of time, and that I cross-checked and compared collected data. In addition, I engaged the participants in more casual conversations, which gave me additional opportunities to question and reevaluate participants' membership.

Rubin, LeMare, and Lollis (1990) point out that the definition of low rate of interaction varies in studies on isolated children. They state, "In reports, children who are observed to interact with peers less than 15% of the time are identified as withdrawn (e.g. O'Connor, 1972); whereas, in other

studies withdrawn children have interaction rates that range up to 50% of the time (Keller & Carlson, 1974)" (p. 236). The eight participants in my study were identified not because of their *low rate* of interaction but rather because of their *lack* of interaction during their breaks between classes, at lunch hour, and in their classrooms. Generally, my lunch hour observations of students were how I first identified potential participants. I noticed that some students were always alone and never stopped walking throughout their lunch hours. Their hurried manner suggested that they had a destination in mind; yet, our paths crossed continuously throughout the breaks. Others I noticed chose the same library carousel to sit in day after day. Unlike the other students, who worked on assignments or sat in front of the computer with a friend nearby, these students read and did not look about. A few always ate their lunch alone while they were sitting on the floor in front of their lockers or else they sat on the bottom stairs of an unpopulated area of the school. After I had ensured that there was a solitary pattern to their lunchhours, I then observed these potential participants in classes. I noted the ones who did not say very much to anyone in classes. These students were usually the first or the last to arrive to classes. If they were early, they chose a desk at the front of the classroom. If they came later, then they would choose a seat that had empty desks all around it. When they waited for the teacher to begin the class or if they completed their work, they would take out a book and read, poke at their calculators, or else they sat perfectly still and stared straight ahead or cast their eyes downwards. During lectures, they either kept their heads down or else

sat rigid in their chairs and never took their gaze off the instructor. They did not volunteer to join any group for class discussions or activities.

The second process of participant identification that I employed was judgmental sampling, which added validity to the selection process. Fetterman (1998) says that "this approach is quite natural, requiring the ethnographer to ask very simple, direct question about what people do" and that it is the most common technique used by ethnographers to select the most appropriate members of a subculture (p. 33). During this process, I approached possible participants, whom I had identified through my behavior observations, during a break in their school day and introduced myself. I informed the students that I was conducting a study on peer interactions, and asked whether I could ask them a few questions. I included students who did not fit the descriptor list as well in order to protect the identity of possible participants and to enable me to compare students' responses. Every student that I approached agreed to be interviewed. I gave them a participant consent form (see Appendix B), which stated that I was investigating how adolescents construct their reality and develop their own explanations for their interactions with peers in a secondary school setting. This consent form, as well as the one that I used after this phase of the study, identified who I was, what university I was affiliated with, the intent of the study, and that confidentiality and anonymity were assured. It stated that participants would be assigned pseudonyms and that these names would be used in transcribing all materials and in the final writing of the dissertation.

The consent forms also stated that participation was voluntary and that the participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and could decline from answering any questions. After the students had completed the forms, I asked open-ended questions, such as: "How is your day going?" "How do you spend your time after school?" "How do you spend your lunch hours?"

The judgmental sampling was instrumental in helping to determine which students were socially neglected. The majority of the adolescents, who had been identified as being possible candidates, told me during the conversations that they usually spent time at school on their own, that generally their leisure time was spent alone, and they either said, "I don't have many friends" or were more blunt and said, "I don't have any friends." Their self-identity disclosure was important as I did not want to indicate that their aloneness was evident to others. I felt at this point, I could discuss my inquiry further and indicate to these students that they may wish to volunteer to be a participant in the study. All but one of the self-identifying students replied that they were interested. They all seemed pleased, however, that they were possibly a member of this recognized social status group and that there were other people like them. I gave each student the second consent form (see Appendix C), which stated that the researcher was investigating how socially neglected adolescents construct their reality and develop their own explanations for their interactions with peers in a secondary school setting. I explained to the students that they did not need

their parents or caregivers' consent to sign the forms, but recommended that they take the form home and discuss the study with their parents.

Elliott and Feldman (1990) indicate that few studies have used participant identification procedures that entail direct observation of adolescent behaviors (Elliott and Feldman, 1990). Rubin, LeMare, and Lollis (1990) state that even though they believe that behavioral observations represent the standard against which all other forms of assessment of withdrawn behavior must be compared, that "the relative neglect of observational assessments are quite understandable; the method requires weeks, if not months, of data collection. This time frame does not compare favorably with the few hours required to administer teacher and peer assessment measures" (p. 236). However, my efforts throughout the two months that it took to complete the behavior observations and judgmental sampling assessment procedures were well rewarded. I believe that the student assessments are valid and the approach I took enhanced my understanding of the phenomena of peer social neglect. In addition, the time spent conducting the assessments increased my visibility, which was a contributing factor to being accepted and trusted.

Participant Data Gathering Process

After the identification processes were complete, I shifted my research focus to gathering data on the eight identified adolescents who had agreed to be participants in the study. The females in the group consisted of two

students in grade 10 and two in grade 12; and the males consisted of one student in grade 10 and three in grade 12. During this three and a half month phase of the study, I immersed myself as much as possible into each participant's lifeworld at school. For example, I observed their classes, had informal conversations with them, and met them at the end of the school day. The conversations and observations took place in hallways, classrooms, offices, student lunchrooms, staff lunchroom, and on the school grounds. Kinney (1993) indicates that frequent observations of adolescents in natural settings provides information about social interactions and behavior and serves as data to be compared with material from interviews (p. 24). The course timetables of the participants were all different except that two of them shared the same class for one subject. I made a point of not communicating to the two students in that particular class because I did not want them to wonder if that other quiet person was a possible participant, which might contribute to either one being identified. I was not concerned that they would greet me as I had already ascertained that socially neglected adolescents tend to not initiate greetings. The observations were conducted during different seasons of the year, on different days of the week, and at different times throughout the school day. Besides the observations, I also encouraged participants to keep journals or diaries of their experiences and feelings, and to share their writings with me. Of the eight participants, however, only the three grade 12 males submitted personal writings to me. During this phrase, I continued to converse and spend time with the other students in the school,

which helped to protect the identity of participants and also increased my awareness of adolescents and the school community.

The main data gathering instrument in this study were the scheduled interviews with participants. The interviews took place from the middle of January until the end of April. The number of interviews that I conducted with each student ranged from five to twelve sessions, and were 45 minutes to one hour in duration.

I was very fortunate to have the use of a small room where I could conduct the interviews that ensured the participants some privacy. My decision to accept introductions was how I found out about the room and got the key to its door. It is somewhat ironical that Fetterman (1998) suggests introductions are an ethnographer's best ticket into a community because they open doors that might otherwise be locked to an outsider. I had been told by Rebecca Thompson that the only room available for interviews was the one that was tucked in the far corner of the main office. This room had inner windows looking into the main office; housed the public announcement equipment as well as office supplies and an assortment of personal belongings; and according to Rebecca, was used by the police to interview students who were "trouble makers." It was obvious that the space could not possibly provide a sense of privacy and I did not like the fact that the only students that went in it were considered delinquents. I was getting rather desperate when I was introduced to a teacher, who listened to my plight and then offered me the use of a small room. The room adjoined a

larger one that was used by teachers within the department to do course preparation. The space was ideal as interviews could be booked by signing a posted calendar. While Fielding (1993a) indicates that most interactionists reject prescheduled standardized interviews and regard the interview as a social event that is based on mutual participant observation, the pre-arranged sessions were important because it meant that participants could schedule interviews around their daily commitments or classes and that they had a voice in determining when the next interview would take place. There were also very few interruptions from teachers because of the booking arrangement, which helped to safeguard participant privacy. Another positive aspect to the room was that its door had a glass partition in it, which offered the students as well as myself a sense of security in regards to closing the door and being alone with each other. The other feature that made the room ideal was that I was given a key to it, which meant that I could lock the door and leave my lunch, extra notepads, pens, treats for participants, etc., in it while I conducted participant observations. However, in regards to recorded or written data, these materials were always carried with me throughout the school day in order to help ensure confidentiality.

I taped the interviews using a hand-sized Sony "Clear Voice" Cassette-Corder, which had a slightly raised built-in microphone. I selected this particular model after testing various audio cassette recorders in stores throughout the city. I wanted a machine that could record students' voices if they chose to sit a fair distance away from me, so that I would not need to

request that they move closer to the cassette in order for their voices to be heard. The machine also had to be able to pick-up a speaker's voice even if there was considerable background noise, which there inevitably is in schools. When I selected the Sony audio tape recorder, I inquired what batteries and audio tapes best suited it and bought an ample "back-up" supply of each. I also purchased a power adapter that could be plugged into a wall outlet. The above equipment as well as a stenographer's notebook, pens, pencils, and copies of participants' timetables were carried with me throughout the school day in a canvas camera bag that was equipped with a variety of zippered pockets.

The semi-structured scheduled interviews used the following six questions, which are also listed at the beginning of the chapter:

1. How do socially neglected adolescents perceive themselves?
2. How do they perceive their peers?
3. How do they think their peers view them?
4. How do their peers interact with them?
5. How do they respond to peers?
6. How do their interactions with peers affect them?

I used the questions as a base and the interviews took the form of conversations. The discussions focused on how the participants perceived themselves and how they understood and interacted with their peers. In his ethnographic study of four early adolescent boys' perception of their undesirable social status among peers, Merten (1996) states that the critical

task is to attempt "to understand how participants interpret their social experience in terms of shared ideas about *what counts as what*" (p. 38).

Brown (1996) supports self-perception data, but he also indicates that researchers need to be aware that the majority of adolescents and adults engage in some form of impression management in order to project a more positive self-portrait (p. 32). Some researchers indicate that the paramount need to be accepted and be included by peers makes some isolated children reluctant or unwilling to disclose events that might make them appear outside the mainstream (Sobol & Earn, 1985; Gottlieb, 1991). However, Hymel, Bowker, and Woody's (1993) suggestion that withdrawn unpopular children tend to view themselves accurately appears to be consistent with the majority of the literature on socially neglected children. Furthermore, I believe that even if participants engage in a form of impression management, it does not diminish the importance of attempting to find ways to better understand them. Some of the participants in my study were reluctant at first to speak about social neglect or else, according to my observations, misrepresented their experiences at school. However, I never pushed them to discuss anything that I perceived they were uncomfortable about and nor did I contradict or question what they had told me. This approach appears to have been the correct one because I noticed that as the inquiry progressed, their sense of comfort grew and they began to speak more frankly about themselves. Griffiths (1995) reports in Adolescent Girls and Their Friends: A Feminist Ethnography that there was a certain testing out period in her study

as well but when the girls realized that she would not break confidences, they began confiding in her. Experiences such as Griffiths and my own indicate that it is crucial in ethnographic studies to ensure that participants are given the time and opportunity to develop trust, and that the researcher collects data from a number of sources so that the information can be compared.

Data Sources

I collected almost 800 pages of data from the transcribed participant interviews. I also transcribed my notes from participant conversations, observations, and perceptions as well as their journal writings and course assignments. In addition, I transcribed notes taken from observations and conversations that I had with peers, teachers, counselors, office staff members, district and school administrators, and parents. The mail box that Rebecca Thompson offered to me on my first day at Chamberlain Secondary became a data collection gold mine. Gilbert (1993) says that "gatekeepers or "access-givers" to an organization often serve as initial informants or providers of data (pp. 159-169). Every slip of paper that the teachers, parents, and students received that announced, warned, praised, or informed about something going on in the school and in the community, I received as well. After the six month data gathering aspect of the study was complete, I sorted through the piles of paper and organized them into categories. The classifications consisted of: daily morning announcements, weekly announcements, staff meeting agendas, staff meeting minutes, staff social announcements, memos

from the principal to staff, memos from the male vice-principal to staff, memos from the female vice-principal to staff, staff committee meeting minutes, district information, staff information, parent/guardian newsletters, library newsletters, weekly sports page, parking information, and a miscellaneous pile. In addition to the immense volume of data that I obtained from the mail box, I also read through two internal school accreditation reports and two external school accreditation reports, district and school statistical information profiles produced by the Ministry of Education, the school's course calendar, the web sites of two of the three municipalities that the school serves (the third municipality does not have a site), and the monthly minutes from the council meetings of the municipality where the school is located. In addition, I gathered data from my conversations with district and school administrators, secretaries in the school board office and school office, teachers, counselors, students, parents, a clerk in the resource center, a local historical museum administrator, clerks at three municipal halls, clerks in various businesses, and acquaintances who live in the area. These conversations focused on professional opinions, personal perceptions, or facts about Chamberlain Secondary School, places of employment if applicable, and on the School District of Geraldton and the municipalities that it serves.

Data Analysis

The data analysis phase began as soon I started to collect data and continued throughout the research process including the writing of the study itself. I agree with Fetterman (1998) that data analysis, which builds on ideas throughout a study, is one of the most engaging features of ethnography. He states that this type of analysis "begins from the moment a fieldworker selects a problem to study and ends with the last word in the report or ethnography" (p. 92). The observations and perceptions that I wrote throughout the study were periodically reviewed before being transcribed onto computer disks. Burgess (1984) recommends that analytic notes should be continually written throughout a study, and asserts that these written records form the core of preliminary analysis (p. 175). I also listened repeatedly to participants' taped interviews and made notes on them. Reviewing the tapes and making notes helped me to pinpoint any comment that needed clarification and increased my awareness of areas that were weak or conflicted with other data.

The data that I collected were from a wide range of sources, which allowed me to validate findings. Brown (1996) and Hatzichristou and Hopf (1996) advocate the importance of using multiple data sources because it enables the researcher to test his or her sources of information against one another. During conversations and interviews, I established whether I understood a particular response by employing four different techniques: I would ask a person to repeat or rephrase a comment if it was unclear; I would rephrase a statement and ask if that was what the person intended to

say; I would repeat the exact words that the speaker had said and usually he or she would take the initiative to re-phrase them; or I would remain silent and allow the speaker to decide whether he or she wished to elaborate or to offer an explanation. Whyte (1984) suggests that it is helpful to occasionally rephrase and reflect back to participants what they seem to be expressing and then to summarize the remarks as a check on understanding (p. 98). Wolcott (1994) says, "I do not mind presenting myself as a bit dense, someone who does not catch on too quickly and has to have things repeated or explained" (p. 348). In ethnographic research, this type of data testing of sources is referred to as "data triangulation." Fetterman (1998) states, "Triangulating always improves the quality of data and the accuracy of ethnographic findings" (p. 95). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) argue that triangulation prevents the ethnographer from accepting initial impressions too readily, assists in correcting biases, and enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the investigation (p. 11). Denzin (1989) states that by triangulating data sources, researchers can efficiently employ the same methods to maximum theoretical advantage (p. 237). In addition to the importance of utilizing triangulation to ensure that findings are not idiosyncratic (Hammersley, 1990), a researcher also needs to be sufficiently reflexive about the project, so that he or she can evoke these resources to guide data gathering and to help gain a better understanding of their own interpretations (Olesen, 1994).

In analyzing the data on the participants, I looked for patterns of thought and behavior. Heath and Luff (1993) maintain that transcribed data is an especially important analytic tool as it provides the researcher with an understanding of, and insight into, the conduct of the individual or group being studied (p. 309). Fetterman (1998) describes analytical data process as beginning with a mass of undifferentiated ideas and behavior and then collecting pieces of information, comparing, contrasting, and sorting gross categories and minutiae until a discernible thought or behavior becomes identifiable (p. 96). During the research process, I kept a list of tentative themes that I continually updated in order to keep track or "on top" of the data. Each participant had an opportunity to read their own transcribed interviews and I discussed emerging themes with them. They did not disagree with any of my suggestions in regards to themes, did not suggest alternative ones, and did not ask to change or omit phrases from the transcribed interviews. However, the participants always expressed considerable surprise at the number of pages there were in each transcript, which is understandable considering that they barely speak throughout the school day.

My writing throughout the research process, particularly the participants' stories and my understanding of them, took a great deal more time and effort than I would have ever imagined they would. However, I found that the writing of them was one of my most important analytical tools. Richardson (1994) says that writing is "a way of 'knowing'--a method of

discovery and analysis" (p. 516). Wolcott (1995) maintains that writing invites us to make a record of what we believe we know; and helps to "ferret out biases and prejudices in such a way that we are able to deal with them *explicitly*" (p. 201). Denzin (1994) suggests that researchers cannot make sense of what they have learned until they write their "interpretive text, telling the story first to themselves and then to their significant others, and then to the public" (p. 502).

It is impossible to state at the onset of an ethnographic study how long the inquiry will take. One of my committee members had advised that I would "know" when there was enough data. Her words echoed in my mind throughout much of my study. I kept thinking as I listened to participants and observed them during the school day, "I don't have enough. My understanding is not deep enough." However, I can recall vividly the day when I understood what the committee member had meant. I was strolling down a hall while classes were in session and I was glancing into the rooms that had their doors open. Suddenly, after almost six months of fieldwork, I stopped and said, "I can stop now." It was at that moment that I realized my observations were not revealing anything that had not been already been noted and that I was satisfied with what I had accomplished through my research efforts. As Fielding (1993b) suggests, leaving the research setting begins when one is sufficiently confident that the chief assumptions have been identified.

The first people who I informed that my study was nearing completion were the participants. I related to them that I believed I had a fairly solid understanding of how they perceived their lifeworld at the school. Fetterman states, "The best reason to leave the field is the belief that enough data has been gathered to describe the culture or problem convincingly and to say something significant about it" (pp. 9-10). The majority of them appeared to be somewhat relieved and agreed that they did not have anything new to share. I wanted to ensure that there was closure to the study for the participants' sake as well as for my own, so after my announcement, I asked each student if we could meet for one more time. At the final meeting, I offered the participants a variety of food and beverage treats, such as doughnuts, chocolate bars, and canned soda pop, and we chatted about a variety of topics that related to the inquiry as well as others that did not. I offered each participant my office telephone number and address at the University of Victoria, and encouraged them to keep in touch if they wished to or to contact me if I could be of any help to them. As I prepared to leave the research setting, I realized that my energy or zest to attempt to learn as much as I could had been replaced with a desire to share what I had learned.

Presentation of Findings

My symbolic interactionist orientation and my ethnographic methodological approach to the study were determinants in deciding how to present the findings from the research data. The majority of my study is

written in the present tense because ethnographic fieldwork is never finished and this is a "way to maintain consistency in description and to keep the story alive" (Fetterman, 1998, pp. 124-125). Much of it is also in a narrative format, and I use ordinary language that is accessible to everyone (Cusick, 1973; Denzin, 1992; Denzin, 1994). Wolcott (1995) says that an ethnographer's ability to write well is now recognized as an essential element in fieldwork, and that the art is to present findings in an engaging and coherent manner that will hold the interest of the reader. William Foote Whyte (1994), author of the highly regarded Street Corner Society, admits that he once hoped to become a writer of novels or plays. He says that, while that ambition has long since been cast aside, the tension between science and humanism continues to influence his work and the way that he presents his research findings. He states, "I do not want the people I study to become submerged in my data so that readers get no sense of the human struggles I describe and analyze" (p. 3). Hopefully, my presentation of my study and its findings contributes to the reader's ability to assess my perspective and assists him or her in their interpretation of my research findings.

Conclusion

My ethnographic inquiry, which was guided by symbolic interactionist theory, deepened my understanding of how adolescents who are socially neglected construct their reality and develop their own explanations for their experiences with peers. However, the data findings are only an entry into

researching the complex world of these teenagers. Cusick (1973), who utilized a similar research methodology and theoretical orientation in his study , states that the final product of a study is the tentative explanation of social behavior which may be used to generate hypothesis for further testing. He adds, "The end of the participant observer's work is the beginning of someone else's" (p. 231). Chang (1989) suggests that the goal of ethnographic studies on adolescents is to attempt to make modest contributions to the understanding of young people. In regards to her own study, she says, "I would be content if my bit of understanding made a contribution to the on-going task of understanding of adolescents" (p. 274). I appreciate and support the goal of contributing to the research. It would be especially gratifying for me if my study is able to enhance the lifeworld of socially neglected adolescents in some way.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Environment of the Research Setting

An observer walking along the streets between seven-thirty and eight o'clock on a typical weekday morning from early September until the following June, may see two, three, four, or five boys or girls walking, riding bicycles, or driving automobiles toward the high school. Now and then a couple may be seen; rarely will an adolescent be seen alone. A tour of the several residential areas indicate that these boys and girls carry into the school situation certain obvious traits which have a bearing on their group relations and on participation and performance in high school (Hollingshead, 1949, p. 163).

Introduction

This chapter describes the environment where my study was conducted. It includes a discussion of the school, the school district, the municipalities that the district serves as well as the children and adults who live and go to school or work within each of the aforementioned settings. It is important to include a thorough discussion of the environment because, as Hollingshead suggests in the quote that introduces this chapter, the environment has a bearing on the participants' group relations and on their participation and performance in high school. A description of it also helps to situate the study and offers an opportunity to compare the one under investigation to other communities.

Pseudonyms have been given to the school, school district, and the municipalities as well as to all locations, landmarks, and businesses in order to provide anonymity to the participants. The statistical figures in the study, which are from the district and school statistical information profiles, have been slightly altered by raising or lowering a figure by half a decimal point or less and some numbers have been rounded off. While the alterations to the percentages and numbers do not affect the informational value that they contribute to the inquiry, they do help to contribute to the confidentiality aspect of the study.

School District

The School District of Geraldton serves five municipalities that span a large geographical area. In the commercial areas of the district, national fast food outlets such as McDonald's and Burger King; petrol stations; stores selling secondhand goods such as furniture, clothing, and books; donut shops; foodmarts with icicle style Christmas lights hanging from their roof-lines; pubs; u-shaped shopping centers consisting of a number of "mom and pop" businesses; billiard halls; and used car lots with colorful triangles of plastic swaged across them claim the sides of its roads. There are a large number of residential subdivisions throughout the district. The majority of the homes in the subdivisions are middle class family dwellings with stucco exteriors and asphalt shingled roofs. The proportion of residences in the district that are considered to be rural is 25 percent. One of the major appeals of

purchasing a home located in the School District of Geraldton is that it will be more reasonably priced than those situated in the nearby city. The two most prevalent businesses in the district are second hand furniture shops and pubs. The majority of the pubs have adopted an English Tudor style decor. One of them has a large sign above its double door entrance that advertises, "Ice cold off sales. Home of the 1 am last call." I promise myself that on the last day of my fieldwork's homeward journey, I will pull into one of the pub's carparks, enter the establishment, and order a cold beer.

The district's total population is just under 50,000 with an estimated population growth rate of 3 percent. The population density is 29 people per square kilometer. There are 14,500 families in the district with an average of just over one child per family. The percentage of families with children at home is 60 percent and lone parent families make up 14 percent of this figure. The median family income in the district is \$53,000 with 10 percent of families having less than a \$20,000 mean annual income. The education level of the residents is lower than the provincial average. For example, residents possessing a university degree is 5 percent less; with university but without a degree is 1.5 percent lower; and with a trades certificate or diploma is 6 percent less. The percentage of the population in the labor force is 71 percent and the unemployment rate is 8 percent. Management, business, and clerical make up 60 percent of the district workforce; trades and manufacturing make up 19 percent; government, religion, medicine, culture,

recreation, and education make up 17 percent; and mining, oil, gas, forestry, fishing, trapping, and farming make up 4 percent.

Geraldton School District's professional staff consists of one superintendent, two assistant superintendents, one district administrator, one director of special education, one career education coordinator, and an enrichment program coordinator. There are 530 educators in the district. The mean salary for a full-time teacher, which includes administrative, isolation, and other allowances, is \$58,000. Ninety-six percent of the teachers possess a professional certificate. There are 23 schools in the district. Eighteen of these are elementary schools (grades K to 7) with enrollments that range from 21 to 550 students; one is a middle school (grades 6 to 8) with 450 students; two are junior secondary schools (grades 8 to 10) with approximately 500 students each; and a secondary school (grades 9 to 12) that has an enrollment of 675 students and Chamberlain Secondary School (grades 10 to 12) that has almost 1500 students.

School and Staff

There is not a door to Chamberlain Secondary School that does not have a black lettered announcement taped on to its surface. The signs warn visitors that "Chamberlain is a Tow Away Zone" and a day pass to park is required. Parking is serious business at the largest school in the district, which serves four out of the five district municipalities and has a student population of almost 1500. The majority of the students drive their own cars

or are passengers in a friend's vehicle, a number are driven by their parents, some walk, a few ride their bikes, and 30 percent are bused.

The person in charge of parking at Chamberlain is Rebecca Thompson, the principal's secretary. When I ask her for a parking permit and inquire about a parking spot, Rebecca issues me a plastic parking sticker to adhere to my car's windshield and instructs me to park in one of the designated visitor spaces that are found in the two parking lots at the south and east sides of the school. After a few mornings of unsuccessful attempts to find an empty parking spot and in frustration parking in a numbered space, I mention to Rebecca that the visitor spaces are always taken no matter what time I arrive at the school. However, her response is to shrug her shoulders at my plight and walk away. I interpret this gesture as Rebecca's way of informing me that the problem is mine and not hers. I finally solve the dilemma by parking in the gravel lot of a nearby commercial building and walking the relatively short distance to the school. It is interesting that the students do not attempt to park in the lot as well as it is void of any "tow-away" signs and there are always a number of spaces available. I am also surprised that this gravel lot is not mentioned in any of the numerous memos from Rebecca about the school's parking problems, and that nobody ever questions me about my car being in the lot throughout the school day.

The school building is two stories high and its shape is rectangular with two U-shaped additions on either end. The closest school entry to the building from my parking space is a door in its south wing. In order to reach

this door, I have to walk past the outside shop area for the Auto Mechanics Program that was established at the school in 1977. This area is surrounded by a high chain link fence and like the visitor parking spaces, there are always cars in it. Most of the time I observe a number of male students watching the bent bodies of one or two of their peers, whose upper torsos appear to be swallowed by the engine compartments of the open hooded cars that they are working on.

As I enter Chamberlain Secondary through its south wing entrance, I become part of a moving mass of students making their way to the first class of the morning. I begin walking with them and feel as if I am walking with as well as against a current of bodies. As I head down the hall in a northerly direction, I pass by the other technical education classrooms. The U-shaped addition opposite these classrooms contain the visual arts and graphic design workshops in one half and the South Gym in the other half of the U-shape. As I continue walking down the hall, the area for Students with Special Needs is to my right and the Career/Counseling section is to my left. The school's main office is located in the heart or the center of the building with a large foyer in front of it. The double doors of the main entrance to the school feed into this foyer. This area is where many students head to and congregate during breaks in their school day. The library is to the left of the main entrance. The student cafeteria, where the staff meetings are held, is across from the library. Continuing in a northerly direction, there are four classrooms and then the staffroom is to my left with two classrooms opposite

it. After that there are several more classrooms, including the Science labs, which are located at the north end of the school. Chamberlain's U-shaped addition at this end consists of a North Gym, theatre, and additional classrooms. There is a separate band hall outside of the building, which is at the extreme north side of the school. On the second floor of the school, there are more classrooms, Home Economics and Business Education labs, and a Learning Support Center. There is also a canteen that sells bakery items, sandwiches, and soup. The food is prepared by the students in the Cafeteria Training Program, and the money collected is used to supplement the costs of their training.

The staff of educators at Chamberlain Secondary consist of a principal, two vice-principals, and eighty-five teachers. The student educator ratio is 19 to 1. In addition to the teachers and administrators, there are five secretaries in the main office, one teacher assistant in the library, a clerk in the learning center, twelve teacher assistants for special education, one youth and family counselor, one teacher assistant for science, one teacher assistant for home economics, one work experience coordinator, one custodian supervisor, one day time custodian, five evening custodians, a part-time public health nurse, and three learning center contact staff. The School has sixteen department heads, who supervise the following departments: Business Education, English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Career Education, Physical Education, Visual and Performing Arts, Special Education, Student Activities,

Languages, Industrial Education, Library, Counseling, Home Economics, and Co-op Education.

The dominant colour throughout Chamberlain Secondary School is gray. This colour choice seems to be a rather dubious one considering the school's climatic zone location is classified as a "Maritime Climate." A spokesperson for Environment Canada explains that Maritime Climates are considered to be moderate weather zones with very wet winters and drier summers. An administrator, in the municipality office where the school is located, states that he does not know the geographical term for the municipality's climate but what he does know is that it rains from October to May. Throughout the months that I spent at Chamberlain, I wrote numerous comments about the rain in my fieldnote journal. One November passage in the journal states, "The bleakness of this place. I didn't want to drive in the gray and the rain." A February extraction laments, "You know it's raining again. So now not only is the day gray with the gray roads but now there is gray rain as well." A clerk in the school's office told me that the secondary school she had last worked at was "really colorful," and that she did not understand why Chamberlain Secondary was "so drab and gray." The majority of the halls, doors, and classrooms are painted in a shade of gray. The linoleum on the hall floors that stretch from the south to the north are gray. The student lockers lining the halls are beige-gray and the garbage cans that are found throughout the building are also gray. It is reassuring to observe that a few of the recently painted sections of halls and doors are

beginning to display some colour and are painted in pastel colours of pink, lilac, mint green, or blue.

The teacher's staffroom is the grayest place of all. One morning in December, I sat in the staffroom with a cup of coffee that I had obtained from the coin machine that has a choice of hot liquids and wrote in my journal, "The staffroom has gray walls, gray mesh curtains with streaks of gray running through them, a gray threadbare wall-to-wall carpet, grayish-blue cupboards, gray chairs, and a gray telephone." After my coffee, I opened the gray staffroom door to return to the hallway that has gray walls and my notes indicate that a gray haired teacher dressed in a gray sweater passed by me.

Not many of the 85 teachers use the staffroom, which is somewhat surprising as it is a large room with individual workstations located at its north end. I never did see any of the three administrators eat their lunch or sit around a table in the staffroom. One of the teachers, who has taught at Chamberlain for 25 years, mentions to me that he had cancer ten years ago and that he had vowed upon his return that he would make more of an effort to use the staffroom on a regular basis. However, he said that he found it such a negative place that he stopped going soon after his return. At the beginning of February in the staffroom, I overheard one teacher ask another, "You work here?" The teacher responded that she had been working full-time at the school since September. She then related to the other teacher that a secretary from her former school tried to telephone her at Chamberlain the previous week. However, the secretary at Chamberlain

told the caller that there was nobody at the school by that name. The teacher then added, "Apparently, they had a real argument about whether or not I was a teacher here." Another time in the staffroom a teacher told me, "You shouldn't bother doing those low-esteem kids you are doing, you should do one on low-esteem teachers." While I had never mentioned "self-esteem" in regards to my study, I had mentioned the words "isolation," "non-aggressive," and "passive behavior."

The classrooms are non-descript although some have been renovated or are newly painted. One teacher tells me that her classroom is one of the newly renovated rooms and then adds, "If you can call it that." The teacher says that one of her colleagues calls it a box and another one calls it a coffin, and then softly says, "I would prefer that they not call it a coffin." The majority of the students' desks are arranged in rows that face the teacher's larger desk, which is located at the front of the room. The view out of the classrooms' windows on the west side of the school is of a major municipal road. The windows of the east side classrooms overlook the school's fields, which are surrounded by a chainlink fence. On the second floor the signs of fast food outlets, a drug store, a bank, a mega-store, and a subdivision of modest asphalt shingled houses are visible to the east and north.

Students

The school day begins for the majority of Chamberlain Secondary students at 8:25 in the morning and finishes at 3:06 in the afternoon except for

Friday, which ends at 1:47 pm. The majority of them leave their homes in the morning dressed in a typical teenager attire of jeans and a sweatshirt or a T-shirt. These students have various types and colours of rubber soled sneakers on their feet and have chosen wash and wear hairstyles. Other students, however, appear to be more conscious of what is the latest fashion trend. It is obvious from their appearance that they have spent a considerable amount of time styling their hair and selecting what clothes and accessories to wear before they head off to school. A number of them wear clothing that advertises manufacturers such as Tommy Hilfiger or Club Monaco, but I did not see any of them wearing the more exclusive high end designer outfits that I have seen on some adolescents attending large metropolitan schools. There are also a few students, whose appearance as they leave their homes in the morning, identifies them as belonging to an alternate group in the school. Some of these teenagers dye their irregularly chopped hair in vivid shades, wear torn clothing, and have various body piercings; some wear black trench coats, have chains hanging from articles of dark clothing, and dye their hair a jet black colour; while others look just like the hippies did in the 1960's.

The type of homes and family life of the students at Chamberlain School vary considerably. According to the school's statistical information profile, 72 percent of its students live in homes where two parents head the household. The number of students living in single parent homes is 4 percent higher than the percentage of lone-parent families for the province. Seventy percent of the students' parents or guardians have a high school

diploma. This percentage matches the provincial rate. The percentage of parents who have a post-secondary diploma is 60 percent, which is 20 percent higher than the provincial average. Twenty percent of the students live in homes where the annual family income is less than \$30,000.

The students' school year is divided into two semesters of five months in duration. They normally complete four courses per semester for a total of eight courses per year. The various programs offered at the school and their course requirements are outlined in the school's course calendar. The calendar offers descriptions of the 210 courses, which are listed in alphabetical order from Accounting 11 to Writing 12. The English 12 provincial pass rate performances on the previous year's provincial examination was 89 percent. The Mathematics pass rate performance was 87 percent. Both of these pass rates were slightly higher than those given for the provincial average. In the preceding year, 88 percent of the grade 10 students at Chamberlain Secondary advanced to grade 11; 67 percent of the grade 11 students advanced to grade 12; and 76 percent of the grade 12 students graduated.

Both Ken Atkinson, the principal, and the head counselor expressed their concerns to me about the high number of drop-outs at Chamberlain Secondary. The counselor said that it was a serious problem and described the school's drop-out rate, which was 260 students in the preceding year, as "terrible." The principal introduced the subject in almost every conversation that we had. In two of the conversations, he asked me whether I knew of any graduate student who might be interested in doing research at his school on

the subject of why students drop out. However, neither the principal nor the counselor solicited any thoughts from me about the subject; and neither did they seemingly view my study on peer isolated adolescents as being a possible area to explore in regards to the concerns that they expressed to me. The latter point is particularly surprising considering that the research on the causes of dropping-out suggests that students who drop out of high school are likely to have had a history of low school involvement, negative school experiences, and to have felt alienated from school life (Steinberg, 1999, p. 390).

While I was unable to ascertain the percentage of students in the school whose family's home language is not English, the percentage for the School District of Geraldton is 2.5 as compared to 14.6 for the province. Both of the school's accreditation reports note that English is overwhelmingly the first language of Chamberlain students and that they are predominately of European descent. The percentage of students enrolled as participants in the school's English as a Second Language Program is .2 percent, while the provincial rate is 9.7 percent. The population of First Nations people in the district is 5 percent. The percentage of First Nations students at the school is 2 percent. A First Nations assistant provides counseling and curriculum support to these students. The school has an international student program with 25 teenagers from Asian, European, and Latin American countries.

Special Needs students represent 5 percent of the school's population. These students are accorded additional funding according to their needs and have individual education plans. I was unable to determine the number of

designated gifted students who are attending Chamberlain. These students are not included in the percentage of special needs students at the school. However, the number of students in the district who have been designated as gifted learners is listed as 175. The school has a limited number of options for students with high academic abilities. One of the choices offered to them is the honors program. The school course calendar describes this program as being intended for the "top performing students who have demonstrated motivation, ability, and eagerness to expand their enjoyment of learning and academic achievement." The honour courses, which are subject to enrollment, are offered in grades 10 through 12 in the subject areas of English, Social Studies, French, Mathematics, and Science. Another option that the school considers would be of interest to honor role students are the accelerated 11 and 12 courses. The course calendar describes these courses as being designed for students planning to proceed to university and advertised as a "two year university preparation course" with topics that include study skills, time management, learning styles, and communication skills. The third option is the Flexible Studies Program for grade 10 students. The course calendar states that this program provides an opportunity for those students who wish to proceed at a faster pace than the regular classes, and that it is designed to provide an alternative to the traditional classroom structure and to meet the needs of those students who prefer to work independently or in a more informal classroom setting.

The student council executive is elected by the students at the beginning of the school year. The council consists of a president, a vice-president, a secretary-treasurer, an internal communication officer, an external communication officer, a social convenor, two athletic representatives, a student representative from each grade level, and two teacher sponsors. The council organizes the dances and other social events at the school. They also plan activities that help bolster or maintain school spirit, such as the one called "Spirit Week," which consists of a pajama day, a sports day, a gender reversal day, and a blue and white day. In addition to the social events and activities, the council represents a place where students can go if they have a concern that they would like addressed or an idea that they feel is worth pursuing. The council also promotes and sells leisure clothing, such as sweatpants, hoodies, and golf shirts, which have "Chamberlain Secondary School" silk-screened onto them.

As I walk the school's halls when classes are in progress, I am amazed that somewhere within the confines of the building are more than a thousand teenagers. Some days it is so quiet in the corridors that even the echo of my footsteps sound loud. A journal entry in my fieldnotes states, "There are 1500 students in this building and it seems almost barren." However, when the buzzer sounds to announce that it is time for lunch or to change classes, then the transformation that occurs in the school is almost instantaneous. The doors to the classrooms, which are mostly closed for the duration of each class, are flung open and a cascade consisting of hundreds of

students pours into the halls. If it is the lunch break, many of them rush to their lockers and grab their bagged lunches. Some of these students then proceed to the large foyer outside the main office where there is always a lively interaction between teenagers taking place. Others head outside to meet friends, eat their lunch, and perhaps smoke a cigarette. A number leave the school grounds and either go somewhere in their cars or walk over to the shopping center that is to the east of the school. Some dump their books in their lockers and then make their way to the cafeteria on the first floor, which is often strewn with litter before the lunch hour even begins. Many of the students remain in this room throughout the lunch "hour" that consists of 55 minutes on Mondays to Thursdays and 27 minutes on Fridays. During this break, they eat what they have purchased, which usually consists of french fries or onion rings, or munch on food that they have brought from home. They also use the room to play cards, flirt with each other, and catch up on what is happening in their peers' lives. Other students choose to go to the second floor canteen, which sells food items such as cinnamon buns, giant cookies, and sandwiches. However, since there are no seating arrangements at this refreshment stand, the teenagers are forced to take their purchases elsewhere to eat. Some students choose to remain at their lockers throughout the lunch hour. Some of these adolescents sit with a small number of friends on the hall floor and use the lockers as backrests. Others sit in groups so large that I find it difficult to maneuver around them when I am walking past them in the halls. A sparse number of students, however, do not share their

lunch break with anyone. A few of these students sit in front of their designated locker and read, watch what is happening in the halls, or sometimes they just hang their heads and stare at the gray patch of linoleum in front of them. Other socially isolated adolescents seek out a secluded area in the school to consume their food. Sometimes they remain in these spots and sometimes they eat their food and then proceed to the library. And for a few others, their lunch hour is spent in constant motion walking the school halls or around the outside perimeters of building and taking bites of their food throughout their solitary procession. A journal entry in my fieldnotes indicates an observation that "students, who are alone, walk fast and always seem to in a hurry to get to somewhere." As Cusick (1973) suggests, "If you keep moving and act as if you have somewhere to go, no one will notice your aloneness (p. 164).

CHAPTER FIVE

The Lifeworlds of Socially Neglected Adolescents

A good interpretation of anything, a poem, a person, a history, a ritual, an institution, a society--takes us into the heart of that of which is the interpretation (Geertz, 1973, p. 18).

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the lifeworlds of eight socially neglected adolescents in a secondary school setting. The stories are based on data derived from my observations of the participants as well as the scheduled interviews that I had with them. I went into the interviews with six research questions: How do socially neglected adolescents perceive themselves? How do they perceive their peers? How do they think their peers view them? How do their peers interact with them? How do they respond to their peers? How do their interactions with peers affect them? The questions, which were designed to form the base of my conversations with the participants, focus on present rather than past experiences. However, in accordance with my symbolic interactionist approach, I believe that people create their lives by acting on the self-reflected meanings that they derive from their experiences. Therefore, I encouraged each participant to also discuss general and specific events that occurred during his or her lifetime and about the locations where

emotional experiences took place, such as classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, and their homes (Deegan, 1987; Denzin, 1994).

Initially, I planned to approach the stories by introducing a participant, offering a description of him or her, and then concentrating on their responses to the question, "How do socially neglected adolescents perceive themselves?" I was going to continue in this manner until I had completed similar pieces of writing for each individual. After the introductions, descriptions, and information from the first research question were complete, I was then going to merge the data from all of the participants. I was concerned that if I continued to present each individual's data separately that their stories might become repetitive and the reader would turn to the last page of the chapter to see how many more pieces of paper they had to "wade" through or, even worse, that they would skip to that final page. As Wolcott (1984) points out, "If nobody reads our studies--virtually in their entirety--our efforts are doomed to obscurity" (p. 209). However, my plan did not unfold as I had envisioned it, and the only thing that I kept from my "sketch" was my decision to group the participants according to their grade level and to present the findings in descending grade order.

I chose Richard, who is a grade twelve student, to write about first because we had spent the most time together, and I felt that this writing would offer me a solid base to start from. What I discovered, however, was I became totally immersed in his story. Whenever I would attempt to write

about the next participant, nothing seemed to “jell.” As I held my hands over the keyboard, it felt as if there were lead fishing weights attached in a continuous line along my forearms. However, when I would return to Richard’s transcriptions and my fieldnotes about him, I was able to write and was no longer conscious of the heavy feeling in my arms. As I wrote about Richard, I became part of his world. I visualized his face, his mannerisms, his voice, and his presence. I felt as if Richard was saying that this was an opportunity for his story to be heard and that is what he wanted me to do with the trust, effort, and time that he had given to me. This rather strange occurrence happened for each participant and even transpired when I was undertaking the editing of their stories. I began to resist the urge to shape the data that I had collected from the participants and instead wondered where it would take me. With time, I learned to allow and even encourage their words to shape my writing about eight socially neglected adolescents and their lifeworlds.

Lifeworlds of the Participants

Richard

You're walking around... there's everyone... everyone's around you but there's... there's no one to talk to. You're by yourself. You can't... you don't say anything to anybody. You're just walking around. It's like being a ghost. No one sees you.

There is nothing about Richard that would make him stand out among the student population at Chamberlain Secondary School. He is a grade twelve student who achieves average marks. He has a pleasant appearance. He is small of stature, but the definition of the muscles on his upper arms suggests that he does some sort of weight lifting exercises. His dark brown hair is shaved close to his head, and he either wears wire rimmed glasses or contact lenses to correct his near-sightedness. His clothing choice is the ubiquitous blue jeans and T-shirt combo that the majority of high school students wear. He has a dry wit and I am amazed to hear how often we laugh when I listen to the twelve taped interviews that I have with Richard, which take place from the middle of January until the end of April. He arrives early for each one of those scheduled sessions and he always greets me with a smile. Richard says that he has given a great deal of thought about being alone and it is obvious from his responses, which he offers without hesitation and yet are rich in detail and insight, that he has.

At our first meeting, I ask Richard how he perceives himself and he replies, "I'm not supposed to use those words in school." After reminding him of the study's confidentiality, he responds, "I think of myself as a loser, piece of shit." He then shifts his responses and for the rest of the session he shares fairly innocuous ones, such as admitting to being a procrastinator, having an addiction to books, and to being fairly lazy and slightly sarcastic. After that initial meeting, however, Richard's responses to my questions become darker once again and are similar to his first statement. He says, "I think of myself as a stupid fucking piece of shit that doesn't deserve to live and should never have been born." He also makes derogatory comments about his appearance and his intellect, such as "I'm ugly as a brick. A squashed bug" and "I'm ugly and stupid." Richard tells me the reason that he has a low opinion of himself is because when he looks around all he sees is death and he knows that our days are numbered and yet he does nothing about it. He suggests that most people do not understand this, and therefore, he can forgive them but not himself. And yet, even though he berates himself for not having the courage to try and do something about the world situation, Richard often describes feats of bravado in our conversations that he has either accomplished or would attempt to do. For example, he says that for exercise he lifts barbells with his arms and legs and that if somebody came into Chamberlain with a gun, he would run up to them and try to wrestle the weapon away. He states, "Maybe I'll get shot but I'll save somebody who

shouldn't be shot. Right. I might do something worthwhile." He also says that if he saw someone "getting the crap beaten out of them" that he would try to stop the beating. He states:

If I had to, I would kill the person. And I know how easy enough. All you'd have to do is punch them right there [at this point in his statement, Richard points to the bridge of his nose] and the cartilage of their nose gets driven into their brain and they die. I wouldn't want to but I would.

Richard says that he was "bugged a lot" in elementary school, in grades eight and nine as well as a bit in grade ten by "bigger people who looked down at me." He explains:

I was small, so people would pick on me. I was different. I didn't like sports, so I obviously... obviously I was stupid or something. And since I wore glasses and stuff, I must be getting A's in all my classes, which was not true at all. So they picked on me and then I grew away.

What Richard cannot comprehend is why those differences would warrant the type of attacks that he was subjected to, such as having objects thrown at him and the tires of his bike punctured and its brakes disconnected. He tells me, "I didn't really do anything. I read. I sat there and read. I rarely even talked to them." Richard's parents and his teachers told him to "ignore them and they'll go away." He followed their advice but bitterly dismisses it as being unhelpful to him. He says that not only did he have to endure his

peers' abusive behavior for a long time before they eventually left him alone; but in addition, he did not know who would go after him and who would not, so he ignored everyone. Richard says that the consequence of the advice from his parents and his teachers was:

I closed off. I closed off so that I wouldn't get hurt more and I just ignored them. But then I had trouble being "up" to the people who weren't trying to... they were just... so I closed them off. I used to like solitude. I was fine. I enjoyed myself and I was OK. Now after five, let's see six years, now I'm starting to get lonely because now everyone realizes I want to be alone, so now they all leave me alone.

Richard likes going to school because "it makes the day go faster." He listens to teachers because they tell him what he is supposed to do and because "it is more important than socializing for a couple of seconds over something that doesn't really matter." When I observe him during classes, he never gives any indication that he is aware of the other students around him or of me and instead focuses solely on the teacher or on his work. He says that he ignores his peers during class time because "the government didn't make a rule that you had to come to this age just so that you could come and talk. They made it so you could come and learn this stuff." The last time that he was reprimanded by a teacher was when he was in grade two and it was for running in the classroom. When he has to speak in class, Richard says his ears turn "beet red" and the rest of his body feels hot. He

states, "I feel that everyone's watching me. Waiting for me to screw up and fail or something." While writing examinations, he gets nervous and tense. He says his neck muscles get stiff; he usually gets a headache; and "it just feels like... everybody's staring at you. Right. Saying... like you can almost hear them say, 'You're gonna fail. You're gonna fail.'" Richard tells me that he puts on a "zombie face" at school and has done so for years. He describes this particular look as:

My face goes completely dead. There's no emotion whatsoever. I'm pretty much like that when I walk around the school and when I'm in a class unless I'm around people that I like to at least some degree. Even my eyes go flat and dead. It just happens now. It's like the habit of chewing on your fingernails. You don't think about it and then you do it.

I ask Richard if he can show me what the zombie face is like. He bobs his head to acknowledge my request and I observe an almost instantaneous change in his appearance--his facial muscles sag, his eyes become expressionless, and his mouth droops. I study this facial cast and I recognize it as the one that he usually "wears" when I am observing him in his classes.

Richard's lunch hours are spent in the library and he always chooses the same carrel to sit at. He says that the library is "where people like me go just because it's quieter." Some days he wears ear plugs and other times he does not, but whether they are in or not, he does not glance around during

this hour and neither does he look up from what he is reading when students nearby act in a boisterous manner. Richard identifies reading as his "form of escapism," and says that it helps him to forget about himself for awhile. He tells me that he literally takes on the role of one of the characters in a novel and lives their life instead of his own. He adds, "My mind is actually... my mind is gone. I'm actually in the book. I can see the people. I'm living the story." When I ask him about using alcohol or drugs as a means of escape, he replies that while alcohol is tempting, he avoids it as it just leads to "having one hell of a headache when you wake up, not to mention all the throwing up and who knows what you will do while you are drunk." It is interesting that he should respond in this way to my question because in a previous session he has mentioned that he has had only two alcoholic drinks in his life and that was at his sister's wedding.

Richard admits that he has trouble reaching out emotionally to anything or anyone else, and that he is nervous about letting his peers see who he is. He says that he has learnt to hide everything that he does because "whenever I lost control, whenever I let anything show, somebody always punched me in the gut or something." He feels as if there is a barrier around his mind and body that separates him from other people. He describes it as being either gray or black and "very confining like a mummy-type sleeping bag." He notes that the only time it does not feel as if it is getting tighter is when he is doing something that he enjoys, such as reading or camping.

Richard says that the barrier's outside material is not as strong as the inside one. He explains, "On the outside somebody could poke through. With difficulty, but they could. I don't have a drill with a bit that can drill through it and everyone else does." He recalls an incident that happened in the previous year when he was sitting at a table in a science class and his lab partner draped her arm around his shoulders. He says, "I nearly jumped out of my skin because it surprised me. At first I knocked the arm... I tried to knock the arm away because... because I wasn't used to anyone actually touching me." He finds girls somewhat easier to be around than boys "because whenever I'm around other guys, I always seem to have to compete with them to see who's better at this and who's better at that." When I ask him how his peers might perceive him, he answers they would probably reply that he was nice because he is polite to people even if he does not like them. He also relates that they would most likely consider him to be a weakling and chuckles after he says this to me. He then remarks:

I find that amusing. I'll let them think that in case they ever decide to pick on me and beat the crap out of me. I'll just kill them or hit them hard enough that they fall down or something and then they will leave me alone.

Richard describes a loner as "someone who is alone all of the time, and doesn't talk to anyone." He adds, "Pretty much like me." He believes that being alone is "very devastating" to adolescents, and maintains that a lot of

people in his situation "would just give up and shoot themselves or something." Richard credits his stubborn will to not concede as the reason why he has not succumbed to his own feelings of despair. He thinks that the worst is behind him and tells me that he barely even hears insults anymore. He says, "There's nothing they can say that will hurt me. I don't even care what they think of me." He admits though that the two emotions that he still experiences the most are fear and anger. Richard feels that alienation can eventually drive a person mad and suggests that this is quite likely what happened to the students who shot their peers at school. He states, "It drove them over the edge and they lost it." He adds, "They were miserable. Everyone hated them. They probably wanted to get revenge if they were bugged a lot." He emphasizes, however, that he has never been aggressive and that nobody has ever seen him angry. He explains to me that when he is upset his face goes dead, he does not say very much, and he usually goes to a place where he can be assured of being left alone.

Richard's parents rarely socialize and the only visitors they have to their home are Richard's older sister, whom he is very fond of, and her husband. Richard speaks a great deal about his father, who is in the armed services. He says that his dad is used to watching everyone at work to make sure that they get their job done correctly and Richard feels that he tends to do this at home as well. Richard believes that his father's perfectionist

tendencies and controlling personality have affected him a great deal. He explains:

Whenever my dad tries to teach me something, I can feel his eyes on the back of my head watching. Waiting for me to screw up. I dislike helping him because I feel that he is always judging me like I'm too stupid to figure that out or this out. And I can't seem to read his mind when he says he wants something.

He also indicates that his father has a bit of a temper and says that while "he doesn't hit anybody, he just gets mad and he has a loud voice and he looks intimidating, so... it gets worse and worse." He does not talk much about his mother, who is a homemaker, except to say that she gets mad at him if he does not use his manners and that she is always telling him, "You're too young to have stress." Richard tries to be pleasant around his parents but tells me that he keeps his emotions to himself and usually wears the "zombie mask" while he is in their presence. His parents have never asked him why he does not have any friends over or why he does not go out more often. He does not have a job and does not have any household responsibilities. His parents buy his clothes and give him an allowance. He says:

I rarely buy things. Right? I don't need to. My parents... if I want to go get books, I'll get my Mom to take me to a second hand store and she will buy me books. And that's better than... whenever she complains

that I get her to spend so much money on books, I just say, "I could be smoking or doing drugs or drinking even."

At our last meeting, Richard tells me that he is deeply concerned about his future responsibilities and about the fact that he has trouble having fun anymore. He states, "I see everything in front of me and all the work I have to do and I have trouble enjoying myself. And that's probably one of the hardest things that I'll have to learn. Re-learn." I ask him how he feels knowing that the study is concluding and he responds, "Kind've painful in a way." He adds, "Because I'm alone. Everyone around me has friends. Maybe they have a boyfriend or a girlfriend--which ever. And they have friends. They go out and do stuff. Me... I sit in my room... alone." He also reveals during this session that he told his sister about being a participant in the study and that she thought it sounded "neat," but that he never informed his parents. He explains, "I didn't want to. They don't know. It's my business not theirs." When I ask about what they might say, he replies, "They probably wonder why you'd want to talk to me. Like how could I be depressed? I'm so young. Or have stress?" When he tells me this, I remember his words at the previous interview, which were:

I'm on the... right on the edge pretty much. If somebody got me angry enough, I could quite likely kill them. I don't know if anybody can get me angry enough though cause they would have do something fairly bad.

Peter

I kind've want people to know who I am and that I'm a person.

Every morning as Peter grabs one of the handles of the twin doors that are located on the south side of the school, he says to himself, "It's a new day. I've got to get it over with," and then he pulls the door open. His appearance as he enters the building could be described as looking "freshly scrubbed." His cotton slacks and shirts are pressed; his nails are trimmed; and his brown hair, which looks as if it has just been cut, encircles a clear complexioned face with rosy cheeks. Peter shares many similarities with Richard. He is pleasant looking, is small of stature, wears glasses or contact lenses to correct his near-sightedness, and he achieves average marks in his grade twelve classes. Like many of the participants, Peter is always punctual for the meetings. However, his greeting whenever he first sees me for each one of the eleven scheduled interviews that take place from the middle of February until the end of April, is different than all the others. His face radiates with happiness and the more time we spend together, the wider his grin is when he first sees me. Peter says that he has trouble maintaining eye contact while speaking or listening to another person; yet like his smile, the more times that we meet, the more it improves.

Peter's first statements about how he perceives himself are fairly positive. He says that he is a silent person, who is punctual and organized. He prides himself on being honest and respecting other people and indicates that he respects himself as well. He states, "I'm not the bragging type--in that way I'm different from everybody else." Peter says that he can be trusted but emphasizes that he does not trust people at school. He says that he is not insecure and describes those that are as the type that "put other people down just to make themselves feel better in front of other people." He also maintains that he does not want to change but after the first few sessions, his statements and the journal that he shares with me indicate otherwise. For example, he writes that he found the "Young Driver's Course" to be extremely stressful and that it "showed me who I was, which I really did not need."

In the beginning of our sessions, Peter blames a family move from one school district to another when he was in grade seven for his isolated status at Chamberlain Secondary School. He says, "I don't really have any strong connections with friends because of... I transferred schools in grade seven, so... I don't really... really know anybody. Whereas in [name of other school district], I've known people since kindergarten." However, like the statement he made about not wanting to change, Peter eventually tells me that he has always been shy and reserved. He also confesses that he is "ashamed about being an introvert" and about lacking the courage to try and do something

about his social situation. He says that girls were usually "a bit nicer" than boys, but that both genders tormented him throughout his elementary school years because "I was introverted and I wouldn't say anything. They bugged me about that." He recalls one student, who was particularly cruel to him:

He would make a spectacle of me in front of the whole class. When the teacher was taking attendance, he would make fun of how I would say that I was here. He said that I had a high, squeaky voice.

Peter says that the student also stole his school bag and that "the teacher saw it but she didn't do anything. So... I hated her. I hated her for that." He tells me that this boy now sits in front of him in English twelve and "doesn't even know who I am." Peter learnt that the best protection from the attacks that were aimed at him was to erect what "feels like a shield" around himself, to remain silent, to ignore the teasing, and to concentrate on what was in front of him. He found that these strategies were effective because "it doesn't get a reaction out of you and they can't feed off that." Peter's peers eventually left him alone and he states that he was able to "get on with his life." He says that he no longer really thinks about his peers when they are around and explains, "I can just kind've concentrate on something so much that I don't even know that there are people around me." When I ask if it takes energy to do this, he replies, "Yes, but I need to protect myself."

My observations of Peter during classes indicate that he generally sits at his desk with his hands tucked between his thighs, his right foot intertwined

around the left leg's ankle, and a rather blank or passive look on his face, which he describes as his "neutral face." He says that when his mother picks him up after school, she often remarks on the seriousness of his facial expression. Teachers do not ask him questions nor do they appear to expect any input from him. He tells me that it is the popular students who talk a lot and do well in school who "have the attention of the teacher most of the time." Peter rarely speaks in class and says, "It's unusual to be the only person in the class not really talking to anybody, but I've lived with it." He wishes that he could talk but confides that his greatest fear is that he will be thought of as being stupid. He says that when he is forced to speak to his peers, "My palms start to sweat. And my mouth dries out. My heart really goes fast." He states that these physical symptoms become even more pronounced when he is speaking to a teacher. Peter tries to block out the other students during teachers' lectures as he finds their presence as well as their talking distracting. When students are allocated to a group to complete assignments, Peter does not contribute and if the others ask him for his opinion, his usual response is to look down at the piece of paper in front of him and begin to write.

At the beginning of most lunch hours, Peter heads for a stairwell at the north end of the school, which is where his younger brother hangs out with a group of other grade ten boys. When he arrives, he chooses an unoccupied step to sit on and eats the lunch that his mother has packed for him. Occasionally, he looks up from his food and watches the antics of his brother

and the other boys. After they leave, Peter either remains, goes to the library to read computer programming books, or wanders the halls. He says that the latter helps to pass the time; and explains, "I don't really think when I'm walking the halls." At our first meeting, Peter tells me that he is used to being excluded at lunch. He says, "I've been doing this for so long now that it's just become like second nature. I don't even think about it anymore." At later sessions, however, he states, "It bothers me that I don't really have anybody to talk to at lunch;" and "I wish that I had someone else that I could be together with." Peter says that he when he tried joining the Animé Club [Japanese animation videos], he did not feel accepted by its members, but at another session he tells me that he only went to the club's meetings because his brother was a member and he did not want to spend the entire lunch hour by himself.

Peter says that the demands of school life and his social isolation place a great deal of stress on him. He confides that it is actually worse for him being a loner in high school because he is more self-conscious now about his social status than when he was in elementary school. Peter believes that this awareness as well as the presence and talking of his peers in classes have had an impact on his academic achievements. He states, "It's really strange. It affects my learning at school. I find I cannot do difficult cerebral work." During each interview he introduces the subject of being tired and makes statements such as, "You know, it's kind've odd but I feel really really tired at

school and then when I go home all this energy comes back.” He writes in his journal that he used to go to bed at nine o’clock on school nights “but I increased [sic] it to eight o’clock because the next morning I’m still fairly tired.” Another entry in his journal states, “More introverted when tired. Less energy therefor [sic] less courage.” Peter tries to hide how stressed he feels but says that when he is fatigued he loses control over his emotions. He states:

The more tired I am, the more my control is not as good. If somebody says something funny, I laugh too much and too loud. If I get lots of rest, I can laugh more normally. I get really embarrassed when I can’t stop laughing. I feel helpless. I can’t really control things as much as I would like to.

Peter has a great fear of losing control. He tries to be reserved around his peers and careful of his actions because he does not “want the other person to see the wrong thing.” When I ask him to explain what the “wrong thing” is, he replies that he does not want them to misinterpret the idea that he is supposed to be getting across. He has learnt to keep his emotions in check by “just being totally passive and not having any feelings about anybody else.” He fears, however, that all his senses may be dead because he has been doing this for so long. The entries in his journal, such as “Does anyone listen to me, NO!” and “That guy sucks and I hate him because he obviously hates

me!" and "I am a better person than all the people who hate me" suggest though that he is still capable of strong feelings.

Peter lives with his parents and has three younger siblings. When I ask him how he feels when he goes home at night, he replies that he looks forward to it because "there are people there that I can talk to." His father is a medical doctor and his mother, who was a healthcare worker, is now a full-time homemaker. Peter tells me that he is "very dependent" on his family. His parents buy everything for him and he is not responsible for any of the household chores, such as cleaning his room, doing dishes, or mowing the lawn although he says, "on the rare occasion I'll stir whatever my mom's cooking." He indicates that his parents are trying to find ways to encourage him to become more independent because "they kind've know that I'm too dependent. I need to do a little something on my own." He adds, "I would love to be independent. I just don't have the confidence yet." At one session he tells me that his parents forced him to order his own meal at a fast food restaurant the previous weekend, which was the first time he had ever done so ; and at another one he says that his father now encourages him to drive to the video shop on his own, but that he resists whenever he can. Peter is uncomfortable about driving without a family member along because he feels that it is safer to have somebody with him "to watch what I'm doing and to see that I'm doing the right thing." He explains, "I do make a lot of mistakes." Peter's mother handles the discipline in the household and he says that "she's

quite strict with rules. Um... you wouldn't break her rules." He never has any problems though because he stays "quite within the bounds of what the rules are." I ask him, considering that he is 18 years old, what might happen when the rules are taken away, and he responds, "Kind've scary at first." He tells me that he always tries his best and that occasionally he does have "little disagreements" with his parents, but it is rare for him to raise his voice or for them to get angry. Peter says that he has never thought of rebelling because "that would disappoint my parents."

Peter feels "very close" to his mother, whom he refers to as "my anchor." He says that he confides a great deal to her and that she was the one who counseled him about how to handle the students who were bothering him when he was an elementary school student. Peter tells me that her advice has helped change his life. When I ask him how, he replies, "Stronger person." However, when I inquire how his mother feels about the stress that he endures, he replies that he hides it and that she has, in fact, no idea that he suffers from it. He adds that if she did know she would probably respond, "You have to deal with this because you'd have to deal with this later anyway" or else "You just have to roll with the punches." Peter says that he informed his mother about being a participant in my study and states that while she was "not too positive" about it, she also told him, "If you want to do it, go ahead." He hardly ever mentions his father and when he does it is usually about how his dad is attempting to get him to be more involved in

outside interests. For example, in responding to a question about how he became involved with the "Young Drivers' Course," Peter says, "My dad signed me up and he didn't tell my mom or me, so... I was kind've ticked off." One of the English teachers at the school, who has taught Peter for four consecutive years, tells me that Peter's father is a "real entrepreneur type who is bristling full of energy" but says that he does not know whether Peter has a mother. The teacher says that he does not recall Peter or his father ever mentioning anything about a mother or a wife and that Peter has never written anything about having a mother in any of his journals.

When I remind Peter at our last meeting together that we will not be having any more scheduled interviews, he visibly retreats. He hangs his head, he does not make any eye contact with me, and his answers to my questions are monosyllabic. Near the end of the interview I ask how he is feeling and he replies, "I'm just trying to shield my emotions. I don't want to show anything to the other person." When I ask him to explain what he means, he says that he needs to prepare himself for my leaving. He says he feels, "Ah... I guess... kind of sad. You've helped me in a number of ways so... that's being discontinued... so." When he shakes hands good-bye, Peter tells me that he has come to trust me and that I am the first person, other than his mother, whom he has ever had a conversation with.

Mike

At school I feel dead like. Dead to the world basically. Like I just don't care. I'm dead to them.

Mike, like the first two participants, is a grade twelve student.

However, his appearance, except for the fact that he also wears glasses, could not be much more different than theirs. He is tall, large boned, and his stomach hangs over the sweatpants that he wears to school. Most days, no matter what the temperature is, he usually wears a black T-shirt, a navy blue windbreaker, a gray woolen scarf, and white running shoes whose frayed laces are left undone and trail along the floor as he walks. The long strands of hair that protrude from the well worn white baseball cap that he always wears is jet black and greasy looking. It is hard to determine the colour of his eyes or the expression in them as he usually keeps the visor on the cap pulled down low so that it covers most of his face. When I ask Mike about his cap, he tells me that he uses it as his shield against other people. He appears to suffer from a mild form of acne and the lower half of his face is shadowed with dark stubble. Mike says that his peers would probably call him a "geek" or a "loser" and when I ask him "How come?" he replies, "My appearance."

The amount of effort and interest that Mike gives to my questions during the eight scheduled interviews that we have from the beginning of March to the end of April varies. Sometimes he is cooperative but many

times he is unresponsive. If I attempt to put any kind of pressure on him to respond to the questions, no matter how gentle or encouraging I try to be, he slouches down in his chair, pulls his cap's visor further over his face, crosses his arms, and replies, "Yeah," "Yep," or "No" to each one of them.

Occasionally, he requests a piece of paper, takes a pencil from his backpack, and begins to draw. Mike is a member of the Animé Club and his ability to sketch the female characters that are portrayed in the Japanese animation videos is quite good. During these moments, I learn that the best way to work with Mike is to drop whatever the subject is, sit quietly, and wait for him to make some kind of signal that it is all right to proceed with the interview.

Sometimes the sign he gives to me is as innocuous as moving the visor of his cap slightly upward; while other times he will make a more obvious gesture, such as handing me the drawing that he has been working on. In addition to his periods of resistance or silence, some of Mike's statements contain conflicting segments or are vague. For example, he says that he has a shy and outgoing personality. When I ask him for an explanation, he replies, "Well it doesn't really matter. It just kind've mixes." However, during these episodes I am usually able to appeal to Mike's sense of humor and he will chuckle at the irony or the folly in his statements and the conversation, unlike the ones where I have to drop the subject, will then resume.

At school, Mike feels a little lost and "kind've sad." He tells me that he is stressed and tired when he leaves school in the afternoon, but that he is

even more stressed and tired when he arrives in the morning. He says that as he enters the building, he begins to feel nervous because "It's a new day. Don't know what's going to happen." Mike spends his lunch hours either working on one of the computers in the library or walking around the school's halls and grounds. In his classes, Mike keeps his gaze focused towards the floor and his cap's visor pulled down low. When a teacher or another student is speaking, he will turn his head in their direction but he does not make eye contact nor does he raise the visor. I am amazed to see how much time he spends during his courses vigorously punching numbers on a calculator while sitting at his desk. I ask him about this activity and he explains to me that he just strikes numbers at random and that it helps to keep him busy. If a teacher or another student asks Mike a question in class, he becomes nervous and feels singled out. He says that he is hardly ever asked to contribute though and that most days he does not say anything at all. Mike adds, "Nobody really thinks of me in the classes." He believes that his shyness has affected his grades, which are below average, because he will not ask a teacher for an explanation or for instructions and instead pretends that he knows what he is doing. Mike feels as if there is some kind of layer around him, which comes on "even when it's nice and quiet." He describes it as a numb feeling that is particularly noticeable around his ears. Mike says that other people cannot get through the layer but that he can. I ask if the layer ever disappears and he replies that it does; however, he refuses to give

any response to my question of "When?" What he does tell me though is that he is acutely aware of the layer when he talks with other people. He explains that being around other people makes him nervous and uncomfortable and that when he tries to speak, "My voice is kind of wavy and I'm shaking like crazy. I perspire. My hands sweat. My eyes start to tic." One of the administrators, who has described Mike as "an odd duck" to me, asks whether I have noticed his peculiar way of speaking and then mimics his voice to me. I remember thinking, "How little is known about the students who are my participants in the study," as I stood in the hall and listened to her.

Mike was small for his age when he was in elementary school and blames his diminutive size for his social isolation. He says that his peers, who "were all stronger than me," were cruel to him throughout these years. Mike's parents never visited the school and he tells me that he cannot remember them or any of his teachers ever intervening on his behalf. He states, "I'd tell them and they'd say, 'Just ignore them.' That type of thing." Mike did as he was instructed and did not confront his peers. He says that he was able to express some of his anger through his drawings, but that he also "wanted something more." When I ask him what he wanted, he replies, "The teacher to go talk to the person." When Mike was fourteen, he turned the anger that he felt for his peers onto himself and he began to cut his body with a knife. While he is telling me this, he yanks the collar of his T-shirt

down and I see long streams of red that lead up to a mass of scar tissue at the base of his throat. Mike admits that he has also been physically violent at school. He explains, "One guy butted in front of ... and I feel bad... but I just took my pencil and stabbed him in the back." After the stabbing, Mike merged with the rest of the students who were walking down the hall and confesses that he has been never caught for the incident but that he has "been arrested for punching somebody" and that the courts have been involved in that particular case. He tells me that while he assumes most of his emotions are "dead," he has a bad temper and still feels anger. Mike says that his parents have helped him to stop being violent. When I ask, "How?" he replies, "They sat me down and talked to me about cutting myself up, and that stopped me." When I inquire if there was anything else that helped him to control his violent tendencies, he replies, "Faith in God." Mike says that he also finds books calming because they put him in a "clone position," which he defines as feeling like he has evolved into one of the characters whom he is reading about.

Mike lives with his father, who is a social worker, and his mother, who is a teacher. His two sisters are considerably older than he is, and live in other parts of the province. He also has a cat and a dog, whom he appears to be very attached to. For example, at one session he volunteers to bring some photographs of his two pets in to show to me, and at the following one he produces several pictures and speaks animatedly about the endearing

qualities of each animal. According to Mike, his parents are beginning to encourage him to make more decisions on his own and are trying to get him to be not as dependent on them. He states, however, that the only time that he really sees them is at dinner and, except for special occasions such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, these meals are eaten while watching television and that each member of the family sits at his or her own individual TV table. Mike says that when he attempts to talk to his parents during this meal, he finds it difficult to get their attention. His parents purchase any major item that he needs, such as his clothes, glasses, and shoes. Occasionally, Mike accompanies them on their shopping excursions, but usually they just buy what he needs and bring the items home. His pocket money comes from returning the family's empty cans and bottles for deposit and from delivering a community newspaper twice a week.

Mike feels that his parents have a great deal of control over him and he regards them as being strict. He says it is "OK when they're controlling" because they just want him to do the right thing and that he is "quite obedient" to them. However, a few seconds later he adds, "I feel angry at them when they try." He believes that their control has gone beyond what it should be for a person who is 18 years old. He has tried to rebel in the past, but tells me that it was not successful and refuses to give any explanation about his rebellion until the fifth interview. At that particular session, Mike relates how he has told his parents about being a participant in the study and

that "they were kind've ah... leery about it." When I ask, "How come?" he replies, "Basically my personal laundry being revealed to the world. That type of thing. But I told them that you said that I wouldn't have to worry about that." I repeat what I have already told him about confidentiality and anonymity and stress again to him that:

The tapes are erased after I've transcribed them and nobody hears them except for me. So you don't have to worry about that. The only time that I would have to tell is if you are planning on hurting yourself or somebody. That's fair enough isn't it? My main goal is to understand what life is like for socially isolated students and how it impacts their studies and their life.

After I have said this, Mike looks up and makes eye contact with me, which is one of the rare times that he does. He studies me for a few seconds and then says, "Actually... I have. I've actually done it." Mike tells me that he tried to end his life when he was fourteen years old because he did not have any friends and that he felt that he could not handle the teasing that he had to endure from his peers any longer. He says that his parents know about the attempt. Mike slouches down in his chair after this confession and I recognize this gesture as his signal to me that he does not wish to discuss the topic anymore. I tell him, "We won't talk any more about it," and he whispers, "Thanks."

At our last meeting, I ask Mike if he can help me understand about the times during our interviews when he was uncooperative or unresponsive. He explains that he was not bothered by the actual questions, however, some of them did make him feel a bit uncomfortable. He says that he sometimes felt bad about not responding to me or to what I was asking him about, and tells me that he is often like this with other people as well. Mike discloses that while he "used to be super super trusting," he now has trouble not only trusting people but that his social isolation makes him feel "dead-like." When I inquire whether he believes that socially isolated students need help, he replies, "Some do. If they still have violent tendencies." He assures me though that he can usually control himself and that he has learnt that he should not lash out at people. However, he also relates that he sometimes gets frightened that, if people are ever mean to him, his temper will get out of hand and "it will get a little dangerous." The last words that I transcribe from my interviews with Mike are: "Shyness is a shield to keep you out of deep... deep trouble."

Carolyn

It's become difficult to sit down and talk about my feelings. I seem to have shut up entirely. I've lied to myself so much and said, "I don't care," that I don't really care anymore.

Carolyn is intelligent and she achieves exemplary grades in all of her grade twelve courses. The oversized boys' blue jeans, dark loose shirts, and black trench coat that she wears swallow her slim body frame. Her long brown hair is parted in the middle and she tucks her bangs, which she is attempting to grow out, behind her ears. Carolyn's hair often needs shampooing and she does not wear any make-up or jewelry. In regards to her appearance, she stresses, "I do nothing." She is attractive, however, and her facial bone structure's strong angular lines draw attention to her green eyes. At one of our sessions, I make a positive comment about her appearance and she expresses surprise at my statement and says, "You're the first person to tell me that. All I've ever gotten was ah... the acne thing; and most ugly; doesn't wear her hair right; in those clothes you look like a guy." There is something about her though that makes a person wary. She is aware of this aspect of her persona and says some students have told her that the message she projects is, "Don't come near me." She points out:

The first time I heard it I was shocked. Someone actually said, 'You're really frightening to me.' And I couldn't believe that. I always

considered myself really sociable or at least civil. But I get that a lot now.

A few adults at the church where Carolyn attends Sunday services have also said similar things to her, but she tells me that none of her teachers ever have. What she does not know, however, is that two of her teachers have pointed her out to me and said, "She's the Columbine kind. You know... trench coats."

Throughout the six scheduled interviews that I have with Carolyn, which date from the middle of March to the end of April, the flat tone of her voice remains as constant as her frank and thoughtful answers. In addition, she never hesitates to correct me if she thinks that I have misunderstood her. For example, when I paraphrase one of Carolyn's comments and suggest, "You like to be different;" she replies, "No, I like things that are different." She is not as punctual to the meetings as most of the other participants, but she is the only one who remains to talk after the hour is over. Our conversations during these times usually focus on what she wants to do after graduation and how she will eventually achieve more professional and monetary status than her fellow students. At each one of the interviews, Carolyn speaks a great deal about her peers and their treatment towards her. She says that they were "brutal" to her throughout her elementary and junior high school grades. She states, "They told me that I was lame, that I was a loser, a twink... that I was dirty, and that I was lesbian." Carolyn does not

know why she was attacked but suggests it may have been because she was bright and preferred to read rather than to play sports. She explains, "You had to be in the 'in crowd.' No one's allowed to have any differences." When I ask her, "How did their words make you feel?" she replies, "I got those words thrown at me ten to twenty times a day;" and then justifiably adds, "You would be really injured if you had them thrown at you." Carolyn reveals that not only did her peers call her names but they also talked about her as if she was not there. She cites one incident during a grade nine class when a group of girls discussed her acne problem. She says:

There wasn't much other talk in the math class and I could hear them quite clearly. And as I said I had the acne problem so one time exactly it was um... ah... "That's disgusting. How could she live with that? I couldn't."

She suggests that other students do not expect people like her can hear them because they think we "are really lost in our writing or books or our studies and don't hear anything else going on." Carolyn tried to retaliate one time when a group of girls in her grade nine English class said they wanted to read what she was writing. She felt they were just being sarcastic in saying this and indicates that she knew that they would make fun of whatever she wrote, so instead of handing over the paper that they were referring to, she gave them the most violent piece that she had ever written. Carolyn tells me, "They read that and they just started telling me how... saying I was going to be a

psychopath and I was going to kill people when I was older.” To my question about whether she has spoken to a school counselor, she answers, “You go and see a counselor if you ah... are having massive problems. Like if you are abused at home or you are pregnant or you’re taking drugs not if you have social issues in school.” And to my inquiry about how the teachers reacted to her peers’ treatment of her, she snickers in a sarcastic manner and then replies, “What teachers?”

Carolyn discovered that retaliating or “fighting back” did not alleviate the situation with her peers, so she turned to other methods to try to get them to stop bothering her. She says that ignoring the other students and trying not to let them bother her was helpful because “eventually they stop coming near you and that’s exactly what you want.” She also found that arriving late for morning classes, which she describes as a “kind’ve a self-defense mechanism,” was also beneficial “because if I’m late, then nobody is outside and I can just walk in.” Carolyn says that lunchtime was the most difficult to get through. She explains:

Lunchtime was really, really sad. I wanted to stay inside my classroom at lunch. Most often I got garbage thrown down the hallway at me. Sometimes rocks. I eventually told the principal about that. And you learned to stay up against the sides so you wouldn’t get hit with anything. You would just wait until the library opened to get inside.

When I ask her whether teachers monitored the halls, she says that some did and they would tell the students to pick up the garbage but after they left, it would start all over again; and that other teachers avoided the hallways altogether. Carolyn says that when her junior high school class had their orientation day at Chamberlain Secondary School, she noted where everyone sat during lunch and then "scouted the school out to find the most suitable spots" where she could be alone. While relating this orientation day experience to me, she gets up from her chair, walks over to the window, points to the east wing of the building, and states, "Kids don't normally come there." Even as a grade twelve student, Carolyn still hates lunchtime. She says, "It's when you have to interact with people and it's the main barrier for me to cross." She eats her lunches in empty classrooms and heads to the library to read or to work on course assignments after she has consumed her food. In class, Carolyn does not appear to notice the other students or their antics. She listens attentively to the teacher's lecture or else works diligently on assigned work at her desk. In fact, even though I sat in many of her classes before approaching her about the study, she reports that she was not aware of my presence in any of them. She explains, "Well there's so many teachers-on-call, teachers' aides... I don't even notice the student teachers anymore... the very young ones." Unlike the other participants, Carolyn does not have trouble speaking in class and says, "It's because I know the answer. You're not going to look stupid if you know the answer." In the hallways, she avoids

any eye contact with her peers and walks "past people as quickly as possible." When I observe her during this time, I notice that she still keeps as close to the walls as she can.

Carolyn identifies herself a loner and admits that she does not have any peer relationships at school. She states, "I don't want to like things that I don't like just to fit in. And if what I like makes me fit in, then fine. If it doesn't I won't fit in." She also adds, "I'd rather not associate with people than to associate with them because of the hurt that they can bring with them." Carolyn used to want to belong to the social group but then she stopped caring. She explains, "When you stop caring, things do not affect you so much;" but also confesses that the "negative result is that you can't care ever again even if you want to." Whenever Carolyn is around peers or teachers, who she does not like or respect, she consciously puts up a "harsh emotional shield" that she describes as being her "look of death" to protect herself from them. She also informs me that she wears "Columbine clothing" because it helps to keep people away. She points out, "Part of the reason that you'll see the trench coats... that's kind've a way of self-defense. It does work on some people. They are scared off by them."

Carolyn lives at home with her parents and her younger brother and sister. Her father is a mechanic and her mother, who was a nurse, is now a caregiver for the elderly. Both her parents are religious and she feels that they are more controlling than other parents are. She says that her mother is

always telling her, "I should hang out with girls more often. I should hang out with Christian friends more often. I should... she's always tells me all the things that I should do that I'm never going to do;" but then adds, "But she is not exactly the most female person herself, so she can understand." While Carolyn says that she is close to her mother, whom she describes as "a very caring person and someone who you would respect," she tells me that she trusts her father, whom she hardly discusses at all, more. She states:

I tend to trust females less because they're a lot more manipulative and capable of severing relationships. I've never really met a guy, except for one and he had really feminine characteristics, who could manipulate someone like a female.

Carolyn adds, "I like to do more masculine things than feminine ones."

However, at another meeting she tells me that while she finds men attractive, she also hates "just about everything about them." She states, "They're obnoxious, not all that intelligent, and with completely different views than me." At our last meeting, we talk a great deal about trust and Carolyn says that "it's very hard to trust someone." She relates that she trusts me "somewhat" and that she has tried "to be as open as possible but there's still some things that you really shouldn't say."

Susan

I don't do much. I don't care.

Unlike any of the other participants, the more I see of Susan, the less she responds to me or to my questions. The answers that she does offer during the five scheduled interviews that take place from the middle of January to the middle of February, are uttered in such a soft voice that I often have to ask her to speak a bit louder or to sit closer to the taperecorder. Even with these provisions, I still have to listen to her taped statements several times before I am satisfied that I can accurately decipher what she is saying in order to transcribe them. Many of my questions are responded to with silence or "I don't know" or "Yeah" or "No" or else she emits air through her mouth, which sounds rather like a small snort. During our meetings, she swings her legs methodically back and forth under the chair that she is sitting on, her hands grip its plastic seat, and her eyes remain focused on the floor in front of her. The only times that Susan's face ever becomes charged with emotion and her voice animated is when we are discussing her parents.

Susan is tall with a slim build. Her long straight hair is brown but whenever the light catches it, you can see that there are strawberry colored strands throughout it. Her pink toned complexion is clear and free of any make-up, but the large coral colored plastic prescription glasses that she wears completely dominate her rather gaunt face. In response to the question of

how she perceives herself, Susan says, "That I'm tall. That I wear glasses." To the same question at our second meeting, she replies, "I don't know. Tall. Long hair. Glasses." Susan hates her glasses. Her mother chose the style and she says that she would prefer to wear contact lenses. She has very little interest in clothes and wears whatever her mother purchases from second hand stores, such as jeans and cotton tops or sweatshirts. She says, "Value Village is my mom's favorite place;" and then adds with surprising boldness and volume, "I'm starting to hate that store. We go every weekend. I don't know--there's nothing there. She just has to go there." Susan claims that she is not envious of people who wear clothes that are purchased in trendy shops, such as the GAP, and states:

My cousin sometimes buys clothes there. I don't know... I don't mind the clothes in there, but I just can't afford them. They're too expensive. Just because they're GAP.... it's the GAP. They always have new things in commercials... those stupid GAP commercials.

However, at another interview, she tells me that she envies girls who wear trendy clothes "as long as they don't get too dressed up."

Susan's marks in her grade twelve subjects are below average and her course timetable includes a support block, which enables her to receive one-on-one remedial assistance from a teacher. Susan offers very few comments about how she perceives school and the ones that she does offer are brief. For example, when I ask her about her elementary and junior high school years,

the only thing that she will tell me is that grades four to eight were the worst school years for her and the only explanation that she will offer, other than "I don't know," is "I got bugged." In regards to Chamberlain Secondary, she says, "I like school. It's just too long. The classes are too long." However, at a later session she states that school is "not that great" and that "it's getting boring." My classroom observations of Susan suggest that she does not appear to be interested in what her teachers or peers are saying or doing. Occasionally, I notice that she will look up and stare at a student who is doing something humorous or entertaining, and whom the rest of the class is laughing with or at, but for the most part she ignores everyone and they appear to ignore her as well.

Susan's comments about her perception of her peers are almost non-existent. She does acknowledge that sometimes she would like to be part of a group, but also says, "I like to do stuff on my own." To my question about whether she would like more friends, she replies, "I don't care." Susan avoids going to areas where students gather, such as in front of the vending machines that are in the main foyer of the school, and whenever she is forced to pass a group of teenagers in the halls, she goes as far as possible to the other side of the corridor. Her lunch hours are spent sitting on the floor in front of a locker or at a desk in an empty classroom or else walking around the halls and the grounds of the school. She tells me that during this time, "I just wait until the bell goes." Once when I came across her sitting on the hall floor

with her back against a locker and asked how she was doing, she replied, "I just sat down because I didn't have anywhere else to walk." When I ask Susan how she would feel if she saw someone else sitting in front of their locker and they were alone, she replies, "If I don't know them, I don't care." I ask her if she ever reads during the mid-day break and she replies, "I just kind've sit there." She tells me that she spends time in the library as well during the lunch hour, but I never noticed her in it during the six month period that I was at the school. When I ask Susan to tell me how she feels during her lunch hours, she replies, "Oh, I'm used to it." To the same type of question at another meeting, she replies, "I don't care."

Susan's family consists of her parents and two younger siblings. Her father is employed by the provincial government and her mother is a homemaker. Susan says she talks to her mother but "sometimes I don't have anything to say to her." She feels that her mother does not show as much interest in her as she does towards her younger sister and explains, "My sister is real close to my mom." Susan spends most of her time at home sitting on a couch and watching television. The family have a number of pets, and she tells me that their bird usually sits on her shoulder while she is watching a television program. I ask her about the bird and at first she willingly explains what type it is and so forth; but after several comments, she suddenly stops and says, "I don't like the rabbit or the stupid bird." When I ask her "Why?" she replies, "It's noisy. It gets on your nerves;" and "We got rid of our rabbit

yesterday. We took her to the SPCA because it bit my mom so many times. It was an evil rabbit." She says that both her parents like to watch television, and that her mother "watches when she's home" and her father goes to the set as soon as he gets in the house. Susan states that her mother and father like to fight with her and her siblings because "it's something to do." When I ask her what type of fighting she is referring to, Susan replies:

My dad likes to get you and lie on you and pretend he's fallen asleep. He's heavy. One time he was just lying on top of me... and then you have to kick him and then he gets off.

Susan's response to my question on how would she describe a good day is "depends on what my parents wanted to... we usually go downtown." The only social outings that she has without her parents are when she visits her cousins. She tells me, "When I go to my cousin's house and she goes to a friend's... I sometimes... she sometimes puts make-up on. One of her friends has make-up." At another session, she states, "When I go to my cousins... sometimes she puts it on and I have to take it off before I get home because dad doesn't like the way she looks." The three female members in Susan's household do not own any cosmetics and seldom wear any jewelry because of her father's attitude that they "make you look kind of cheap." She would like to own different colours of fingernail polish, but her father will only allow the clear type. Susan appears to be quite proud of her hair and says that while she likes it long, her parents prefer it short and they make the decision of

when and where to get it cut and when to shampoo it. She states, "You can't argue with them. They always win." We discuss hairstyles and she says that she would like to tie her hair back in a ponytail but her parents do not like it that way, so she rarely does. She adds, "Sometimes... I sometimes have it up at school but then when I get close to home I take it down. And they never know." While Susan is telling me this, I notice that she pulls a necklace from the front pocket of her jeans and begins to play with it. I get the impression that she would like me to ask her about it and when I do, she replies, "My cousin gave it to me. Not this Christmas but last one." In regards to activities, the only one that she ever mentions is soccer. She says that she used to like playing the sport but had to give it up because her parents could not afford to pay the fees. In addition, she is the only participant not to mention anything about books and when I ask her about reading, she replies, "I read a little bit." However, she abruptly changes the topic after this statement and states, "I have a waterbed in my room," and then tells me that it used to belong to her parents.

I had been looking forward to my fifth meeting with Susan because I felt that she was beginning to open up about her lifeworld at the school. As I greeted her, however, she handed me a note from one of the vice-principals that said, "Susan and her parents have some concern about her participation in the survey. Perhaps you could give them a call." I was taken aback somewhat by the message because Susan had never shown or expressed any

apprehension about the interviews to me. I invited her into the interview room and asked her if she would like to telephone her parents to arrange for a convenient time for me to speak to them. She agreed and while she was doing this, I went to the office and spoke with the vice-principal about the matter. When I returned, Susan told me that she had not been able to contact her mother at home because the line was busy. I suggested that she try again, which she did. However, she was unable to get through until her fourth attempt and each time that she pounded out the series of numbers, she seemed to become a bit more agitated. I made several attempts to communicate with her during this time but her eyes remained riveted to the beige telephone that sat on the desk in front of her. When she finally connected with her mother, Susan's first words were, "She's here." The mother declined to speak with me, however, and Susan hung up the phone and informed me that she would telephone her father. Again, her first words after she made the connection were, "She's here." This time I was handed the receiver and I spoke to the father. His first question was why had his permission not been asked for. I explained to the father that parental permission was not required at Susan's age. After my explanation, he stated that some of my queries were questionable. I told him that many of the participants were not used to speaking with another person and so I often began conversations with "teenage" topics in order to help make them feel more comfortable and at ease. I offered several examples, such as current

fashions, television programs, and movies to illustrate what I meant. The father then said that it was up to Susan if she wanted to continue to be in the study. She appeared to be quite upset and I asked her if she would like to speak with her dad. When she gave an affirmative nod with her head, I passed the telephone handpiece over to her and then left the interview room in order to give her some privacy. Upon returning to the room, I was surprised when Susan said that she would finish the interview and volunteered to share some of her writings with me at the next session. She also agreed that it would be all right if I continued to sit in on some of her classes. The interview, however, did not produce any results as Susan either did not reply to my questions or else whispered, "I don't know" to them. I never had a conversation with Susan again and, for the most part, she refused to look at me even when I attempted to give her some kind of greeting in the halls. However, when I did manage to make eye contact, the look that she gave me seemed to communicate that she thought of me in the same way as she did the pet rabbit that was given to the SPCA.

Belinda

Well basically I'm invisible. Except for when people, who occasionally bug me, basically nobody really notices that I am there. In the class I'm quiet. I don't say a lot because I just don't have a lot of things to say to other people. I don't know how to say it.

Belinda, who achieves A's and B's in her grade 10 courses, rates "getting stuff done," "being smart," and "knowing stuff," as being far more desirable than being popular. Her thick brown hair is cut short and she, like the majority of the participants, wears glasses to correct near sightedness. Belinda is average in height and the uni-coloured track suits that she wears every day are baggy and suggest that she is possibly overweight. However, Belinda, who is a competitive swimmer, is in top physical condition. She enters race competitions throughout the year; and practices on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday nights as well as on Wednesdays and Saturdays when she has to be "on deck" at 5:30 in the morning. Belinda says, "I positively swear that I'm probably more fit than almost everybody... almost all the girls at school." She explains:

Swimming is physically like running--like air. You actually use a lot more muscles in the water because there is more resistance. And you don't lose weight, you keep from gaining weight. And so people who swim actually gain weight. But they are gaining muscle not fat. If you want to lose your fat, do running.

Belinda likes competing and explains, "I like to beat my times. Beat other people." At another meeting, she tells me that swimming is also helpful because "it keeps me busy and when I get home I just have time to do homework."

Belinda is the only participant who does not opt to take advantage of the opportunity to get out of a class or to use a spare to meet with me. She chooses the lunch hour option for the nine scheduled interviews that I have with her from the middle of February to the end of April. Belinda appears to be ravenous during the meetings, which is understandable considering her athletic regime, and eats her lunch as well as the savories or sweets that I offer to her with great gusto while responding to my questions. After the food has been eaten, she sucks each finger from its base to its tip and there is a loud smacking noise at the completion of each digit. While an observer might suspect that Belinda's attention is solely on what she is consuming rather than on the questions, her responses are thoughtful and insightful. She occasionally punctuates her answers with witty but self-deprecating statements, such as, "My opening line of conversation is basically, 'What books do you read?' And that is not exactly good conversation."

Belinda's answer to my question about how does she perceive herself at our first meeting is, "I'd say I'm somebody who is boring. More interested in books than people. And I do well in school." In subsequent interviews she elaborates on this response but basically the comments that she offers, such as

"I'm mostly pretty quiet," do not sway from her initial statement. Belinda regularly brings up the fact that she just does not know what to say to peers even when she wants to talk to them and that she is unsure about their reactions or how they feel about the things that she does. She finds it stressful and difficult to have conversations and says that she cannot "really get anybody talking or smiling very quickly." When I remark to her that I find our conversations interesting, Belinda retorts, "Questions I can deal with. Polite conversation I cannot." She adds:

And I talk better with adults than I do with kids I guess. And I don't really have to live with you constantly because you're not here. You're going to be gone and I'm not going to be seeing you again. What I say is not going to follow me around.

At another meeting Belinda tells me that another reason she finds it relatively easy to talk with me is because the conversation is totally focused on her and the questions remain within general guidelines.

Belinda says that she is not worried about her social situation at school because "you don't really have to talk to a lot of kids. You just have to work." While my classroom observations of her indicate that she generally pays attention to teachers' lectures, Belinda tells me that she finds school routine and boring. She states, "Basically most of the classes I could do with my eyes closed." When she enters a classroom, she chooses a desk at the front. Belinda says that her seat selection as well as her "invisibility actually comes

in handy" because the teacher's focus is usually at the back of the room, which is where students who cause trouble sit; and, therefore, they do not pay much attention to what she is doing. I notice that during classes there is always an open library book on her desk and that when the teacher begins to read to the students or there is a lull in the classroom routine or the lesson becomes repetitive or boring, she looks down at her novel and commences to read. Belinda is the only participant who eats in the school cafeteria during the lunch break. She says:

That's where I always eat my lunch. There's a large group of people and not just little groups. There's people that aren't very good or that don't like you but the fact is that in the cafeteria there's also other people there.

Belinda often chooses to sit on top of a table that has nobody else at it . At the first session she tells me that she would like to sit at a table with some of the girls in the cafeteria but is not sure how to; and at the second one states, "Sometimes it would be nice to eat with someone else," then adds, "I'm not really talkative." Yet at our third meeting, she admits to liking eating lunch on her own and explains that it gives her an opportunity to think about her school work or about the book that she is reading. After she has finished her food, Belinda leaves the cafeteria and either goes to the library to read or else she heads to a quiet place inside the building or on the school grounds "where other students do not normally go" and reads there.

Belinda says that she does not really want to be a part of the "in crowd." She says, "I usually hang out with myself." She is not interested in "the stuff" that other female teenagers are concerned about, such as fashion, make-up, boys, and soap operas. She adds, "I'm not fashionable. I'm probably the worst dresser of the year." Belinda states that throughout her elementary school years her peers "picked" on her. She periodically informed her parents about her peers' treatment of her, but says that neither parent ever intervened and instead encouraged her to "ignore them" or to tell the teacher and to "get someone in the school to deal with it." Belinda says that she also tried telling one teacher "but she wasn't really receptive. I had to tell her that I was actually pretty miserable but um... she wasn't very receptive." Eventually she learned that if she ignored the attacks, the perpetrators got bored after a while and left her alone. She explains, "If I did anything else, it just encouraged them." She found walking or reading helped to distract her from thinking about her peers' behavior to her, and says that she discovered through doing these activities that she has the ability to "cool off pretty quickly." She tells me a few students still taunt her occasionally at Chamberlain Secondary and call her "bitch," "slut," or accuse her of being a lesbian, but the majority of them leave her alone. Belinda is opposed to retaliation and says, "I don't like to hurt people because basically I guess I know what's it like to be called names and I really don't like it. So I don't." At a later meeting, however, she asks me if the students who were involved in the shootings at high schools

felt alienated and whether they got into a lot of fights with fellow students. When I ask her if there is a reason for this particular question, she responds, "Like I got teased at elementary school and in high school and I have gone through it, so I can understand how they would want to get back at somebody."

Belinda informs me that she does not really put much effort into forming relationships with her peers. She states, "I've haven't really gotten around to putting energy into getting out. That's probably why I don't have very much friends. You need to always put energy into getting something." She says, "If you don't go look for people, they don't really come to you." Belinda also believes that another reason for her lack of friendships is because she reads too much. She states, "You can't be reading and be with friends." Ah... and I like to read I guess. And when I'm reading, I'm not meeting people." Belinda suggests that her refusal to follow fashion trends is possibly a third reason she does not have any friends. She finds it difficult to understand the fashion purchases of her peers and emphasizes the importance of being careful with money. She says, "It's fine if they like fashion. It's OK. But why do they have to buy \$40 jackets to fit in with the school, which they don't get back at all?" She states, "I prefer stuff that I can use and I don't have to worry about getting dirty or whatever." As she is telling me about her views on fashion, I notice that she has begun to pluck at her bright yellow jacket as if she wants to draw my attention to it. I remark

that I like her coat and she responds, "It was my dad's. He didn't want it anymore." Belinda tells me that it is easier being a loner and a poor dresser at Chamberlain Secondary because the school has a large population. She explains:

There's so many kids here that it's easier if you're quiet. People don't miss you. Like if you don't dress... like I sort of blend in better even if my clothes are different colours. You do blend in.

When I ask her how she feels when she is alone at school, she replies that she is a bit lonely and then adds, "I don't really mind. I sort of gotten used to it. But sometimes you like to talk to people but there's nobody to talk to."

While Belinda offers several reasons why she does not have any friends, she does not connect them as possible explanations why her peers picked on her when she was in elementary school or why they ignore or walk away from her now. She adamantly states throughout the interviews that she has "absolutely no idea" about the reasons for either one. I ask her whether she has ever asked someone and she replies that she has never asked a teacher or her parents for an explanation, but that she once got up the nerve to ask a girl in one of her classes who replied, "I don't like you because I don't like you." After this student's response, Belinda forced herself to ask a group of girls the same question and the only answer she got from them was that they did not like her. She says, "It's sort of annoying because nobody will sit beside you, and nobody will be your partner in gym. It's really annoying."

She points out that she is particularly confused about why she is the last person to be chosen for games in physical education classes because, as she puts it, "I'm actually pretty good at some sports." Belinda does not ask me for my opinion in this regard either and the closest explanation that she offers about her peers' alienating behavior is: "I'm not very good at talking with people. I'm not very good with people period actually."

Belinda lives with her parents and three younger siblings. She hardly ever speaks about her mother or her father and I do not have as much of a sense of their identity or parental approach as I do about the other participants' parents. She says that her mother has a friend who she has tea regularly with but that her father, who once told her "he was sort of a square at school," rarely talks to anybody. Her father is an accountant and her mother works part-time as a dental hygienist. Belinda says that while her parents are aware that she does not "have a lot of friends at school," they do not appear to be concerned about her aloneness nor do they suggest that she should socialize more with her peers. She states that she does not interact a lot with her family either but that her sisters and brother, who are fairly sociable at school, do. She suggests that a possible reason why she has a more solitary nature than her siblings is because she likes to read and they do not. Belinda does not eat meals with her family because of her school and swimming schedule and says that when she does come home to eat, "I get leftovers and have to put them in the microwave."

Belinda and I met for three months and yet she never told her parents or her siblings about being a participant in the study. Whenever I would ask her whether she had said anything to them, she would shrug her shoulders and reply that she had forgotten to mention it. At our last meeting, I inquire once again and Belinda tells me that she still has not gotten around to it. When I ask, "How come?" she replies, "I've decided not to do it. It's just not that important. Like it's not the most important thing going on right now." At the conclusion of this session, I tell Belinda how much I enjoyed and learnt from our conversations and ask her what is the major thing that stands out in her mind about them and she replies, "Probably why I don't seek out other people much." After she has left, I think about her response to my question, "How come?" in regards to why she has never informed her family about being a participant. I recall how she had once rather shyly but also with a sense of pride informed me that her sixteenth birthday was the following day. I also remember that when I congratulated her about the forthcoming event, which is a milestone in most teenagers' lives, she had looked down at lap, played with her fingers a bit, and then said, "The problem is I don't really have any friends to invite to it. You have to have someone to invite to your birthday and I don't exactly have anybody. It sucks."

Karen

I know that I like to be alone and I know that a lot of people don't but... like I don't really care. But I don't think that anyone actually really cares. I don't think that anyone really notices me.

As Karen moves from one grade ten class to another, she blends in with the hundreds of other teenagers at Chamberlain Secondary who are also making the transition from one classroom to another. Her height and build are average; her dark blonde hair reaches her shoulders and is parted in the middle; and her clothes are fashionable and clean but not trendy. However, unlike the majority of students, she does not yell out greetings or converse with others while she is walking and her eyes remain focused on the floor in front of her rather than on the peers who surround her. Karen tells me that while she is walking, she thinks about course assignments and what she might be doing in the following class. She believes that she is far more interested in doing well at school than her peers are. She states, "I think that I'm more worried about the future. They care more about what is going on now. Like they'll not study for a test and go out with their friends instead." She derives a great deal of satisfaction from achieving "good marks and good grades;" but explains that because she is not very smart, she has to really try hard to achieve them.

Karen maintains a Mona Lisa type of smile on her face, and it is difficult to discern from her facial expression what her feelings are at any particular moment during classroom and lunch hour observations as well as during the five scheduled interviews that we have. She takes a few moments before responding to any of the interview questions, and when she does, her words are evenly paced and her low voice seldom changes inflection. She is punctual to the meetings, which take place from the beginning of March to the end of April, and always gives a short verbal reply to my initial greeting. Each time that Karen enters the interview room, she walks over to a chair, sits down, squirms around a bit, straightens her spine, and then clasps her hands together and positions them in her lap. Once this ritual is complete, she looks up and makes eye contact with me but does not say a word until I ask a question. At one of our sessions, she tells me, "I don't really speak unless I'm spoken to." She employs the same ritual when entering a classroom as she does entering the interview room. While other students dart about the room or chat with friends at the beginning of a class, Karen waits patiently in her upright position until there is a signal from the instructor that the lesson is about to commence. She follows the teacher's instructions and tells me, "I do what I'm supposed to do," but says that she tends not to be noticed in any of her courses. During class, Karen feels excluded from her peers, and is particularly disturbed when she is not chosen to be a player for a team in physical education classes or to be a member of a

group in other classes. She says, "I hate being not chosen. It's the worst." She notices that there are other students who are also the last to be chosen and admits to feeling sorry for them.

Even though Karen acknowledges that she is not popular with her peers and does not stand out among them, she does not consider herself a "loser." She proposes that other students would "probably say that I was shy;" and adds, "I'm not one of those people who knows everybody and who makes friends really fast. It takes me a long time to gradually get to know people." She perceives herself as a quiet and thoughtful person. She says people can trust her and that she considers herself to be reliable. However, she does admit to having a tendency to procrastinate and to being "a little bit lazy." She does not like to hurt other people's feelings but uses the phrase, "I don't really care about what other people think," liberally throughout our sessions. Karen identifies herself as being an independent person but states several times that she wishes that she could "really stick up" for what she believes in. She also maintains that she does not have the will power to say "no" to other people, but that she is strong willed when it comes to herself. She states, "I push myself but I'm not really able to with other people."

Karen was not rejected or neglected by her peers during her primary and intermediate grades. She tells me that as an elementary student she was fairly outgoing and that her main focus was on having fun. However, when she entered junior high school she suddenly became aware of what was ahead

and states, "I realized that I wasn't really a kid anymore." Karen feels that it is even more important to work towards her future now that she is a student at Chamberlain Secondary. She does admit though to finding school stressful and suggests that the majority of teachers, as well as most parents, have unrealistic expectations. She says that the workload is "way too much," and suggests that one of the benefits about not having friends is that she is able to devote her complete attention and time to course assignments. She explains, "I know that if I had friends, I would be constantly ditching homework or other things. So I don't really try to make a lot of friends. I know... I know that it would just like screw me up." Karen finds being alone during the school day also gives her the opportunity to mentally prepare for classes, and explains that is the reason why she spends her lunch hours in the library. She points out, "There's not really another place in the school where it's quiet and you can be alone." Whenever I go to the library during this mid-day break, I invariably see Karen sitting at a carrel with her head and shoulders leaning over several sheets of papers covering its desk top. I never see her reading for pleasure nor do I notice any of the other students approach her to ask a question or to have a quiet chat as they do with their other peers. During the majority of our meetings, Karen indicates that she does not miss having a social life, and rationalizes that, in any case, being a high school student is only a few years out of a person's life. However, at our last session,

she tells me:

Sometimes I think that I'm going to look back and see that kind've like my adolescence was boring because I haven't... it kind've is but... I'm just hoping that, like when I'm in my twenties and once I get into college and stuff, it will make up for it. Once... once I'm in college or university I think that I'll loosen up a bit cause that means I... once you're in... as long as you do OK once you're in there, you're be OK in life I think.

Karen admits to not liking being around people. She says, "People get on my nerves. I actually like being by myself better." If she has to be around people, she prefers the company of adults over teenagers because she feels more comfortable with older people than younger ones. She explains, "I know that they're not judging me as much. And... a lot of the time they understand. They know how to look at other people's views and not just theirs." Karen finds being around other teenagers tiring and confesses that she does not find the company of most girls interesting because they only talk about "boys or stuff like that." She says that at this point in her life peer relationships are not really important and she does not particularly care that she does not have any friends. Karen states, in fact, that "not having friends is actually freeing." She relishes the freedom of not feeling pressured to do anything after school or on weekends. Her ideal weekend, she tells me,

would consist of being alone at home and drawing, listening to music, and watching television. She states:

Like I don't... like a lot of people like going out and meeting new people, but I'd rather not. I'd rather sit home in my pj's than spend all my time getting ready and being all anxious and stuff. And like having to try hard the whole night to not say anything dumb.

Karen's perception of popular teenagers is similar to the other participants. She views them as being noisy and loud and believes that they make friends fast. She adds, "I don't know why they have lots of friends. I don't get it." She defines unpopular teenagers as not dressing well and being either quiet and shy or else being "really loud and saying dumb things a lot." She feels that many students are disrespectful to each other as well as to adults. She offers dropping their garbage on the hall floors of the school as an example, and points out:

Like someone has to come along and clean it up after that. I don't think they even realize... like what if they did that job and how are they going to feel if they have to go through the halls and pick up everyone else's mess when they could have just walked over to the garbage can and put it in.

Karen lives with her mother and her two older brothers but resides with her father at his apartment every other weekend. Both parents work in offices and are employed by the provincial government. She says that her

mother has some close friends but “loves it when everyone goes out and leaves her in the house by herself.” She states that her father “is actually really by himself. He... he does not like people at all really.” Karen has a congenial relationship with each member of her family but says that not much conversation takes place in the residence of either parent. She states that nobody in her family ever confides or tells personal things to each other. Karen tells me that she believes her parents are fairly happy with her because she has never “really screwed up or done anything too dumb.” She also says that they have been contributing to a university scholarship fund since she was born. She feels that their monthly contributions put a great deal of pressure on her to do well at school, but says, “it’s kind’ve good though cause I’ve kind’ve developed those values from them. And if they hadn’t been like that, I might not have cared.” However, at our last meeting, Karen states that she thinks her mother “forgets what’s it like to be kid.” When I ask her, “What’s it like to be a kid?” she replies:

I think that it’s more stressed than she realizes. A lot more. And I think that it’s more work than she realizes. And we don’t really have a lot of time to go out and play or do whatever.

Karen adds, “I don’t think that I do at all.”

Roger

As far as I remember like... I was pretty much alone. But ah... there are good loners and they are bad loners. Good loners are people who would prefer to be alone. Bad loners are people that don't have a choice. I think that I'm like the only one in the school that wants... that will actively go out of his way to try and be alone.

Roger is of average height and weight in relation to other grade ten male students at Chamberlain Secondary. His hair is black and long in the front, and the only time that his rather deep set brown eyes are visible is when he rakes the dark strands straight back from his forehead with the fingers of his right hand. Roger has seven scheduled meetings with me, which take place from the beginning of February to the end of April. When I first interview him, I am unsure about how to take some of his comments and wonder if they are to be taken literally or if the intention is to produce an effect for my benefit. However, as my research relationship with Roger develops and my understanding about him deepens, I realize that what appears to be hyperbolic expressions are, in fact, attempts to be humorous about disclosures in the hopes that they will help disguise or even alleviate his true feelings.

Roger feels that he would not be considered an average or normal teenager by his peers, but is proud of the fact that he has "not conformed like everyone else." His definition of an average adolescent is "one parent's divorced um... girlfriend, hangs around with a huge group of people, listens

to rap music, and wants to get a low rider that for some reason bounces up and down on the highway." He believes that it is the odd people who eventually stand out in society. He explains:

They're the ones who get the high paying jobs. I see these guys like conformists and they like go along with the crowd and they constantly bug me about being ah... odd... while like three years time nobody's going to care what they think because they're going to be shoveling fries at McDonald's.

Roger prefers to be alone and says that his favorite activity is to "just sit and just think." He does not like the company of many people and points out that he does not "really need to fit in." He feels that one in every ten people he meets at school is a complete idiot; and adds, "And if I'm around twenty people, that's two idiots. That's two too many." He defines idiots as "someone who acts stupid around other people thinking that he has something to prove." Roger maintains that he does not like to be noticed by his peers. Yet he also tells me that every student at the school knows who he is, and even though the grades at Chamberlain Secondary are from ten to twelve, he states, "I'm pretty... I guess I'm kind've infamous like around the grade ten's basically. Grade nine... grade nine... every grade nine knows me. For greater or for ill." Roger blames his notoriety on the tragedy that occurred at Columbine High School. His peers, he says, view him as having similar traits to the students who were responsible for the shootings at that school.

He explains that they view him in this manner because he wears a black trench coat, he is a loner, and that he has "some very odd views of the world." He tells me that "the Colorado shooters were like... ah, they were the odd ones, um... They stuck out. They hung around by themselves. They were the loners. And I fit the bill for all three." He points out that people now approach him at school and ask when he is going to pipe bomb the school. He states, "At first it was humorous. Then it got annoying. Then I started... started to think, 'Oh my God, what the hell is going on here.'" I question him about why he continues to wear a trench coat knowing that it contributes to him being viewed in this way by his peers; and he replies, "Hey, I like trench coats. They're very nice to wear. Um... plus they have more deeper pockets." At another meeting he tells me, "If we ever have that Columbine thing, the people who hate me will be the first to go because they are assholes. I'm not afraid to say it. I hate them. Everyone hates them." He then adds rather quizzically, "Although for some reason, they're popular. Look at Clinton. OK Clinton. That man has to be the biggest asshole in the world. He's good as a president but just as a human being, he sucks. I hate him."

During the three months that I observe Roger, I notice that he often mumbles to himself while wandering the halls, sitting in classrooms, or during his lunch breaks. In the interviews, he admits that he is conscious of this habit but is adamant that he does not wish to draw attention to himself.

When I question him about his murmuring, he replies, "No one else to talk to. I don't like talking to anyone else." In class, Roger chooses desks at the front in order to be able "to hear the teacher and see the board." However, when we discuss the reasons for his seat choice further, he tells me that is where "nobody bothers me and I don't have a problem," and that the back row of classrooms is where "the druggies line up." Whenever other students arrive to class after Roger, they do not choose the empty seats that are usually all around him. During lectures, he appears to listen to the teachers and smiles when they say something humorous. I also note that he watches his peers intently, and that he makes very few movements with his body except for occasionally bunching his hands and rubbing his eyes vigorously with his clenched fists. Occasionally, Roger will raise his arm in class to indicate that he wishes to answer a question, but I never saw any of the educators take any notice of his signal to them. Roger is not proud of his academic accomplishments and remarks, "I'm kind've slacking off a bit. It's my own fault. I used to get like um... C+'s and B's back in grade eight." He says that he is quite confident, however, in his "ability and his parents' ability to whip me into shape and get my butt into gear."

Whenever there is a great deal of noise inside or outside of the classroom, Roger visibly winces. At one of our meetings I ask him how noise affects him and he says, "I swear to God, they've got to get a new buzzer for this school. Oh... the class bell. Oh my God." Roger reveals that when he

first came to Chamberlain Secondary he thought that his head was going to explode because there were so many people around him and he found it "very confining and claustrophobic." He tells me that, even after being at the school for two terms, he still has an urge "to start throwing bodies everywhere to get them out of my way" when he is walking through the halls. He acknowledges that most of his time at school is spent on his own. He points out, "I've just got my books." After this rather stark disclosure, he adds, "Which is really all I need." Roger says that he requires solitude during the school day in order to be able to "just fall into heavy thoughts." Most lunch hours he can be found sitting alone on the steps outside of the school's gymnasium. He says that in a world full of noise, he finds this time very relaxing. He explains:

Like all these guys need special drugs... They need um... counseling um... they need strip bars and stuff like that. All I need is a nice little staircase or something like that and maybe a glass of warm apple cider and no one and like no one to come running down the halls screaming. Just no one within earshot. And there is my nirvana.

There is my perfect equilibrium.

When I ask him about his social life outside of school, Roger replies that he hates parties. He explains, "Nowadays, it's just basically an orgy of drugs, alcohol, and sex. And I'm against all three." However, in response to my question about how he feels at parties, he admits that he has never actually

been to one but has overheard other students talking about what goes on at them.

Roger says that he was picked on by his peers when he was in elementary school. He says, "I was completely miserable cause no one else shared my views." He then adds, "Or I should say my parents' views." Roger's mother and father told him to "ignore them and they'll go away." He says that his experiences have taught him that it is best not to fight back because eventually the students who are doing the bullying will get bored and go away. Roger feels that his peers' treatment of him is the cause of his low self-esteem and confesses that he has thought of hurting himself many times.

He states:

Although the idea of pain does not appeal to me. Um... I mean all these guys, you hear about them hanging themselves from like... like a closet post or something like that. And I'm like... I'm like, "You're an inch off the ground." I couldn't do that. Slit my wrist... I hate knives. Gun to my head... I don't own a gun and I don't know anyone that does and I don't know anyone with the money to buy a gun. Um... pills... Tylenol gives me a headache. So, I'm pretty much stuck for suicide. Um... I'm afraid of heights. I've thought about it plenty of times. It's just... I'm guess I'm just too lazy to do anything about it.

He adds, "People always say there's something wrong with me and I need to seek help. And I'm like, 'I don't want any help. Leave me alone.'" At first,

Roger says, "I don't care about what other people think about me." However, at a later meeting when I re-read those words to him in order to verify that I comprehend their meaning, he replies, "That's a lie." He explains that he has fallen into the habit of lying and that the truth is that he does not care most of the time what other people think about him as long as what they think will not be damaging to him or to his future. It is interesting that Roger should be concerned about the future because he frequently talks about how "we are all heading for a horrible fiery death." Roger is convinced that humanity is corrupt and decaying and feels that there is a great deal of evil in the world. He explains that he is unable to do anything about it because "it's all too big for me right now."

Roger lives with his father, who is an electrician; his mother, who is a homemaker; and his younger sister. He spends most of his weekends reading in his bedroom or working on the family's computer that is located in the basement. Roger says that his parents complain a lot and say, "OK we done this for you and now go do this." He claims that he helps with all the chores around the house and "basically all the odd jobs, I swear to God, my parents are too lazy to do." He rarely goes shopping with his family and says that his parents select and purchase whatever he needs. Roger states that the only clothing purchases he has ever made are two trench coats that he bought at a charity store. Apparently, his parents hid the first one when he brought it home but they are not aware that he owns a second one. He tells me that

"communication is lacking at home" and that none of his family members talk much. Roger describes his parents as being "very religious" and seeking "to dominate every aspect of my life." He states that even though they repeatedly tell him that they will support whatever he wants to do with his life, he believes that they will do so only if he does not go against their beliefs. He stresses that his parents have "constantly drilled it into my head that violence, drugs, and girls are wrong." Roger does not appear to not have much respect for his parents at this particular time of his life. He depicts his father as not having a backbone and claims that his mother "rules the house." He says, "Whenever my dad maybe wants me to do something like go out and my mom doesn't want me to, my dad simply changes his opinion." However, during another interview he relates that both parents put pressure on him to try and get together with other boys because they are concerned that he spends so much time alone. He tells me that his response to them is, "Ah, I don't really want to. I just want to stay home."

Roger indicates that there is a history of mental illness on his mother's side of the family and that he is concerned about his own mental health. He tells me that his mother, who has been diagnosed with depression, is currently on medication but that "right now she's pretty sick" and is "a real bummer to be around." Roger confides that he gets confused sometimes about where he is and has difficulty in determining what is a dream and what is reality. He also reveals that he has a lot of nightmares. He states, "I don't

remember them. All that I know is that I'm scared crapless sometimes. Like I wake up in a cold sweat... I just about scream some nights. It's insane." At our first meeting, Roger informs me that his parents have suggested that he should see a counselor but states that he does not wish to do so. However, at a later session, he states that he has tried to make his parents aware of how concerned he is but they always reply, "Oh no, no... you're fine. If there's anything wrong with you it would have shown up earlier in your life." Roger says that his dad is usually so absorbed in whatever he is doing that, whenever he attempts to speak with him, he does not respond right away and that when he does "it's usually not much of an answer." Roger states that he has learnt that a person has got to find their own solutions; and then explains, "I mean like right now, I'm lost. I don't know where I'm going... my life. But I'm hoping to get there. I hope I grow up."

Conclusion

The adolescent girls in Gilligan's (1989) study ask, "What would happen if what was inside of us were to enter the world?" (p. 4). I cannot say for certain what happened to the participants when they entrusted me with their thoughts and experiences. I do know that I have changed immeasurably, and as Fromm (1998) states, "There is no contact between human beings that does not affect both of them" (p. 23). During the latter stages of the study, I began to experience similar emotional feelings and physical symptoms to those of my participants whenever I was speaking with other people. These feelings and symptoms have abated somewhat but I continue to experience them to varying degrees. They have affected my ability to communicate with others, and like the participants, affected my desire to be with others. While I understand that the peril of "going native" is that the researcher will become over-involved with the participants and thus lose the detachment that is fundamental to ethnography (McNeill, 1990, pp. 82-83), my experiences have given me a great deal of empathy towards the participants as well as tremendous insight into how they respond to peers as well as how these interactions affect them.

I thought that it was going to be difficult to resist offering advice or giving suggestions to the participants. However, I was firmly grounded in the purpose of my study that it is important to try to understand how socially neglected students structure and give meaning to their experiences; hence the

impulse to either give advice or suggestions rarely surfaced. I occasionally made a positive comment if a participant had said the same negative statement many times before. For example, if he or she said, "I'm ugly" or "I'm stupid" or "I'm boring;" I might respond, "I think you're nice looking" or "I don't think that you're stupid" or "I find you interesting." However, my rule was that I would never make any comment to a student unless it was true.

Some of the participants' statements made me aware of my professional obligation to report any indication that a person might harm him or herself or others. If I felt uneasy about a remark, I would inquire whether the adolescent's parents were aware of his or her feelings in this regard and I also followed up on the statement in subsequent sessions. In the writing of their stories, I was always questioning whether what I was revealing could in any way contribute to them being identified by family members or by teachers. With this possibility in mind, I would further disguise their identity, present the information in a different way, or else I omitted the material altogether even when I knew that the information was interesting and that it was potentially valuable to the study. My first loyalty was to the participants, who trusted me to protect their identity so that they would not have to fear being hurt or humiliated.

It was tremendously challenging to encourage the participants, who were used to being passive listeners and to not expressing their views, to

talk--especially on topics that were deeply personal to them. When many of them met me at the door to the interview room, they had not spoken a single word that day. My invitation to them was to not only respond to my questions but to carry on a conversation with me for 45 minutes to an hour. I was conscious of the duality of these interviews. I needed to attempt to draw out these shy and socially isolated teenagers as much as possible in order to understand how they perceive their lives; yet I also needed to be aware of their vulnerability and their experiences. It was essential that each topic was considered carefully before I introduced it. It was also important to make "on the spot" decisions whether to pursue subjects that were brought up, and to be cognizant of the possible messages that my verbal and physical responses were giving to the students.

I became quite fond of most of the participants and continue to feel a sense of responsibility and concern for each one of them. As I conclude this chapter, I would like to quote one of the participants I interviewed for my Master of Arts thesis, The Phenomenology of Solitude. She asked me to "please be aware of the treasures with which I am trusting you" (personal communication, May 1993). I am very much aware of what I have been entrusted with and just hope that I have been able to do it justice.

CHAPTER SIX

An Understanding of the Research Findings

At this point some attempt must be made to explain the total phenomenon.

(Cusick, 1973, p. 214)

Introduction

I got to know the students who do not share their lunch break with noisy and excited friends--the ones who spend their lunch hours sitting alone on a deserted corridor's linoleum floor or walk the school's halls or its grounds with only a sandwich for a companion. Their stories were immensely rich and gave me a great deal to consider. I was deeply troubled by their comments about violence and suicide. I wondered about their parents and about their teachers. I was fascinated by the metaphors they use to describe the barriers that surround their minds and/or bodies. I empathized with their feelings of loneliness. I respected their strength to persevere and their will to survive even though they often feel overwhelmed by their sense of invisibility and alienation. I appreciated their efforts to help me to understand their world. There are a multitude of ways I could have approached and analyzed their stories, but I returned to what I had set out to do when I began my research--I wanted to attempt to understand the world of socially neglected high school students as they understand it.

My research approach limits what I can conclude about peers, teachers, and parents but offers a sense of confidentiality and security to the teenagers, thereby contributing a great deal to the depth of the data that I was able to collect. Throughout the interviews, the participants stressed how much they valued the fact that I listened to them but did not try to preach to them, give them advice, or attempt to change them, which are the reasons why they do not go to a school counselor or school district psychologist. They also knew that I would not bring up what they shared with me in the future; nor did they have to apologize, be embarrassed, or be frightened by what they shared with me. As Belinda points out, "I don't really have to live with you constantly because you're not here. You're going to be gone and I'm not going to be seeing you again. What I say is not going to follow me around."

Socially Neglected or Socially Rejected?

The bulk of the literature on peer social status maintains that there is a distinct difference between the two categories of social neglect and social rejection. Students who are categorized as being socially neglected in a school setting are shy, have passive behavior, make few attempts to initiate social interaction, do not engage in anti-social or aggressive behavior, are neither liked or disliked by their peers, and are virtually ignored or neglected by other children; whereas the ones who are socially rejected are physically and/or verbally aggressive and are actively disliked by their peers (Coie & Dodge, 1983; Duck, 1983; Rubin 1983; Carlson, Lahey, & Neeper, 1984; Asher, 1990;

Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990). The characteristics and experiences of Karen, one of the grade 10 participants in my study, support the literature's distinction between the two categories. She exhibits all of the attributes of a socially neglected student; and her peers appear to have honored the decision that she made when she was entering junior secondary school to withdraw from their company and they leave her alone. The ease of Karen's transition to socially neglected status may have been aided by the fact that her peers were likely caught up in the excitement of becoming high school students and did not even notice her withdrawal. Besides her timing, Karen's junior secondary had a lot more students attending it than her elementary one did. Belinda, who is another grade 10 participant, explains the fundamental difference between larger schools and smaller ones for socially neglected students. She says, "There's so many kids here that it's easier if you're quiet. People don't miss you." However, two and a half years after making her decision, Karen is finding it increasingly difficult to control when she wants to be alone and when she would like be in the company of her peers. For example, Karen is now one of those students who she used to feel sorry for--she is the last person peers choose for group work or for teams. Her comments about her world, such as being the last one chosen, are similar to those of the other participants and support Rubin, LeMare, and Lollis's (1990) finding that children who withdraw have a high probability of eventually achieving socially neglected status among their peers.

The personal characteristics of being shy and passive around peers and of making few attempts to interact with others that the rest of the participants, Richard, Peter, Mike, Carolyn, Susan, Belinda, and Roger, tell me they had as elementary school pupils also fit the category of social neglect as described in the literature. These traits are the same ones that they now have as adolescents. I also observe that they do not engage in any aggressive behavior and their peers appear to ignore or neglect them, which is consistent with the literature as well. However, they were not ignored by their peers during elementary school; and therefore, the distinction between the socially neglected and rejected categories is not as neatly cleaved for them as it is for Karen. In fact, not only were these seven participants not ignored or neglected by their peers, they were actually verbally and/or physically abused by other children who sought them out in classrooms, in school hallways, and on the playgrounds in order to carry out their attacks on them. The students acknowledge that they were shy, did not care much about current clothing fashions, preferred to read rather than to play sports, wore glasses, and many were smaller than their classmates--all of which made them different from the majority of their peers. However, they cannot comprehend why these particular differences should have elicited the types of vicious acts that they did. As Richard states, "I really didn't do anything. I read. I sat there and read. I rarely even talked to them."

The data from my observations and interviews with the participants makes me question why the terms "socially neglected" and "socially rejected"

are used in studies that focus on children's social status with their peers. While a discussion of this question is offered in the Review of the Literature, my findings indicate that being "ignored or neglected by other children" is a form of rejection, and a very cruel one at that. In addition, I suggest that children who face this type of treatment are "disliked" by their peers and perceive themselves in this way as well rather than being "neither liked or disliked" by them as stated in the literature. Harris's (1998) discussion in The Nurture Assumption: Why Children Turn Out the Way They Do of a family move when she was a grade four supports my two suggestions that being neglected by peers is a form of rejection and that children who find themselves in this situation are disliked by their peers. Harris states:

I found myself the youngest and smallest child, and one of the few who wore glasses, in a fourth-grade classroom in a snooty suburb in the Northeast. The other girls were sophisticated little ladies, interested in hairstyles, proud of their pretty clothes. I wasn't like them, and they didn't like me. My family remained in that place for four years, and they were the worst four years of my life. I went to school each day with children from my neighborhood, but not one of them would play with me or talk to me. If I dared to say anything to them, I was ignored. Pretty soon I gave up trying. Within a year or two I went from being active and outgoing to being inhibited and shy. My parents knew nothing of this--they saw no major changes in my behavior at home.

The only thing that changed, as far as they were concerned, was that I was spending a lot of time reading (p. 147).

Harris's family moved when she was in grade eight but she claims her experiences with the "kids in the snooty suburb" changed her personality and that she "remained inhibited and insecure" (p. 147). The participants, except for Susan and unlike Harris, had always read a great deal and they were all naturally inhibited and shy. They assume that their peers disliked them for these traits as well as for the ones that Harris mentions above (i.e. not caring much about hairstyles or clothing, wearing glasses, and being physically small for their age group). Stones (1993) says, "People who are bullied are often pleasant, thoughtful and friendly but they can also be described as: shy, timid, afraid, unassertive, lacking in confidence" (p. 19).

Richard, Peter, Mike, Carolyn, Susan, Belinda, and Roger believe that their peers' regard and treatment of them had an enormous impact on their elementary school experiences and how they now perceive themselves. While my analysis of the data supports their belief, their biographies that they shared with me, which included general and specific events from their lifetimes, indicate that there were other important influences as well.

Parental and Teacher Influences: Elementary School Years

As discussed in the previous section, all of the participants, except for Karen, state that they were different than many of their peers during elementary school and that their classmates verbally or physically abused

them because of these differences. The participants turned to their parents and teachers, who represented both power and authority to them, to mediate the painful situation that they found themselves in with their peers.

When the participants told their mothers and/or fathers about how their peers were treating them, their parents did not come to the school to "sort out" the problem nor did they contact the teachers, the school administrators, or the parents of the children who were harassing their child. Instead, according to the participants, each set of parents gave their child the same advice: "Ignore them and they will go away." Their recommendation advocated taking an alienating approach to a situation in which their daughters or sons already felt alienated. It is likely that the parents believe that their advice worked because their children continued to be respectful and cooperative both at home and at school and their peers eventually stopped tormenting them. It is also the one strategy that the parents continue to advocate, which is not surprising considering its observable results.

The participants found it relatively easy to tell their parents about the situation they faced with their peers at school, but this was not the case with their teachers. The reason they found it difficult to approach their teachers was because they did not have a personal connection with them. The participants' shy and inhibited nature could be partially responsible for this lack of a relationship connection; however, their statements also indicate that they never received any overt recognition or attention from their teachers as they were always compliant about obeying classroom regulations. Their

comments are consistent with those found in the literature (Wentzel & Asher, 1995). Cusick (1973) points out:

The rules, regulations, and routine actually serve to substitute for interaction. If one is aware of them, he does not need to ask or check with the teacher to be sure he is doing the correct thing and can actually go through many consecutive days in school without being selected for anything individually, or even talking to a teacher (p. 211).

The perception of the participants that some of their teachers were not even aware of how their peers were treating them in the classrooms and on the playgrounds supports those in the literature that suggest educators may be overlooking socially neglected students because of their seemingly compliant behavior with others (Coie & Dodge, 1983; Coie, 1990; Kupersmidt, Coie, and Dodge, 1990). However, the adolescents in my study also believe that many of their teachers were cognizant of their situation but neither tried to prevent or stop the other children from tormenting them. I did not find any reference in the literature that supports the participants' statements in this regard, which is understandable considering such a finding would have to entail teachers admitting to ignoring the plight of some of their students. Nevertheless, many of the participants' encounters with peers took place when their teachers were present, such as Peter's example of how another boy told him that he had a "high, squeaky voice" and mocked it during each morning's attendance roll call. The teachers may or may not have been aware of these types of situations or they may have had other motives for their behavior,

such as not wanting to add to a student's embarrassment by prolonging the attention that was centered on him or her. Whatever the case may be, when the participants finally gathered enough courage to tell them, the teachers were apparently not very receptive and offered them the same advice that their parents did. In addition, none of the adolescents can recall an educator who was particularly empathetic to them or who acted in a supportive manner towards them.

The participants found their parents' and teachers' advice, "Ignore them and they will go away," both confusing and difficult to comprehend. They believed that this recommendation implied that if they wanted the situation with their peers to change, they were the ones who had to change-- even though the only "sin" they had committed was staying true to the type of person they were. When the participants continued to be harassed by their peers and no other advice or action was forthcoming from their parents or their teachers, it is likely that they began to doubt not only the legitimacy of their feelings but also their belief that they were in the right and their perpetrators were in the wrong. As they questioned their feelings and their stance, they started to suspect that they were making errors of judgment in the role that they played in the situation; and therefore, were capable of making mistakes about a variety of other things as well. These suspicions have remained with them and comments such as, "I make a lot of mistakes" or "I never seem to be able to do anything right," are found throughout their transcribed interviews. When their suspicions began to take hold, the

participants found that they no longer trusted their own perceptions and started to base their understanding on how they believed their parents perceived their situation. In Invisible Men: Faces of Alienation, Victor (1973) suggests that conditioning children not to act on their instincts and feelings, means that we are rewarding them when they ignore their inner urgings and denying them the satisfaction when they do so. He warns:

A child, in adopting a narrow role that is given to him by a parent, is conditioned to become unresponsive to elements of himself that are not consistent with the role. He will learn (to the extent that he cooperates with the parent) to ignore his own desires, tastes, or feelings (p. 15).

Victor adds that once children master the assigned role that is given to them by their parents, they are then able play it for others who want it as well; and in the case of the participants, this was their teachers.

It was inevitable, once the participants viewed the situation with their peers in the same manner that they perceived their parents and teachers did, that they should follow their advice, "Ignore them and they will go away." The participants admit that the ploy was successful in that, as Carolyn puts it, "Eventually they stop coming near and that's exactly what you want." What the adolescents point out though, which the adults may not have been aware of, is that the advice sentenced them to a considerable period of time in which they had to continue enduring emotional and/or physical pain before their peers finally left them alone. They also experienced a great deal of stress over

having to choose which peers to ignore because they were unsure of who would go after them and who would not. Coleman and Hendry (1999) point out that if an event "is relatively unpredictable, the individual is likely to feel that he or she has little control over it," and that it is "likely to have a high degree of stress associated with it" (p. 213). In time, the participants learnt that the period of being verbally or physically abused was shortened if they hid whatever they were feeling from their peers. They admit that this was sometimes very difficult to do, but say that once they discovered how to deny their emotions in the first place, the task was made easier. They found that solitary activities, such as reading, walking, and drawing also helped to distract them from whatever they were feeling. Eventually, the eight adolescents in this study were ignored by their peers and when each one of them entered Chamberlain Secondary School as a grade 10 student, he or she was the "pure type" of socially neglected student as depicted in the literature. Peter states, "They eventually ignored me. I felt better cause they weren't bugging me anymore. So... I could get on with life." It is this "life" that the next section focuses on.

Participants' Lifeworlds at Chamberlain Secondary School

Chamberlain Secondary School is an example of an educational institution that supports an hierarchical transfer flow of learning. It maintains the structure and rules of society rather than promoting the questioning or challenging of them. For the majority of the hour-long

classes, the teachers direct and control most of the verbal and physical interactions that take place in their classrooms. The students sit in rows that face the teachers' front-and-center lecture positions. Most of the attention of the educators is given to the popular students or to the ones who choose to sit at the back of the classroom, those identified by the participants as the "troublemakers." The desks at the front of the room are the ones the adolescents in my study select. They do exactly what they are instructed to do and their teachers, who most likely assume that they are on-task and working, appear to leave them on their own. Whenever I was asked by a teacher to name the student whom I was observing in his or her classroom, invariably the response to my answer was one of surprise. For example, one teacher replied, "I don't understand why you're studying her. She's fine. She does her work and appears to get along with everyone in the class." In School Girls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap, Orenstein (1994) remarks that one of the girls in her study, who is withdrawn and timid and whose grades have dropped, is not regarded as someone in need of counseling or special help by her teachers because "she is never combustible: she never, for instance, yells in class, pounds desks, fights with other children, conspicuously challenges authority" (p. 81).

The teachers' bewilderment and expressions of surprise upon hearing the names of the students whom I was observing as well as studies such as Orenstein's (1994) are disappointing because Eckert (1989) states in Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School that "the

flourishing field of classroom ethnography indicates that educators have begun to take seriously the social interaction in the classroom as part of the educational process" (p. 179). The comments from the adolescents in my study also make me question Eckert's statement. The participants report that they are made to feel invisible by their teachers, and their statements are supported by my classroom observations of them. For example, several times I noted that they were never chosen when one of them would tentatively raise an arm to indicate that they wanted to respond to a question, a rare but occasional event. The ones who were selected were the students who were waving their arms vigorously in the air or who were shouting out the answers before they were even called upon. One class, in which I was observing Belinda, was particularly painful to watch in this regard. The teacher had asked the students to put their desks in a semi-circle around his in order to help facilitate class discussion. His chosen topic captured their interest and soon there was a chorus of arms raised every time he posed a question. The teacher called upon students who sat next to or near Belinda several times, but even though she sat patiently with her strong swimmer's arm raised high above her head, he never chose her. In comparing a socially isolated student in his study with higher status ones who act out in class, Cusick (1973) remarks, "It is perhaps paradoxical that it was Nick who behaved as the organization said a student should, but it was Jack and his friends who got the rewards" (p. 172).

In spite of the participants' comments about feeling invisible in classrooms, the adolescents in my study favor the type of pedagogical approach where teachers control verbal and physical interactions because they feel its conventions and regulations protect them from the other students.

Cusick (1973) also suggests:

An isolated student might prefer a teacher-centered room because it gives them protection from their isolation. If the teacher maintains control he is addressing twenty-five individuals, not three groups, two dyads, and two isolates. At least it places the isolates and less popular students on an equal basis with the members of groups (p. 201).

The participants believe their teachers value their solitary stance and silence in classrooms. The comments from the educators about being surprised at who I was observing in their classes suggest that this may be true. The participants' experiences in other types of classrooms, such as the ones where pupils are given more independence and autonomy, have been frightening for them. Carolyn was a member of the Flexible Studies Program that is designed for junior high school students who prefer to work independently.

Carolyn says:

There were two sides to the Flex. There were children who were very able and wanted to work ahead and there were those who couldn't keep up. So there was no middle ground. There were just the extremely bright people slammed right in with people who would pick on them. No work ever got done.

The participants find that teacher-centered classrooms, sitting at the front of the classroom, and their behavior all contribute to helping them get through the routine of their school days, which they describe as being mainly boring and monotonous. Because of these three factors, teachers do not approach them or question what they are doing. The teenagers are free to indulge in their favorite activities, such as reading and "falling into heavy thoughts"; or ones that help to "kill time," such as tuning out or punching random numbers on a calculator. Orenstein (1994) says of the withdrawn and timid girl in her study, "She even begins to see her silence as an advantage: as long as she's perceived as shy, her teachers won't notice that she has, in truth, disengaged from school" (pp. 80-81). The factors listed above offer a possible explanation to the question posed in the literature on why socially neglected students do not achieve higher grades in school than their more gregarious and popular peers even though they are perceived by teachers as being more on task than other students (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990).

Peers, Social Status, and Identity

Even though it is easier for the participants to conceal the fact that they are isolated from their peers at Chamberlain Secondary School because of its large student population and the size and configuration of its building, and even though they were picked on by other children during elementary school, the adolescents in my study feel more conscious and embarrassed about their isolation now than they did as children. The participants explain

that when they were younger, the other children were forced by their parents to include them on their party invitation lists and so forth. On Valentine's Day, which they confess is the most difficult day of the year for them now to get through because they perceive everyone else as having at least one important person in their lives, teachers made certain that everyone received cards and candy. The other thing that makes their isolation more disconcerting now than it was in elementary school is that they believe that being seen as someone who is a loner is considered "odd" by others. Their belief is consistent with the findings in the literature, which states that with increasing age, a child's isolation from their peers is not only more conspicuous, it is also associated with abnormality (Byrnes, 1983; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Rubin, 1985; Coie, 1990; Rubin, LeMare, & Lollis, 1990; Parkhurst & Asher, 1992; Younger & Daniels, 1992; Hatzichristou & Hopf, 1996). Eckert (1989) says that the high school students in her study recognized the critical need "to expand their networks to avoid being lost and isolated in the larger environment, and most considered making contacts to be the first priority upon entrance into junior high" (pp. 85-86). Most teenagers want to be viewed as people who are popular with peers at school; who have lots of invitations to parties and events; and who possess the correct social symbols, such as trendy clothes and accessories as well as stylish hair colours and cuts. Each one of these factors contributes to their social status and identity. Eckert states:

Adolescents are engaged in the development of social identity, and of a sense of community structure outside the family. Their use of social symbols, such as dress, territory, cars, music, and language is an important part of the process of manipulating and signaling this developing identity and of marking social differences within their evolving communities" (p. vii).

The eight adolescents in my study would like to have friends--people to do "stuff" with. Everything they do at school is on their own, except for in-class group activities and even then they rarely participate. They walk the halls alone, they eat their lunches alone, and they sit silently in their classes while their peers talk to each other. The participants know the characteristics and criteria that are needed for popularity and group acceptance, which is consistent with the findings from other studies that discuss peer cultures and unpopular students (Cusick, 1973; Brown, 1989; Youniss, McLellan, & Strouse, 1994). They identify the popular students as talking a great deal, creating a lot of noise, getting most of the attention, going to lots of parties, caring about their appearance, and wearing trendy clothes. However, the participants' perceptions of themselves are the opposite of how they perceive popular students. They propose that their self-perceptions of being shy, introverted, quiet, not talking very much, reading a lot, not wearing fashionable clothes, not caring much about their appearance, and not being noticed by others, are most likely how their peers view them as well.

The participants' first comments to me about their appearance and clothing suggest that they do not put much effort into either one. However, subsequent statements indicate that the participants do put thought into what they wear. For instance, there is nothing about Karen, Richard, or Peter's appearance or clothing that would make them stand out from their peers, but it is exactly this neutrality and blandness that they are striving for. Richard explains:

My clothes are rather like a uniform. Right? Like what can you bug about me? I'm wearing a white T-shirt and jeans. Big deal. That was always part of the reason. Just so they couldn't bug me about it anymore. There was just nothing left to bug. Right?

Roger and Carolyn also choose their clothing carefully but for a different reason. They wear trench coats because they regard this single piece of clothing as their insurance that peers will continue to give them a wide berth and leave them alone because of the connection that such coats have with the Columbine High School tragedy. Mike, Susan, and Belinda's clothing styles also tend to make them stand out from their peers. In Susan's case, her parents dictate what she will wear and it is apparent that she has physically outgrown many of the dated clothes that they have chosen for her. However, she has not totally succumbed to their wishes and several of her comments indicate that she has put thought into what she wears. For example, while Susan is telling me how her father forbids any women in her family to wear cosmetics, jewelry, or nail polish, she pulls out a necklace that she has been

hiding inside of her shirt and begins to play with it. When I ask her about the piece of jewelry, Susan says it was a gift from her cousin--the same one who lets her experiment with make-up whenever she visits her house. In Belinda's case, she chooses sweatsuits to wear to school because of the convenience that they offer. They are the easiest type of tops and bottoms to pull on after swimming practices and competitions, which take place every day of the week for her except on Sundays. In addition, all of the suits have been purchased at a discount price because of their bright colours, which pleases Belinda who promotes economic thrift in regards to spending money. The reason why Mike wears odd pieces of clothing is because he desperately wants to be noticed by his peers. In the participant interviews, Mike was the one who had the most trouble admitting that he spent the majority of his time, whether it was at school or during his leisure hours, on his own. Perhaps the reason why he brought in photographs of his two pets was a way of indicating that some other living things cared for him and that he cared for them a great deal as well.

In regards to music, which as Eckert (1989) points out is an important social status marker, none of the participants ever mention anything about their favorite singers, groups, or types of music unless I make a point of asking them. The answers they give suggest that they are not particularly interested in anything to do with music or sound. Richard is the only one I observe occasionally listening to music on a personal cassette disk player during lunch hours. However, neither he nor the other participants turn on

the radio, recorded music, or music videos as soon as they get home from school, as many adolescents do. Nor do they listen to music while doing homework, reading, working on their computers, walking, or any other activity. This finding was rather surprising considering that many teenage leisure pursuits are focused on music, such as purchasing, listening, talking, and attending concerts. Steinberg (1999) points out that by middle adolescence, the typical teenager listens to music from four to six hours daily (p. 235). He states that the music they listen to, such as rap and heavy metal, is created specifically for adolescents and suggests that it plays a significant role in exposing them to the youth culture. However, the participants indicate that talking and other kinds of noise distracts them and make it difficult for them to concentrate on whatever they are doing, whether it is in the classrooms, during breaks, or at home. This inability to tolerate noise is possibly a reason why the adolescents in my study differ from many teenagers in regards to their approach to music.

Studies such as Dunphy's (1969) and Eckert's (1989) state that an adolescent's ability to talk the language of the group is one of the most important requirements to possess if he or she wants to belong. However, when the participants try to talk with their peers, their own physical reactions make it incredibly arduous for them to carry on a conversation. Being around people makes them nervous and uncomfortable. For example, Mike says, when he tries to speak, "My voice is kind of wavy and I'm shaking like crazy. I perspire. My hands sweat. My eyes start to tic." Peter states, "My

palms start to sweat. And my mouth dries out. My heart really goes fast." It is even more unfortunate for the participants that verbally fluent speakers are viewed as believing they are competent; while verbally inept ones are deduced as seeing themselves as worthless and of low value (Duck, 1983, p. 55). The participants also do not know what to talk to their peers about, which is understandable since they do not pursue similar leisure activities and interests; and therefore, are unable to start or sustain a conversation with them. A startling discovery that came out of my study is that the participants find it difficult to comprehend much of what their peers are saying because they are unfamiliar with the jargon that many teenagers use whenever adults are not present. As Belinda explains, "If something's being said out loud, I don't understand what it's about very quickly." The inability to use and comprehend the specialized vocabulary of peers means that they do not know how to react when comments are directed at them or when they eavesdrop on conversations, which all of them admit to doing. They express a great fear of being thought of as "stupid," and have no way of knowing whether their retorts or actions will be appropriate to the comments, so they are careful to keep their emotions "in check." Coie (1990) suggests that unpopular children are not disliked because they are verbally deficient but because of the way in which they handle themselves over issues related to it. The more tired the participants feel, the less they are able to control their emotions. Striving to be always on top of their feelings adds additional stress to their lives and to the anxiety that they already feel about how others perceive them and to their

feelings of being alienated from their peers. Willcocks (2000) points out, "Don't connect, and you don't understand the people around you. The less you understand them, the more alien they seem, and the more likely you'll steer clear of any common activities with them" (p. 8).

The participants' inability to converse with peers also means that they rarely if ever get to talk to other teenagers about themselves. They admit that there are many days when they never say anything to anyone until the time they get home from school and even then it is often evening before they get together with another family member. As Peter points out in the previous chapter, I am the only person, other than his mother, whom he has ever had a "true" conversation with. Having opportunities to talk about ourselves to our peers is not only beneficial but it contributes to our self-identity. In The Art of Being, Fromm (1998) points out:

As long as I talk, I know I exist; that I am not nobody, that I have a past, that I have a job, I have a family. And by talking about all this I affirm myself. However, I need someone to listen; if I were only talking to myself I would go crazy (p. 23).

Besides not talking to their peers, the participants are also not used to being touched by them and do not know how to react when they are. Victor (1973) suggests minor physical encounters, such as being lightly bumped by others, take on unusual significance for those who feel invisible and alienated (pp. 65-66). For example, when a girl draped an arm around Richard's shoulders, he says, "I nearly jumped out of my skin because it surprised me. At first I

knocked the arm... I tried to knock the arm away because... because I wasn't used to anyone actually touching me."

Even though Coleman and Hendry (1999) point out that "in present-day society alcohol consumption among teenagers is common" (p. 124) and that alcohol and drug use by Canadian youth is continuing to increase (Chiarelli, 2001, p. B11), the participants do not smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, or do drugs and are strongly opposed to all three vices. At first, I was somewhat puzzled by their abstinence and by their opposition. I thought that the teenagers might seek substances to enhance their image and to ease their social anxieties, which would increase their sociability. After all, the companies that produce cigarettes and alcohol have spent a great deal of money on advertisements that suggest smoking and drinking offer a sense of belonging, help a person to relax, and are what popular or "cool" people do. In addition, the adolescents do not possess many of the protective factors that would decrease the likelihood of them engaging in substance abuse, such as "positive mental health (including high self-esteem and the absence of depressive symptoms), high academic achievements, close family relationships, and involvement in religious activities" (Steinberg, 1999, p. 411). However, the participants find it difficult to comprehend why peers would use any type of drug to enhance the moment. Richard argues:

Quite often people my age are just too childish. Like, let's go drink ourselves into insensibility. Well, yeah that's very nice but you are going to have one hell of a headache when you wake up. Not to

mention the throwing up and who knows what you will do while you are drunk.

When I ask Richard, "Do you ever live for the moment?" he replies, "Rarely." The participants do not focus on the present--they worry about their futures. Roger explains:

Druggies um... they very much live for the moment. I mean like fast cars, the thrills, ah... the drugs and stuff like that. That's all stuff you do in the moment. I mean like five minutes later, it's going to be all over. And you're going to want to do it again. I'm not like that. I prefer planning for the future and do things that are like meaningful for the future.

As Karen says, "A lot of people are more worried about the now and like that. I think that I'm more worried about the future. They more care about what is going on now." In addition to focusing on their futures rather than on the present, the participants do not have to deal with social contexts where peers are drinking alcohol or using drugs and pressuring others to do so as well.

I did not explore the few comments that the participants made about their sexuality to any great depth. I felt that the students may have viewed such an exploration as insensitive or inappropriate since I knew that they did not have any close peer relationships and because, as Coleman and Hendry (1999) point out, "The topic of sex can be acutely embarrassing, especially for young people" (p. 104). In addition to these concerns, I was also cognizant that the scheduled interviews were taking place in a school setting, the

student was alone with me, the door to the interview room was closed, and that the participants often became emotionally upset during our conversations. However, each one of the participants made remarks that either indicated they were heterosexual or else they came right out and told me. For example, all of the males informed me that they were not gay and Belinda and Carolyn told me that their peers often called them lesbians but that it was not true. All of the females indicated that they did not have any desire to go out with a boy at the present but would like to do so later on in their lives. Each of the males also spoke about how they would like to have a girlfriend. While Roger thought that there was a possibility that this would happen, Richard and Mike stressed that they were unlikely to ever have a close relationship with a female. The longest conversation that I had about sexuality was with Peter and I found it to be both memorable and potentially significant. We had been talking about dating and I mentioned that a person's sexual drive is second only to the drive for self-preservation. After making this comment, Peter sat straight up in his chair and stared into my eyes for a considerable period of time. I was unsure of his reaction, but later wrote in my fieldnotes that he looked shocked, embarrassed, and alert all at the same time. I was concerned that Peter would tell his parents that I was discussing sexual related feelings with him while we were alone in a room and the door was closed. At the next interview, my first question to him was, "So what did you think about our conversation last time?" Peter replied:

Well... after the conversation I was starting to feel really good for some reason. What we talked about kind've reacted inside my brain. I went for a run around the track and I just felt really great. I went around two or three times. I just couldn't stop running.

When I asked Peter if he could tell me about how he was feeling and what he was thinking about when he was running around the school track, he explained:

A spurt of energy. Yeah. It was weird. I ah... well the first thing that came to my mind was when you were telling me about things that drive people. Ah... I think that maybe I'm denying a part of myself. So... I'm not denying it anymore.

When I inquired what changes have occurred, Peter chuckled and said, "I'm noticing girls more."

Various terms of aloneness or alienation, such as "ghost, dead-like, loner, phantom, and invisible," are used by the participants to describe the images that they have of themselves and of how their interactions with peers at Chamberlain Secondary School have affected them. They have consciously utilized barriers, such as "zombie" face masks, a "look of death," or "shyness" to keep their peers at bay. However, they are finding it increasingly difficult to control the different types of armor that they have chosen to erect. In fact, the participants claim they are no longer even conscious of when their shields are up. To protect themselves from the barbs of their peers, they have built layers around themselves, which are invisible to others but not to

themselves. The participants describe the layers in various ways, such as a numb-like feeling or an impenetrable metal. Many of them say that these layers feel as if they are beginning to tighten. They fear being slowly asphyxiated by them. However, having perfected their ability to hide their emotions and keep them in check, nobody else seems to notice their feeling of being inextricably wound towards oblivion.

What Could Make A Difference?

The participants continue to harbor resentment about how the adults mishandled their situation with their peers and that, even though they did as they were instructed to do, everything has not turned out to be "OK" for them. They wanted, as Mike puts it, "something more" when they first told these adults about how their peers were treating them. This section contains participants' suggestions on what could have made a difference to them, the something more that they were looking for, in regards to their parents, teachers, and peers.

Parents

The participants do not have close relationships with their parents and many of the activities that they pursue at home are solitary ones. However, unlike the majority of teenagers who embrace the idea that their roles with their parents are changing, the relationships that the eight adolescents have with their parents have, for the most part, stayed the same. And, while their peers are demonstrating, to different degrees, that they have adopted new

values, attitudes, and behavior, which are distinct from those of their parents, the participants generally support the ones that their parents uphold. In the much cited Cliques, Crowds, and Gangs: Group Life of Sydney Adolescents, Dunphy (1969) indicates that the societal expectation for an adolescent is that he or she will achieve a new kind of status in the community outside of the family. He suggests, "The adolescent must learn, by participation, more roles than his family can offer him. He must acquire a new reference system which will extend, and partly replace, his identification with the parents" (p. 9).

While the parents, according to the participants, are beginning to communicate that they feel their children are more dependent than they should be, the data suggest that they have not yet relinquished their control over them. The adolescents believe that their parents do exert too much authority over them, which is a common complaint among teenagers. However, their comments indicate that parental control is well beyond what the average parent might consider as cautious or prudent. In light of their descriptions of their parents' authoritarian approach, it seems incongruous that the mothers and/or fathers of the seven participants, who were abused by other pupils during their elementary grades, did not come to the schools to sort out their children's problems with peers or contact an administrator, teacher, or the other parents. However, the parents' conduct in this regards is almost identical to how they reacted to my study. The participants, except for Belinda, told their parents about being a participant in the study; yet only one father contacted me and that was to berate me for not having sought his

permission to involve his eighteen year old daughter in the study. Neither he nor any of the other parents indicated that they would like to discuss the study with me and nor did they ask questions such as: Why was the study being conducted? How did their son or daughter come to be chosen as a participant? Could they have a copy of the study? How was I protecting the identity of their child? Could any harm come out of being a participant in this study? Do I have any suggestions that might help their child? My study does not focus on the parental perspective, so I am unable to determine why the parents did not come to the school or contact an educator, other parents, or me. Rigby (1998) suggests that there are various reasons why parents do not become involved with the school or only come as a last resort. He says that parents may have painful memories of how they were treated by their peers at school and feel guilty about being unable to help their children overcome the same difficulties that they had themselves; they may be ashamed that their son or daughter is unable or unwilling to protect himself or herself; they may believe that they had contributed to their children's problems by not being suitable role models or by failing to provide their son or daughter with opportunities to socialize with other children; or parents may interpret what is happening to their children in light of their own cultural experiences (pp. 114-115). Eckert (1989) also suggests that educational institutions "base their practices on only one background--that of the white middle class Anglo-American" and that non-mainstream parents avoid contact with the schools because they believe their homes and experiences are

not valued (p. 9). Nonetheless, it seems odd to me that parents, who are described by their children as being authoritarian and controlling, would not have taken more interest in my study.

Although the parents never asked, their children certainly have ideas about what their mothers and fathers could have done that would have been beneficial to them. The main point that the participants emphasize in their interviews is that youngsters like themselves need to have the support of their parents. Victor (1973) points out:

How alienating social influences will be on a young child depends on how they fit with his individual inclinations. The development of true self or identity is fostered by social influences that recognize and are responsive to a child's inclinations (p. 14).

Zarzour (1994) suggests that "when someone is power-tripping on your child, you don't leave him to fight his own battles; you listen with respect and then work together, parent and child" (p. 94).

The adolescents also point out that they wish their mothers and fathers would have encouraged them to get out of the house more. However, in regards to getting out more, Richard recommends, "Don't embarrass them too much by being out with them all the time." They say that they would have welcomed opportunities to meet other children, especially those who did not attend the same school they did. They believe that these strategies would have been beneficial in helping them to learn how to socialize with other

people and would have given them a chance to play with peers who were their own age.

Teachers and School

While some of the teachers and administrators asked me, "How are things going?" none of them ever instigated a conversation about my study nor did any of them ask how they or the school could assist socially neglected students. Their attitude and approach to my research and to myself was generally one of indifference, which is consistent with the participants' comments about how their teachers have always behaved towards them. However, my study only involves the staff of one school and there are considerable differences between the atmosphere of institutions and of educators' philosophies regarding their involvement and obligations to students. Rigby (1998) argues that teachers vary widely regarding the extent to which to perceive their obligations to help students. He also points out that "it is easier to appraise a situation if you are an outsider observing people's behavior at a school," but "if you have grown used to the school, the habitual way in which people treat each other will appear normal" (p. 20).

The adolescents in my study indicate that if teachers want to be able to identify students who are like them and are interested in helping such children and teenagers, they should look for ones who are sad looking, are depressed a great deal, appear to be "closed off," do not talk even when there are people around them, and avoid eye contact. Some of them state they have appreciated any gesture, no matter how small or incidental, that their

teachers have made towards them. For example, Roger says, "Some teachers do make an effort. I like them a lot more." When I asked him what kind of effort they made, he replies, "They say, 'Hi,' in the hallways." However, others say that it would not have helped their situation even if teachers had shown some interest in them. Mike says, "It wouldn't have helped. I have had teachers ask me, "How's it going?" I say, "It's OK." But it wouldn't have made any difference. They're still not my age. I get along with adults." The participants admit that they feel more comfortable being in the company of adults than being with their peers. They recognize that the role that they have adopted, which includes being obedient, taking responsibilities seriously, and being respectful, is one that pleases many adults.

Some elementary school principals and teachers, whose schools I have conducted research for graduate course papers in, tell me that they occasionally put loners together in a room or else group them together for class projects. They suggest that this practice provides students with an opportunity to socialize with other children and to practice their conversation skills. The participants do not support such practices. As Carolyn points out, "Loners don't voluntarily talk." Richard states:

The problem with loners going with loners is that well... they just stand there. I've done that many times. We were put in a group together with some other people and we sat there and none of us said anything until the teacher came over and started talking to us, and

then we answered the questions quickly and without any embellishments.

Having to wear school uniforms is another tactic that many educators suggest would be helpful to children who are made to feel different and are ostracized by their peers because of the clothes they wear. Karen, who was not a socially neglected student in elementary school, is the only one who supports the wearing of uniforms. She states, "No one would be picked on how they're dressed or how they really look cause they'd all be wearing the same thing." The other seven participants dismiss the idea and point out, as Harris (1998) does, that a child's clothing style contributes to only a part of their social status with peers.

The participants do not believe that their teachers could have prevented their peers from harassing them. They explain that when a teacher told the class to "quit picking" on them, that everyone's attention then became focused on them and they were picked on even more. The adolescents say that this practice also made them dislike the teacher because he or she exacerbated the problem between their peers and themselves. Belinda suggests that it might be helpful if teachers instruct their students to tell them in private which peers are bothering them and to encourage them to describe what is occurring between them. She says that the teachers should then give a description of the other children's actions to the whole class and to state that such behavior is unacceptable because it disturbs everyone.

Belinda emphasizes that under no circumstances should the teacher ever name the student who reported the other students. She explains:

Like don't say, "Don't bug her because this, this, and this." Say instructions in class like, "You're disturbing the class;" instead of saying, "Stop bugging Belinda." Otherwise you'll get picked on worse and stuff.

Zarzour (1994) supports Belinda's recommendations. She states, "Children need to be impressed with the importance of telling an adult, with the guarantee that their identity will be protected if they do" (p. 92) and that they "should also be aware of the victim's very real fear of revenge" (p. 141). The participants also suggest that it is best if teachers do not praise students like themselves in front of peers because then they might be thought of as being a "teacher's pet" and be tormented even more.

Schools in which the grade range is from eight to twelve are preferred by the participants over junior secondary or middle schools. They suggest that the presence of more mature students helps to tone down the behavior of the younger ones; and that the older ones also monitor the type of abuse that the students in the earlier grades afflict upon their peers. They recommend that teachers of elementary, middle, and junior high schools increase their lunch time monitoring, particularly in the halls and on the school grounds. Stones (1993) points out that some of the most violent cases of peer abuse have happened when adults were not there to supervise (p. 73). Zarzour (1994) suggests, "Adults on yard duty should be aware of the bullying

hot spots, be able to detect subtle, covert bully problems and be trained to deal with them" (p. 135). The adolescents like lunch hours that have some kind of activity going on because they find this makes the time pass faster. Zarzour believes that conflict between peers can be reduced by giving students more to do during their breaks. The participants also support the idea of having a designated room where people like them can choose to go to at lunch and know that they will be safe. Carolyn explains:

It would have helped immensely if they had a place for us go instead of out there. I think that you wouldn't call it anything. You wouldn't even announce it. The students that it would apply to would just go there. Preferably it would be one of the rooms upstairs where no one would know about it.

Peers

When I ask the participants, "What would make a difference to their lives?" their single word reply is, "Friends." They state that the most welcome change would be if they had someone their own age who they could do things with and who would invite them to go places. When I inquire about what kind of person they would like to have as a friend, they tell me that they would like someone who is caring, friendly, trustworthy, does not talk all the time so that they get an opportunity to say something, and who has a sense of humor. The last trait in this list is interesting because Hymel, Bowker, and Woody (1993) state that sociometric studies have found that socially neglected children do not possess a sense of humor. In addition,

Parkhurst and Asher (1992) suggest that a lack of sense of humor and ability to take a joke are predictors of low status for teenagers. However, most of the participants have a sense of humor and are able to take a joke, poke fun at themselves, and make statements that are witty or amusing.

The participants are not particularly optimistic that someone will offer them their friendship. They do not blame the teenagers at Chamberlain Secondary School for their isolation. They suggest that it would just never occur to their peers to include them in their conversations, invite them to parties, or to ask them to join them for their lunch hour or leisure time activities. As Belinda so aptly points out, "If you don't go look for people, they don't really come to you."

It is likely that parents and teachers could have made a difference to the participants' lives while they were in elementary school by providing them with a source of support--the "something more" that the students in my study were looking for. Rigby (1998) suggests that whatever action or non-action is taken, it is important that children should feel that they have been taken seriously. It is crucial that we listen carefully and respectfully to what socially neglected students have to say about their world.

Future Research Recommendations

The advantage of an ethnographic approach to my inquiry on peer social neglect is that the themes that emerged were generated from the participants' perspective and not from any preconceived ideas or hypotheses.

While my six research questions helped to give structure to the inquiry, it was the teenagers who decided which path each interview would take. If I had entered the research field with preconceived notions of what it is like to be a socially neglected adolescent or had students complete questionnaires rather than be invited to have conversations with me, I would not have formed the same kind of relationships with the participants nor would I have gathered the kind of data that I did. The participants knew that I genuinely wanted to get to know them and to understand what high school is like for them. As Cusick (1973) suggests, "The greater degree of intimacy the researcher achieves, the greater his accuracy" (p. 232).

The bulk of the data was collected from interviews and casual conversations with the participants as well as from my observations of them. However, the fact that parents and teachers became such an integral theme in the inquiry suggests that perhaps they should be included in future studies. Berndt (1983) notes that the links between children's relationships with their parents and other significant adults and the ones that they have with their peers are potentially complex, and suggests "they deserve far more attention than they have yet received" (p. 447). Interviews with adults would provide a different perspective on the adolescents, and they may answer questions that arose from my study. For example, why did the parents not contact an administrator, teacher, or the other parents to discuss their children's problems with peers? Why does it appear to the socially neglected students in my study that their teachers are indifferent to their needs and are not

particularly supportive towards them? It is important to point out though that if adults are involved, the participants may not respond or cooperate to the same degree because of the influences that their parents and/or teachers have on them. This factor could possibly affect what students reveal and how they behave in classrooms and thus skew the data. I do not recommend including peer interviews because I believe that it is ethically unsound to identify children and discuss specifics about them with other children. Studying the participants in different social contexts, especially those who are involved in outside activities, might also provide new insight. However, the adolescents in my study, except for Belinda, spend the majority of their leisure times in their bedrooms; and therefore, this viewpoint would not have been particularly productive for this inquiry. There is also a need for longitudinal research studies to ascertain how the perceptions and experiences of being a socially neglected student affects a young person's life once they leave their secondary school.

The focus that I used to analyze the data on peer social neglect was a non-gender specific one, so I am unable to suggest how societal gender conceptions may impact participants' understanding and experiences of social neglect. However, a gender focus should be considered in future studies. There is a lack of investigation on gender differences in the behavioral profiles of sociometric groups (Hatzichristou & Hopf, 1996); and there is a paucity of research on low social status females, particular socially neglected ones. The vast majority of researchers have focused on the rejected category

and their participants have been elementary male students (Cohen, 1979; French, 1989; Rubin, Hymel, & Mills, 1989; Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; Hymel, Bowker, & Woody, 1993; Steinberg, 1999). French (1989) states, "We know very little about the characteristics of girls who experience difficulties with peer relationship" (p. 2028). Steinberg (1999) indicates that a possible explanation for the predominately male focus is that boys usually exhibit more overt aggression than girls, and that this characterization may have led researchers to examine the social relationships of boys rather than girls (p. 178). His explanation suggests that not only have studies on peer isolation focused on males, but that they have typically focused on rejected children rather than on neglected ones who "have been observed to be much less aggressive than all other children" (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990, p. 52).

Even though the participants' comments on sexuality are limited, they indicate that we need to attempt to understand how a socially neglected teenager's sexuality and their perception of it impacts him or her. For example, why was it important for each participant to let me know that they were heterosexual or wanted to be thought of as one? Coleman and Hendry (1999) suggest that "while it is undoubtedly true that there have been significant changes in attitude among professional adults, there is still an enormous degree of stigma associated with homosexuality, especially among young people themselves" (p. 110). We also need to research how a lack of peer relationships may influence a socially neglected teenager's sexual behavior and their interactions with people whom they are sexually attracted

to. As Steinberg (1999) points out, it is "the adolescent's peer group that generally plays the central role in socializing youngsters in appropriate sexual behavior and in developing the capacity for intimate friendship" (p. 180).

The participants' statements that they find it difficult to tolerate different types or levels of noise could be significant and worth further study. Future research may want to examine whether their intolerance contributes to how they approach and structure their lives at school as well as at home. For example, how does their inability to endure talking or noise influence their course selections, such as language or industrial education courses; their reactions to different types of teachers and classrooms; and their choice of where they spend their lunch hours and what they do for their leisure activities? In addition to the preceding questions, another worthwhile point to investigate would be the participants' belief that talking and other kinds of noise have had an impact on their scholastic achievements. As Peter points out, "I try to block my awareness of the class out. The talking distracts me and I find it hard to concentrate. It's certainly brought down my marks." If findings from such research should support their belief in this regard, then different pedagogical approaches to learning and to writing examinations may have to be contemplated.

Throughout the study, I was concerned whether my inquiry would cause the participants to be even more aware of how isolated they are and thus be detrimental to them. I wondered if there was a less intrusive approach that I could suggest when I wrote about my recommendations for

future research. Near the completion of the study, I took my concerns to the participants, who told me that they enjoyed the opportunity to talk about themselves. Some of them also said that they found the interviews were personally helpful. For example, Peter says, "For me, the earlier the better;" while some replied that they did not find them particularly helpful, but believed that others might. As Carolyn points out, "If they're already like that, then it is not going to hurt them any more to talk about it. It could even help some of them." One of the teachers at Chamberlain Secondary, who identifies her social status with her colleagues as being similar to the one that the participants have with their peers, tells me on my last day at the school, "You made my year a lot easier to bear. You listened to me." She also remarks that the teenagers in my study would most likely feel that I was the one person who was truly interested in them and who gave them my sole attention.

Conclusion

My ethnographic research approach was instrumental in helping me to understand how the eight participants in my study perceive their lifeworlds. Cusick says, "If we are to have any understanding of what individuals make of their lives, then we have to make a genuine attempt to see and understand their world as they see and understand it" (p. 4). The methodology allowed me to interact, communicate, and observe socially neglected adolescents in a variety of situations at different times of the day, days of the week, and

seasons. It gave me an opportunity to listen to the tone of their voices, hear the nuances, the sighs, the chuckles, and the silences as I transcribed each word of their conversations with me. As I read and analyzed the transcribed data from the interviews as well as from the rest of the data that I gathered from conversations with other people and from my observations, I was granted yet another glimpse into their lives.

The participants' stories and my analysis of the data indicates conclusively that there is a dire need for more research on adolescents who are socially neglected. For the most part, studies on peer acceptance in school settings have been conducted on elementary children and have utilized quantitative research methods. The majority of these studies do not distinguish between "socially neglected" and "socially rejected" children. However, the few that do were instrumental in providing a base to my own understanding of the behavior of socially neglected students and on the differences between them and socially rejected students. The qualitative studies that I drew from did not focus specifically on peer social neglect, but their research on social life in schools and their findings on students who are loners, isolated, or unpopular contributed a great deal to my knowledge of peer social status.

My symbolic interactionist theoretical approach to the inquiry forced me to examine the data repeatedly and in various ways for signs that "support the possibility of individual will and action" (Deegan, 1987, p. 13). Without this type of theoretical approach, I would not have kept "digging" at the data

until I had reached a deeper understanding of the participants. I now believe that the participants' detachment and disengagement from peers, family members, and teachers and the fact that they perceive themselves as the opposite to how they perceive popular students are not evidence that they have given up, but rather are signals of despair. The reason the participants keep pushing the boundaries of their isolation is because they believe that eventually a point will be reached where it will be impossible for people not to notice their detachment. Orenstein (1994) says that when adults are unwilling to confront the pain that their children are experiencing, then the youngsters' effort to get their attention will escalate (p. 82). The recent comments of peers and adults that there is something frightening about the participants may indicate that some of the adolescents' passive signals are evolving to ones that others will notice. This is an optimistic sign as it demonstrates a growing will on the part of the participants to stop denying their feelings and instead to allow them to rise to the surface and be seen by others. However, I am concerned with the actions that these rising emotions may evoke in the participants as well as in others. I must admit that at times I also experienced some feelings of uneasiness or even alarm when I was with the participants, especially when they admitted to feeling "dead like;" having trouble determining what is reality and what is a dream; and when our discussion veered towards the subject of violence and their comments alluded to hurting themselves or to taking their revenge out on others.

Using a symbolic interactionist theoretical approach to my study also exposed me to participants' perceptions and experiences that I would not have thought of examining. As Fielding (1993) points out, interactionists "assume that no fixed sequence of questions is suitable to all respondents, and allow respondents to raise considerations that the interviewer has not thought of" (p. 151). For example, the six research questions that I went into this study with did not focus on the participants' elementary school experiences. However, the findings from my inquiry suggest that these early school experiences have had a considerable impact on their perceptions and approach to their lifeworlds.

Denzin (1994) suggests that interactionists cannot make sense of what they have learned until they write their "interpretive text, telling the story first to themselves and then to their significant others, and then to the public" (p. 502). His suggestion is certainly true in regards to my study--as I wrote, I learnt; but the insight that I gained about peer social neglect made it necessary for me to re-write, and so it went. It is through these multiple approaches to writing the stories of the participants and to my understanding of the data that the voices of the participants began to be heard and their presence felt.

The participants do not look forward to the time when they will no longer be attending Chamberlain Secondary even though they find being isolated from their peers both painful and difficult. They find the majority of their days at Chamberlain to be boring and the routine of many of their

courses to be monotonous, but they say that going to school helps "make the day go faster;" and they are more lonely out of school than while in it.

Merkin (2001) writes about a woman in a psychiatric ward who, like the participants, has no desire to leave because she likes being taken care of, even if it is in a peremptory and impersonal manner, and because she feels secure within the cloistered atmosphere. Merkin asks:

Was it possible to be so fiercely needy, so passive on your own behalf, that you would want to tarry forever? That you would want to make the unit, with its harsh fluorescent lights and endless expanse of waxed linoleum, its tasteless food and unchanging days, your home? (p. 35).

Chamberlain Secondary School, like the institution described above, is a physically bleak place. As I point out in my discussion of the environment of the research setting, the dominant colour throughout the school as well as outside of it is gray. However, course requirements gives the participants some purpose to their days and teacher controlled classrooms provide them with a sense of security. And, as members of the student body, there is a feeling of belonging to something and to somebody.

The question I was frequently asked, "What will happen to them?" whenever I discussed my study, was usually followed by, "I bet it gets better. They'll go to university or get a job and then they'll meet people." Perhaps these predictions are wishful thinking on the part of the people who said them. Socially neglected students are not seen to be as at-risk and in need of intervention as socially rejected ones (Asher, 1983; Coie & Dodge, 1983; Terry

& Coie, 1991) because their status is associated with lack of social involvement but not with overtly deviant behavior (Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990). Or, as Orenstein (1994) puts it, they have made the decision of "opting out rather than acting out" (p. 81). However, I unequivocally believe that this at-risk assumption needs to be re-addressed and that there is a potential for socially neglected students to harm either themselves or others if ignored.

I do not know what will become of Richard, Peter, Mike, Carolyn, Susan, Belinda, Karen, or Roger. What is of utmost importance to them now is surviving the present. Richard says:

Ones like me, there's not a whole lot you can do. Right. They just need friends and stuff like that. Well they say that friends will eventually come and then they will come out of the hole. As long as they get past the suicide stage. Right. If they can hold on through that, they should be fine once they start making friends again. I'll improve myself or I won't improve. Or I might just unimprove. Go back to the way I was. If I went back to the way I was and I kept digressing, then I would probably end up committing suicide or something.

My attempt to understand how socially neglected adolescents interpret and structure their lifeworlds is a step towards having "a whole lot that we can do."

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Appendix A: Research Request Letter--School District

Date

District Superintendent of Schools
 School District
 Postal Address

Dear (Name of District Superintendent):

Re: Ph.D. Research Request

I would like to conduct a research study on adolescent peer interactions in one of the secondary schools in School District #XX. The study will be undertaken as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. It has received approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee. I would like to begin the research in November 1999 and conduct it over a period of six months.

There is a paucity of research on adolescent peer interactions, and it is especially scarce in the area of peer social neglect. The focus of my study is on how socially neglected adolescents make sense of their interactions and experiences with peers in a secondary school setting. I believe that my research findings will provide a deeper understanding of how these adolescents construct their reality and develop their own explanations for their experiences with peers. My study will also attempt to determine whether there are different sub-groups of socially neglected adolescents. I propose that this research is vital to determine whether intervention is needed, and if it is, what strategies or techniques would be beneficial to each individual.

My ethnographic research focuses on examining perspectives and behavior from the point of view of students in a secondary school setting. The study is divided into two parts:

Part One I will make contact with the school principal and arrange to speak to staff to describe my research and to gain their understanding of my role and place in their school. I will attempt to understand how different factors, such as the school's organization structure, curriculum, students, administrators, teachers, support staff, geographical location, and physical structure may impact or influence adolescents and their interactions with peers. During this part of the study, I plan to sit in on classes and attend athletic activities, fund raising events, staff meetings, school counsel meetings, student club meetings, etc. in order to observe students' interactions and to engage in casual conversations with them. I hope to also speak with students during their lunch hours, before and after school, and during their spare blocks.

I have enclosed a copy of the consent form that I will use during this part of the study (Enclosure One). The form states that the person is being asked to participate in the part of the study that investigates the community of the school and how adolescents spend their time at school. The form identifies who I am; what university I am affiliated with; the intent of my study; that participation is voluntary; that participation will not affect a student's grades; that data will not be shared with teachers or administrators; and that the participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time and may decline from answering any question. Confidentiality and anonymity is assured and pseudonyms will

be given to participants, the school, the community, as well as all locations and landmarks. I understand that the decision of who to converse with and what classes or meetings to attend will be dependent on invitations or affirmative responses to my requests to participate, observe, or question. Data will be recorded in shorthand or by an audio tape recorder, stored in a locked cabinet, and destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Part Two While Part One will further my knowledge of adolescents and their interactions, it is important to point out that my understanding of adolescents is already quite extensive. I have been a teacher of adolescents for ten years, taught courses for experienced teachers of adolescents at the University of Victoria, been a practicum supervisor, conducted previous research studies on adolescents, am very familiar with current literature on adolescents, and am a parent of two adolescents.

My observations and conversations during Part One will give me a solid base of understanding of the school's community and its members. In addition, it will also offer me an opportunity to observe and converse with students, who may be socially neglected. In Part Two I will continue my conversations with students. However, if a student discloses that they do not have close friendships with peers at the school and displays socially neglected traits, then I will discuss Part Two of my study and indicate to that individual that they may wish to volunteer to be a participant.

A copy of the consent form that I will use during this part of the study (Enclosure Two) is attached to this application. Consent Forms One and Two are similar except that the second form states that the student has volunteered to participate in the part of the study that investigates how socially neglected adolescents make sense of their interactions and experiences with peers in a secondary school setting. During this part of the study, volunteers will be asked for their permission to accompany them through their school day, to keep a journal of their experiences and feelings and to possibly share their journals with me, as well as to participate in approximately four to six interviews. The interviews will be prearranged; conducted before school, at lunch hour, or after school; will be 30 to 45 minutes in duration; and will take place in a location, such as an unoccupied room that will ensure privacy. The interviews will be audio recorded. The interview questions are:

1. How do you perceive yourself? (i.e. What kind of person are you?)
2. How do you perceive your peers?
3. How do you think your peers view you?
4. How do your peers interact with you? (i.e. How do they converse with you?)
5. How do you respond to your peers?
6. How do your interactions with peers affect you?

I look forward to being given an opportunity to discuss my study with you. I may be contacted at the above address, by telephone at 721-6349, or by email at paulaf@uvic.ca. My graduate supervisor, Dr. Alison Preece, may be reached at 721-7831 or (250) 629-3966 or by email at apreece@uvic.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Paula FitzGibbon
Doctoral Candidate

Enclosure (2)

Appendix B: Interview Consent Form--Member of School Community

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a research study entitled "Adolescent Peer Interactions in a Secondary School Setting" that is being conducted by graduate student, Paula FitzGibbon, as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree, Faculty of Education, University of Victoria. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Paula FitzGibbon by telephone at 721-6349 or by email at paulaf@uvic.ca. Her graduate supervisor, Dr. Alison Preece, may be contacted at 721-7831 or by email at apreece@uvic.ca.

The purpose of the study is to examine how adolescents make sense of their interactions and experiences with peers in a secondary school setting. You are being asked to participate in the part of the study that investigates the community of the school and on how adolescents spend their time at school. If you agree to participate, you will be asked respond to questions, such as: "How is your day going?" "How do you spend your time after school?" "How do you spend your lunch hours?" The interviews will be conducted by Paula FitzGibbon. They will take place in settings such as school hallways, school grounds, and lunch rooms; will be conducted before school, at lunch hour, or after school; and will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The interviews will be recorded in shorthand or by an audio recorder and will be transcribed on a computer with a word processing program.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to refuse to participate, to withdraw from it, or to refuse to answer certain questions, without any negative consequences. In the event that you withdraw from the study, your data will not be used in the project and will be destroyed.

Your anonymity and confidentiality in this study will be protected by:

- Pseudonyms (fictitious names) will be given to participants and these names will be used in transcribing all materials and in the final writing of the study. The choice of pseudonyms will provide no obvious link to individuals. In some cases, more than one pseudonym will be given to a participant if the compounded information might contribute to the disclosure of their identity.
- Pseudonyms will be given to the school and to the community as well as to all locations/landmarks.
- The master list linking names and pseudonyms will be safeguarded in a locked file cabinet, and only the principal investigator will have access to the list. One computer will be used throughout study and only the principal investigator has access to it.
- Audio tapes, field notes, and transcribed data will be safeguarded in a locked file cabinet.
- The interviewer will regard all interviews, meetings, and oral or written exchanges as confidential. Data will not be shared with teachers or administrators.
- Participation will not affect school grades.
- The data from your interviews and/or copies of the transcript will be available to you for perusal and may be changed, deleted, or added to in order to assure interviewee's intent and clarity.
- All raw data (including audio tapes, field notes, master list, and manually recorded interviews) will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

The results of this study will be prepared for presentation at Paula FitzGibbon's dissertation defense meeting with her supervisors, Dr. Alison Preece and Dr. Jane Gaskell; her committee members, Dr. Sibylle Artz and Dr. Ted Riecken; and her external examiner, who has not been selected at this time. In addition, copies of the study will be offered to the school and participants, and given to the McPherson Library as well as to the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria.

Having understood the above information and been given an opportunity to have my questions answered, I agree to participate in this study:

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form--Socially Neglected Participant

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a study entitled "Adolescent Peer Interactions in a Secondary School Setting" that is being conducted by graduate student, Paula FitzGibbon, as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree, Faculty of Education, University of Victoria. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Paula FitzGibbon by telephone at 721-6349 or by email at paulaf@uvic.ca. Her graduate supervisor, Dr. Alison Preece, may be contacted at 721-7831 or by email at apreece@uvic.ca.

The purpose of this study is to examine how socially neglected adolescents make sense of their interactions and experiences with peers in a secondary school setting. If you volunteer, you may be asked to permit Paula FitzGibbon to follow you throughout your school day, to keep a journal of your experiences and feelings and to possibly share them with her, as well as to participate in approximately four to six interviews. The interviews will be conducted by Paula FitzGibbon. The interview questions will focus on your perceptions of yourself and your peers as well as your responses and interactions with them. The interviews will be prearranged; conducted before school, at lunch hour, or after school; will be approximately 30 to 45 minutes in duration; and will take place in a location, such as an unoccupied room, that will ensure privacy. The interviews will be audio recorded and will be transcribed on a computer with a word processing program.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to refuse to participate, to withdraw from it, or to refuse to answer certain questions, without any negative consequences. In the event that you withdraw from the study, your data will not be used in the project and will be destroyed.

Your anonymity and confidentiality in this study will be protected by:

- Pseudonyms (fictitious names) will be given to participants and these names will be used in transcribing all materials and in the final writing of the study. The choice of pseudonyms will provide no obvious link to individuals. In some cases, more than one pseudonym will be given to a participant if the compounded information might contribute to the disclosure of their identity.
- Pseudonyms will be given to the school and to the community as well as to all locations/landmarks.
- The master list linking names and pseudonyms will be safeguarded in a locked file cabinet, and only the principal investigator will have access to the list. One computer will be used throughout study and only the principal investigator has access to it.
- Audio tapes, field notes, and transcribed data will be safeguarded in a locked file cabinet.
- The interviewer will regard all interviews, meetings, and oral or written exchanges as confidential. Data will not be shared with teachers or administrators.
- Participation will not affect school grades.
- The data from your interviews and/or copies of the transcript will be available to you for perusal and may be changed, deleted, or added to in order to assure interviewee's intent and clarity.
- All raw data (including audio tapes, field notes, master list, and manually recorded interviews) will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

The results of this study will be prepared for presentation at Paula FitzGibbon's dissertation defense meeting with her supervisors, Dr. Alison Preece and Dr. Jane Gaskell; her committee members, Dr. Sibylle Artz and Dr. Ted Riecken; and her external examiner, who has not been selected at this time. In addition, copies of the study will be offered to the school and participants, and given to the McPherson Library as well as to the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria.

Having understood the above information and been given an opportunity to have my questions answered, I agree to participate in this study:

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____