

THE LIFE WORLDS AND PRACTICES OF VIOLENT SCHOOL GIRLS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the life worlds and practices of violent school girls. After showing that violence among adolescent school girls is on the rise in Canadian schools and establishing that virtually no literature currently exists which addresses the participation of school girls in violence, the author undertook an ethnographic key informant study which had a twofold purpose: (1) contributing towards filling the gap in the literature on violence and girls, and (2) formulating an understanding of the participation of school girls in violence. Attached to this second purpose was the intention that data gathered should be also be useful to the design and implementation of programs and interventions which have the power to reach violent girls and help them to stop participating in violence.

Six girls aged fourteen to sixteen years participated in this year long study along with their parents, primarily their mothers, and their educators and counsellors. Each participant has been both a victim and an assailant. Four of the six had been sexually abused, one by her brother, three by non family members they knew and trusted.

The central findings of the study are that: (1) all six girls come from families in which violence is a regular part of every day life; (2) within these families and also within the social world in which the key informants live, girls and women are devalued and oppressed as a matter of course, and (3) violence in all its forms is justified by the assailants on the grounds that the victim caused the assailant to attack the victim thus making violence necessary. In most but not all cases, the key informants beat up other girls primarily because they saw these girls as threatening their relationships with males. On occasion, they also engaged in physical battles with other girls and sometimes boys, in order to defend their status and uphold their reputations. Chiefly they felt justified in attacking other girls if they believed that these girls "deserved" to be beaten because they were sexually provocative or promiscuous and could therefore be construed as "sluts". They also felt justified in attacking those who attempted to attach this label to them. All six key informants struggle with notions of self which are for the most part, negative and grounded in an acceptance of the belief that women achieve their greatest importance when they command the attention of men. All are striving to be recognised and respected. If prosocial means for achieving this are seen as closed to them, they are willing to use antisocial means to achieve their ends.

It is suggested here, that if we are to help violent girls choose other means of settling disputes and achieving social standing and significance, we must find ways to help them see themselves and other girls and women as having worth and importance in their own right, separately from standards set for them by the males who dominate their life worlds. We must work with violent girls to help them to change their notions that those who

displease them are morally and causally responsible for the beatings they mete out to them. We must recognise that their own abuse histories come into play in any change process and must address their recovery issues and we must find the means to allow them to experience respect, positive attention and connectedness to others. Otherwise we can expect them to continue to use violence and the other antisocial approaches they are currently using as tools for survival.

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CHAPTER ONE -- INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

We must say in all honesty that the research scholar in the social sciences who undertakes to study a given sphere of social life that he does not know first hand will fashion a picture of that sphere in terms of pre-established images (Herbert Blumer, 1969, p. 36).

Situating the Inquiry

I initially became interested in conducting this inquiry into violence among adolescent school girls while working as a consultant for a local school district, which I have been doing since the fall of 1990. While conducting workshops on learning and teaching styles, I was struck by the number of times that teachers brought violence in schools into our discussions.

As time went on, more and more teachers began to talk about an increase in aggressive and violent behaviour. Teachers and school board personnel, some of who were also attending the workshops, were reporting gang fighting, drug use, vigilantism and extortion among students, along with what they described as a definite increase in intimidating behaviour towards adults.

While educators and administrators grappled with these difficulties on the front lines, the local press was also reporting incidents of violence involving adolescents. According to newspaper articles, students in local schools are carrying weapons (mostly knives, but in one case a starter pistol). They are ganging up on one another in order to steal coveted clothing (in one case a baseball cap, in other cases brand name sneakers and jackets bearing the emblems of professional sports teams). They are also involved in crime in greater numbers than previously reported (Times Colonist, February 28, March 21, April 13, 1993). For a time, banner headlines were feeding the

notion that violence among adolescents in our community is reaching crisis proportions.

The teachers I had contact with, while not suggesting that a crisis was imminent, were never-the-less visibly alarmed. Task forces were called together and effective modes of intervention were sought. Because of my involvement with the district and my connection to the field of Child and Youth Care, my opinion was also asked. What struck me at that time, was that I knew no more about the problem than anyone else did, and that we all knew only what we had either heard, or in some cases personally witnessed. No one had an overall grasp of the problem, although everyone had in one way or another been touched by it.

My response to the situation was to ask for more information and to suggest that intervention might be premature if none of us actually understood the problem of school-based adolescent violence or the conditions which were contributing to what appeared to be rapid increase in the incidence and of such behaviour. Because of my suggestion, I was invited to research the nature and incidence of the violence in order to provide a realistic and concrete understanding of the extent of the problem in the junior secondary schools where most of this was and still is taking place. When I began this process by holding a series of meetings with the district's Director of Instruction, it became clear that not only were we talking about violence among the student body in a general sense, we were also talking about a very particular group of perpetrators--female adolescents. Girls, who typically have very low involvement in violent behaviour and who are most often seen as the victims of violence rather than those who carry it out (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992), were being reported as participating in every kind of aggressive act that had been described.

As I worked towards formulating my inquiry, I felt pulled in two directions. On the one hand, I felt some urgency with regard to what was emerging as a serious and escalating problem, and I wanted to do what I could to assist school personnel with the design and implementation of well-grounded intervention and prevention programs. On the other hand, I felt hesitant about leaping into intervention without first learning what I could about how other concerned researchers and field workers had approached the problem. I was also interested in understanding the way in which violence was being enacted at a local level and how the girls themselves made sense of their participation in violence. I handled my dilemma by turning first to existing literature on the topic in order to inform myself of current thinking and current trends, and to help me choose the kind of research design which would assist me with gaining insight into the life worlds and practices of others. As I turned to existing research, I discovered the following:

An Overview of Recent Views of Violence in Schools

In Canada and the United States, youth violence, and violence in schools have been the object of intense media attention in recent years. This topic has been widely discussed in newspapers, magazines, learned journals and books and displayed on television (both commercial and public) and debated on radio talk shows, as well being made the focus of academic and community conferences. On a purely personal note, since entering into the fray and announcing myself as a scholar in the field of adolescent females and violence in schools in September of 1993, I have been interviewed for radio four times, written about in the newspaper four times and been the subject of two journal articles. I have also been invited to participate in ten conferences, given presentations at six schools, and attended an eleventh conference at which I did not speak. Youth violence is "hot," and it appears to be

commonly accepted as fact that youth violence, and violence in schools is on the rise at an unprecedented rate, and that this violence is more intense, vicious and deadly than ever before.

In an article entitled *It's a Jungle Out There*, (Hamilton, 1993) the author states categorically that "few young people today have not experienced some form of violence either first-hand or involving a friend. Bullying, sexual assault, and violent incidents involving children and teens are happening more and more frequently across Canada, in big cities and small towns, in parks and shopping centers, in private and public schools" (p.A2). She supports her assertion with data from Statistics Canada and an Ontario Teachers Federation survey conducted in 1991. Bibby and Posterski (1992), suggest in their *Teen Trends* report on Canadian youth, that talking with educators convinced them "that violence in the school environment is increasing" (p. 228). In their report on *Student Perceptions of Violence*, conducted in two southern Ontario school districts, Ryan, Mathews and Banner (1993), state that, "There can be little doubt that we have a problem with violence in schools in this country." In his descriptive study entitled *Youth Gangs on Youth Gangs*, a study of in gangs in Metropolitan Toronto and southern Ontario, Mathews (1994), points out that "at a minimum, there has been an increase over the past few years in the level of violence used by youth, particularly gangs/groups and especially in or around schools" (p. 9). The British Columbia Teachers' Federation *Task Force on Violence in Schools Final Report* (January 1994) states that "Teachers are observing and experiencing an increase in aggression among their students" (p. 3). American educators agree with their Canadian counterparts. In an article entitled *The Violence at Your Door*, which distils the findings of their national survey of school executives, Boothe, Bradley, Flick, Keough and Kirk

(1993) state that "violence has increased markedly in US. public schools in the last five years" (p. 16).

Emerging trends

Sources consulted report the following:

From *It's a Jungle Out There* (Hamilton, 1993, p. A2)

- Statistics from 13 police departments across Canada show that the number of youths charged with violent crimes has increased 34% in the past four years [1988-92].

From *Teen Trends* (Bibby and Posterski, 1992, p. 228)

- When today's teens were asked if they knew anyone who had been the subject to an attack of violence, apart from what they had read in the paper or seen on TV, the percentages were as follows:

Physically attacked at school	45%
Victim of gang violence	35%
Physically abused at home	42%
Sexually abused	39%

From *Student Perceptions of Violence*, (Banner, Mathews & Ryan, 1993, pp. 105-108).

Students participating in a survey of student perceptions and self-reported participation rates of violence in two southern Ontario schools suggest that:

- Depending on the school, between 60% and 82% of students did not feel safe at school.
- There were no remarkable differences between male and female perceptions of violence.
- More than 8 out of 10 students [in both schools] had been exposed to violence.
- Overall, males and females reported similar rates of victimisation.
- [However,] male students reported that they were more likely to be the victims of physically violent crimes [that is, beatings] while female students reported that they were more likely to be victims of sexual assault and less physically violent crimes [such as threats, intimidation and bullying].

- The three most common [violent] offences students reported committing in both schools were verbally harassing/bullying someone, threatening someone or beating up a fellow student.
- [According to the researchers,] the extent of female-perpetrated violence was a surprise finding in the study. In one school, female students reported that they were as likely as male students to rob another student... and more likely than male students to threaten or hurt someone with a weapon. [In another school,] older females (grade 9) were more likely than males, to be perpetrators of most categories of violent offences with the exception of sexual violence.

From *Youth Gangs on Youth Gangs* (Mathews, 1994, pp. 9-10)

Trends that appear to be emerging in Metropolitan Toronto and southern Ontario are:

- Youth involved in violence are getting younger with students in grades 1 and 2 getting involved in violent activity.
- There is evidence of the presence of guns and gun replicas in school violence.
- There is a reported increase in verbal and physical insults on teachers and in vandalism of teachers' cars and other property.
- Individual school yard bullies are being replaced by groups of youth who commit assaults, thefts and swarmings.
- extortion and drug dealing are becoming routine in some schools in some communities.
- Intruders have become a serious problem for many schools.
- Girls are becoming more directly involved in assault and the use of weapons, as individuals and in groups or gangs, though most attacks are against other individual girls or groups of girls.

From the British Columbia Teachers' Federation *Task Force on Violence in Schools Final Report* (1994, pp. 5-6)

Trends that appear to be emerging in British Columbia schools are:

- Students appear to be aggressive at a younger age with teachers reporting biting, kicking or punching of teachers and fellow students and the use of extremely violent language among students as young as age five.
- Violence among students appears to be more severe [i.e., teachers are reporting the perception that violence is more severe in that this appears to be so to them]. Students appear to be resorting to violence much more quickly. One-to-one fighting appears to be giving way to

group attacks and ganging up on individuals appears to be on the increase. The "end points" in fighting appear to be changing in that the fighting continues even after the victim is down. Random acts of violence appear to be on the increase.

- Weapons appear to be more common, with knives and razors being the weapon of choice.
- Verbal abuse appears to be on the increase and respect for authority appears to be on the decrease.
- Teachers report noticing adolescent females as perpetrators of intimidation, harassment and physical assault.

From *The Violence at Your Door* (Boothe, Bradley, Flick, Keough & Kirk, 1993, pp. 18-22)

According to a survey of school administrators in the United States conducted in 1993 and asking about trends in the last five years,

- Nearly half (46%) of the school executives who responded to the survey reported that the number of acts of violence committed by students has grown.
- Two thirds predicted an increase in school violence during the next two years.
- Fifty-four percent of middle school principals and fifty-six percent of elementary school principals acknowledged an increase in the number of violent acts in their schools or districts compared with five years ago.
- The highest rates of increased acts of school violence reported were among girls fighting.

Each of the sources consulted supported the notion that violence in schools has increased over the past few years. Four of them specifically mentioned an increase in violence among girls. While the reported increase in violence overall has made violence in schools a "hot" topic, the involvement of females has made it even hotter.

Females and Violence in Schools

"Hot" topics usually generate a great deal of literature, therefore, an extensive literature search was undertaken in order to investigate this topic further. With regard to girls and violence in schools however, little was found. Using computerised data bases (ERIC, Sociofile, Psychlits and Social

Work Abstracts) as resources, and choosing "female, school, violence," and "female, delinquency, violence and aggression" and "female, development, aggression and violence" as key words and going back twelve years to 1982, 202 articles were found. Of these, 68 were judged to be relevant to the study of school life and gender because they focused on girls as perpetrators rather than as victims. However, of these 68, none actually concerned themselves specifically with girls who are violent in schools. The vast majority of the articles focused on female delinquency outside schools, and took up their study of females when they were already for the most part, lost to the regular school system. In the school based literature on violence, girls seem to be largely absent.

Further attempts were made to uncover literature on violent girls within recently published material on violence in schools, but other than the articles mentioned above, which indicated that females were also participants in violence in schools, nothing was found. In fact, a major trend in the literature for both males and females and violence in schools was not to research the violence in order to better understand it, but rather to offer prescriptions against it. For example, in their handbook *Leading the Way to Violence-Free Schools* (October 1993) the British Columbia School Trustees Association/British Columbia Teachers' Federation provide 64 articles, but only 4 of these are focused on research on violence, while 60 focused on various aspects of prevention and intervention. The 4 research-based articles, plus 2 government publications which were also published in the fall of 1993 in Ontario, were the 6 studies consulted in the Overview and the Emerging Trends sections of this paper. The bibliographies of these six studies were consulted in the hope that they might reveal further sources with regard to girls and violence in schools; they however, offered nothing more.

This absence of literature on girls is not a new phenomenon. It has been investigated and discussed by feminist scholars (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Lyons & Hanmer, 1990; Hancock, 1989) in the field of moral and intellectual development. Yet while much has been written about women since the advent of the women's movement in the 1970's, work which focuses on girls and specifically girls as perpetrators of aggression and violence is limited. Chesney-Lind and Randall Shelden (1992) in their book, *Girls, Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*, the first book devoted solely to the topic of girls and the juvenile justice system published in the United States, state that, "For most people delinquency is an almost exclusively male activity" (p. xi). The authors go on to point out that as a consequence, very little has been written about deviant girls' lives and problems. Where girls are concerned, no matter what the topic, this is generally the case. In Canada, only one book entitled *No Kidding: Inside the World of Teenage Girls*, (Kostash, 1987) has been written about girls and their experiences. While focusing on the unexplored territory of the lives of adolescent girls, this book does not however, discuss aggressive and violent girls or girls and delinquency. As Chesney-Lind and Koroki (1985) point out in a report written for the Youth and Development Research Center at the University of Hawaii:

Female juvenile offenders have traditionally been ignored by those building theories of delinquent behaviour. As a consequence, although there are a large number of books and articles on crime and the criminal justice system, most concern themselves with the male criminal. The unique experience of the female juvenile offender has, until recently, eluded serious examination, and was at best, dealt with as a special category of [male] delinquent behaviour (p. 1).

If one looks outside the field of juvenile delinquency and wishes to inquire into aggression and violence among girls, little has been written. Females are

ignored largely because relative to males, their participation in deviant behaviour, especially aggressive and violent deviant behaviour, is low. Until the rise of feminist scholarship, it was simply taken for granted that theories which explained male deviance* were adequate to explain female deviance. Given the marked lack of literature on this topic, in part, the purpose of this study is to analyse what does exist, identify the gaps and contribute new knowledge to what appears to be a relatively new academic field.

What follows in the next chapter is a synopsis of the literature reviews of theories about female crime and delinquency, produced by Chesney-Lind & Koroki (1985), Ronald M. Berger (1989) and Chesney-Lind & Shelden (1992). These reviews surveyed close to 200 articles, reports and books produced between 1985 and 1991. Other sources were also consulted, notably Warren, (1981) and Flowers, (1990), but for the most part, this synopsis is guided by the work of Chesney-Lind and her associates, and Berger. This chapter also explores the implications of current research on female adolescent crime and delinquency and addresses what can be done with regard to the above identified gap.

* As Flowers, (1990) points out, no uniform definition of adolescent deviance or antisocial behaviour exists. The term is freely used, and rarely defined. A dictionary definition (Oxford, 1995) describes deviance as "deviating from what is accepted as normal or usual" (p.220). Kelly (1993) suggests that all categories of deviance emerge out the interaction between people and depend on the existence of agreed upon laws or mores, the designation or viewing of certain behaviours as violating those laws or mores, and the possibility of enforcement of said laws and mores. As well, the term deviance seems to be interchangeable with the term delinquency, as exemplified by the definition of this term offered in Atwater (1992), which states that delinquency is "socially deviant behaviour by youth under the legal age" (p.429). A final problem compounds the difficulty of providing a definition for deviance/delinquency for minors: their acts can be labelled deviant if they commit criminal acts and if they commit acts that would otherwise be considered legal and acceptable if for adults. In the end, deviance is an elastic term which depends upon prevailing and sometimes loosely agreed upon social trends in an interplay with more tightly codified laws. Even where the law is concerned there is room for interpretation, because distinctions are made in law between status offences and criminal offences. While an adolescent is generally considered delinquent if she or he has been processed in juvenile court, the actual label of delinquent is applied more to those who have been convicted of criminal rather than status offences (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992; Flowers, 1990).

CHAPTER TWO -- A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Prior to the 1970's researchers treated females as marginal to the study of juvenile delinquency. Albert Cohen (1955), for example, well known for his study of male delinquent subcultures, paid only token attention to females, proposing that male delinquency was "versatile," while female delinquency was "specialized" and limited to "sexual crimes" (p. 144). He concluded that girls became delinquent because they were preoccupied with establishing sexual relationships with boys (Berger, 1989, p. 375).

Exploring Theories of Female Crime and Delinquency

Mainstream Theories of Crime and Delinquency

Early theorists of crime and delinquency included Park & Burgess (1925), who studied ecological patterns of crime and delinquency and the effects of social disorganisation and deprivation on crime; Thrasher (1927), who studied juvenile gangs; and Shaw & McKay (1931, 1942), whose work further investigated the effects of social factors on crime and delinquency. While these theorists demonstrated the powerful effects of social disorganization, the breakdown of social conventional structures and social class on crime and delinquency, for the most part, they overlooked females and concentrated on the experiences of males. Focusing on inner city crime, these researchers were able to show that communities which are largely populated by transitory, economically underprivileged people coming from similar ethnic backgrounds and are characterised by a collective inability to make provisions, problem solve and maintain social control through the adequate use of organisations, groups and individuals within those communities, invariably give rise to disproportionately high crime rates. Their work was seminal for others, notably those who developed "strain" theories of delinquency and crime, theories which concentrate on the explanatory power of frustrated social opportunity and its relationship to crime.

Strain theories of crime and delinquency.

Building on Emile Durkheim's (1933) notion of *anomie*, described in Webster (1975) as "lawlessness: a state of society in which normative standards of conduct and belief are weak or lacking," (p. 47), and described by Chesney-Lind & Shelden (1992) as a "breakdown in moral ties, rules, customs, laws and the like that occurs in the wake of rapid social change" (p. 64), strain theorists beginning with Robert Merton (1938), developed theories which "explain juvenile delinquency as a response of adolescents to their lack of socially approved opportunities" (Flowers, 1990, p. 127). Merton, focusing on males, noted that unequal opportunity and limited access to legitimate means for achieving culturally defined male success goals created "strain" or pressures which pushed those who experience this into finding alternate means to achieve these desired ends. Merton postulated five alternate adaptive responses to anomie and strain: (1) becoming a *conformist*, which implied accepting culturally defined success goals and means, (2) becoming an *innovator*, which implied accepting commonly held success goals while replacing socially sanctioned means with deviant means, (3) becoming a *retreatist*, which implied giving up and rejecting both goals and means, (4) becoming a *ritualist*, which implied blindly following the means while rejecting the goals, thus following rules only for rule's sake without attaining the goal, and (5) becoming a *rebel*, which implied redefining success goals in one's own terms and inventing one's own means for attaining them (Chesney-Lind Shelden, 1992; and Flowers, 1990).

Generally, it has been reasoned that the most common adaptive responses used by delinquents are *innovation* expressed through the use of illegal means such as theft, fraud and robbery to achieve material gain; *retreatism*, the flight to drugs and alcohol as a means of escape from

frustration; and *rebellion*, the rejection of conventional authority through aggressive and hostile behaviour (Flowers, 1990).

While Merton's theories may have had explanatory power for males, they do not hold for females, especially in the late twentieth century. Given that it can be argued that females in great numbers now have success goals similar to those of men (Adler, 1975; Morris, 1987; Simon, 1975), and given also that women's opportunities are far more limited than those of men (Faludi, 1991), it would be expected according to Merton, that women would experience more strain than men, and would therefore commit more crime than men. Thus, while it may be true that women experience more strain than men, they are not committing more crime than men.

Theories which followed on Merton's, continued to explore the links between strain, social class and gender and crime and delinquency. Among these are Albert Cohen's (1955) theories of delinquent subculture which saw delinquency as a phenomenon brought about by the inability of lower class males to achieve recognition and success commensurate with the standards set by the dominant middle class.

Central to Cohen's thesis is the notion that problems of adjustment are different for males and females because each individual's behaviour must first of all be in keeping with his or her identity as male or female. Thus females must preserve their frail and dependent state in order to affirm themselves as feminine and as such, are not inclined towards crime and delinquency, while males must preserve their independent and dominant state in order to affirm themselves as masculine, and are therefore, when thwarted, more inclined to delinquency. For Cohen, delinquency is a male solution to a male problem.

...both the respectable middle class pattern [for success, i.e., getting an education and success in the business world] and the delinquent response are characteristically *masculine*. Although they differ dramatically, to be sure, they have something in common. This common element is suggested by the words "achievement," "daring," "active mastery," "pursuit." Every one of these terms has, to be sure, a different twist of emphasis or direction when combined with the different values orientations of the respectable and the delinquent culture...In both cultures however, one measures his manhood by comparing his *performance*, whether it be in stealing, fighting, athletic contests, work or intellectual achievement, against those of his own sex (1955, p. 139).

Cohen suggested that because male members of the lower class were for the most part blocked from ever achieving success as defined by the middle class, they instead inverted middle-class standards, and developed a reactive and rebellious subculture. In redefining the rules for success in a way that made it attainable for them they established themselves as "rogue males," "untrammelled in their masculinity" and therefore free from the domination of others (p.140). Cohen described the values and standards of this subculture as a "short run hedonism" that is "malicious, negativistic and non-utilitarian," but at least left one thing in no doubt, for "however it may be condemned by others on moral grounds, [this behaviour] has at least one virtue: it incontestably confirms, in the eyes of all concerned, his [the rogue male's] essential masculinity" (1955, pp. 139-140).

Cohen's firm claim, that a defence of masculinity is at the bottom of crime and delinquency, leaves little room for the formation of an understanding of female crime and delinquency. This gap in applicability does not appear to have deterred others from continuing to build theory based exclusively upon male experience. Miller (1958) further explored conflict in class standards and values, and argued, much like Cohen, that a lower class male focus on trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate and autonomy ultimately leads to engagement in delinquency and crime. He

further suggested that this is often the outcome of males seeking the company of other males in street corner groups which become gangs. This, Miller (1958) argued, was the result of the absence of fathers in lower class households and the inability of mothers to provide adequate male role models, thus forcing young males to learn male behaviour from their peers.

Cloward & Ohlin (1960), concentrating once more on males and delinquent gangs, elaborated on Miller's (1958) notions and argued that while lower class males indeed had far less opportunity to achieve success through legitimate means and therefore experienced intense frustration, they still had ample access to illegitimate means (especially because of their propensity to congregate in gangs) which they frequently exercised. Like Miller, Cloward & Ohlin suggested that the underlying cause for all this could be found in the absence of males in the life world of the lower class adolescent. Lower class males,

engulfed by a feminine world and uncertain of their own identification,..protest against femininity...in the form of robust aggressive behaviour, and even malicious, irresponsible, and destructive acts. Such acts evoke maternal disapproval and thus come to stand for independence and masculinity to rebellious adolescents" (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960, p. 49, in Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992, p. 67).

Quite apart from the fact that Miller (1958) and Cloward & Ohlin (1960) offer nothing to females and indeed in some ways, seem to hold females responsible for male deviance, they also overlook the fact that while lower class, or more appropriately working class, males are disproportionately represented in index crime statistics, the vast majority of working class males are not before the courts for delinquency and crime. According to Flowers (1990), such theories have also been widely criticised for making the assumption that lower class males automatically wish to adopt middle class norms of material success, and educational and occupational achievement in

the first place, and for overlooking that fact that even those who become gang members for the most part eventually abandon their delinquent lifestyle and lead conventional adult lives.

Differential association theories of crime and delinquency.

Noting that delinquents appear to gather in groups and gangs, and noting also that those who engage in crime appear to have more interaction with others who engage in crime than those who do not, Sutherland (1939) and others (Sutherland and Cressey, 1978) argued that deviant behaviour, like other human behaviour, is learned. Thus, close association with others engaging in such behaviour provides learning opportunities in which the techniques, motives and values which facilitate criminal behaviour are transmitted. According to Flowers (1990) differential association theory suggests that:

the probability of delinquent behaviour varies directly with the priority, frequency, duration, and intensity of a person's contacts with patterns of delinquent behaviour, and inversely with their non deviant contacts. Interaction with anti-social elements tends to take place more often when an individual's perception of their circumstances is supportive to violations of the law...Additionally, the theory contends that delinquency is a social rather than anti-social behavioural pattern. Thus, if most of a juvenile's interaction is with people who frequently violate the law and who express beliefs that seek to justify their behaviour, then the juvenile has a greater chance of becoming delinquent or criminal than one who interacts with persons who do not violate the law or disapprove of such violations (p. 130).

Sutherland, while not confining himself to a study of the lower classes in that he included white collar crime and professional theft in his work, did however focus only on males. Despite this, Sutherland's differential association theories hold some promise with regard to females, given that recent research indicates that females who have frequent contact with deviant females appear to engage in deviant behaviour to a greater degree than those

who do not (Giordano & Cernkovich, 1979). As was pointed out by Giordano, Cernkovich & Pugh (1986; see also Morash, 1986 and Singer & Levine), females who become involved in deviance and delinquency, while still participating at lower rates than males never-the-less

both adopt a set of attitudes in which they [see] delinquency as appropriate, possible, or desirable...and a friendship style in which they... encourage each other as a group to act on these orientations. (p. 1,194, 1988).

Social control theories of crime and delinquency.

Also promising from the point of view of females, are social control theories of crime and delinquency which focus on the capacity of all human beings to engage in deviance and crime (although most researchers who conceptualised them still focused on males as research subjects). For social control theorists, crime and delinquency have less to do with motivation to deviate from the norm and more to do with the presence or absence of conditions favourable to breaking the law. Social control theorists explored personal control or inner containment of deviant urges grounded in a positive self-concept (Reiss, 1951; Reckless, 1961), effective family and other external social controls of deviance grounded in a positive social structure (Nye, 1958; Toby, 1957), and the absence or presence of a social bond (Hirschi, 1969). Both Chesney-Lind and Shelden, and Flowers select Hirschi as offering the most influential of the social control theories largely because his theory that individuals with strong bonds to social institutions like family and school are more likely to have lower rates of crime and delinquency, have been in part borne out not only by Hirschi's own research, but also by that of others.

Hirschi (1969) suggested that the social bond -- that which keeps one's deviance in check -- is made up of four components: (1) *attachment*, largely

emotional, to family, friends, peers and institutions like school; (2) *commitment*, or one's personal stake or investment in conformity based in what one would stand to lose if one did engage in crime and delinquency; (3) *involvement*, or one's participation in legitimately sanctioned activities like school, work, and non-deviant forms of recreation; and (4) *belief*, or one's acceptance that socially sanctioned moral values provide the correct foundation upon which to build one's own standards. Hirschi (once more working exclusively with boys) found that attachment, commitment and belief were the best predictors of delinquency or lack of it, while involvement had a lesser effect (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992).

Hirschi's notions that social bonds and the social controls exerted by these bonds had a direct effect on the level of an individual's participation in delinquency and crime generated much further research, including research on females. Jensen & Eve (1976) and Cernkovich & Giordano (1987) found that attachment to conventional others and a belief in the legitimacy of rules had predictive power for both male and female delinquency. Cernkovich and Giordano also found that lower rates of female delinquency could be partly explained by higher levels of parental supervision and intimate communication between parents and daughters.

Hagan, Simpson & Gillis (1987) and Hagan (1988, 1990) took up the theory of social control and argued that social control or constraint varies across gender, with females experiencing more social control especially in more traditional, patriarchal families. Hagan, Simpson & Gillis (1987) define the "ideal-type patriarchal family" as including "a husband who is employed in an authority position and a wife who is not employed outside the home" (p. 791). They define the "ideal-type egalitarian family" as including a mother and father who are both employed in authority positions outside the home

(p. 792). They also define single parent households headed by women as "a special kind of egalitarian family" which, like other egalitarian households, experiences "freedom from male domination" (p. 793).

It is their contention that whenever males are dominant, as they most often are in the ideal-type patriarchal household, mothers are charged with the task of child-rearing as a result of a division of labour along gender lines. This leaves fathers in control of production (that is, participation in the work force) and mothers in control of consumption and domestic labour and the "day-to-day control of their children, especially their daughters" (p. 792).

According to Hagan et al., such families reproduce the gender divisions they model and enforce and allow much less risk-taking behaviour in their daughters. As a result, these families produce lower deviance and delinquency rates for females than for males, while ideal type egalitarian families (which allow more risk taking in their female members) produce higher delinquency rates for females, rates which tend to move towards a closing of the gender gap. Therefore, according to Hagan et al., the more traditional the family, the lower the female delinquency rate.

Their argument rests upon two points: one which suggests that mothers working outside the home (especially in positions of authority) constitute a move away from patriarchy towards a more egalitarian system, and the second which suggests that such a move towards egalitarianism is linked with higher delinquency rates in girls. Therefore, for Hagen et al., the greater the control of men over women and girls in families, the lower the risk for female adolescent deviance. When this is not the case, and adult women in families take up more equal power with males, or find themselves in the position of being single heads of households, girls in these families

become more like boys and as a consequence also take more risks, including deviant risks.

In effect, Hagan and his associates appear to be suggesting that working mothers are contributing to higher delinquency in their daughters. But, as Chesney-Lind & Shelden (1992) point out:

no evidence suggests that as women's labor force participation has increased, girl's delinquency has increased. Indeed, during the past decade, when women's labor force participation and the number of female-headed household soared, aggregate female delinquency measured both by self-report and official statistics either declined or remained stable (Ageton, 1983; Chilton & Datesman, 1987, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1986) (pp. 96-97).

Therefore, while Hagan and his associates may be correct in pointing out that gender and patriarchy are important with regard to the shaping of both male and female behaviour, their assumption that mothers working outside the home leads to increases in female delinquency does not appear to hold. This theory, like others that will be discussed below, is an example of the kinds of backlash theories that in effect suggest to women that it may be better to stay with traditional role configurations because in the end, liberation, that is a move toward the masculine, carries with it a price that may not be worth paying.

Labeling theories.

One final mainstream theoretical approach which may shed light on female crime and delinquency is labeling theory. Labeling theory concerns itself primarily with the selective social construction of certain behaviours as criminal and delinquent rather than with original causes of behaviour.

Schur (1972) suggests that

Human behaviour is deviant to the extent that it comes to be viewed as involving a personally discreditable departure from a group's normative expectation and it elicits interpersonal and collective

reactions that serve to isolate, treat and correct or punish individuals engaged in such behaviour (p. 21).

Therefore, deviance becomes the creation of those in society called "moral entrepreneurs" by Becker (1963), who designate deviance through the creation of certain rules and standards which, when broken, constitute deviance.

Thus deviance is not characterised by certain kinds of behaviour, but is rather the consequence of the attachment of the label of deviance and its differential application to certain kinds of behaviour.

This theory helps us to understand the social construction of certain behaviours as deviant for females although they are not constituted as such for males. A prime example of this is the propensity for juvenile justice systems to characterise women and girls as deviant based upon the perception that they are engaged in promiscuous sexual behaviour and to incarcerate them for status offences, such as running away and curfew violations because they are designated as "unmanageable" and "being beyond control," a standard that is rarely applied to men and boys (Chesney-Lind & Shelden 1992). Further, labeling theorists, unlike other mainstream theorists thus far, did in fact include women in their theorising. Schur (1984) extended his theories to women and argued that

Women's powerlessness has resulted in an extensive array of labels being used against them to characterise them as deviant and to devalue and objectify the very condition of womanhood itself (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992, p. 70)

Summary

Few mainstream sociological theories appear to have concerned themselves with female crime and delinquency. Content with the assumption that crime and delinquency were masculine forms of behaviour and bolstered in that assumption by statistical evidence of the overwhelming

participation of males in such behaviour, the majority of theorists, who were themselves male, focused on males. Those who did concern themselves with female participation in crime and delinquency still grounded most of their thinking in male experience.

A Brief History of Theories of Female Crime and Delinquency

As outlined above, most researchers treated females as marginal to the study of crime and delinquency prior to the 1970's. In part at least, interest in female crime and delinquency arose as the result of two forces: (1) the involvement of more women in scholarship and (2) the possibility that female crime and delinquency may be on the rise. A careful reading of work focusing on females, reveals that most research on female crime and delinquency has been geared toward answering the question, "why do so few girls and women engage in crime and delinquency?" rather than toward answering the question, "why do girls and women engage in crime and delinquency?" When females are considered, the focus is generally on the gender gap and the proportionally low participation of females, rather than on either the conditions or the motivations which move females toward crime and delinquency.

Three categories of theory have emerged from the literature: (1) those which explain the gender gap in crime and delinquency as given in the biological differences between the sexes and explain female deviance in terms of biologically based sexual problems; (2) those which explain the gender gap in crime and delinquency as derived from differences in gender role socialisation and explain the kinds of deviance females do participate in as based on their gender roles; and (3) those which accept that female deviance is on the rise relative to males and explain this growing deviance in terms of a "masculinization" of women brought on by women's liberation and the

feminist movement. All three categories of theory explain female crime and delinquency as a move away from the feminine toward the masculine. Only Chesney-Lind and her colleagues call for a shift away from theories of delinquency which are uncritically grounded in male behaviour. In place of such theories, Chesney-Lind et al. suggest a move toward a broader understanding of the lives of deviant girls and women.

Sex based theories of female crime and delinquency

Early theories of female crime, like early theories of male crime, were strongly affected by social Darwinism. Biology was destiny, and criminal behaviour was seen as the result of problems with evolution. Cesare Lombroso, working in 1895, explained all criminal elements in society as biological throwbacks resulting from an arrested evolutionary process. According to Lombroso, females were congenitally less inclined towards crime than males because (a) they had evolved less than males and were therefore naturally more childlike, sedentary, weak and passive, and thus not able to participate in challenging and independent activities like crime; (b) their primary functions were childbearing and caretaking which made them unsuited to criminal activity; and (c) their under-developed intelligence, and their maternity, piety and weakness tempered their often jealous and vengeful natures and prevented them from behaving like criminals. Thus, Lombroso reasoned that if women did choose to become criminals, it was largely because they were not possessed of a maternal instinct and were most probably degenerate, unwomanly and negatively masculine in throwback form.

The belief that biology is destiny, along with the notion that men and women had natural roles and true natures outlived Lombroso, although his work has by now been for the most part, discredited. Otto Pollack, working in

the 1950's, and Cowie, Cowie & Slater working in the 1960's, wrote extensively about imbalances in women's physiology and sexuality as causative of female crime.

For Pollack (1950) the explanation for the consistently low rates of female crime in relation to higher rates for males, lay in the fact that women were naturally more deceitful and concealing and could therefore get away with far more than men could. He located this skill in deceit in women's sexual passivity and their ability to conceal or manufacture sexual arousal; something which men cannot do. Therefore, women's ability to be deceitful coupled with the various hormonal imbalances brought about by menstruation, menopause and pregnancy, predisposed women towards criminality and at the same time provided them with the means to escape detection and responsibility for their actions.

For Cowie, Cowie & Slater (1968) differences in male and female delinquency were largely explained by anatomy. According to Cowie et al. (1968), two primary forces accounted for male/female differences in deviance: (1) biological, somatic and hormonal differences derived from chromosomal differences between the two sexes, and (2) the natural timidity and lack of enterprise found in females. If females did get involved in criminal activity, Cowie et al. attributed this to an excess of male chromosomes.

The notion that biological factors exert a strong influence persists among some criminologists to the present day. Slade (1984) and Binder, Geis & Bruce (1988), proposed pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) as a cause for female criminality, although little evidence was brought to bear in support of this claim, and Wilson & Herrnstein (1985) once again stated the case for the belief that biological factors are determinant of levels of aggression and differentials in male and female law breaking. Gisela Konopka (1966, 1983), who broke

broke new ground by being one of the first to go directly to adolescent females in order to formulate an understanding of their life worlds, and broke further new ground by emphasising the effects of psychosocial problems on identity formation, the changing cultural position of women and the sexual double standard on female crime delinquency, none-the-less assumed that in the final analysis, girls and women were largely controlled by biology and sexuality. As Chesney-Lind & Shelden (1992) point out, Konopka, in noting that most girls come to the attention of the juvenile justice system because of sex-related behaviours, was convinced that "most female delinquency is either "sexual" or "relational" rather than "criminal" in nature"(p. 61) and therefore requires help with sexual adjustment

In part, the assumption made by so many researchers that delinquency in juvenile females is largely sexual delinquency borne of sexual maladjustment, can be explained by the fact that in the United States, the ratio of arrests for prostitution is 50:1 for girls over boys (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992, p.8). Noteworthy as this arrest pattern may be, it may in fact reflect not girls' sexual deviance, but the American judicial system's preoccupation with girls' sexuality, a preoccupation that in itself reflects the preoccupation of the culture at large .

Gender role theories of female crime and delinquency.

In contrast to and in protest against biologically based theories of crime, gender role theories of delinquency and crime emerged in the 1950's (Grosser, 1951) and have grown in strength and number to the present day (Balkan and Berger, 1979; Hagan, Simpson & Gillis, 1985; Hoffman-Bustamente, 1973; Morris, 1965). Given that males are socialised to be more active, aggressive, independent and rewarded for flaunting conventional behaviour, while females are socialised to be more passive, caring, dependent and rewarded for

engaging in conventional behaviour, (Berger, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Hoffman-Bustamente, 1973) it is reasoned by gender role theorists that the male/female differences in aggression and crime can be accounted for by differences in socialisation.

The power of gender role theories lies in the fact that a look at female involvement in delinquency and crime shows clear distinctions with regard to the kinds of crimes in which males and females engage. Berger (1989) notes that "male juveniles have been consistently more likely than females to be arrested for every crime category (except running away and prostitution)" (p. 378). Citing Federal Bureau of Investigation data from 1987, he indicates that

male juveniles accounted for 89% of all juvenile arrests for "index" violent crimes (i.e., murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault) and 79% of all juvenile arrests for index property crimes (i.e., burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, arson) as well as 91% of arrests for vandalism and 81% of arrests for disorderly conduct (FBI, 1988) (p. 377).

Chesney-Lind & Shelden tell a similar story using self-report data gathered in the US by Cernkovich & Giordano (1979). They report that

Boys are more likely to report involvement in gang fighting, carrying a hidden weapon, strong-arming students and others, aggravated assault, hitting students, sexual assault [and sex for money]. Boys are also disproportionately involved in serious property crimes; they are much more likely to report involvement in thefts of more than \$50 (pp. 16-17).

Again, males show dominance in all areas including sex for money, a delinquent behaviour traditionally considered "feminine". Comparable data were reported by Figueria-McDonough, Barton & Sarri (1981), who found significant gender differences in theft, vandalism, fraud, serious fighting, carrying weapons and prostitution, with males reporting their involvement at ratios of between 3 and 6 to 1 over females.

Returning to official crime statistics, Hindelang, Hirschi & Weis (1981) also reported stable, offence specific, male/female differences in US Uniform crime reports from 1960 to 1976, with males showing a distinct dominance in burglary, weapons offences, assault, robbery, and auto theft. Data on admissions to corrections gathered in B.C. between 1986 and 1993 shows a similar trend. (See following page.)

**OVERVIEW OF ADMISSIONS TO CORRECTIONS FROM APRIL 1986 TO APRIL 1993,
BRITISH COLUMBIA MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

FEMALES AGED 12 TO 18

	<u>1986-87</u>	<u>1987-88</u>	<u>1988-89</u>	<u>1989-90</u>	<u>1990-91</u>	<u>1991-92</u>	<u>1992-93</u>
Total Admissions	796	797	738	742	825	1007	930
Breaking and Entering	69	61	38	50	54	78	66
Crimes Against Persons	94	99	93	110	139	184	190
Property Crimes	431	419	398	413	460	564	499
Sexual Crimes	29	53	28	16	26	42	34
Theft by Fraud	19	14	32	15	13	23	14
Theft Under \$1000	248	250	264	226	270	304	306
Violent Crime	31	38	24	28	36	53	43

MALES AGED 12 TO 18

	<u>1986-87</u>	<u>1987-88</u>	<u>1988-89</u>	<u>1989-90</u>	<u>1990-91</u>	<u>1991-92</u>	<u>1992-93</u>
Total Admissions	4,075	3,714	3,630	3,944	4,134	4,494	4,192
Breaking and Entering	1,209	956	926	841	809	878	801
Crimes Against Persons	421	386	421	586	650	758	778
Property Crimes	2,638	2,285	2,247	2,358	2,544	2,863	2,522
Sexual Crimes	99	97	90	117	106	122	120
Theft by Fraud	64	37	45	35	28	47	31
Theft Under \$1000	652	629	607	632	584	652	583
Violent Crime	256	210	220	319	314	405	399

* Note these figures, provided by the British Columbia Ministry of the Attorney General and reprinted here with permission, indicate only the incidence of admission to custody, not the number of individuals in custody. It is entirely possible that one individual was sentenced for more than one offence and that one individual was placed into custody more than once in a given year. Note also, that not all categories of crime for which data exists are presented here. The above categories were selected because they are similar to the ones discussed by the other researchers mentioned.

Once more, males outrank females in their participation in crime including sex-related crimes. Males account for 94% of breaking and entering, 81% of crimes against persons, 84.5% of property crimes, 76.7% of sex crimes, 68.5% of theft by fraud, 69.8% of theft under \$1000, and 89.6% of violent crime on average, over the seven year period since the Young Offenders Act became law in Canada. And while the data reported here are by no means exhaustive, whether one turns to official crime reports or to self-report data for serious crimes, males clearly participate in significantly greater numbers than females.

Gender role theorists often explain this difference in male and female participation as an outcome of the imposing of higher moral expectations and greater social controls on girls and women. As Berger (1989) points out,

Family arrangements have kept females, in comparison to males, more cloistered, and females have been expected to provide support and nurturance to others. In the occupational world, these traditions have been reflected in and reinforced by "gender appropriate" occupations such as secretaries, waitresses, teachers, and social workers. As a result, girls have been more closely supervised by their parents than boys and have had less opportunity than boys have had to commit delinquent acts. They have been more likely to accept general moral standards, blame themselves for their problems, feel shame for their misconduct, taught to avoid risks, fear social disapproval and be deterred by legal sanctions (p. 377). (See also Balkan & Berger, 1979; Giallombardo, 1980; Hagan, Gillis, & Simpson, 1985; Mawby, 1980, Morash, 1983; Morris, 1965; Richard & Tittle, 1981.)

Given the consistency of the gender gap in both official crime rates and self report data, especially for more serious crimes, an understanding of socialisation patterns and gender expectations may indeed contribute to an understanding of male/female differences, but it does not explain either the motivations for females taking up crime and delinquency nor does it explain engagement of females in the so called "male" crimes and delinquencies. Therefore, a reliance on socialisation patterns and gender expectations "fails

to explore motivation and intent as an integral part of female crime... [W]hile significant in its contribution...role theory still provides only a limited perspective on female crime and behaviour" (Chesney-Lind & Koroki, 1985, p. 7). Further, while bringing into focus the need to understand the differences in social experiences and their effect on behaviour for males and females, gender role theories also provide a basis for the feminist backlash notion that a change in women's roles and the emancipation of women will ultimately lead to a greater participation for women in criminal activity.

"Masculinization" theories of female crime and delinquency.

Freda Adler (1975) is generally credited with promoting the belief that a convergence of gender role expectations brought about by feminism and the women's movement in the late 1960's and 1970's has contributed significantly to a rise in female crime. Adler claimed that "the phenomenon of female criminality is but one wave in...[the] rising tide of female assertiveness--a wave which has not yet crested and may even be seeking its level uncomfortably close to the high-water mark set by male violence" (in Berger, 1989, p. 379). Basing her claims on largely unfounded notions that traditional attitudes towards women were rapidly changing and that women were indeed making substantial gains in all areas of the corporate world (Anderson, 1991; Faludi, 1991), Adler contended that

in the same way that women are demanding equal opportunity in the fields of legitimate endeavour, a similar number of determined women are forcing their way into the world of major crimes...as the position of women approximates the position of men, so does the frequency and type of their criminal activity (in Chesney-Lind & Koroki, 1985, p. 9).

Adler's claims supported those of Simon (1975) who noted a rise in women's arrest rates for white collar crimes (embezzlement and fraud) and attributed this to women's greater participation in the work force.

Adler's claims created an ongoing debate because they appeared to be supported by official arrest statistics for the period between 1960 and 1975, which showed dramatic increases in female crime, especially in non-traditional offences for females. The primary objection to her thesis came from scholars who disputed her analysis of official crime statistics. Specifically they argued that while percentage increases in non-traditional crimes for females (murder, aggravated assault, robbery) showed dramatic leaps, these increases were based on very small absolute numbers where even a small change in number could create a large change in percent (Chesney-Lind, 1992; Miller, 1986).

Most increases in female crime were found in non-violent offences. Simon (1975) found the greatest increases in offences such as larceny, fraud and cheque forgery and argued that this was the direct result of the feminization of poverty brought on by the rise in single family households headed by females. This was confirmed by Steffensmeir (1978) and Steffensmeir & Cobb (1981) who found major increases in female crime largely in shop lifting and cheque forgery, crimes which are consistent with traditional gender roles for women. And while they and others concurred that female violence for adults and juveniles had risen between 1960 and 1977, Steffensmeir and his associates found that male violence had also increased at an equal rate, thus leaving the gender gap firmly in place. Steffensmeir's work itself sparked a further debate centering around interpretation of data and methods for calculating comparative changes in crime participation rates (see Berger, 1989).

This debate continues to the present and is reflected in the current alarm about greater participation of females in violence in schools. At the end of the day, it does appear that both males and females are participating

somewhat more in all forms of crime and delinquency, especially in the United States, but that sex differences remain relatively stable (Berger, 1989). While Adler and Simon and others hold the emancipation of women responsible for an apparent narrowing of the gender gap in crime rates, a number of researchers have found evidence to the contrary. For example, James & Thornton (1980) found that attitudes towards feminism had little to do with the extent and kind of female participation in delinquent behaviour. Cernkovich & Giordano (1979) found that positive attitudes towards feminism were not related to participation in delinquency, and that such positive attitudes may indeed inhibit delinquent behaviour, while more traditional attitudes toward the role of women were associated with increased delinquency. As Chesney-Lind & Shelden point out,

...serious research efforts to locate the dark side of the women's movement have almost without exception been unsuccessful. Careful analyses of existing data fail to support the notion that girls have been committing nontraditional (i.e., "masculine") crimes. It seems peculiar...that so many academics would be willing to consider a hypothesis that assumed improving girls' and women's economic conditions would lead to an increase in female crime when almost all the existing criminological literature stresses the role played by discrimination and poverty (and unemployment and underemployment) in the creation of crime. Because rectification of these social injustices has been put forward as a major solution to crime, it is more that curious that in the case of women's crime, the reverse was argued with such ease and received such wide public acceptance (pp. 77-78).

Despite this, the notion that feminism is responsible for a rise in female delinquency and crime persists, especially in the popular press. Celeste McGoveren (1995) wrote recently in weekly newsmagazine that, "prodded by feminism, today's teenaged girls embrace antisocial behaviour" (p.28). She suggested that at bottom, most of the ills experienced by adolescent girls can be accounted for by "new masculinized attitudes [which] permeate

girls' attitudes," and lamented that because of feminism, "the rate of cultural degeneration seems to be accelerating."

In terms of academic research however, "masculinization" theories of female crime and delinquency have been shown to be inadequate, but this "persistent theme...that masculinity, of one sort or another, is at the core of [female] delinquency" (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992) never-the-less appears to be central to all sociological theories of crime. In every case, female experience is measured against that of males, and theories about female delinquency are constructed out of already existing theories premised upon male experience.

The Implications

If "all theories of delinquency are built around the lives and experiences of males, whose development, behaviour, and options are radically different from those of females," (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992, p. 80) how then are we to understand the deviant girl, particularly the violent girl, in her own right? Chesney-Lind & Shelden suggest turning to the girls themselves and beginning the search for an understanding of female deviance with their personal accounts. They call for a qualitative exploration of the lives of deviant girls by pointing out that much insight into male delinquency grew out of the willingness of male researchers to spend large amounts of time interacting with delinquent boys. They note that researchers like Frederick Thrasher and Clifford Shaw generated volumes of information on the lives of the boys they studied, sometimes devoting an entire book either to one boy, or to a small group of boys (Shaw, *The Jack Roller*, 1930; *Brothers in Crime*, 1938). Chesney-Lind & Shelden discuss the fact that other researchers relied heavily on the work of Thrasher and Shaw, and lament the fact that much of delinquency research on girls including their own, has

taken a quantified view (one that seeks to understand delinquency in terms of sociological and psychological variables and factors, rather than in terms of the essential features of delinquent action as a lived experience) and therefore does not provide the same qualitative basis for understanding afforded to theorists of male delinquency.

It appears, therefore, that if we are to understand delinquent girls, we must first of all understand the circumstances of their lives. Few such studies exist. Chesney-Lind & Koroki (1985), interviewed female delinquents in custody in Hawaii. Chesney-Lind & Shelden (1992) mention three others: Bottcher (1986) who interviewed girls in California training schools; Arnold (1990) who conducted a retrospective study of black women's' reflections upon turning to criminal behaviour in New York; and Gilfu (1988) who studied adult female offenders in Massachusetts. Two of these studies actually involved talking to women about what it had been like to be deviant girls; they did not involve adolescent females. I had great difficulty locating research which focuses on the life worlds of delinquent girls, especially those not yet involved with the justice system. Where violent girls were concerned, I was unable to find such a study.

I was, however, able to locate four researchers who between them had produced eight studies in which they explored the lives of girls who were gang members (Brown 1977; Campbell, 1984, 1986, 1987; Horowitz, 1983, 1986, 1987; Klein, 1971). While not focusing directly on girls' violence, they do concern themselves with girls' accounts of their own experiences and as such contribute to the kind of qualitative basis for understanding deviant girls' behaviour that Chesney-Lind & Shelden call for. However, these studies confine themselves to the lived experiences of girls who are struggling at the sociocultural and socioeconomic margins and are American, mostly black, or

Hispanic, or in the case of Chesney-Lind & Koroki's (1985) study, members of a racially mixed Hawaiian group.

The girls in Chesney-Lind & Koroki's (1985) study were interviewed about a number of dimensions of their lives. They reported coming from extremely troubled homes, in which they experienced divorce, abandonment, death of a parent, problems with step-parents, alcoholism and frequent moves. They reported feeling lonely and isolated both from peers and family; they reported feeling suicidal and in some cases, made suicide attempts. All had experienced violence and physical abuse, and six of the ten had experienced sexual abuse. School life was problematic, although only two actually reported not liking school. Despite their school difficulties, they all expected to graduate from high school, and six of the ten wanted to go to college. Their notions of gender were for the most part stereotypical, and their gender role expectations for the future were traditional. Most of the girls were experienced users of drugs and alcohol, and most had been involved in deviant behaviour for some time before they were arrested and put into detention. Typically, they reported deliberately adopting a "bad" girl image because this afforded them status, excitement and a sense of pride. Finding themselves unable to make it in the role of "good" girl, they found a new lease on life in the role of "bad" girl. Here at least was a release from boredom and a chance to shine.

Chesney-Lind & Koroki (1985) point to poverty, severe family problems and physical and sexual abuse as thrusting the girls in their study into difficulties in school and behavioural patterns which eventually resulted in their involvement with the juvenile justice system. They also highlight the girls' typically traditional notions of sex and gender as a contributing factor in that their participants

typically hope to escape from their present situation by marriage to men who, like their fathers, stepfathers, and brothers abuse them. Wedded to traditional and rigid sex roles, these girls see no other way out, and their fantasies, while enabling them to deal with the loneliness of the present, guarantee nothing but another generation of "bad" girls in the future (p. iv).

Chesney-Lind & Shelden (1992), upon reflecting further on the Hawaiian study, suggest that for these girls, delinquency was an adaptive move, a way of coping with otherwise dismal life worlds. When all that one can expect at home is abuse, running away, truancy and even trading sex for money, food and refuge become survival strategies. Chesney-Lind & Shelden (1992) point out that girls, particularly working and lower class and especially poor girls from dysfunctional families* (that is families characterised by marital discord, family violence and the abuse and neglect of children) are

* Although most of the literature surveyed here focuses on a sociological understanding of female crime and delinquency, it is clear from the material provided by Chesney-Lind and her associates (1985, 1994) and by Campbell (1991), that dysfunctional families are strongly implicated in the deviance and delinquency of their daughters. Flowers (1990, pp. 133-139), in his overview of the literature on juvenile offenders states that "many experts believe that it is the interactants of family life that is the greatest predictor of adolescent delinquency" (p.133). In examining the familial correlates of delinquent behaviour, Flowers (1990) cites over 40 studies and notes that child abuse, especially sexual abuse, and physical violence are strongly associated with deviance and delinquency for both males and females. According to Flowers, numerous studies have shown that sexual abuse is strongly linked with prostitution and sex crimes. He also notes that many studies have shown that violent adolescents have often witnessed brutality in their families and experienced it at the hands of their parents or other family members. Such abuse is not only strongly linked to extra-familial violence, it is also linked to intra-familial violence, in that children who have been physically and sexually abused also tend to abuse their parents more than children who have not been abused. Other familial correlates of delinquent behaviour also listed by Flowers are: lax or inconsistent discipline and harsh discipline; a lack of parental affection; the absence of the kind of parenting that promotes interpersonal positive communication and encourages the development of normative values and prosocial behaviour and of academic and professional skills; the "broken home factor," in which one or both parents are absent through death, desertion, separation or divorce; and family dissension, where families have remained intact, but are characterised by a climate of conflict and discord. With regard to this last correlate, Flowers suggests that "there is indication that intact families beset by conflict and turmoil are more significant in delinquency formation than broken home families" (p. 139). Finally, Flowers includes intergenerational cycles of violence and abuse grounded in "a lifestyle of neglect that comes from sharing and passing on of family misfortunes" as the context in which the familial correlates he itemises have their anchor (p. 135).

disadvantaged early in life by entrenched stereotypical notions of gender, limited educational prospects, the constraints of the sexual double standard and by the emotional and psychological impact of physical and sexual abuse.

Campbell (1991) who studied black and Hispanic girls in New York City, found that girls participated in gangs primarily because they were attempting to escape violent and dysfunctional families and the resulting emotional isolation. Typically, they had experienced severe parental alcohol and drug misuse, family disintegration through marital discord or the alcohol or drug related death of a parent, and extreme poverty. Added to this were the ever-present difficulties they experienced simply as a result of being young women of colour. When they joined gangs, they expected to find continuity, loyalty and unconditional acceptance. They wanted somewhere to belong, and they sought safety and community. As well, the support of a gang held out the promise (but not the reality) of improvement of their financial state, albeit through illegal means.

As gang members they engaged in violence as a means of survival and as a way of proving their worth to other gang members. They also engaged in violence because violence was accepted and expected. Typically they fought for one of two reasons, (1) to settle disputes over boys and (2) to enhance their reputations as "tough girls." Being known as "tough" meant that other girls and also some boys, would fear them and show them respect. This gave them a sense of worth and power. As one girl in Campbell's (1991) study put it,

It's true -- you feel proud when you see a girl that you fucked up. Her face is all scratched or she got a black eye, you say, "Damn, I beat the shit out of that girl you know." And it makes you feel stronger then you want to fight more and more...(p. 263).

All the studies point to the marginality of the girls concerned as the explanation for their participation in a delinquent and/or gang life, and with

it violence. Missing in the literature are studies which seek to understand the life-worlds and practices of violent working and middle-class girls living in Canada, girls who are not part of a visible minority or a distinct group such as a gang.

Filling the gap

As shown above, the literature does not as yet address the participation of white, working and middle class Canadian, adolescent girls with relatively homogeneous social and cultural backgrounds, in violent and aggressive behaviour. This gap in the literature was what helped me to decide upon the focus of my own work. I undertook the task of producing a qualitative study which inquired into the life-worlds and practices of violent school girls who were involved in violence, but who were not involved with the juvenile justice system, or members of a gang or a visible minority group. I chose an age range of between approximately fourteen to approximately sixteen years of age, and sought out girls who attended junior secondary schools largely because preliminary information gathered as part of a separate study (Artz & Riecken, 1994) indicated that the greatest participation in violence by girls in the school district under study occurred among girls of this age in junior secondary schools.

According to demographic information published locally (Denboer, 1994, CRD demographic atlas), this school district is located within a region of approximately 300,000 people that is largely white. Census figures for 1991, indicate that of these 300, 000 people, about 3% are Native Indian, while 34.6% identify themselves as being of British ethnic origin, 2.9% identify themselves as ethnically German, 2.2% identify themselves as ethnically Chinese, 1.8% as ethnically French, 1.6% as ethnically Dutch, 1.1% as ethnically Ukrainian, and a further 12% identify themselves as belonging to another single ethnic

group. The rest, approximately 40%, identify themselves as having Canadian ethnic roots.

This region is also characterised by having a slightly older population than the rest of British Columbia and the rest of Canada (19% are seniors [aged 65 years and over], vs. 13% in BC and 12% in the rest of Canada). It also has fewer residents in pre-school and school age groups than are found in the rest of British Columbia (23% vs. 27%). Overall approximately 64% of the region's population aged 15 years and over are members of the labour force. This is slightly lower than the provincial average of 68% and reflects the fact that a greater proportion of the region's residents are over 65. It should be noted however, where the school district under study is concerned, the population is younger on average than the rest of the region.

The average household income for the region is \$45,344.00, which is more than 3% below the province-wide average. This difference is due in part to the fact that a larger than average segment of the region's population lives on retirement incomes. It is also due in part to the fact that a greater segment of the region's workforce draws its income from service-based occupations, while the workforce in rest of the province draws its income from higher paid resource-based occupations. Different parts of the region have incomes higher and lower than the region's average. Those living within the school district under study enjoy a slightly higher average household income of between \$47,669.00 to \$56,408.00. With regard to occupation, the breakdown is as follows:

Clerical positions are the most common occupational group in the region, accounting for 19.1% of all jobs. Employment levels for several occupations are clearly distinctive between the genders. Nearly one-third of all female occupations were in the clerical field compared to 7% for males. Likewise, female employment is more common in the social sciences, teaching and health-related occupations. In contrast, a

higher number of males were employed in activities relating to technology, construction, transportation, manufacturing and primary industries (pp. 31-32).

Most children in the region live in two-parent households where fathers are the main wage earners although mothers often supplement the family income with part-time work and in 64% of cases with full-time work. About 12% of all families in the region are classified as single parent households, reflecting the provincial average. Of these, 84% are headed by single-parent mothers. Of all the households in the region, these are the most financially disadvantaged, but it is worthy of note that within this region, only 10% of households are classified as low-income (meaning that more than 56% of their gross income is spent on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing). This is lower than all other regions of British Columbia where the number of low-income cases stands at 12%. The majority of low-income households are found in those parts of the region outside the school district under study. Therefore, while individual households in the school district may certainly experience some financial hardship, district households are not characterised by poverty. They are also not characterised by a general lack of education, in that over 68% of the adult population has a high school graduation certificate or better. Both the district and the region have higher than average education levels for British Columbia.

With the above demographic information as context, I sought to answer a number of questions: "Who are the young women who engage in violence? Where do they come from, and how do they find each other? How do they arrange their activities, make decisions, carry out their acts of aggression, explain them to themselves, to each other, and to others who might oppose them? What about their families, parents, siblings, grandparents? What kinds of home lives do they have? What stories might

the girls tell me? What stories might their parents tell me? What about their school life? Who interacts with them at school? Who do they know and who knows them? What kinds of forces are at work at home, at school, and in the community which serve to suggest to these young women that aggression and violence are a means to an end? How do they make sense out of their participation in violence and how do they perceive violence in others and in general?"

My main purpose in approaching the girls with these kinds of questions in mind, was the formulation of an understanding of their participation in violence, the kind of called "Verstehen" by the philosopher Heidegger, and described Max van Manen (1977), as the kind of knowing that seeks to disclose human life worlds, and the meanings we make out of our own and others actions (p. 215). It is my belief that we do the things we do because we have made sense of ourselves and the world along particular lines and are therefore impelled to act in certain ways. I see action in Michael Novak's (1978) terms as "a declaration of faith: one cannot act without implicitly imagining the shape of the world, the significance of one's own role, the place at which the struggle is effectively joined" (p. 45). Therefore, I believed that if I wanted to understand violent action among teenage school girls, I needed to approach the girls in ways that would allow me to discover what I could about their "declarations of faith" through learning about the ways in which they lived their lives and about they ways in which they made sense of what they did. But my purpose was not only to understand their actions. Ultimately, I wanted the data that I gathered to be useful to the process of design and implementation of programs and interventions which had the power to reach violent girls and help them to stop participating in violence, and I believed that I could not properly participate in such a process

without first thoroughly understanding girls' violence from the ground up. I was therefore interested not only in studying secondary sources of information on violence, but also in learning directly from those involved in violence how violence was negotiated (how it happened) and how it made sense to them.

What follows in the next chapter is a discussion of the approach I took to achieving the goals I have outlined above.

CHAPTER THREE -- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

...the means used to get the data depend on the nature of the data to be sought...(Herbert Blumer, 1969, p. 25)

Coming to Grips With Method

Introduction to Choosing a Mode of Inquiry

In acknowledging my focus on understanding and sense making I recognised my approach as falling within what Aoki (1987) calls the "situational-interpretative orientation". Researchers working from this orientation concern themselves with understanding how people make sense of their lived experiences and look into the meanings embedded in every day life. They see themselves as pursuing their research questions in existential and qualitative terms, seeking neither to measure, predict or control variables which they have isolated as pertinent to their inquiry, nor to test theories about the phenomenon under study which were formulated in advance of engagement in the research process. Such researchers position themselves as subjects seeking to understand other subjects through direct and personal contact and through conversation and dialogue. They are "interested" in the Latin sense of the word, which was originally a verb meaning to "be between" (Ayto, 1990). I took "being between" to mean standing at the intersection of all strands and dynamics of the phenomenon of concern; that is, standing at the point at which the meanings and actions of all those actively engaging in and with the phenomenon come together whether they are active or passive in their participation. I saw myself very much as "being between" with regard to violent teenage school girls, between the girls and their educators, between the girls and their counsellors, their parents, their community workers, and between the girls and my own commitment to both understanding their violent behaviour and finding ways to intervene.

As an interested researcher inquiring into violence, I saw myself as willing to gather first-hand observations from and about the girls and the conditions of their lives, and I saw myself as willing to participate in direct intersubjective contact with violent girls so that I could gain an understanding of the lived reality of their experiences with violence. However, I was clear about the fact that I could neither write about the phenomenon as an insider who had participated in violence as the girls had, nor as the kind of observer who would stand by as a witness while violence took place in her presence. Therefore, while I considered myself as an intersubjectively engaged participant and observer in the context of this study, I had put parameters around my participation and my observation. If violence were to have erupted in my presence, I would have participated in stopping it.

Having identified myself as an intersubjective participant observer engaged in qualitative research concerned with understanding and meaning, I then chose my way of proceeding in the light of three kinds of qualitative approaches: (1) phenomenology, which Osborne (1994) describes as seeking to uncover the essential structures of lived experience and basing its findings on the explication of thematic meanings; (2) hermeneutics, which Madison (1991) describes as a "theoretical, reflective inquiry that is "an attempt to formulate plausible theories...about how it is that theories of whatever sort [in this case theories about violence and violent action]...come to be formulated and to be believed in" (pp. 8-9); and (3) ethnography, which Dietz, Prus & Shafir (1994) describe as emphasising "the ways in which people accomplish their activities on a day-to-day, moment-to-moment basis" with a focus on working towards an understanding of others that is based on seeing "how people make sense of the situations they encounter in their daily

routines and how they deal with these situations on an ongoing basis" (p. 2).

I chose ethnography, because in examining and re-examining the purpose of my inquiry I concluded that rather than attempting to uncover the essential structures of the experience of being violent, or being occupied with formulating plausible theories about how it is that the girls acquired their own theories about their violent actions, I was most interested in how the girls went about the action of being violent within the context of their daily lives, and how they made sense of their participation in violence. I believed that if I could understand both the ways in which they went about being violent and the ways in which they interpreted their own and others' actions, that I would then have an understanding of violence that was informed in the way that Chesney-Lind & Shelden suggested as necessary to theorising about girls and violence, and which I saw as necessary to theorising about intervention and prevention.

While I settled upon ethnography as my method of choice, I recognised that ethnography is not unrelated to either phenomenology or hermeneutics. In its quest for an existential understanding of the life worlds of its subjects, its preoccupation with meaning, and its direct appeal to the subjectivity and interpretative capacities of both the researcher and the researched, ethnography proceeds along the same pathways as phenomenology (Osborne, 1994). Further, according to Prus (1994), the ethnographer's acknowledgement of the interpretative capacities of both researcher and researched places ethnography "squarely in the...*hermeneutic* (after the Greek messenger [interpreter] god, Hermes) tradition" and places upon ethnographers an extra demand to be "sensitive to the *double hermeneutic*" that is, to the dynamic unfolding of interpretation on multiple levels. For while researchers are interpreting the words and deeds of their subjects, these

subjects are also engaged in an ongoing interpretative process that is a part of the sense making involved in negotiating the processes that are every day life (p. 20).

In what follows, I will elaborate on my understanding of ethnography, as well as articulating my own assumptions within the general assumptions that ethnography makes. Having clarified these assumptions and articulated my own in so far as that is possible, (given that I believe that I can never become wholly aware of my own assumptions or prejudgments since I am embedded in them) I will then outline what I found through my involvement with the participants in the study and describe what I came to understand through my analysis of what I uncovered.

A Brief Overview of Ethnography

Ethnography, an approach to the study of human group life which was first used by anthropologists, has been variously defined as "written representation of culture* (or selected aspects of a culture)" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 1), the inscription of social discourse (Geertz, 1973), the analytic description or reconstruction of cultural scenes and groups (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984), and as "a type of writing, putting things to paper" (Geertz,

* Culture is a term which has been variously defined. In discussing the multiple meanings of the word culture, Geertz (1973) lists eleven different definitions generated by the noted anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, as well as offering two more general descriptors used by other anthropologists, while also outlining his own. Accordingly, culture has been taken to mean: (1) "the total way of life of a people"; (2) "the social legacy the individual acquires from his group"; (3) "a way of thinking, feeling, and believing"; (4) "an abstraction from behaviour"; (5) "a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave"; (6) a "storehouse of pooled learning"; (7) "a set of standardised orientations to recurrent problems"; (8) "learned behaviour"; (9) "a mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour"; (10) "a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men"; (11) "a precipitate of history"; and...[12] as a "sieve", and [13] a "matrix". Geertz himself defines culture as a semiotic concept and notes that he believes along with Max Weber that "man is essentially an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun". He therefore sees the analysis of culture "not as an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning" (pp. 4-5). In this study I will not use the term culture other than in the above references to definitions of ethnography. I will instead speak directly about behaviour and meaning.

1988, p. 1) which addresses cultural questions through fieldwork or direct personal involvement with the subjects of one's study. According to Wolcott (1975), "The term ethnography belongs to anthropology; ethnography provides the basic descriptive data on which cultural anthropology is founded. An ethnography is literally an anthropologist's picture of the way of life of some interacting human group" (p. 112).

Within the field of qualitative social research, ethnography is being used not only by anthropologists, but also by sociologists (Dietz, Prus & Shaffir, 1994), psychologists (Osborne, 1994) and educators (Wolcott, 1975). The focus of ethnographic research is as Wolcott says, "the way of life of some interacting human group", whether that is a group living at a great distance or a group which gathers down the street or next door.

Constructing an ethnography entails the gathering and interpretation of multiple forms and kinds of information concerning the group which the ethnographer is studying. This process is undertaken not at arms length, but in the field. Ethnographers live and work among those they seek to understand in order to draw upon their own first hand, personal experiences as a means of generating data. Ethnographers are participant observers in the processes they wish to know more closely. They attempt to know the groups they study well enough to be able to know how and why a member of that group behaves as he or she does. They produce personal descriptive accounts of their own observations and understandings attempting all the while to describe the group in a way that remains somehow true to that group. According to Wolcott (1975) an ethnographic account can be judged as adequate if a person reading it "could subsequently behave appropriately as a member of the society or social group about which he has been reading, or

more modestly, whether he can anticipate and interpret what occurs in the group as appropriately as its own members" (p. 112).

Within the parameters of working towards faithfully documenting the patterns and forms of the group under study, the ethnographer enjoys what Wolcott describes as the freedom to "muddle about" and pursue hunches as she or he sees fit. Ethnographers discover patterns and problems. They do not test their data against predetermined hypotheses under the constraints of the experimental method, nor do they enter their inquiry with anything more than the foreknowledge gained from their previous experience as a guideline for action and interpretation.

The Epistemological Assumptions and Commitments of Ethnography

In this, the late twentieth century, a time sometimes identified as "the postpositivist era" * one would be hard pressed to find serious scholars who would deny that any research approach inherently reflects the beliefs and perspectives of the researcher employing it (Fox Keller, 1990, Jagger & Bordo 1990, Lather, 1991).

Since Albert Einstein, and after him Max Planck and Neils Bohr, recast the nature of reality by demonstrating the relativity of time, space and perspective, it has become difficult to argue against the notion that observation (and for that matter participation) is grounded in the posture of the observer's choices (Mahoney, 1991). According to Wilson (1977), ethnography locates itself within a research tradition based on two sets of

* Postpositivism is a label which suggests that we have moved beyond making positivist claims that reality is objectively independent of human understanding, that knowledge can be attained by individuals in ways that leave them unaffected by their membership in socially constituted and historically changing groups and that universally applicable truths reside in the objectively separate and external world waiting to be discovered by a precise and "correct" methodology.

assumptions which acknowledge relativity: the naturalistic-ecological assumption, which acknowledges the relative influence of settings and the qualitative-phenomenological assumption, which acknowledges the relativity of both the observer and her subjects.

The naturalistic-ecological assumption.

The naturalistic-ecological assumption asserts that humans are significantly influenced by the environments (social/psychological and physical) in which they conduct their various activities and strongly advocates the conducting of research in the setting in which the behaviours of interest take place. This assumption is grounded in the rationale that all settings, including the experimental setting itself, will exert a unique set of influences upon the phenomenon under study, and that any setting other than the natural one is likely to distort what an observer will see. It is therefore reasoned that an observation conducted in a natural setting is more likely to yield an accurate description of what is taking place. While this acknowledges the relative influence of settings on behaviour it does not acknowledge the relativity of the observer herself. Claims can still be made that an observer in a naturalistic setting can position herself as objective, that is, as a disinterested observer and recorder of phenomena, which can be analysed according to a previously constructed frameworks for interpretation. The relativity of the observer is left to be acknowledged by the qualitative-phenomenological assumption.

The qualitative-phenomenological assumption.

The qualitative-phenomenological assumption highlights the subjective and interactive role of both observer and research subject. It suggests that the researcher is implicated in the collection of his or her data and is him/herself an instrument of research. He must therefore take note of

his own subjectivity while seeking to understand the meaning structures within which his subjects are interpreting their own experiences. Ideally, the researcher considers the interpretations of his subjects as primary and seeks, within the realm of his own subjectivity, to take the role of his subjects as much as possible. This cannot take place if the researcher imposes a priori limits upon the data he collects by seeking to define hypotheses and categories in advance of collecting data. It can also not take place if he becomes so enculturated by the processes he is working to understand that he becomes an indistinguishable member of the group even to himself. In Wilson's estimation, "The researcher must develop a dynamic tension between the subjective role of participant and the objective role of observer so that he is neither one entirely" (1977, p. 250).

The achievement of dynamic tension in assumptions.

Geertz (1988) describes the achievement of dynamic tension in assumptions as an oscillation and states that in the context of ethnography as authorship, "Finding somewhere to stand in a text that is supposed to be at one and the same time an intimate view and a cool assessment is almost as much of a challenge as gaining the view in the first place" (p. 10). Geertz also points out that over time, in the process of attempting to achieve a balance between the two assumptions upon which ethnography is grounded, some ethnographers have found themselves being concerned with being insufficiently detached while others have found themselves being concerned with being insufficiently engaged. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1984), where the individual ethnographer finds himself on the detached-engaged continuum depends upon the place he has assigned to four intersecting dimensions of research: subjectivity-objectivity, induction-deduction,

generation-verification and construction-enumeration. These dimensions are discussed below.

The subjectivity-objectivity dimension.

If the researcher enters the natural setting with a view to uncovering and describing cultural and behavioural patterns as they are viewed by the group under study, and then seeks to reconstruct the specific categories that the subjects themselves use to conceptualise their own experiences and world view by using only strategies which elicit such information, the researcher is proceeding subjectively (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). A pitfall of subjectivity is that indeed it may be "too subjective", that is, the cultural and behavioural patterns and reconstructed categories which the researcher reports may be heavily informed by the experiences and interpretations of key informants in a particular setting and may therefore offer little insight into the larger context in which these are made manifest.

If the researcher enters the natural setting in order to apply previously worked out conceptual categories to the subjects under study, the researcher is proceeding objectively. By suggesting the categories in advance and observing her subjects in order to determine how their behaviour matches with a priori constructs she is by-passing both the subjects' and her own experience as a source of theory and performing a quasi-experimental act. This act positions her as an external observer, whose disinterest demands that she hold in abeyance both her own and her subjects' interpretations. Her success or failure as a researcher is in this case, premised upon how faithfully she applies previously worked out constructs to her data. A major pitfall she faces is the overlooking of patterns and categories which could have suggested themselves if subjectivity, particularly that of her subjects, had been allowed to enter into the researcher's theorising. A further pitfall is the

possibility of "forcing" data, that is, becoming so preoccupied with making data fit preordained frameworks that a lack of fit may be ignored or overlooked.

When I analysed my own position vis-a-vis on the subjectivity-objectivity dimension, I found myself being able to take both a subjective and an objective position. I was and am happy to inter-subjectively facilitate the self-articulation of my research participants' life worlds and acknowledge my own subjectivity in the process. But, while I grasp relativity and the notion that knower and the known are strictly speaking, inseparable, as amply demonstrated by quantum mechanics, I still proceed at times, somewhat more like a Newtonian physicist. That is, I believe now, and believed while conducting this study, that there are identifiable cause and effect events which give rise to behaviours and hold them in place, and that I as the observing person may not necessarily always be implicated in all the cause and effect relationships I find. Furthermore, I was and still am willing to use previously worked out constructs as frameworks to help me to explain behaviour. I believed throughout the time of conducting this inquiry and still do now, that some behaviour can be best understood in terms of widely applicable pre-existing categories, categories which can be applied to rather than constructed from, the data. I also believe that it is possible to be objective, that is detached from a particular person or system, while subjectively engaged with it. To help me with this, I turn to Evelyn Fox Keller (1990) who points out that the ability to delineate subject from object, self from other, and to relate to a world external and separate from oneself is the hard-won developmental achievement of emotional and cognitive maturity. I quote her at length because I believe she has a fine point to make:

The recognition of the independent reality of both self and other is a necessary precondition for science and for love. It may not however, be sufficient -- for either. Certainly the capacity for love, for empathy, for artistic creativity requires more than a simple dichotomy between subject and object. Autonomy too sharply defined, reality too rigidly defined, cannot encompass the emotional and creative experiences which give life its fullest and richest depth. Autonomy must be conceived of more dynamically and reality more flexibly if they are to allow for the ebb and flow of love and play. Emotional growth does not end with the mere acceptance of one's separateness: perhaps it is fair to say it begins there. Out of a condition of emotional and cognitive union with the mother, the child gradually gains enough confidence in the enduring reality of both him/herself and the environment to tolerate their separateness and mutual independence. A sense of self becomes delineated -- in opposition, as it were, to the mother. Ultimately, however, both sense of self and of other become sufficiently secure to permit momentary relaxation of the boundary between -- without, that is, threatening the loss of either. One has acquired confidence in the enduring survival of both self and other as vitally autonomous. Out of the recognition and acceptance of one's aloneness in the world, it becomes possible to transcend one's isolation, to truly love another (p.47).

The dynamic autonomy that Fox Keller describes underlines the kind of objectivity I take for myself. I believe that the ability to distinguish self from other is key to any inquiry because it is this that permits the recognition of the possibility of realities other than those I already know, realities to which I can relate differently and which can inform my present reality and change it. And while my concept of other may always be mediated by my concepts of self and by my already-existing perceptual world, I never-the-less understand that other is not self, and that others exist enduringly and separately from my knowledge of them. This in itself permits the study of others, interpretation of their behaviours, and deconstruction of and reflection upon the dynamics which hold them in place. If I had not claimed this kind of objectivity for myself and others I would have spent my time describing and deconstructing only my own experiences, not those of others.

My stance vis-a-vis subjectivity and objectivity had a strong impact on the way I took up my position with respect to the three remaining dimensions which I will describe next.

The inductive-deductive dimension.

Finding one's place with regard to the subjectivity-objectivity dimension also helps the researcher with regard to the place she assigns to theory in her research. A subjective position claims that theory can suggest itself only after the data are collected. This approach conceives of research as an inductive process in which theories explaining data arise from within the data and engender the patterns, categories and propositions which explain the phenomena. An objective position demands that theory be worked out in advance and then tested against data. Under these conditions, the researcher conceives of research as an undertaking based in deduction.

With regard to the place of theory in my work, while it was my intention to use an inductive process and let the data suggest the theory, I did not refrain from using existing theory when the data I gathered matched previously worked out categories found in pre-existing theories. These theories were used as deductive tools to help me in my understanding of the phenomena I observed. This ties in with my objective stance and my willingness to apply conceptual categories developed previously by researchers who are external to the processes I am studying, to the conditions I am investigating. Where such externally derived constructs could be usefully applied and helped to illuminate my understanding of a phenomenon, then I considered their application helpful and practical. As well, I would argue, that theories and constructs which I have used as tools for years, are part of my subjectivity not only as a researcher and practitioner, but as an individual. These theories are therefore very much a part of my

personal foreknowledge in any given situation and as such are integral to the way in which I take up information, which is why I drew upon them in the first place.

The generative-verification dimension.

The researcher's position on the inductive-deductive dimension also has implications with regard to the researcher's assumptions about the purpose and sequence of research. According to Goetz & LeCompte (1984), the researcher proceeding from the objective, deductive position seeks to verify or test propositions and hypotheses developed in advance of data collection in order to provide evidence that these propositions apply more universally, while the researcher proceeding from a subjective, inductive position seeks to generate rather than verify theory.

The verification of particular theories in order to discover the extent of their generalizability was not the purpose of my inquiry. I was primarily interested in discovering the constructs and patterns which signal the presence of meanings and assumptions which hold particular behaviours in place. And while I have stated elsewhere that I am not averse to using previously worked out theories to help me in the understanding of what I find, I did not enter into this inquiry intent on finding particular patterns, patterns attached to the verification of a particular theory. The verification I believed myself to be bound by, is the verification generally prescribed for ethnographers. In other words, I worked to generate accounts which satisfy two requirements: (1) they would be deemed accurate by my informants and (2) they would be useful for outsiders as guides for understanding insiders' behaviour. Generative research concerns itself with the discovery of patterns, constructs and propositions in particular situations and conditions. It is not concerned with proving the veracity of hypotheses or the extent of their

generalizability. This has implications for yet one more dimension as outlined below.

The construction-enumeration dimension.

While the objective process of deduction and verification is taking place, enumeration or systematic measurement (counting) is proceeding apace. In contrast to this, during the subjective process of induction and generation of data, construction, "the discovery of analytic constructs or categories which can be elicited from the stream of behaviour" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p.5) is taking place. As I have stated above, it was my intention to discover the relationships and patterns, the meanings and assumptions embedded in the lived experiences of my subjects through description and observation. I have however, given myself permission to enumerate to a certain degree, in that I paid attention to the frequency with which certain behaviours occurred, and to the frequency with which informants discussed or described things in similar ways. I was not however, primarily concerned with systematic counting or enumeration. My strategy in this case, was to be constructive in that I worked as much as possible to allow my data to suggest the analytic constructs or categories which were used to formulate understandings of the data.

A Concluding Overview of My Epistemological Stance

In this study of violence among adolescent girls in a suburban school district, I proceeded in the following way: I took as my starting point the notion that individuals have meaning structures that determine most of their behaviours. I approached the understanding of my root interest, for the most part, descriptively rather than with the idea in mind that I was there to predict behaviour or to evaluate a particular theory or intervention, but I did allow myself to bring external constructs to bear on my data when the fit

suggested itself based upon my previous experience. This suggests that I used both inductive and deductive reasoning in my interpretation. I did not attempt to verify existing theory, generalize my findings to other populations, or test a hypothesis which I constructed in advance of gathering my data. I did however, seek to generate and construct some theories with regard to what I found, which means I moved beyond a strict description into explanation.

The Theoretical Underpinnings of Ethnography

As well as having an epistemological framework, that is, a structure for achieving its knowledge claims, ethnography also has a theoretical system upon which it builds this structure (Osborne, 1994). Given that ethnographers inquire beyond directly observable behaviour into the meanings and shared symbolism which the actors in a particular human group assign to behaviour, the theoretical underpinnings of ethnography are generally drawn from symbolic interactionism (Prus, 1994; Spradley, 1979; Van Maanen, 1988). Symbolic interactionism is a term or label applied by Herbert Blumer (1969), to a theoretical framework which he formulated as an approach to understanding human group behaviour. Blumer acknowledges firstly the philosopher George Herbert Mead, and then John Dewey, W. I. Thomas, Robert Park, William James, Charles Horton Cooley, Florian Znaniecki, James Mark Baldwin, Robert Redfield and Lois Wirth (thinkers identified by Charon (1979) as pragmatists*) as providing the intellectual

* Pragmatism is defined in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1975) as "an American movement in philosophy founded by C.S. Pierce and William James and marked by the doctrines that the meaning of conceptions is to be sought in their practical bearings, that the function of thought is to guide action and that truth is pre-eminently tested by the practical consequences of belief." (p. 903). Joel Charon (1979) outlines the four basic principles of pragmatism as follows: (1) "Truth is possible for the human being only through the individual's intervention", which means that any truth which we discover or articulate is essentially dependent upon our definition of it, i.e. in capturing anything as true, we must first have had to accept or define a conceptual framework with which to grasp that truth. In other

foundations for symbolic interactionism. However, Blumer states quite emphatically that aside from relying chiefly on Mead, he himself must bear full responsibility for the conceptualisation of symbolic interactionism. I turned directly to Blumer for my own understanding of this theoretical orientation and based my grasp of it on his delineation. As Blumer states it:

Symbolic interaction rests in the last analysis on three simple premises. The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they have for them...The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person dealing with the things he encounters (p. 2).

The above being so, symbolic interactionism concerns itself with meanings, the things we intend or wish to convey or signify; with the creation of intention or signification out of actions between people; and with the interpretative process, which is the ongoing working out or constructing and reconstructing of meanings which are not static entities but subject to negotiation and modification in the light of new conditions, the input of other actors and each individual's communication with him or herself. For symbolic interactionists, meaning is not merely the product of behaviour and the factors and stimuli which produce behaviour, it is created out of the active engagement of persons with themselves and others. Symbolic

words, there is no "truth" out there which is independent of our formulating a way of capturing it. (2) "Knowledge for the human being is based on its usefulness"; which means that in effect, we retain and apply those ideas, concepts and practices which we judge useful and applicable in practice, and discard those that do not. In other words, we engage in ongoing hypothesis testing and change our hypothesis, or what we hold as knowledge, according to how well it serves us in practice. (3) "Objects we encounter are defined according to their use for us," which means that we impute meaning according to use, role or function. Thus objects and people can have multiples uses or roles and functions and will therefore have multiple meanings. (4) "Understanding about the human being must be inferred from what he or she does", which means that our actions are the raw material out of which we create our understandings of people. In other words there is a connection between action and intentions and consciousness which allows us to make inferences or interpretations from action to meaning and intention (p. 29).

interactionists view relationships with self and with others as central to the meaning making process and assign an active interpretative role to all human subjects.

The meaning making process that is symbolic interactionism specifically rejects both the notion that meaning is intrinsic to things and the notion that meaning is a product of the accumulation of psychological attributes brought to experience by the meaning maker. This means that symbolic interactionism does not proceed along the lines of philosophical realism which would have us see only one meaning and one interpretation for each object, such that a chair is only and always a chair, a house is only and always a house, and a mother is only and always a woman, and invites us instead to see that the perspective of the seer can transform a chair into the lion tamer's training tool, the house into a valuable piece of real estate, and the mother into that which authors, engenders or masterminds (as in necessity is the mother of invention). When meaning is acknowledged as perspective dependent, it can no longer be singular nor emanate directly from things. Add to this that meaning is also more than mere "psychical accretion brought to things by the person for whom the thing has meaning", that is, more than simply the "expression of constituent elements of a person's psyche, mind or psychological organisation [which comes from]...such things as sensations, feelings, ideas, memories, motives and attitudes" (Blumer, 1969, p. 4), then meaning is open to a new and different definition. Symbolic interactionism

sees meaning as arising in the process of interaction between people. The meaning of a thing grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing. Their actions operate to define the thing for the person. Thus symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and

through the defining activities of people as they interact (Blumer, 1969, pp. 4-5).

Meaning making thus described involves interactive interpretation, and interpretation according to Blumer, requires two distinct steps. These steps involve the human actor first of all in communication with herself, indicating to herself the things toward which she is acting and the meanings that these have for her and then handling these meanings in the light of her situation and her actions. Blumer (1969) points out emphatically that the process of interaction with self is not merely premised on the interplay of the actor's psychological elements, but involves instead the internalising of a social process which is the basis for the actor's communication with himself.

In this sense, Blumer is reminiscent of L.S. Vygotsky's (1978, in Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner & Souberman) notions that behaviour occurs as the result of the internalisation of culturally produced sign systems. As Vygotsky points out, interpersonal processes are the basis for intrapersonal processes in that

Every function in [one's] cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later on the individual level; first between people...and then inside the [individual]. This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals (p.57)

This transformation of the interpersonal to the intrapersonal involves the internalisation of external communication into internal communication and involves people in communication with themselves.

For Blumer, the making of indications to oneself is an internalised social process much as Vygotsky has described it. Blumer articulates this as follows:

The making of such indications is an internalized social process in that the actor is interacting with himself. This interaction with himself is

something more than an interplay of psychological elements; it is an instance of the person engaging in a process of communication with himself...by virtue of this process of communicating with himself, interpretation becomes a matter of handling meanings. The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroupes, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action. Accordingly, interpretation should not be regarded as a mere automatic application of established meanings but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action. It is necessary to see that meanings play their part in action *through* a process of self interaction (1969, p. 5, italics mine)

Vygotsky (1978 in Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner & Souberman) makes the case that meanings are mediated through internalised speech, that is, thinking, and that internalised speech is central to communication with self. For Vygotsky, internalised speech and all manner of communicative indications including the use of tools, have their origins in social interaction. For Vygotsky and for Blumer, anything that signals, carries, and conveys meaning is first of all socially negotiated and always socially and historically context dependent. In other words, meaning making is an interpersonal/intrapersonal activity that is grounded in action and the internalisation of socially rooted experience.

I believe that Vygotsky and Blumer offer compatible approaches to understanding human behaviour in that both Blumer and Vygotsky objected to similar things and concerned themselves with solving similar theoretical problems*. Specifically, both rejected the reduction of behaviour to the sum

* It should be noted, that to the best of my knowledge, Blumer and Vygotsky are rarely if ever mentioned in the same theoretical discussion. In the first place, Vygotsky, a Russian Marxist trained in law and philology, who wrote his doctoral dissertation in the psychology of art, was primarily interested in the psychology of consciousness, and died in 1934 at the age of 38, while Blumer an American sociologist and educator, born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1900 and living until 1987 in Chicago, Washington DC, Hawaii, and California, experienced life in vastly different worlds, both socially and historically. In the second place, it appears that neither ever refers to the other, although it is difficult to state categorically that they had no knowledge of each other, especially because Vygotsky became known in the field of psychology and education in the United States in the early sixties where his work continues to generate interest and

of additive bits of sociological and psychological factors. Blumer objected because this in effect by-passes the activities of people and makes them passive conduits of psychological and sociological elements. Vygotsky objected because he conceived of human behaviour and human mental processes as something more than reactions or responses to external stimuli and concerned himself with coming to understand the development of human minds, human consciousness and human behaviour as grounded in action and bound to social origins. It also strikes me that because of their insistence that human behaviour must be understood as a continually emerging socially enacted process, both Blumer and Vygotsky offer a basis for understanding the action of being violent in the course of every day life. This understanding moves the theoretician past a finely tuned assembly of psychological and sociological factors which combine to produce violent behaviour, into understanding violence as a lived reality which emerges out of peoples interactions with one another and is incumbent upon each actor taking into account what the other or others are doing. As Blumer (1969) says:

The actions of others enter to set up what one plans to do, may oppose or prevent such plans, may require a revision of such plans, and may demand a very different set of such plans. One may have to fit one's

excitement (Vygotsky, 1978, in Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner & Souberman). Furthermore, while Vygotsky may not have been aware of Blumer, although Blumer was publishing since 1927, it is clear from biographical information about Vygotsky that he was aware of William James and therefore pragmatism, which Blumer credits as contributing to the intellectual foundation of symbolic interactionism. The difference that is most likely to have kept Vygotsky and Blumer from knowing each other's work is that Vygotsky is known primarily in the field of psychology and education while Blumer is known primarily in sociology, and while both are now widely read in related fields, that may not have been the case in their own times. The introduction of Vygotsky into a discussion of symbolic interactionism was one I made because upon reading Blumer, I was reminded of Vygotsky, with whom I became familiar before I learned about Blumer. And while my understanding of girls being violent in the context of their daily lives is most strongly premised upon a symbolic interactionist analysis, I cannot deny that in part my understanding of symbolic interactionism is grounded in my prior understanding of Vygotsky's notions of how behaviour and the higher psychological processes come to develop.

line of activity in some manner to the actions of others. The actions of other may have to be taken into account and cannot be regarded as merely an arena for the expression of what one is disposed to do or sets out to do (p. 8).

As previously mentioned, this taking into account of others actions is a symbolic process, a process mediated by signs, by interpretation and meaning making which, as Vygotsky also points out, is a process which is social in origin. Thus, the entire process of engaging in any behaviour is one that draws on what Robert Prus (1994) describes as "the human capacity for communication through sharedness of gestures [and language] and the resultant sense of reality that emerges as people interact with one another" (p. 12). It is precisely this *active* process of making meanings, of interpreting and acting which I sought to uncover in the process of forming my own understanding of violent school girls. According to Prus (1994) such an understanding is premised upon an approach that is mindful of the following five key aspects of human group life:

1. People develop and work from constantly emerging perspectives, that is, they act towards each other and towards things in terms of the meanings that these people and things have for them, and these perspectives are the basis for their reality.
2. People have the ability to be reflective, that is, be objects of their own awareness (be self aware).
3. People engage in active attempts to negotiate, that is they attempt to influence, make bargains or otherwise shape each other's behaviour, no matter how uneven their relationships may be.
4. People's lives are relational, that is they form bonds and associations, and attachments as well as disaffections and antipathies out of which emerge their definitions of self, others and their life worlds.
5. Peoples' lives are processual, that is dynamic and continually emerging and changing (pp. 19-20).

When these aspects of human life are taken into account by a researcher, she then seeks to learn about the viewpoints of her research participants; the interpretations, or meanings which her research participants attach to themselves, others, and their experiences; their attempts to exert influence and to have an effect upon their life worlds and the people in it; the bonds and relationships they form and their ways of being in those relationships; and the history or evolution of the development of people's sense of self and others and world; which is what I sought to do in this study.

How I proceeded

Ethnographers typically gather data in three ways: through observation, participant-observation, and interviewing key informants (Prus, 1994). I used all three of these methods, and will define my understanding and application of each of them in turn.

Observation

Observation is typically described as watching, noticing, or consciously seeing and taking note of something upon which one has focused one's attention (Fowler, 1965). Within the context of conducting this inquiry, I understood and used observation in two ways: (1) as verb, in which observation is *observing*, that is, an action or activity which involved me in seeing and noting concrete physical and behavioural details through carefully focused analytical attention; and (2) as noun, in which an observation is a recorded artifact or piece of information contributed by others within the purview of my inquiry (e.g. poems, drawings, locally gathered self-report data relevant to the key participants). Thus, observation refers to what I saw and noted, as well as to other data at hand supplied by those participating in the research project. Observations in my view, are only observations so long as they are confined to the concrete and the descriptive rather than the

interpretative realm. And while I consider observation as always selective, because making observations or using observations involves making choices with regard to what is observed and recorded, observation plays a part in the constructing of inference or interpretation, but is not in itself inferential or interpretative. Observation as I am describing it here involves conscious and purposeful selection of what is to be attended to and assumes a high degree of objectivity, that is separation of knower from the known, and observer from the observed.

When I used observation in the active sense, I attended to and noted descriptive physical details about surroundings I found myself in when I visited the malls, schools, homes, street corners, youth centers, social agency offices, police stations, restaurants, movie theatres, and neighbourhoods which my key informants frequented. I also attended to and noted key informants' and other participants' gestures, postures, facial expressions, the clothing they wore, the ways in which they walked and sat, in short, anything physical that caught my eye which I construed as information, and which I used as a basis for my own interpretation and sense making. When I used observation in the nominative sense, I referred to things that participants showed me or told me about, such as their drawings, their poems, their music, or the self report data they supplied through their participation in a *A Survey of Student Life* conducted by Ted Riecken and myself in October 1993*. Observation supplied me with the information

* *The Survey of Student Life* was conducted in the junior secondary schools of School District 62 in October of 1993. Students were asked to report and comment upon on their sources of enjoyment; their sense of the importance and valuing of a number of life factors; their group affiliation; their viewpoints with regard to the seriousness of certain problems facing Canadians; their assessment of social and personal issues such as right and wrong and attitudes towards other people; the sources of their problems; their self esteem; their fears; their experiences with violence and abuse; their rule breaking, deviant and violent behaviour; their use and abuse of drugs and alcohol; their sense of personal safety at school; demographic information with regard to family configuration and parents employment; their own sources of

which helped me to contextualize the life worlds of my research participants and with the ground upon which I walked as a participant observer.

Participant-observation

Participant-observation is described by Spradley (1979) as a research strategy which entails the researcher in becoming actively involved in the life worlds of her participants in order to gain firsthand experience with their lived experience. Thus the researcher becomes an actor and an informant in the research process, not only an observer. The rationale offered for participant-observation by ethnographers is that

it offers to those who are able and willing to assume the role of another in a more comprehensive sense, a unique and instructive form of data...since it typically puts researchers in close, sustained contact with others, participant-observation generates further opportunities to gain insight into the viewpoints and practices of the other...(Prus, 1994, p. 21).

While it is acknowledged that participant-observation is by definition a subjective approach to data gathering which places certain restrictions upon the interpretation of data (for example, a researcher would not seek to generalise from her data, and would also underscore the fact that her findings are personal and descriptive rather than empirical and analytic*), it is also acknowledged that the insights gained from firsthand experience and from a

money; their future expectations with regard to educational expectation; and their sense of their personal future. In all they were asked to give information on over 200 variables. More than 1,500 students participated in the survey. The students' responses helped to shed light upon their participation in violence and therefore helped to inform this inquiry into violent girls. The results of this survey are available on interactive computer disk or through the Internet, and can be obtained from Ted Riecken, University of Victoria, Faculty of Education (triecken@postoffice.uvic.ca), or Sibylle Artz, University of Victoria School of Child and Youth Care, s artz@hds.uvic.ca).

* "Empirical and analytic" refers to the title given by Ted Aoki (1987) to the epistemological orientation which approaches understanding "in terms of informational knowledge (data, facts, generalizations, cause and effect laws, concepts theories)" and attempts to link cause and effect through hypothetic-deductive reasoning. According to Aoki, the main focus of this orientation, is prediction and control. Other researchers, (Lather, 1991; Osborne, 1994) refer to this orientation as positivist and logical-empirical, and connect it, as does Aoki, to the practices of traditional natural science.

more intimate kind of contact with research participants allow a unique understanding of the phenomenon under study. It makes possible the formation of the kind of understanding that moves the researcher beyond a search for psychological and sociological factors which determine behaviour into knowledge about what Blumer (1969) describes as

the process of self-interaction through which the individual handles his world and constructs his action [and] the vital process of interpretation in which the individual notes and assess what is presented to him and through which he maps out lines of overt behaviour... (p. 15).

Given that the central thrust of my inquiry was the formation of an understanding of how adolescent school girls engaged in being violent and made sense of this engagement, I believed that participant observation would be a helpful and useful research tool because it would bring me closer to the girls' lived experiences and to the lived experiences of others in their life worlds. Outlined below is a description of the way in which I operated as a participant-observer in this study.

In the context of this inquiry, my status as a participant-observer was anchored in my four-year-long consulting and training association with teachers and administrators in the district. Having worked with over 100 teachers (about 20 of these were either principals, vice-principals or board office personnel) in a series of workshops each of which consisted of seven sessions usually spread over a period of three to four months, I had already developed at least an intuitive feel for the school based life world of my research participants. As I visited the schools where I conducted my workshops, I had the opportunity to look around and interact with teachers and administrators. I also had the opportunity to see students in classrooms, on playgrounds and on their way to and from school. In working with those

who attended the workshops, I helped them deal with the difficulties they were encountering in teaching, especially where challenging and difficult students were concerned, and therefore had some understanding of the violence and aggression that they were encountering in their classrooms and schoolyards. Through my contacts at the board office, I had begun to develop a sense of the overall conditions prevailing in the school district. The relationships I had developed provided me with enough credibility to be allowed to engage in this inquiry; they also provided me with a basis from which to approach students, parents and youth workers in the district.

While my most recent experience in the district was as a consultant, I also had other long term participatory experience in the community. I made my home in the community from 1975 until 1984 and therefore also had first hand experience with being a community member. This helped me to understand that this community is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. In one sense it is a bedroom community which sprawls over a wide hinterland and provides the people who work in the offices, shops and businesses in the city. In another sense it is an industrial community in which one finds small manufacturing business and heavy equipment yards and unkempt strip malls interspersed with gas-stations and do-nut shops. In some parts one finds great affluence--architecturally designed homes housing well paid professionals who prefer a more rural aspect; in other parts one finds ramshackle buildings and rundown housing mixed with subsidised townhouse complexes occupied to a large extent by welfare recipients and the working poor. There are rural lanes and horse farms, there are well-groomed subdivisions overlooking the ocean, and there are also heavily travelled routes which pass by rusting car hulks, and empty dump trucks parked in front of half-finished houses guarded by German Shepherds on chains.

Members from all social classes live together here, but the predominant flavour of the community is working class. It is a community that is always in the making, where enterprising developers continue to carve subdivisions out of forests and mountain sides. It is also a community which contains pockets of history reaching back to the earliest intrusion of white settlement.

As well as living in the community, I worked there as a youth worker from 1981 to 1987 and still have collegial relationships with agency workers and the police which keep me current with local issues. I taught life skills to adult students at a local high school in 1988, which gave me the opportunity to take part in some of the every day life of a school. And while I lived in the community and later, I fostered special care foster children (all girls aged 11 to 16) who had a number of behaviour problems which included acting out at school, and in two cases, problems with violence. This provided me with first hand experience in dealing with behavioural difficulties, hostility, aggression, and violence, from a parent's point of view. All the experiences which I have outlined thus far, helped to provide me with a grounding in experience directly relevant to this study.

When I began this study, I drew upon this experience and relied upon the connections I had forged, but I also made my status as researcher clear to all concerned. I was introduced to all participants as a researcher, and my role as researcher and the participants' roles as voluntary informants in the research process were clearly outlined in the consent forms which were signed by the girls, their parents and all adult participants. I also let it be known that I entered into the research process in the spirit of understanding how it was that girls were engaging in violence and in the spirit of using that understanding to do something about violence with the participants' help;

that is, I approached participants as co-participants, as people who had something to contribute.

I gained access to participants and participated in the community in a variety of ways: (1) Because it was known within the school district and the community that I was engaged in local research on youth violence and because teachers and administrators saw it as useful for the district, I was given the opportunity to conduct a series of teachers' professional development day workshops in which the focus was violence in schools. At the workshops, teachers and parents were invited to describe and discuss their first hand experiences with violence in schools, thus providing me with descriptive data about the phenomenon. In all, three such workshops were conducted, in which over fifty people participated by sharing their experiences with violence in schools. (2) My colleague Ted Riecken and I were invited to present a forum on youth violence for the *Parents Together* * network, which we conducted as a workshop, again inviting parents to tell us about their personal and first hand experiences with youth violence. The two *Parents Together* staff, four youth workers and twelve parents attended the forum, and each of them contributed their experiences with violence to the inquiry and helped me to further round out the description of the phenomenon. (3) As a result of these contacts in the community, several teachers, administrators and parents volunteered to become further involved in the study by agreeing to be interviewed and by facilitating contact with their children or their students. (4) The contacts that were made through these

* Parents Together: "Parents Together is a self-help and support program for parents experiencing difficulties with their teenagers. It is administered by the Boys and Girls Club of B.C., and operates out of Boys and Girls Club offices in cities throughout the province. The aim of the program is to provide parents with the support and the problem-solving skills to deal more effectively with conflict with their teen-agers. Parents Together is based upon a self-help model. Its ultimate objective is to work towards more harmonious family relations" (Parents Together Program Overview, 1994, p. 1).

connections led to research relationships with six adolescent girls who had personal involvement with violence, and who became the key informants* in the study.

All those involved in the study, including the six key informants, saw themselves as involved in contributing to an understanding of violence that would move us collectively closer to finding ways to prevent violence. In that sense we had a common purpose. Even though some of the participants were themselves violent, they participated because they wanted to be helpful to a process that would ultimately contribute to doing something about violence. I had no difficulty in finding people who wanted to talk with me about their experiences. Often, once people began to talk, they wanted to go more deeply into their own experiences and their own understanding of violence. If people wanted to talk with me further, I made myself available to them. If problems, or issues or personal difficulties emerged in the context of our discussions, I did what I could to help participants become connected to helpers and agencies in their community.

At certain times during the research process, I worked with my participants much in the same way as I did when I worked as a child and youth care worker; that is, I became actively engaged in helping them to sort out difficulties and find new strategies for dealing with certain aspects of their lives. Especially where three of the six key informants were concerned, I moved beyond interviewing into more of a group process format. At these girls' request, we met a number of times over a period of six months and had focused discussion groups on the topic of violence. I also put them in touch

* Key Informants: Key informants are those participants in an inquiry whose role it is to initiate and inform the researcher with regard to the phenomenon under study. It is their role to teach and to explain, to demystify and to uncover the processes which go into creating and constructing the lifeworlds and experiences in which they participate as "natives" (Spradley, 1979)

with locally based resources in order to provide them with ongoing service and support. One of the participants and I still meet occasionally. She and her family have recently encountered a number of difficulties because one of the children in the family has been diagnosed with a long-term mental illness. I helped them to find the appropriate resources, and on occasion extend support to my research participant by listening to her and helping her to find the contacts in her school and her community who will help her. Mostly, she wants contact with a mentor, an adult guide she can trust. For the moment, that is the role that I have taken with her and with some of her friends, female and male who she sometimes brings to talk with me.

Over the course of just over one year, beginning in July of 1993 and ending in October 1994, I spent over 100 hours with the six key informants, approximately 15 hours with their parents, 50 hours with their educators, counsellors and law enforcement officers, and countless hours in their community observing everyday life. The conversations I had with the key informants covered many aspects of their lives. As well as exploring their involvement in violence, we discussed their views of their parents, siblings and other family members, their sense of self and their experiences of being female, their notions of friends and friendship, the social activities they pursue, their perspectives of their educators and their own educational performance, and their ideas about right and wrong and the origins of their moral stance. The discussions with the key informants and others who are a part of their lives yielded over 1,400 pages of tape transcriptions and field notes. These pages became the basis for my formulation of my understanding of the ways in which these young women approach their violent activities on a day-to-day, moment-to-moment basis and of how they make sense of the

situations they encounter in their daily routines and deal with these situations on an ongoing basis.

As things stand, I have completed my work as a participant-observer with regard to this inquiry, but not with regard to my involvement with the school district or the community. Some of the research participants now regard me as a mentor, someone they can consult with if they so wish. As well, my role as researcher and participant in the community has expanded and I am now a member of a community based violence prevention project team. If anything, my involvement with the community has become more intensive as a result of this study, and the participant side of my role has overtaken the observer role.

Interviewing

While observation and participant observation provided me with rich and useful information and insight, I relied most on interviewing as a tool for data gathering. As noted in a previous work, (Artz, 1992) interviewing has long been used as an accepted tool for data gathering across numerous social science disciplines. Recognised as a "research instrument" (Brenner, Brown & Canter, 1985), in psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, and history, interviewing has spawned numerous manuals, and texts which delineate methods for interviewing. Approaches to interviewing vary both across and within disciplines.

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) describe interviewing as a form of questioning and answering in which the researcher can effectively control the flow of information. Brenner (1985) suggests that "interviewing means quite literally to develop a view of something between (inter) people" (p. 148). His emphasis, like that of his co-editors and the contributors to his book,

The Research Interview: Uses and Approaches, is on finding ways to use the interview as a research tool which, while it allows both interviewer and interviewee to explore the meanings of the questions and answers involved, still centers the control of the flow of the interaction and the interpretation of the information in the hands of the interviewer/analyst.

Elliot Mishler (1986), in his discussion of current views and practices of interviewing in the social and behavioural sciences, suggests that in the mainstream social sciences, interviewing has come to be regarded as a behaviour in which questions and answers are seen as analogous to stimuli and responses rather than forms of speech. This, he points out, has engendered what he describes as a technological conception of interviewing which edits out the personal and social, and has perpetrated a kind of fiction that interviewing is something other than the face to face speaking to each other of two people. For Mishler this has led to restricted and false understanding of the interview process which obscures that an interview is an occasion for communication between people and denies that interviewing is a form of discourse. For Mishler, it is important to recognise that interviewing is

discourse shaped and organised by asking and answering questions. An interview is a joint product of what the interviewee and the interviewer talk about together and how they talk to each other. The record of the interview that we researchers make and then use in our analysis and interpretation is a representation of that talk (p. vii).

Interviewing is therefore neither a value free nor an objective process, it is an intersubjective process. Accordingly, it must be recognised that the interpretation which we derive from interviewing reveals not merely the information given by the interviewee but also the interviewee's and the interviewer's assumptions and presuppositions. In view of this, Prus (1994)

suggests that interviewing, but particularly ethnographic interviewing, should be "careful and receptive listening" sustained by "open-ended queries and extensive probing", reflecting a "generalised curiosity about the situation of others" and allowing the development of questions in the context of the interchange between researcher and informant, rather than in an interview schedule (p. 22).

I took note particularly of Mishler's recognition that interviewing is discourse and Prus's suggestion that interviewing should involve careful and receptive listening. For me, interviewing is a specialised kind of listening. In my case, this listening has been shaped by over twenty years of child and youth care work with clients and their families. In that time I have become sensitive to listening not only for story and content, but also to listening for voice and personal meaning. When I listen for voice, I am not listening merely for point of view, I am listening for the emergence in language and posture and gesture, of a sense of self and personal world.

As I worked with the participants in the study, my interviewing was guided by careful listening to and reflection of, the emergence in language of the lived experiences of the participants, rather than by an interview schedule. Although I certainly touched upon similar subjects with a number of the people that I interviewed, and in that sense did exercise some control over the flow of the interaction, I did my best to follow their lead rather than to pull them along a predetermined route. I treated each interview as a discourse that was jointly constructed by two people, but in which I, the interviewer, bore the responsibility for doing what I could to create a climate in which the interviewee's voice was heard and encouraged.

Brown and Gilligan (1992) suggest that the kind of listening which allows voice and meaning to emerge involves the listener's being responsive

to "the interplay and orchestration of feelings and thoughts" of the speaker (p. 23). I worked to employ this approach to listening, which meant that I was consciously willing to hear and reflect what the speaker was saying, and to ask questions that focused less on gathering facts about a particular subject and more on learning as much as I can about the speaker's experience.

In proceeding this way, I conducted myself much as I would have had I been entering into a counselling relationship. This meant that I kept in play the conditions of empathy, genuineness, and positive regard, conditions identified by Carl Rogers (1957) and elaborated by Cormier and Hackney (1993) and others, as being essential to any meaningful counselling relationship. In approaching participants in this way, I sought to understand their experiences and perceptions from their perspective, and I responded to people without pretensions, i.e. I engaged with them as a person, not as a persona, and I valued them as individuals regardless of their behaviours or appearances. I listened actively and reflectively, and I asked questions which were open-ended and served to clarify and elaborate the interviewee's experience. My ultimate objective was to speak with participants in ways that promoted their articulation of their life worlds. I therefore, did not dominate the interview with a preset structure. Instead, I followed the interviewees'/speakers' leads and explored the subject *Violence Among Adolescent School Girls* with the participants as my guides.

Through the course of the year or so that I spent proceeding with this study in the manner outlined above, I kept in mind my original questions with regard to who the girls are and where they come from, how they find each other, arrange their activities, make decisions, carry out their acts of aggression, explain them to themselves, each other and those who might oppose them. I kept in mind my questions about their families and their

home life, and I listened carefully to their stories, those of their parents and those of others who know them, and most of all, I listened to hear how they made sense of their own participation in violence. While I kept these questions in mind, they did not drive the interviews and conversations in any systematic way, because (as I have already said) I left the direction of our discussions to the key informants. In all, I produced over 1,400 pages of transcribed interview data and field notes. In order to distil this mass of material into this dissertation, I read through it page by page, noting recurring themes and topics as they arose. These presented themselves with noticeable consistency* . The girls talked repeatedly about their families, their perceptions of self, their feelings and what it means to be female. They talked about their friends, their social activities, their school experiences, and about their experiences with violence and how they made sense of their participation in violence as well as talking about their life aspirations and enthusiasms. No one conversation duplicated another, and each participant had her own unique story to tell. In order to render this material in an orderly and readable fashion, I have presented each participant's contribution as a story about that individual. These stories are accounts of our discussions which follow the order of our conversations and use the participants' own

* In order to check on my choice of the themes which I saw as presenting themselves with such consistency, I provided three readers with transcripts of my discussions with the key informants: Dr. Ted Riecken, the supervisor of this dissertation, Wanda Seibel, Child and Family Counsellor and research assistant for the Youth Violence Project of which this study was a part, and Francine Gerruci, editor of my forthcoming book, Beastie Girls, Betties and Bangers. These three people chose the same themes that I did. This gave me some confidence with regard to the accuracy of my descriptions and the matching of my understanding with that of others. Later, when my analysis was complete, I shared my findings with parents, educators and youth workers who have direct contact with violent girls. I also shared my findings with the key informants as I proceeded and with other girls who identified themselves as involved with violence (on one occasion I did this with over 60 "at risk" young people taking part in a conference on youth violence, more than half of which were girls). Each time I shared my findings and my analysis I got the same response: confirmation that what I was describing was how others also saw and experienced it and assent that my analysis focused on actuality.

words to illustrate my understanding of their perceptions and experiences. At certain points, I also drew on information provided by their parents, educators and counsellors, but for the most part, I have confined myself to focusing on data gathered from the girls themselves.

In the chapter that follows, I discuss how I came to know the key informants and introduce them and their families, establish their links to each other and to the community and outline their individual stories.

CHAPTER FOUR -- THE FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY: THE LIVES OF THE KEY INFORMANTS

Research Participant: One who has the experience that has been identified as the focus of the research and who is willing to share her/his understanding of that experience with researchers (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.35).

Since the subjects of ethnographic research are people, researchers face the problem of making contact with others. There are four major options one may use: (a) draw on one's own experiences; (b) access mutual settings; (c) find sponsors and (d) make "cold calls" (Prus, 1994, p. 22).

The Key Informants

Finding the Key Informants

The *Survey of Student Life* (Artz & Riecken, 1994) conducted in October 1993, alerted me to the fact that according to students' self-report data collected in the four junior secondary schools in the district, the vast majority of girls did not participate in violence. In the terms outlined by the survey questions on deviant, rule breaking and violent behaviour, the 717 girls who participated in the survey answered the question: *During the past year how often have you beaten up another kid?* with: *never*: 556 (77.91%); *once or twice*: 109 (15.5%); *several times*: 26 (3.7%); and *very often*: 12 (1.7%). By comparison, the 763 boys who participated answered the same question with *never*: 367 (48.1%); *once or twice*: 243 (31.8%); *several times*: 92 (12.1%); and *very often*: 61 (8%). Boys clearly reported greater involvement in violent activity than girls, (2:1 at the *once or twice* level, 3:1 at the *several times* level and 4:1 at the *very often* level). This could mean that girls who participate in violence might blend into the overall population less easily than boys, and might therefore be more visible and known. In total, 147 girls in four schools reported having beaten up another kid at least once or twice in the past year; of these, 26 reported doing this several times, while 12 reported doing this very often. Of particular interest to me were the girls who participated

several times or very often, because I believed that they have become established at using violence as way of dealing with others. When I looked at the number of girls this might entail, (38 girls, at least as far as the survey was concerned) I considered these numbers manageable in the sense that if I were a teacher working in the district, I could imagine myself being able to know and keep track of this number of students at any given time. I reasoned from this that it was probable that each of these girls would be known to teachers and administrators, and that especially the very active girls, would be well known. In fact that was exactly what I found as I began to make my rounds.

As I worked in my capacity as a researcher in the district, and conducted workshops, attended community meetings and entered into conversations with people, I began to hear stories about particular girls and particular fights. What struck me was that the same names and the same fights came up again and again. I therefore made an effort to meet girls whose names I had come to know because their reputations had preceded them. Six such girls agreed to meet with me to talk about their experiences with violence.

Meeting Each in Turn

It should be noted here, that the names and overtly identifying characteristics of all participants have been altered in order to preserve anonymity.

Sally.

Sally was introduced to me by Helen Morris, a youth worker in one of the local agencies. Sally was one of her clients. Sally was known to the students in her school and to her teachers as a "tough" girl. She and her best friend Adel shared this reputation and were known as a kind of duo or team. Together they managed to intimidate both their male and female fellow students, especially after they had roughed up a boy who had called Adel a "slut." Sally had been referred to Helen by a school counsellor after she had

been set up by Adel (her "best friend") to be severely beaten by Sarah and Marilee, students affiliated with Sally through her school and her neighbourhood.

When I met Sally she was just thirteen years old and in grade eight. My first impression was of someone at least three or four years older. Sally is a tall, attractive girl, about 5' 8', with long thick hair which reaches down her back almost to her waist. Although I offered to come to her house, she said that she would like to come to the university to meet with me because she would find that interesting.

Since her beating, she has stopped going to school and is doing her studies by correspondence under her father's supervision. He works nights, and is able to be home during the day with Sally. Sally's father drove her to the university and came in to meet me. We chatted briefly, and then he left after first arranging to come back in about two hours.

Sally lives with her mother and her step-father. She also has frequent contact with her father and his second wife and their five year old daughter, Sally's half sister. At this time, Sally's mother drives her to her father's house every day so that she has someone with her while she works on her correspondence courses. All four of the adults in Sally's life work, the women in offices, and the men at blue collar jobs.

I met with Sally twice, each time for about two hours, and chatted with her on the telephone between meetings. I also visited Sally's mother at work, and talked with her on the telephone several times. Sally and her mother both expressed a desire to talk to me about Sally's experience, and after we had done this also expressed a desire to put the experience to rest, because they now felt that they had in effect "worked it through" and felt ready to move on. Knowing that they were both seeing counsellors, (Sally was seeing Helen,

and Sally's mother was seeing one of Helen's colleagues and participating in a women's group for co-dependents) I gave them each my telephone number and invited them to call me if they wished to, but did not pursue further contact.

Marilee.

I deliberately sought out Marilee and invited her to participate in this study because she was one of the girls who beat up Sally, but also because the fight which took place between Sally and Sarah and Marilee was one that I had heard described by a number of different people. These people included Joyce, a parent participant in this study, Helen, Sally's counsellor, a principal, a teacher and a school counsellor, and Marilee's mother, who brought it up at the parent forum on violence which Ted Riecken and I conducted for the *Parents Together* network.

Sally's beating seemed to be foremost in a number of people's minds because of its severity. Sally's face was badly bruised and she sustained several cuts. One eye was swollen shut, and several bumps which rose under the skin on the side of her face have still not receded although many months have gone by. Over thirty young people watched the fight, and their only intervention was to surround the fighters and push Sally back into the ring when she tried to get away.

In order to contact Marilee, I first called Joyce who then called Marilee's mother to ask if I could call her to discuss Marilee's participation in this study. Once Joyce had facilitated this, I called Marilee's mother who asked Marilee if she would meet with me. After several days, I was given the go ahead to call Marilee, which I did. I arranged a home visit, and was able to spend a morning with Marilee.

I felt fortunate to be allowed to do this, because there was much concern on both Marilee's and her mother's part about confidentiality and security. Marilee had dropped out of school in grade eight as the result of her involvement with a group of violent girls. At that time Marilee had been singled out by this group because they believed she was a "narc", a police informant, so they subjected her to harassment and to threats of violence which frightened her into leaving school. Marilee has been doing correspondence courses for the past two years, and is currently enrolled in school re-entry program so that she can return to school in grade 10. At the time of our interview, she was no longer concerned about her original assailants, but she was afraid that if it became known that she talked to me that she might antagonise her best friend Sarah, whom she had assisted with beating up Sally.

As I drove to Marilee's house, which is in a pleasant subdivision of 60's and 70's houses that looks very much like those I've often read about in real estate ads: "cathedral ceiling entrance, spacious three bedroom house, fully developed basement, in-law suite potential, sunny deck off kitchen, 2 1/2 bathrooms, large, well-treed yard, a must for a growing family, close to schools and stores, priced to sell," I noted how much this neighbourhood was like the one I had lived in when I lived locally. It is a neighbourhood of family homes, with weekend campers and boats in the driveways and swing sets in the backyards. Sally lives in the same neighbourhood, just a few streets away. I stopped at the corner store and bought a newspaper because I was early for my appointment with Marilee. I made small talk with the Vietnamese proprietor and looked around. This was the store in front of which Marilee and Sarah had beaten Sally until one of Sally's eyes was swollen shut, and her face was completely black and blue with cuts and

bruises. This was the man who had not called the police, largely because he faces daily intimidation and insults from groups of young people who distract him with talk and insult his ethnic origins while trying to rob him of candy bars. He lives with his family in rooms attached to his store, and has found a way to run his business and earn his keep by staying on neutral ground.

I found Marilee's house on a quiet cul-de-sac. It looked like the house I had described in my imaginary real estate ad, comfortably furnished with family pictures on display on the china cabinet. Marilee, like Sally, looked older than I expected. She is sixteen, but I would have guessed eighteen or nineteen, if I had met her on the street. Like Sally, she is a tall girl, 5'9"-10", with long blond hair and blue eyes. Like Sally, she is attractive. Marilee lives with her mother and father, who have been married for nearly twenty-six years. She has a sister who is two years older and is away at a college in eastern Canada. Both Marilee's parents work, her mother in an office, her father in a blue collar night shift job with a trucking company.

Marilee was willing to meet only once. She spoke quite openly with me, but she was also quite clear about the fact that she felt that she was taking a risk in talking to me. I had one telephone contact with her after our morning together, but after that she went on with her life, and I made sure that no one knew I had interviewed her.

Molly.

Molly was introduced to me along with Mary and Linda by Jennifer Halliday, a counsellor at one of the junior secondary schools. Molly became part of the small group of girls that I referred to earlier, who asked me to meet with them regularly to discuss girls and violence. Molly initially volunteered to be a part of this group because like Sally, she had been badly beaten by Cathy who was also a student at her school. In fact, Cathy was a good friend of

Mary's, and well known to both Linda and Molly, and had previous verbal exchanges with Molly in which Molly also gave as good as she got. Molly herself was no stranger to violence and was known to use threats, intimidation and on occasion, pushing, shoving, and banging into other people to let them know that she was in charge. Aside from this she has an older brother with a reputation for toughness, whom she relies upon to back her up if need be.

Molly was just turning fourteen and in grade eight when I met her. She is also a tall girl, about 5' 10-11", taller than both Sally and Marilee. Like them, she gives the impression of being older. Even Mary and Linda who knew her, were surprised to learn her age, and had somehow judged her to be closer to sixteen, even though she was in a grade lower than theirs. Molly too is an attractive girl with long dark curly hair and dark eyes. Her bearing is somewhat more reticent than Sally's or Marilee's. She carries herself with the slight stoop of someone conscious of her height. She is athletic, and swims competitively.

At the time of our first meeting, she was still in pain from the injuries she had suffered to her back, head and neck. Cathy had beaten her up just two nights before, and although they first denied it, Mary and Linda had been present as witnesses to Molly's beating. Mary stated that she had tried to talk Cathy out of going through with the attack on Molly. When she found that she could not prevent Cathy from fighting, she stayed to watch as did Linda and some thirty school aged spectators who stood and watched until a teacher who was passing in his car, stopped the fight.

Molly lives with her parents and her three brothers (one older, two younger) and her mother and father, in a small house in a more modest part of the community. Both Molly's parents work at jobs similar to those of the

other parents mentioned so far. Her mother works in an office, and her father works as janitor. Molly's parents have been married for twenty-two years and married when they were in their early twenties.

I met with Molly four times in the course of two months and had several telephone conversations with her, as well as several phone conversations and one meeting with her mother. Molly left the discussion group after four meetings because of a dispute with Mary and Linda. The dispute arose when Molly disclosed confidential information about Linda to some of her other school friends. Molly was privy to this information because Linda had shared it in our group's discussions on the understanding that it would be kept confidential. When Molly broke this agreement, Linda was devastated and both Mary and Linda became furious with Molly when she refused to accept responsibility for repeating confidential material, and instead tried to excuse herself, using stress as an explanation. Although I offered to meet on an individual basis with Molly after she left the group, she didn't take me up on the offer, preferring instead to talk a few more times on the telephone, and then opted to "put it all behind her".

Mary.

As stated above, I also met Mary through Jennifer Halliday, who had a number of encounters with Mary because of Mary's fairly constant involvement with fighting and other difficulties in the school, mostly centering around disputes with teachers. Mary's most spectacular fight had been reported in the local papers. It took place at a local fair and involved injuries to the other girl. But because it was actually the other girl who had instigated the fight, no charges were laid against Mary. Mary also refrained from laying charges against her assailant, Andrea. At the time of my first meeting with Mary (and Molly and Linda), Mary had no further dealings with

Andrea, but this scenario changed during the course of the study. Andrea tried to get to Mary by attacking Mary's brother Paul when she happened to see him at a gas station, then Mary's father threatened Andrea and pushed her around when he happened to run into her at a local store, and then Andrea arranged to have Paul beaten up by a group of her male friends during a beach party. At the time of this writing, hostile and aggressive interaction was on hold between Mary and Andrea. Both girls are now attending the same senior high school and for the moment, are staying out of each other's way.

Mary is fifteen years old. She is tough looking, 5' 6" or so, overweight, with chin length blond hair that isn't very well looked after. She has a round face with a double chin, and a large waist. The first time I met her, she was wearing a brown and black suede baseball jacket, jeans, a T-shirt and runners. This style of dress did not vary much over time, although sometimes, she would change her hair style a bit and pull her bangs forward. This made her look less tough. (Actually, each of the girls consistently wore T-shirts, jeans and runners, but Mary wears a more sports team version of this teenage "uniform".)

Mary lives at home with her mother and father and older brother. Mary's father is self-employed; he runs his own construction contracting company. Mary's mother is currently enrolled in Canada Manpower re-entry program where she is receiving training in book-keeping and accounting. She plans to work as her husband's company accountant. Mary's parents have been married for twenty-one years, and like Marilee's and Molly's parents, have known each other since they were in their teens. Mary and her family live on about ten acres of land in a very spacious and attractive house which Mary's father built largely by himself. They have a number of farm

animals, chickens, goats, horses and cats and dogs. I visited Mary's house a number of times, and met both her parents and have talked on the telephone for nearly two hours with her brother. As well, I interviewed Mary's mother and met with both Mary and her mother when the family went into crisis because it emerged that Paul, Mary's brother, was grappling with a debilitating mental illness.

Of the six key informants in this study, Mary played the most central role. She was most willing to share information, and is extremely well-connected to a network of violent and tough girls and boys in the community. She is also perceptive and articulate. As well as participating in this study, she participated in a local two day violence prevention seminar at my invitation. Her participation as one of two Youth Consultants was extremely well received, and provided other delegates with invaluable insights into the youth perspective. Mary and I still have contact. She is the participant for whom I have become a mentor, and the conduit for other young people who on occasion want to talk to me.

Linda.

As mentioned previously, Linda was also introduced to me by Jennifer Halliday. Jennifer believed I should meet Linda, because of Linda's involvement in constant skirmishes with Jenny, a fellow student, and the sixth key informant in this study. In the past four months, according to documentation provided by Amy Barrett, the school's vice-principal, Linda, who is in grade 10, had been involved in four incidents of harassment and one incident of threatening another student with violence in the four months preceding our meeting. Last year she was suspended from school for hitting Jenny.

At the time of our meeting, Linda was nearly sixteen. Unlike the other girls I've described so far, Linda is a small delicate looking girl, barely 5' 2" in height, quite slender, with long light brown hair and a "cute" look about her. Linda lives at home with her mother and father and her younger sister. She, like Molly, lives in a more modest part of the community, in a small house which I noticed particularly because it looked neat as a pin. Linda's parents, like Marilee's, Mary's and Molly's, have been married for around twenty years. As with the other key informants, Linda's parents are both employed. Her mother works as an ordering and stock clerk, and her father works in the automotive trade as a mechanic.

I met with Linda almost as many times as I met with Mary. She participated in the group with Mary and Molly, and after the demise of Molly as a group member, continued to meet with Mary and me. We also met for coffee on three occasions on our own. I did not meet either of her parents. According to Linda, her mother is extremely shy, and her father was not interested. The last time I had a meeting arranged with Linda, she had to cancel because she was taking part in a school based event. I left the door open for her to call me whenever she wished, but she hasn't done so. I did run into her one more time when I went to her school to speak to a parent-teacher group. Linda was outside smoking and hanging out with a group of boys. She came into the building to see me and we had a glass of juice and some baked goods together and talked briefly, but I have not seen her since then.

Jenny.

Jenny was also introduced to me by Jennifer Halliday. Originally, Jennifer suggested that Jenny be a part of the small group which included Molly, Mary and Linda. Since the beginning of the school year, Jenny had

engaged in three fights, each of which attracted large crowds of spectators (well over 70-100 youths, and in one case over 300). Two of these fights were with other girls; one was with a boy. Each time, Jenny got the better of her assailant, although she was not spared cuts, bruises and scratches. In her fight with the boy, she was joined by a male friend while her opponent was joined by his father. Jenny is well known to other students as a fighter, although Mary calls her an "amateur". Jenny was unable to attend our original meeting, and then elected to meet with me on her own afterwards, rather than join the group.

Ultimately Jenny didn't join the group at all because Molly, Mary and Linda refused to let her. Linda especially, was against sitting down with Jenny, because of their history of grappling both verbally and physically. Jenny is one of Linda's favourite people to hate. At one point the three girls in the group suggested we invite Jenny after all, but when I probed for reasons for their sudden change of heart, they revealed that their objective in asking her to come to the group was to "let her have it" verbally. I did not allow this meeting to take place. Instead we seized the moment and discussed the issues that were underneath their desire to verbally attack Jenny, and we all learned something more about the dynamics involved in their engagement with violence. In the end, Jenny and I made arrangements to meet on our own.

Jenny was fourteen and in grade eight when I met her. She was 5'3", and quite attractive with shoulder length dark hair and blue eyes, and although she too was wearing running shoes, T-shirts and jeans, I had the impression that she had taken the time to carefully select the kind of T-shirt, jeans and running shoes she was wearing. Her T-shirt was pigment dyed and fashionably large, her jeans were oversize and dark chino instead of ordinary denim, and her running shoes were black hightops. As well, she had added

accessories like a crocheted vest and rings, necklaces and earrings, and she was wearing make-up, and had styled her hair so that her bangs were fluffy and held in place with gel.

Jenny lives with her parents and her younger sister on about five acres of rural property which they share with Jenny's mother's parents and Jenny's mother's youngest brother. The two families live side by side in two houses and share much of every day life. They often go camping together in a large mobile home, and Jenny's mother and grandmother work together at a local hotel where Jenny's mother is the head chambermaid. Jenny's father works for the school district's maintenance department. Jenny's twenty-five year old uncle lives with his parents, and works as a construction labourer. Her grandfather is retired and spends his time looking after the houses and outbuildings. When I visited Jenny's home, her grandfather was in the midst of renovating the house he shares with his wife and son.

Jenny and I met five times, each time for about two hours, and I also visited her home and interviewed her mother. As well, we talked on the phone a few times. We met until Jenny reached a point where she believed we had "covered" violence. As with other participants, Jenny has my telephone number and invitation to call me if she wishes. So far she hasn't called, but she has joined a local youth group at my suggestion, and that seems to be working well for her according to the youth worker who is working with her.

This completes the introduction to the key informants. In the next six sections, I will tell each key informant's story as I reconstructed it from my observations, field notes, transcriptions of my taped conversations with their teachers, parents and counsellors, and my transcriptions of the taped records of my conversations with the girls. In the closing chapter which follows this

one, I summarise the perspectives and interpretations provided by the key informants about their families, themselves, and their worlds and offer my analysis of the meaning of what they have said. I also revisit those theories offered in Chapter Two as a means of understanding deviant and delinquent behaviour in females in the light of what the key informants have told me and outline what I have come to understand about violent girls as a result of engaging with the participants in this study.

The Key Informants' Stories

Sally's Story

The Daisy Chain

The daisy chain fits together as one,
Like a man and a woman they have lots of fun.
As the years go by they come apart and wither away
And there's no longer a sweet scent of love.
Hate takes over and it drives them both insane.
Hate take over and it drives them both insane.
Four years go by and they've both remarried,
But the love inside for each other still blossoms
Like the day the daisy chain was made,
Like the day the daisy chain was made.

(Song written by Sally)

Sally has two families. She lives with her mother and stepfather, but she also has a great deal of contact with her father and her stepmother and her five year old half sister. As she described it, her parents are both better off with their present spouses, because while they were together, they fought constantly and were both really unhappy. Sally's parents split up when she was six years old, and have been living with their respective partners for over six years each. Sally's mother married her new partner. Sally's father is living common-law. At first, Sally was quite angry with both her parents for separating. She was angry with her mother for driving her father away, and

angry with her father for leaving. But by the time she was eight, she had come to terms with what happened and described things as having "fallen into place" and herself as being "fine" with regard to her parents divorcing.

In talking about the family which consists of herself, her mother and stepfather, Sally described it as an "alright family that has its bad times", in which there are ups and downs which center around how well she and her stepfather are getting along. When Sally and her stepfather don't get along, they have the "bad times" during which Sally and her stepfather fight and shout at each other and call each other names and swear, sometimes loudly enough that neighbours have called the police. According to Sally, the bad times happen because Sally's stepfather "is not like a father unless he has to be". Instead, he "acts like a brother" to her, listens to her music, talks the way Sally and her friends do using expressions like "dude"" and relates to everything she does in the same way that she and her friends do. This leads to a kind of rivalry which Sally describes as "constantly fighting like brother and sister" which creates some problems for Sally because as she puts it, "I do need him to act like a parent". For Sally, "acting like a parent" means treating her with respect by listening to her instead of just saying "hey, leave me alone" and being "like a brother and sister case". When Sally and her stepfather "act like a brother and sister case", Sally's mother "makes us talk about our problems instead of just yelling at each other ...and then gets really mad at us if we don't." Sally's mother also acts as an intermediary, approaching each in turn to make suggestions about how best to relate to the other in order to minimise the amount of fighting they engage in. Sally explains her stepfather's behaviour as arising out of the fact that he is nine years younger than Sally's mother, and that at thirty years of age, he still likes to "act like a kid".

I learned more about the dynamics in Sally's family from her mother whom I also interviewed. With respect to family dynamics, Sally's mother's main concern at this point is to break what she described as her own "co-dependent" patterns of interaction with those around her. By this she meant that she wants to stop controlling others by caring for them too much, and by trying to make them feel good. To that end she has joined a co-dependents group which she attends weekly, which she says is helping her come to terms with taking care of other people's feelings for them. Still, when it comes to Sally and Sally's stepfather, she plays the part of the peacemaker in the middle in the interest of family harmony. Quite often, this places her in the role of parent to her husband, a role which some of the other key participants' mothers also take within their families. As well, Sally's mother seems to experience further confusion with regard to just what action to take in order to counteract her co-dependency when it comes to taking an authoritative and directive stance with Sally. For example, on the day that Sally was set up by Adel to be beaten by Sarah and Marilee, her mother was quite reluctant to give Sally permission to go to the store with Adel, but let her go in the interest of "not acting like a co-dependent". In other words, she over-ruled her own better judgement and a strongly felt intuitive hunch that there was something suspect in Adel's insistence that Sally go to the store with her at that precise moment, because she did not want make Sally's decisions for her in the manner of a "co-dependent" mother. Therefore, she neither questioned Adel herself, nor encouraged Sally to inquire further, nor did she refuse permission or attempt to distract from the trip to the store, or suggest another time--all possibilities she considered but rejected. Now, with twenty-twenty hindsight, she feels quite guilty for not acting on her hunches, but still squashes her own negative feelings and thoughts about Sally's ongoing

friendship with Adel, because she does not want to influence or alienate Sally.

In the context of our conversation about co-dependency, Sally's mother also mentioned her struggle with herself when it came to dealing with the police with regard to their working on Sally's assault by Sarah. On the one hand, she wanted the police to take action and make Sally's case a priority, but on the other hand she did not want to be "pushy". Thus she put pressure on herself to be understanding and patient with the police and found herself making excuses for them. She did this despite feeling frustrated and angry because the constable in charge was not returning her phone calls and holding out little hope that anything would come of the charges laid against Sarah while at the same time cautioning her against directly approaching the parents of the students involved in beating up Sally even though these parents were actually willing to meet with her and support her with demanding action. It would appear that on several fronts, Sally's mother debates with herself about what messages she should give to those around her: should she be direct and clearly state her thoughts and feelings, should she soften her message with understanding, should she find a compromise in advance of stating her ideas and state her compromise instead? The discussion seems to take place in Sally's mother's own mind, while those around her appear to hear only the more moderated messages which they don't always take in.

When Sally talked about her mother, she talked in generally positive terms, but she also described her mother as "co-dependent" because she's always looking after other people" (a description which Sally's mother liberally applies to herself, and Sally has no doubt picked up on). Her first mention of her mother was with regard to her mother's help and guidance

with proceeding with charges against Sarah. According to both Sally and her mother, Sally's mother took all aspects of Sally's beating very seriously and insisted on following through with the police, with the school and with finding trauma counselling for Sally when, in the aftermath of the beating, Sally regressed to behaving in ways which one expects to find in a much younger child. She took to staying at home and dressing in flannel pyjamas and a bathrobe and sitting in her mother's lap on the couch and not letting her mother out of her sight, even to do things like have a shower and go to the bathroom.

In the aftermath of her beating, Sally described her mother as wanting her to face her fears and return to school, although Sally's mother talked about wanting to proceed with caution with regard to this. As Sally's mother described it, she found herself debating with both her husband and the police about the fact that Sally should simply "put it all behind her and return to school and get on with life". She remembered herself fighting for the middle ground between Sally's father, who introduced the idea of correspondence schooling and made arrangements with Sally to do this without first consulting Sally's mother, and Sally's stepfather, who had himself tried correspondence and believes it to be not workable and argued for an immediate return to school. Lost in the shuffle of opinions was Sally's mother's arrangement with the school counsellor for Sally's gradual, counsellor-supported return to school.

With this debate in the foreground, a further debate between Sally and her stepmother was taking place in the background, which Sally described as her stepmother "just being mean" and "criticising her about everything" by pointing out that Sally would lose all her friends and no longer be popular if she didn't return to school. Thus Sally opposed her stepfather, agreed with

her father, hated her stepmother and set out to prove her wrong, and didn't hear her mother's ideas with regard to a gradual return to school because the more immediate message seemed to be, "go back to school". Sally strenuously objected to this. In the end, the adults, who could not reach agreement among themselves, turned the decision over to Sally who decided to stay home and do correspondence. At this point, she plans to stay with this arrangement until she enters grade eleven, because at the moment, she is experiencing more success with her school work than she did while attending school.

I probed further for Sally's experience of family, and was able to gather the following pieces of information: Sally's general sense of her home life with her mother and stepfather is that "things are okay because mostly I'm never there". She considers her own rules pretty flexible because things like curfews are negotiated according to the activities she is taking part in. And while Sally's general take on "adults' rules" is that these are pretty reasonable, she has friends who "want to kill their parents" because they have too many rules. Most of Sally's closest friends have parents who have been divorced and think that family life is depressing.

Sally hates her stepmother and likes it best when she can spend time only with her father and half sister whom she feels able to control. Sally's hate for her stepmother stems from feeling continually criticised by her stepmother and from the fact that her stepmother has made it clear that Sally will not be included in "her" forthcoming wedding to Sally's father, because it is "her" wedding, and she wants no reminders there of Sally's father's previous marriage. This exclusion leaves Sally feeling alone and angry.

In the end, Sally, like most of the young people she knows, looks to friends rather than family for connectedness, belonging and protection. She

and many of her friends are quite enthralled with the notion of gangs which they seem to spend a lot of time discussing. Despite having been severely beaten by Marilee, Sally spent much of our time together talking about her connections to gangs, particularly a gang called the "Bloods" and told me early on that even previous to being beaten up, she had cultivated a tough attitude and projected a threatening image. In fact, she talked about the irony of having been beaten up because right up to the time that Sarah and Marilee beat her, Sally saw herself as "usually the tougher person who'd be like the tougher one that people would have to back down against". Indeed, conversations with Sally's fellow students revealed that this was not a spurious claim and that in fact, both Sally and Adel (the "best friend" who had helped to lure Sally to the corner store where she was beaten up) had reputations for toughness among their fellow students, especially among the younger ones. Furthermore, Sally's friendship with Adel was in part at least, premised on toughness in that Sally described Adel's participation in setting up Sally's beating as, "that's the kind of friendship we have, she wanted to see me get pushed around, and I would love to see her pushed around too". Thus Sally assured me that in the aftermath of being beaten up she isn't really afraid that it will happen again because "I have like tons of friends in gangs, and I'm not even scared." And while she briefly mentioned her injuries which were considerable, and then discussed placing charges against Sarah, she was emphatic that despite all this she was unmoved because she felt protected by her affiliation with gang members.

When Sally talked about gangs, she became quite animated and excited, so I followed her lead and asked her to tell me more about her connection to these gangs. In response to my queries, she offered me a detailed description

of her notions of local gang life and her connections to people who carry guns and can arrange to kill people. For Sally, a gang is a group of people who

go around killing people that bug them. Like the toughest guys and the toughest girls get together and then just form a gang and they go down and get guns and stuff.

When I asked whether these gangs actually killed people, Sally informed me that this

Depends. Okay, if they were to fight, they'd give the other gang the option, and if they wanted to use guns then they'd have gun fights and if they wanted to have fist fights, then they would do it. But they let them have the option. Like if I was to go to one of my friends and say, "Can you go and kill this person for me?" they would say, "How do you want them killed? When do you want it done?" and then they'd go and do it like a hit man.

Certainly, in Sally's eyes, these people were tough, but they were also "friendly people that would come up and talk to you", thus making it possible for Sally to get to know them. As she explained it to me,

There's a whole bunch of girls that I know that are in gangs, and they're pretty nice, it's just staying off their bad side, 'cause they can do serious damage to you.

When I asked what might provoke girls in a gang to do serious damage to Sally or any other girl, she replied,

Anything. Like, okay, if you go to the club where they all hang out...and say you thought one of the guy Bloods was good looking and you went up and started talking to them, if a girl Blood just didn't like the way you looked or didn't know why you were talking to her boyfriend, like you just wanted to ask him for a cigarette or something...that can provoke them, or if you were to call them names or give them a dirty look. Like you just gotta be really careful around them, 'cause they could beat you up just for the way you look, or if they want your shoes, or if you don't like the shirt you're wearing or something.

Despite the personal risk involved, knowing people in gangs seemed very important to Sally. She told me rather proudly "did you hear about the

drive-by shooting downtown, those two guys that did the drive-by shooting? Those were my friends". (This information fits the facts. There was a drive-by shooting near a downtown park in which two youths from Sady's neighbourhood drove by in a car and shot another youth in the leg. This shooting took place on November 22, 1993 and was reported in the Times Colonist on November 24, 1993.) Finally, she identified herself as a gang member in her own right:

I'm in a Skate gang--the Blue Snakes, Blue Snakes are not as extreme as Green Iguanas because we don't tattoo ourselves. I'm the only girl. It's rare to have girls as Skates,

When I asked her what it was like to be a Blue Snake, she answered:

It's perfect being a Skate because you, you've got your skateboard. That's something to do. You've got your skateboard, that also counts as weapon. And...there's not, like, but Skates don't get hassled a lot.

I asked her to explain to me how a skateboard could be used as a weapon and learned that:

To use a skateboard as a weapon, you pick it up and hit people. People only do this if they were gonna, like gonna get mugged or something. Usually, like, they yell, like they just kind of like "Leave me alone!" I don't know, like my friend Allan, he used his skateboard to fight someone--a whole bunch of Rappers came up to him, stole his walkman, stole his skateboard and he grabbed it back and hit them. So then they ran off, but they took his walkman. Rappers and Skates fight each other. It's like Rappers think they're too good for Skates because that's all we hear on the news now is Rappers this and Rap this and everything and Skaters, we are just calm and keep to ourselves. WE don't do anything. We like, our pastime is skateboarding. That's not hurting anybody.

When Sally talked about her connection to Skates and skate boarding, she premised her identity not on the individually oriented "I" but on the plural "we". In talking about her connection to Skaters and skateboarding, Sally had very clear ideas about what constituted the "we" that she identified with. As a Skate she is part of a group who pursue a certain activity--skating

which involves learning how to do certain tricks with skate boards, participating in skate-offs and wearing certain clothes like Airwalks, Doc Martens and second hand clothes bought at thrift stores. She was also clear that Skates are further distinguished by not being Rappers. For Sally, Rappers are people whose

pastime is going around beating people up, fighting, everything...The Rappers, they go out and buy like, sixty dollar jeans. We go to Value Village and get ours for like five dollars. I mean there, there's like, that's what Skates are. They [Rappers] wear, they have baggy jeans, but we cut ours off at the bottom so it goes like straight down and they're pretty short, and then we wear like a big, big, big, oversized striped T-shirt, a toque, and there we go. They, they have to wear like a name brand hat, a name... like a labelled shirt, cross-coloured jeans, like or whatever kind of shoes they're wearing now, and then start talking like the Rappers, start listening to their music and then they're slowly, slowly classified as one. And us, we go down to the thrift stores and.... there we go. Rappers like to pick on skates, nobody picks on Rappers.

In order to further understand the distinction between Skates and Rappers, I listened carefully to what Sally said, but I also discussed this with other young people, and learned that Skates and Rappers do indeed have very different orientations. While the most immediate distinguishing feature between the two groups is one of style of clothing just as Sally described it above, along with the adoption of a particular style of clothing comes the adoption of an attitude and the participation in certain kinds of activities, the key to which is a certain taste in music.

Thus, "Rappers" are people who listen to "Rap" music, music which has its origins in American, inner city, black, ghetto, street music and reggae. Rap involves rhyming and dancing, and its main appeal is its tribal rhythms. Rap is "cool" in the style of black America, and Rap is angry. Rap focuses on a number of different topics from endorsing gangs, crime, machismo and misogyny to freedom from white, dominant-group oppression. Being a

Rapper means acquiring an instant style: baggy clothes, designer sneakers, and label (and sports team affiliated) jackets, shirts, and pants. For most adolescents, being a Rapper has more to do with fashion and style than it does with espousing the sentiments expressed in the lyrics of rap music. The main draw with Rap is beat and image, but Rappers do take a position with regard to violence. Mostly their message is "I'm tougher than you". This holds true for both males and females, and in the final analysis, a Rapper is loathe to back down and must guard his or her reputation for toughness.

"Skates" or "Skaters" are people whose focus is predominantly on the activity of skateboarding and somewhat less on style and music, although they also have a clothing style and music preferences. Skates enjoy thrash, punk and hip-hop music, and tend to dress in anything they can find, although their preference in sneakers and skateboarding equipment is expensive and brand-name driven. The look they try to achieve is unmistakable. It involves oversize T-shirts, shorts and pants, long underwear worn under shorts, toques and sometimes baseball hats worn backwards, strategic holes and tears and cut-off cuffs, sleeves and pant legs. Skates are less concerned with toughness and anger than Rappers. Generally they appear to be on the defensive in an altercation. They do, however, see themselves as outcasts because they are so often on the opposite end of authority because their skateboarding activity is rarely welcome. There are many fewer Skater girls than boys largely because skateboarding appears to appeal more to boys, but also because most adult involvement with skateboarding is commercially driven and encourages a competitive, product endorsement stance aimed very specifically at males. Occasionally a girl does join a group of Skaters, and in one or two larger urban centers, it's possible to find groups of female Skates. These girls sometimes call themselves "Skater

Betties" and act on their own, but mostly if a girl is a Skate, she became one through her connection with a Skater boy.

Our discussion on group affiliation and identification ultimately grew to include a third group, the "Bangers" which Sally also related to, as did Marilee, Linda and Jenny. Interestingly, information gathered earlier (*A Survey of Student Life*, Artz & Riecken, 1994) indicated that girls who reported themselves as participating at higher than average rates of deviance and violence indicated that they belonged to the three groups that Sally described far more often than girls who reported average involvement in deviance and violence. Thus the information provided by Sally mirrored the information provided by the *Survey of Student Life*, which found that with regard to group membership, high deviant girls identify themselves as belonging predominantly to the "Bangers" (59% for high deviant females vs. 10.3% for girls overall), the "Rappers" (31.5% for high deviant females, vs. 14.3% for girls overall) and the "Skates" (13.9% for high deviant females vs. 4.2% for girls overall).

"Bangers" are people who particularly like heavy metal music. Their favourite bands are "Guns 'N Roses", "Alice In Chains" and "Metallica". Heavy metal music is largely blue collar and anti-establishment in its origins. Often the music expresses angst, anger and rage, and sometimes the focus is on a self-absorbed examination of substance abuse. Bangers' blue collar, anti-establishment values are expressed in their music, and their heroes are the musicians who perform heavy metal music. Both male and female Bangers wear heavy metal music group T-shirts and tight jeans. Banger males usually grow their hair long, and females may dye their hair blonde. Females often carry large purses or bags in order to carry alcohol and drugs for boys. Bangers believe in male dominance; females "look after" (read serve and look up to)

males. Banger girls, like Rapper girls, are tough, particularly when it comes to beating off competition from other girls vis-a-vis their boyfriends. For Sally, Bangers were not as threatening as Rappers and her explanation for this was clear, at least in her mind:

Like there's no what's it called like, fighting, there's no fighting between the Bangers and the Skates. It's the Rappers, 'cause they like brand names and everything.

Sally appeared to feel strongly connected to her identity as a Skate, and traced her membership in a Skate gang back to her elementary school friendship with a boy who had initiated her to the world of skating. Both the friendship and the affiliation to skating have endured for a number of years, and have continued despite the fact that Sally has moved away from the neighbourhood in which her Skater friend lives. When I asked her why she thought young people join gangs or groups such as the ones she described she explained that

Like, I think that people who go into one of those gangs, it's like they don't have a good family life, so they're using the gang as a family. Like, okay, well, if I'm in this gang, then the gang members are going to treat me like I'm there and they're gonna do this for me...so it's like having the comfort of like being somewhere where they belong, where like people are paying attention to you...

According to Sally, some young women will go to great lengths to achieve a state of belonging. They will submit to having sex with as many as twelve young men, hand-picked for them by the existing gang members and/or endure being beaten without flinching for a set number of minutes, where the beating consists of being kicked in the stomach, kicked in the head, and punched in the face by the toughest girl in the gang. All this is considered the price of admission. Although Sally herself had never encountered such treatment herself, she was seemed convinced that such things did take place.

For Sally, gang or group membership implied "being treated like I'm there," getting attention and having a family. Given that this appeared to be important to Sally, I asked her about her family, and about "being treated like she was there" and about getting attention. She offered me a great deal of information about her family, about which several factors stood out in connection to "being treated like I'm there". When I asked her during our second meeting about how things were going at home she responded with "Fine, I'm never there." But when we talked about what Sally liked and wanted most from her family and from people in general, she told me that she liked being listened to and getting attention. In other words, although she didn't spend much time with her family, she actually wanted their time and attention. Sally expressed all this quite clearly and simply: "I like it when people look at me...I like attention...I like people to recognise what I do and give me attention for it..."

Sally talked about doing a number of things to get attention. She dyes her hair using unusual colours: green, purple, odd shades of red. She tries out many different hairstyles, all of them deliberately "weird" and "original". She wears clothes which she describes as "weird" just like her hair, and in social settings she subscribes to behaviours which she hopes will make people notice her. When I met with her, she had dyed her hair auburn, but unfortunately this was not bringing her the kinds of responses from her parents that she was looking for:

My Dad didn't even notice, like he hasn't said anything and I've had it in for two weeks...When I got home, my Mom, she's like, "Get out of here"...I got in the house and she said, "Get out of my sight and don't come back until that's washed out".

Aside from getting attention from her parents, Sally likes to get reactions from other people, anyone who will look, anyone who will react:

I wear like a really nice dress, that doesn't like, it's got like little tiny straps and then I'll wear a different patterned shirt and like, hifi socks that are striped. Then I'll wear my big Doc boots and I'll put my hair all in these weird positions and do little braids and everything and then when they [my parents] walk with me they go, "She's not with us, we don't know her", but I do it because I like it when people look at me, but I kind of like the glances, but not the stares...Then I feel different...It's cool because there's no one else that 's dressed like me...and people just look at me and some of them go, "Oh neat", and some of them go, "Oh my gosh", you know, but it's up to them. I like it. I like the attention...And yes, I'd like to be on stage.

With regard to being on stage, Sally had much invested in someday being a performer. She and two of her friends have dreams of becoming musicians, performers just like their idols the Beastie Boys, a punk music trio from New York City. In fact, Sally was wearing a Beastie Boys T-shirt while telling me about her strong identification with these musicians:

So, I'll play the bass and we're all going to be singers, we don't want to fight over who sings...And Beverley is going to play drums and Lorraine's going to play electric guitar. We're going to be like the Beastie Boys...We're going to be just like the Beastie Boys, like I'm wearing this T-shirt here because MCA, he's my favourite, and he plays the bass, and Mike D, this is of course Beverley's favourite and he plays the drums and King Ad-Rock, this is of course Lorraine's favourite and he plays the electric guitar, so we're a kind of like girl Beastie Boys kind of thing...We want to be unique like that. We want to have a kind of weird sound that no-one else has.

Rolling Stone Magazine describes the Beastie Boys as a band which offers

a sly blending of the styles...*Ill Communication*, [their latest album] fuses jazz laced hip-hop, crabby 1980-style punk thrash, aggressive, groove-heavy rap and the kind of infectiously sleazy instrumentals that can be heard playing in porn movies just after someone says, "Hey, you're not the regular cabana boy"(Mundy, August 11, 1994).

Dressing in a blend of clothing styles which harkens back to the 70's and brings together everything from thrift store finds to the latest in Skater gear, all of it several sizes too large, and spinning language into the kind of word

association free-for-all one would expect to find in a latter day *Finnigan's Wake*, the Beastie Boys have become what Mundy (1994) terms as "a leading cult" with an "original posture as cartoonish beer-swilling assholes" who are now considered "musical innovators, cultural pioneers and the kind of upstanding citizens [read successful businessmen] that deserve to kick back and dig their bad selves" (p. 48).

Millions of young people like Sally and her two friends identify with the Beastie Boys. Millions emulate their style of dressing, their hair styles (which invariably involve the use of wild colours and oddly angled razor cuts), their style of talking and their attitudes. For some the identification goes beyond style and attitude and reaches to a sharing of life experiences. Like Sally, Ad-Rock Horovitz's parents divorced when he was young (aged three) and he went to live with his mother. Like Sally, he discovered skateboarding early and still pursues this activity. Like Sally and her friends, who began to use marijuana, magic mushrooms and acid (L.S.D.) in grade six, and who have no trouble obtaining drugs and alcohol whenever they want, drugs and alcohol are part of Ad-Rock's everyday life and have been since at least grade four when he first got caught for smoking pot. Ad-Rock's mother, whom he describes as "the coolest person ever" because she ran a hip thrift shop in New York City's West Village and liked to go to see rock bands and stumble down streets singing and laughing, died from alcoholism when he was in his teens. Like Sally, he is no stranger to violence. In the past year he has been charged with assault twice, once for throwing a full beer can at a female fan, once for assaulting a television camera man who was trying to film him at a time he did not want to be filmed. The first charge was eventually dropped, the second brought him 200 hours of community work.

The other Beastie Boys, MCA Yauch and Mike D. Diamond (who lost his father at the age of sixteen), share Ad-Rock's history of early initiation into drug and alcohol misuse. And while all three grew up on New York's affluent Upper West Side in wealthy families and attended expensive liberal private schools and were exposed to New York's intellectual and artistic elite, all three chose public acting out as a way of making their mark in the world. Credited with inventing the epidemic fad of ripping off hood ornaments from expensive European cars and the wearing of one's baseball cap back to front, known for being young, drunken and bad, and for prancing about in clothes meant to shock, the Beastie Boys (now well past the age of thirty) have made a life's work of never growing up, at least in public. Instead they have become trend setters whose greatest preoccupation is with themselves and with sex, drugs, alcohol, and violence, as the lyrics from their songs clearly demonstrate:

From *The New Style*:

Father of many--married to none
And in case you're unaware I carry a gun
Stepped into the party--the place was overpacked
Saw the kid that dissed my honey and shot him in the back
I had to get a beeper because my phone is tapped
You better keep your mouth shut 'cause I'm feeling fully strapped
I got money in the bank--I can still get high
That's why your girlfriend thinks that I'm so fly
I've got money and juice-- twin sisters in my bed
Their father had envy so I shot him in the head
If I played guitar I'd be Jimmy Page
The girlies I like are underage (Check it!)
Girls with boyfriends are the kind I like
I'll steal your honey like I stole your bike
You're father --he's jealous 'cause I'm making that green
I've got the girlies' numbers from the places I have been
Lyrics by M. Diamond, R. Rubin, A Yauch and the King
Music by R. Rubin and The King
c 1986 by Def Jam Music Inc. (ASCAP)/Brooklyn Dust Music (ASCAP)
rights reserved

From *No Sleep 'Til Brooklyn*:

Another place--another train
Another bottle in the brain
Another girl--another fight
Another drive all night
Our manager's crazy --he always smokes dust
He's got his own room at the back of the bus
Tour round the world--you rock around the clock
Plane to hotel--girls on the jock
We're thrashing hotels like it's going out of style
Getting paid along the way 'cause it's worth your while
Four on the floor--Adrock's out the door
M.C.A.'s in the back because he's skeezin' with some whore
We've got a safe in the trunk with money in a stack
With dice in the front and Brooklyn's in the back.

Lyrics by M. Diamond, A. Yauch, and the King
Music by R. Rubin, A. Yauch, and The King
1986 by Def Jam Music Inc. (ASCAP)/Brooklyn Dust Music (ASCAP)
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Despite all this, Sally and her friends want to be "girl Beastie Boys" when they grow up, and in the meantime they are practising for the role. For Sally, practising includes overcoming her own shyness in order to be able to become a performer. This means having to change the way she goes about things in social settings and taking risks which could get her into trouble:

Like, I'm really shy, but it's like if you get up there and act like an idiot people don't think you're shy, so even if I am shy, I can't do that...if you don't act shy, people don't treat like you're shy, so I'm crazy now...Like I'm totally over my shyness and everything, and last weekend, when we were downtown, I got Beverley's boyfriend in trouble. He's a Rapper, and he was really bugging me, so I go up to these big, big Rapper guys that look like they're real tough and I go, "See that guy over there? Well he thinks you're an idiot and he wants to fight with you." So he goes over and he's like, "What are you saying?" and he's like, "Nothing, I'm sure I didn't say nothing," and I'm just embarrassing myself going up to everyone and saying "I think you're cool, and...everyone's like, "Stop it, stop it," and it was so much fun.

Practising also includes doing drugs and believing that in her school of over four hundred students, (Sally thinks there are about four hundred students in her school, the actual number is actually over six hundred) "only about twelve kids don't smoke drugs and drop acid and they're all chess players". It means being a Skate and trying to be "original and different and like nobody else" while carefully emulating a music group that is the focal point for many adolescents all trying to be just like them. It means wanting to live in a loft in New York City like the Beastie boys did when they started out. It means talking like the Beastie Boys talk, that is, combining insults with unusual word associations meant to shock and amuse and sometimes baffle the listener. Thus, a Beastie Boy might describe another band he admires as, "fly, fresh, dope and phat, they are ultimately the shit" (Rolling Stone, August 11, 1994) or perhaps respond to a reporter's question about whether or not he owns and uses exercise equipment with, "I have a uh, John Holmes penis pull. I have a basketball, a brand new Voit black streetball basketball. It's the best basketball I ever owned" (Mack, 1994) or talk about using drugs as if it were just something everyone did:

Alright. My friend and I used to uh...always be trying to find anything to get wasted on, and be eating the cough medicine with the codeine, or doing whippets, or like mixing all the alcohol or whatever. So we discovered this stash of drugs. We used to experiment and take 'em, and we really got fucked up, they were like psychological drugs that would do weird things to your brain...it was just like a dream (Mack, 1994).

In the same vein, Sally talks about getting drugs as if it were the most common of everyday experiences:

Uhm, there's about seven dealers at our school, you walk up to them and you say, "Can I get a gram or a hit?" And they say, "Okay", and you give them the money, and they give you the drugs, and you walk away. Or if they don't have any on them they say, "I can get it to you at lunch". They skip their class, their first class before lunch, and they go

over to the high school and get it off a dealer at the high school and then come back to school.

Sally's assumption is simply that this is how it's done, and "we" (meaning everybody except maybe the odd chess player) all do it.

When I asked Sally about how it came to be that the groups she had described to me organised their identities around the music they listened to, she made it clear that for her, there was a direct connection between the music one listened to and the way one acted. Her explanation was that that's "because it's like the total biggest influence". As Sally described it, when kids talk about what it is that makes them a Rapper or a Skate,

They're like, "Well, the music". It's just neat and it draws you to it and I like, I like to listen to it, I'm like, Oh ya".

Furthermore, she offered this as an explanation for why Rappers in particular were as violent as they are:

'Cause everyone's like, like it's like gangster music and everyone's like, "Oh ya, I gotta be tough. I gotta go kill people", like that and stuff...'Cause the lyrics in the Rap music, it's like, "Ya, go out and kill your Mom and then get the money and then go kill your Dad"...And then they say things like they're going to, they're going to get their gang after them and stuff...Like the reason why the kids wanna kill 'em is cause they have rules.

When I probed further into the actuality of such killings, Sally became vague but assured me that if someone wanted to get someone killed it could be arranged. When I asked more questions as to the lives of kids whom she knows to engage in violence on a regular basis, she replied,

They're like always, they always need to either be drunk or like smoked up, and they always like have to be like doing something...like breaking into cars, houses, stuff like that.

What was underneath these behaviours in Sally's estimation was "a bad family life" and not enough personal attention, which together drove kids to seek out the connectedness and feeling of belonging found in groups and

gangs. As a Rapper, a Banger or in Sally's case, a Skate, a kid can be "somebody" with a ready-made and recognisable identity broadcast to others through music and dress and the activities endemic to their group.

The notion of a "bad family life" was something Sally expanded upon, especially when she talked about her friends' families. With the exception of Lorraine, most of Sally's friends have experienced family break-ups which like Sally's parents' break up, followed several years of quarrelling and fighting. But even Lorraine had not escaped experiencing difficulties at home and a "bad family life". As Sally described it, Lorraine was deeply unhappy with her family:

Lorraine's parents are still together, and that's why she's so depressed. She hates her mother and she hates her father and wishes they would get divorced...Her mother won't let her go and won't accept the fact that she's getting older and her dad's never there...He goes away for months at a time to work, and she gets depressed...She loves being depressed. She couldn't be happy, like her brother is such a goody goody, and she's just the opposite, and her mother's always going, "Why can't you be like Jim?" and people say, "You're Jim's little sister." That's like her name. Whenever she writes me a note she signs it "Jim's little sister", and she's really depressing. She's like so depressing, she makes Beverley and me want to cry whenever she goes on one of her depressing modes. She just sits there and her room's so dark, like prisoner in jail...She says, "Too many people are happy, what's there to be happy about? Trees are being cut down and people are dying. Who Cares?" But she's really smart like me and me and her are exactly alike, except I'm crazy and she's depressing.

It seems that only when the three girls get together and work at being girl Beastie Boys, does Lorraine achieve some relief from her depression. As a potential Beastie Boy, she engages with the other two in song writing, and then begins to brighten up a little.

As Sally and I talked, as well as being struck by the emotional abandonment she was describing, I was also struck by the fact that the sources from which she was drawing most of her inspiration and her identity were

male and degrading to women, so I asked her about whether she wanted to be like any women she knew. Sally named four women. One was the seventeen-year-old daughter of a friend of her mother's who she admires because, "she's the nicest person and she's got a weight problem and she doesn't care", but whose real attraction is that she has an attractive brother. The second was Madonna, the world famous pop music, sex idol. Sally's reason for looking up to Madonna is that, "She can do anything she wants and not care what anybody thinks about her". As well as being a lionized sex symbol, Madonna is a former battered wife whose marriage to Sean Penn (a Hollywood actor known for his tough, bad boy image) floundered because Penn beat her during fits of drunken rage. The next woman she named was Marilyn Monroe, about whom she didn't have much to say except that she was dead. Marilyn Monroe died as most of us know, because she took an overdose of anti-depressants combined with alcohol. Idolized by millions, romantically linked to John F. Kennedy, a veteran of four marriages and a survivor of sexual abuse in her younger years, Marilyn Monroe was never able to find peace. The last woman Sally named was Naomi Campbell, whom she described as "like a runaway supermodel" who she liked primarily because "she's got like a neat accent and she's really pretty..." Three of the four women Sally named are sex objects; highly paid and much adored for their bodies and for their faces and for the images of narrowly defined female desirability they project upon the public mind in the service of a multi-billion dollar entertainment and fashion industry. At least two of them, Madonna and Marilyn Monroe, have suffered publicly for being the sex symbols their audiences pay them to be.

Further dialogue revealed that for Sally, the very idols she chose (other than the daughter of her mother's friend) presented her with difficulties with

being a girl. According to Sally, the images provided for girls and women by the entertainment and fashion industry, create expectations which all females must measure up to. Thus Sally believes that most boys and a lot of other girls think that all young women must be "like Cindy Crawford, a supermodel, she's like underweight, like a perfect body, so, pretty, like everything". And although Sally said that she didn't think she personally needed to conform to this image, she was well aware of it and constantly fighting against it.

In part, she finds refuge from the pressure to be thin and perfect by being the only girl in her Skate group, but here she faces a different kind of pressure and a different kind of discrimination. There the boys tell her "You, you gotta learn how to skate better, come on, you gotta alley a little bit higher". And, although it's clear that she is welcome largely because one of the good Skaters is her friend, she is not really in contention as a Skate who can enter skateoffs and find sponsorship through one of the local skate equipment suppliers because she is a girl. Given that little encouragement is extended to girls to engage in skating for its own sake, there are still few really good female Skaters to be found, especially in Sally's community. Therefore, Sally must often fight against the accusation that she is merely a "poser", someone who carries around a skateboard but can't really skate. As well, she faces harassment from other girls who accost her when they see her with a skateboard and yell out "Oh yeah, what are you trying to be, a guy or something?" Often such remarks bring out an aggressive reaction in Sally and it is mostly under such circumstance that she has threatened other girls and faced them down.

The gender based discrimination that Sally experiences with regard to her body and her participation in skateboarding reaches into other areas of

her life as well. She gave me the following examples; the first has to do with being prevented from taking part in an activity, the second has to do with being subjected to abuse as a result of the still deeply entrenched sexual double standard:

1. A lot of Skater guys, they go snowboarding and then girls that want to go snowboarding, they get dumped on, and the guys go, "Stick to the ski slopes", you know, do the girls' thing and stuff. My friend Lorraine, her boyfriend's this big time snowboarder, she wants to try it, but every time she asks her brother, her brother's like, "Don't Lorraine, don't", he like tells her, "You're just going to get mocked and stuff". so she says, "Okay", and she just goes skiing.
2. Uhm, it's like girls can be called sluts if they have sex, but guys are rewarded. If a girl's to go and do it with fifty guys, then they're called a slut or something, but if a guy's going to do it with fifty girls then like, it's "Right on!"...Like guys get rewarded and girls get beat up or pushed around or talked about like rumours or something. I think it's really dumb because they're both doing the same thing.

Sally, (who was thirteen years old at the time of our interviews) gave me a first hand example of being the victim of the double standard she so abhors:

My last boyfriend was a big time Rapper and he was such a jerk, you can't explain it. There's something about him, I can't stand him now, I'd like to see him die...He called my friend a slut, and I do not like that name, slut is a word I hate, and he wouldn't stop calling her that and I told him to stop it...and he wouldn't let up with calling her that...And there was a lot of stuff that he did that was, I don't know, low, like he set up his friend who's a virgin and hated it, with Adel so she'd sleep with him, but somebody else told her it was a set up so she said, "Okay, fine, you're dumped", but he still kept calling her a slut. And he well, used me, like we finally had sex and then as soon as that was over he's like, "Bye"...And like I'm so mad at myself for like actually letting him. We weren't going out for that long and stuff. I got so mad at myself for letting somebody do that to me, so, I don't know, I hate him so!

The fact that girls get "beat up or pushed around" and construed as a "sluts" for showing an interest in sex, led us back to discussing violence, because Sally's beating was over exactly that. Marilee and Sarah and their friends had decided that Sally was in fact a "slut" for showing interest in

Sarah's boyfriend. This designation as a "slut" made Sally fair game for a beating according to the rules as understood by Sally and by the girls in the social circles in which they live. In fact, for the most part, this insult is hurled at girls by other girls far more often than it is by boys, although they also use it. Sally thinks that it is "stupid" that there is a double standard and says that she "just calls guys sluts too if they're going to call me and my friends that". But, she also plays into the double standard by believing that being called a slut is "the biggest insult" one which must be addressed, one that is experienced by her as a direct attack worthy of an aggressive response. Thus being called a slut is,

Like, it'd be people taking me on, and then if someone was to pick on me, I'd turn around and do it right back. It's like this girl called Adel and me sluts, so I got really mad and I said "You, you don't go around talking like that...and I'm like, "Who are you, like who are you to judge us?" and everything, and she's like, "Well I can if I want, so I pushed her and I said, "I don't wanna ever hear you calling anybody a slut, you can call them any other name, but like that one is just degrading." And she's like "Fine!" So I just like pushed her again and walked away.

Thus girls, even girls who are clearly cognisant of the fact that designating another girl as a slut is simply buying into a "stupid" double standard, will never-the-less take such name calling seriously and push each other around and beat each other up over it.

Sally, despite her personal rejection of these standards knows them well, and knows also that these standards govern rules which in the end must be followed. As she explained it to me, if you go somewhere, and,

Say you thought one of the guys there was good looking, and you went up and started talking to him, and he was one of the girls' boyfriends and she didn't like the way you looked or didn't know why you were talking to her boyfriend, they can do serious damage to you.

Therefore, when Sally showed an interest in Sarah's boyfriend and consequently got beaten up by Sarah and Marilee, she fell victim to the very double standard she hates, a double standard which operates on many levels in her life.

This became even more clear to me when we talked some more about how Sally likes to spend her time and Sally turned the discussion to a point made earlier with regard to how she likes to spend time with her little sister, and revealed that other than practising to become a "girl Beastie Boy", and being a Skate, Sally very much likes to play with Barbie dolls not only with her little sister, but also with her friends, the same friends who want to be girl Beastie Boys. As she explained to me, every afternoon,

I do my school work and after, I play Barbies with my sister, and it's okay, as long as I get to be in charge of the game, and I love to put on Barbie's wedding dress and play them getting married...I have tons of Barbies myself and I keep them. I've got so much furniture. I've got three cars and a bath room set and all this stuff so, and I'm not going to give it to my sister because when I have kids I want it. It's okay, sometimes I get sick of it because I take so long to get set up, like I have to have the house perfect and everything. Like I'm a perfectionist. I get it from my Mom. After I'm set up, that takes an hour and then I only have half an hour to play with her because I leave at four thirty...And I tell my friends that I play with Barbies and they go "Yeah, you're cool", some of them. (Sibylle: How many of your friends do that?) Sally: Lorraine, Beverley. Beverley is so crazy, she needs to go, she's like psycho, she loves Barbies, loves making them do things

As I listened to Sally talking, and read and reread the transcripts of what she had said to me, I was reminded of the work of A. N. Leontyev (1981), a Russian psychologist who worked with and expanded on L. S. Vygotsky's theories on the development of self and mind. Leontyev suggests that because play provides an arena in which children practice entering into an active relationship with self and others, play makes a strong contribution to the development of mind, self and world. Within the serious practice

(praxis) that is play, children try out and formulate their identities, and their understanding of how the world works. Given this, I looked at what Barbie dolls could offer Sally.

Barbie dolls offer a version of womanliness premised on largely unattainable and very narrow standards of body image. They suggest that women ought to be long limbed and thin, small hipped and narrow waisted and above all else, large breasted. They suggest that a woman's hair must be thick and long and wavy and preferably blond. They also suggest that women are and should be primarily preoccupied with how they look, with what they wear and with their material possessions, particularly those that are useful to their domestic life. Barbie's primary focus is her wardrobe.

Barbies first came on the market in March of 1959, as the embodiment of the perfect American teenage fashion model. According to a pamphlet enclosed in the package of the thirty-fifth anniversary re-issue of the original Barbie, this doll was created by Ruth Handler, so that all little girls could live out their dreams. Ruth Handler describes Barbie's beginning in an open letter to those who acquire the re-issue Barbie, in the following way:

Dear Barbie Collector,

I never tire of telling the story of how Barbie was born. I'm actually quite proud of it. I remember watching my daughter play with paper dolls. She'd dress them up, over and over again until the papers tattered beyond recognition. As she played out her dreams, I dreamed of a new doll, a real fashion doll who would become an extension of little girls' dreams. This dream came true in 1959: the first American Teenage Fashion Model, and I named her Barbie, after my own daughter.

It's hard to imagine a world without Barbie! She has come to be a role model for girls for over three decades. What is it that makes Barbie so special and so popular? I've been asked that question countless times. Is it her beauty? Her ability to keep pace with the current styles? Is it her glamorous wardrobe? Is it her endless accomplishments from stewardess to military officer to presidential candidate?

Perhaps. But I believe that the most important reason Barbie maintains her status is that she allows girls from all around the world to live out their dreams and fantasies in spite of a real world that may seem too big. Experimenting with the future from a safe distance through pretend play is an important part of growing up. Barbie is anything a little girl wants her to be.

I predict that Barbie will grow and change with the times as she always has and that she will be every little girl's best friend and confidante (manufacturer's pamphlet, Mattel toys, 1995).

Barbies are now available in nearly thirty different guises. Some do indeed allude to working, but these are hard to find. Most Barbies found in toy stores are engaged in sun-bathing, exercising, preparing for gala evenings on the town, singing in rock bands and dancing, and are generally glamorously dressed in sexually alluring costumes. I was able to find one doctor Barbie, dressed in a white coat, a short skirt and tight sweater, wearing a stethoscope and weighing a small baby. She was also blonde, buxom and wearing a great deal of make up on her "oh so coy...delicately painted face" (description attributed to Barbie in the manufacturer's pamphlet, Mattel Toys, 1995). Since 1959, little has changed with regard to Barbie's underlying message about women's bodies and women's focal points. In all ways Barbie is still "a perfect blend of innocence and glamour, right down to the tip of her pretty pink polished fingertips" engaged primarily in achieving a "perfect look"(manufacturer's pamphlet, Mattel Toys, 1995). Over the years Barbie has acquired a larger wardrobe and a greater range of accessories. She has acquired Ken as a play mate, and a house, camper and cars, but the underlying premise that the ideal woman is one who looks like Playboy Magazine's creator, Hugh Hefner's idea of the perfect playmate has not altered.

For Sally, being like Barbie plays into having to be thin and reaches to getting married, to playing the game of wedding over and over again to perfectionist standards. Sally knows she should be thinner. She's clear that

what is expected of a girl in the 1990's is "to be like Cindy Crawford" a thin and according to Sally "annoying" example of what "guys and other girls think girls should be like". And she knows that even though she wants to be a girl Beastie Boy and identifies herself as a Skate, the ultimate achievement for a woman is a wedding. Young woman like Sally still understand, as did the women of my generation and generations of women before us, that no matter how else we occupy ourselves in the meantime, the thing that of greatest importance is getting married and that we can only hope to achieve this by emulating as closely as we can, the female templates provided for us by models like Cindy Crawford and that enduring symbol of ideal womanhood, Barbie. Sally has "got the message" loud and clear. When I asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, she answered, "a model and a musician"; and Sally is not alone.

As Sally and I explored all this, I wondered how education fit into her life in the midst of all these other largely negative influences, so I asked Sally about her experiences at school, and what they meant to her. For Sally, school, when she did go there, was primarily a place to meet with other young people, and only secondarily a place where she went to get educated. When Sally, who is now getting her education by correspondence, was in school, she mostly didn't go to school. As she described it,

Like I'd go to school, to get Adel, and then leave. So, we'd like walk, we'd have to walk to my house or her house, which takes about an hour, and like the principal kept calling our parents, and my Mom just said that she knows that I don't like school, but she wants me to know that for her, school is a big deal, so she told me that I had to go.

When I asked her about what school was like, She told, "Mmm...I got a B in math once when I was in junior high, everything else I failed, 'cause I was

walking around and watching television". When I probed further so that I could understand what Sally found difficult about school she explained that,

I don't like having people at school. Like I like to keep to myself, unless, unless my friends from downtown, 'cause they're my loyal friends. And, I don't know, there's just no one there I like. "Cause at school, you've always got someone around you. You go to class with your friends and you get five minute breaks with your friends, and then you get lunch. I just like being by myself...

Further discussion led us back to more talk about drugs and violence. School is where according to Sally "fights happen almost every day", and where people are mean to each other. School is where Sally had to act tough. School is where she learned about drugs and sexual harassment. School is where she had a reputation to uphold and where she made friends whom she defended when others called them sluts. School is where, when academics were concerned she mostly failed. Sally hated school.

By contrast, Sally "loved" working on her correspondence courses at her father's house under his supervision. She described it as,

Easy, I got an A in French. Then I got an E in French and I need to get tutoring, then I got a C+ in Science and I'm getting B's and A's in English and like, B's and A's in math, and I haven't done any guidance and socials, I haven't sent anything in yet, but everything else is real easy, and it's better than school. It's like I can do whatever I want for as long as I want. It's just better than school. I don't like school...I'm going to stay on correspondence 'til Grade 11.

In the end, the social demands of school were too much of a distraction for Sally, and friends and drugs and sexual harassment and violence drove her out. She is far happier at home. Each day she spends time with her father and her sister and rides back and forth to the city with her mother. Each day she plays Barbies, and on weekends she meets her Skater friends and skates, or she gets together with Beverley and Lorraine and writes songs and practices being a girl Beastie Boy. When she wants excitement, she and the girl Beastie

boys go downtown and hang around with other kids and create some diversion for themselves. Sally told me how they go about it:

I just get this big bolt of energy and, Okay, I'm in this hyper mood and when I get hyper, I am just like, if you don't want to be embarrassed walk totally away from me because I'll just go up and talk to everyone. Like, "I think you're cool, but you need a haircut", like I'm so critical, it's really funny. And Beverley is exactly the same way only she's not so, she wouldn't go and do it, she mocks everybody behind their back, but I'm the person that goes up and says it. "You know what my friend just said about you?" and she goes, "You're an idiot", and stuff, and like, people just laugh, and we do it to have fun, for something to do...

Ultimately, Sally loves to do anything that will earn her some attention and a sense of belonging. She will dye her hair a multitude of colours and dress herself in weird and wonderful clothes. She will make friends with gang members. She will go to church socials with new acquaintances and sing religious songs on Friday nights when she has nothing else to do. She will take drugs and get into fights. She will go with her stepfather to the mall and pretend he's her older brother and with her mother to Tupperware parties and although her mother "dragged" her there at first, she will go to see a counsellor. Going for counselling is something that Sally really loves because it's

Uhm, really good, it's time.... a time to talk. (short laugh)
So you can talk about like all your problems and they can give you advice and stuff. 'Cause at first I said "Well I won't go". And then when I met her [the counsellor] and everything I'm like "Okay. this isn't that bad". And now it's like my Mom has an hour and a half appointment and she comes out to the car and I'll still be talking to my counsellor, like we'll have a two hour session. And my mom's like, "What kept you guys so long?" Tomorrow I'm going to bring in coffee and we're going to sit there and talk as long as we want...

This is where I left Sally: seeing her counsellor on a weekly basis, and staying away from school.

Marilee's Story

One time when my dad was drinking he kicked me out of the house, he hit me a couple of times, so I left that night and went to a friend's house. My dad regrets it, and he says he wouldn't do it again. He hit my mom too. He had her down on her knees right by the coffee table and he had her arm behind her back and he threatened to break it an' stuff and then she screamed. And I came down the stairs and she told me to phone the cops. So my dad left, and now they're back together and he's in counselling and it's better, but I'll never forgive him. Like inside, I'll never, ever forgive him, but I'll forgive him enough to keep my love for him and stuff. (excerpt from taped interview with Marilee)

Although Marilee described her family as basically good, there was much in what she told me that pointed to deep-seated and long-standing difficulties. Her parents have been together for nearly twenty-six years during which they have had many mini separations, short periods of time when one parent or the other left the family in order to cool off after a fight. Fights appear to occur frequently in the family (and happened frequently in Marilee's father's family as he was growing up). Everyone in the family fights. Fights take place between mother and father, father and daughters, mother and daughters or between the sisters. These altercations seem to begin over small things and escalate into major confrontations. As Marilee described it

All our fights start over stupid things, just little stupid things, and they always seem to happen on vacation or something like that. 'Cause Christmas time we'd always get in a fight, and the family would split up. My dad would go somewhere for a couple of days before Christmas, then come back. My sister and I got in a big huge fight on Valentine's Day, and I ran away on Valentine's Day.

The Valentine's Day fight was over who could wear a particular pair of shoes. Running away as a way of dealing with this fight was actually sanctioned or perhaps even suggested by Marilee's mother who told her, "Okay, you can get out of the house, you know," and drove her to the house of a friend who had agreed to take her in.

According to Marilee, when her father is involved in the fighting he is usually drinking and listening to country music and feeling angry. Furthermore, drinking together as a family and getting drunk is very much a part of any holiday and the celebrating of birthdays and anniversaries. Marilee's parents purchase the alcohol for Marilee, her sister and their friends, and sanction their drinking at home under their supervision. The trouble seems to be that the parents themselves drink right along with everyone else and set limits neither on their own or others' drinking. As Marilee describes it, both parents "used to like really party and stuff", but have lately cut back because "they figure they're getting too old for it". Drinking is still however, Marilee's father's chosen form of recreation. It is his ritual to drink with the boys at the local bar every Friday, and while according to Marilee, he has cut back somewhat on the amount he drinks during the week, he "has to" drink on Fridays because he "needs his time to have fun", especially since his best drinking buddy has just "dropped dead" at fifty.

Most conflict in the family seems to be characterised by an "either or" approach, that is, either you do what I want you to do or I'll let you have it. "Letting you have it" begins with screaming, yelling and name calling, escalates to threats and on occasion, physical violence, and usually ends in someone being told to "get out" or choosing to leave as a way of punishing his or her opponent. People often leave, but they always come back.

Ultimatums are frequently held over the heads of family members who are seen to be in the wrong. For example, at the moment, Marilee's father is seen to be in the wrong because of hitting his wife. He has therefore been given the ultimatum to "never do it again" or he's had it, "because he knows that if he makes one more mistake he's gone!" Marilee herself has a similar ultimatum hanging over her head, although her ultimatum is not

about her conduct during fights, it's about her commitment to school. She knows that she has only one choice: "either do correspondence or get out". Marilee made it clear to me that she is no stranger to conflict and violence in her home.

As Marilee told me her story and I recorded it, I kept flashing back to my conversations with Marilee's mother. Marilee's mother had expressed astonishment and dismay with regard to her daughter's involvement with violence and talked at length about how shocked she was to hear about Marilee's participation in the beating of Sally. During the *Parents Together* forum on violence, she had described her incredulity to the group while I took notes. I had heard her express similar sentiments at another *Parents Together* meeting I had attended. In searching for an explanation, she and the other parents who participated focused on their children's peers as the culprits who had persuaded them to engage in violence. No one mentioned family violence. Everyone saw it as a "kids' problem" brought on by the need for status which could be gained through intimidation of others. Each parent in turn went to great lengths to elaborate on this thesis and to tell the others how their own child had never been violent and never experienced violence before she or he changed "one hundred and eighty" degrees when she or he "hit puberty" and started to hang around with their present friends. Several parents stated emphatically that since they had never even spanked their kids there could be no connection between their children's violent behaviour and anything they had experienced at home. Marilee's mother said not a word about her husband, about the conflict in her family, about the violence each family member had both witnessed and experienced at the hands of other family members, and about the many times she or her husband had left the family temporarily because of fighting. She did not mention that her

husband was currently in counselling under threat of being thrown out of the family home if steps out of line. Instead, she talked about Marilee's need for anger management and about her efforts to persuade Marilee to accept counselling. For Marilee's mother, and for the parents who participated in the forum, youth violence is somehow derived from the state of being adolescent. Marilee offered a different explanation. She saw her own violence as directly connected to her experiences with her family and to her deeply felt anger, and while willing to talk to me only once because she was afraid of being called a "narc" (an informer) for telling me about what she knew about violence, she was none-the-less willing to enter into a lengthy discussion about many aspects of herself and her life.

As well as talking about family, we focused on what most occupied Marilee aside from family, which was what she described as "trying to become the person I 'm supposed to be". When I asked who that person was, she answered with "Just the person I am right now, the person who doesn't do drugs". It seemed for Marilee, that since grade eight, (Marilee was now completing grade ten by correspondence) she had not been the person she was "supposed" to be because as she described it, she had become involved with "the scummy people", those who were "druggies and just didn't care", those who "did whatever they wanted". As a self-described "scummy" person, she had enjoyed herself by "basically living on the edge every second you were there". When I clarified what living on the edge meant, I found out that it meant defying one's parents primarily by taking drugs. When I asked what had induced her to become involved with drugs and "scummy" people she told me,

I met Rosie, a friend of mine, and she kind of, I never knew she was hangin' around with them, and I got pulled into them, and it just

seemed like a good idea at the time. (Laughs) "Cause it was fun. It was exciting...rebellling against your parents, just being in control.

When I probed further to find out why she was no longer there, she explained that this was all due to a "mishap", a "mishap" which turned out to be a narrowly averted beating at the hands of the very people she found so exciting to be around. It seems that because she was a newcomer to this crowd, she was also a target for suspicion. Thus, when a rumour began to circulate that the local R. C. M. P. knew that the members of this "scummy" crowd were smoking dope and had a list of their names, Marilee was targeted as a "narc" and singled out for a beating by about forty or so people. She was to receive the beating at the hands of a number of girls who were threatening to "bash her face in". These girls (who until that moment were seen by Marilee as her friends) had organised the beating, which was to take place just outside the same junior high school that Sally attended. The boys, who were also involved in targeting Marilee, were to stand by and act as spectators. Their role was to watch and not to speak to Marilee who was to receive her punishment at the hands of the girls. Marilee avoided the beating by calling her mother and pleading with her to come to the school with her car in order to take Marilee home and out of harm's way. She has been at home ever since. Like Sally, Marilee refuses to return to school. Like Sally she is receiving her education by correspondence. While staying home and working on correspondence, Marilee began to consider what it meant to become the person she was "supposed" to be, and now, some two years later, it appears that she is reaching some clarity as to who she was, so I asked her to tell me more.

At first, Marilee talked about herself in positive terms, and outlined for me how she planned to behave in the future: She would be a person who

would not allow violence in her home so that her children would not have to experience the terror and the pain of being beaten and of watching their parents engage in violent quarrels, that she herself had. She, unlike her mother, would follow through on avoiding violence in her family, even if it meant divorcing her husband. She would avoid smoking in front of her children so that they would not pick up the habit from her, as she had picked it up from watching parents of friends smoke. She would marry as soon as she finished school, and before that, perhaps when her boyfriend moved out of his family home and found an apartment, she would move in with him. She would "get out" (of her family home), get a job, "just a normal regular job, something to afford my car and my apartment, maybe pet grooming or daycare". She would have children, a little boy and girl, for whom she had already picked names which her boyfriend also liked. She would build on her present situation which she outlined as

Everything's so good right now. You know, I've got a boyfriend, and he loves me, I love him, and my parents are fine. You know my sister's doing fine, and I've got my learner's [license]. You know I've finally turned sixteen, you know, so, and I've finally found friends and I finally realise that I don't have to find friends or boyfriends that everyone's gonna agree with. 'Cause I used to try and find, you know, find popular guys, good looking' guys, but now, you know, Danny, and like all my friends, Rick and Tim and them, people think they're losers, other people consider them the losers. So they say "Oh gross, don't hang out with them!" And it's like "Excuse me, they're my friends, you know, they treat me good," and I'm tired of trying to find people that all my other friends are happy with. So I'll just be friends with who I'm friends with, and I'm fine.

But as we talked and I tried to learn more about what "fine" looked like in the every day sense, it turned out that things were really not all that fine, that in fact, most of the time, Marilee struggles with feelings of anger, fear, insecurity and grief. For while she has hopes of a rosy and secure future premised on marriage and children, she also suffers daily in a private world

where the threat of violence is never very far away. Marilee's explanation for this is that this happens because kids have "attitudes". Citing herself and her friend Tanya as examples she told me that

Most of my friends' parents hit them. It's like Tanya and her mom, it just happens. It's just like the kid has an attitude, and the parent gets fed up. I mean my mom told me, you know, from time to time, she wants to just punch me in the face. You know it's understandable why she does that. You know, I mean I can admit it, I get an attitude, it's just, you get an attitude...

So for Marilee, in every day life, the feeling of anger is far more dominant than feeling "fine". As she describes it, given that life is

just like the commercials that are on now, the one uh, with the girl from "Sisters" on there, where she was saying how uhm, she was saying how kids look up to their mom and dad. You know, "Let's dress like mom, let's shave like dad". Uhm, and then they watch mom and dad yell and fight, you know and it's true enough. Kids grow up with violence, and...so I'm violent, and I'm a very angry person...I can get very angry, and just, I don't always know why. Somehow, I mean something, just a little thing, triggers me off, and I'll just be like all angry. You know, I've grown up a very angry person...I'm that angry that I will deck someone, I'm just scared of the day that I end up punching a person when I shouldn't, 'cause I get so angry, I get so excited. I get angry and my adrenaline pumps up and I'm just like, "Ya, let's do it!" you know.

And of course Marilee, in a condition that she describes as "pumped with anger", had in effect "decked" someone when she helped Sarah beat up Sally. But for Marilee, her involvement in that fight didn't really count as an enactment of her anger and as "decking" someone she shouldn't because (a) she felt perfectly justified in pushing, shoving and choking Sally and holding her for Sarah to beat up, because in her mind, Sally "deserved" this for showing an interest in Sarah's boyfriend and (b) she hadn't actually hauled off and punched Sally although she wanted to, because she was afraid that if she did that and her parents found out, she wouldn't be able to get her learner's license.

Anger is a constant for Marilee. She is angry with her father for bringing violence into the home. And although she talked about things being "fine" with her sister, she often engages in what she describes as "huge fights over stupid little things" with her sister. For the moment there is peace between the sisters, a peace brought on largely by the fact that they are living several provinces apart. On occasion, she is angry with Danny, her boyfriend, and fights with him just like she fights with her sister over what she also describes as "stupid things". As she tells it,

It's like, somethin' little he'll say, I'll just start yelling at him, and then he'll start yelling back at me, and he'll start bringing somethin' else into it, and then I'll bring somethin' else into that and it's just like a big fight. Bang! and then it's like, "See ya!"

She also gets angry with her friends, the same friends she is so happy to have found, the "losers" whom she defends to other people, and describes as treating her "good". On the Saturday before I interviewed her, Marilee had in fact become involved in what turned into a violent altercation with the very people she was describing as her closest friends:

Me and my boyfriend, we were down at Seven-Eleven, and it was with the people that I was friends with at the time. Then, they just went against me so I got angry at them. So we were dr.. I was drunk. Down at Seven-Eleven. I was fingering Rick and, you know, I was saying "Fuck you man! Na na na.." You know, stuff like that. And, just to joke around and Rick's was like "'Kay let's go". I'm like "'Kay". 'Cause I was the only one saying it to him. You know, so, uhm, Danny took me and we walked, and then I got mad at Rick and I started walking ahead of them, for some reason, I don't know. So then, Mike and them drove by in the van and Danny's like "Fuck you!" and Rick hangs out the window and goes "What?", and Danny said "I said go fuck yourself!" So they stopped, and Mike come out. I just... try and stop Mike I'm like "Don't touch him! Don't touch him!" Like I'm "Don't touch my God damn boyfriend!" He's like "Oh, screw you!" So then he walks and I'm trying to stop Rick at the same time and I just turned around, and I just saw them fighting. I just walked off. I left. I was in tears. I was crying. I knew where I was going. I was gonna go straight to Tanya's but I just kept walking past Tanya's. I was just

scared that I was gonna, you know, they're gonna come after me. The cops were gonna come up behind me saying "Danny's in.. going to the hospital". "Danny's laying dead on the road." You know, "Danny's going to jail". You know, it's just, stuff was going through my head. I thought it was my fault. But Danny said it wasn't 'cause if he hadn't yelled anything out to them they wouldn't have stopped. 'Cause they were going right by us. But, I just thought it was stupid. So Sarah thinks that uh, Danny should charge Mike for it. 'Cause Mike's the one who started it.

On other occasions she gets angry with her girlfriends, even those she describes as her "best" friends, girls like Sarah with whom she beat up Sally. In the week before our interview, Marilee had in fact decided to "not bother" with Sarah, because she was angry with Sarah for making comments about the amount of time Marilee was spending with Danny. They had only begun speaking with each other again because Sarah had gossip to share about the Saturday night Seven-Eleven fight and most particularly about Danny and the other boys that Marilee wanted to hear. In many ways, Marilee's friendships with girls are tenuous and largely premised on alliances against other girls who are seen as "competition" for boys. For Marilee and her friends, boys are central to their sense of self worth, in a large part because they have been abandoned physically and or emotionally by their fathers. This was her explanation for Sarah's need to beat up Sally:

It's her dad, I don't know what happened to him, but Sarah I think, gets her anger from him. I can't remember the whole story, but I think her dad just basically left her, and so when guys leave Sarah, she can't handle it, because her dad did it to her. And when she was going out with Chris, she had an obsession with Mike, you know, she was fooling around with Mike when she was going out with Chris. And she just used to have an obsession with two guys all the time. And if one would try and leave her she would say, "Oh well, I'll be with you", to the other guy. So she gets lots of anger and depression from that, and so I think the fact that she might have thought that Chris might have left her, just because something could go wrong and Sally could have said something that Chris believed, or something like that, and Sarah got mad right? Sally might try to take Chris away from her, and he was

Sarah's, and nobody could touch Chris. Sarah could touch somebody else, but nobody could touch Chris.

As Marilee described it, she, and other girls constantly look each other over in order to assess how much "competition" they might represent. As a consequence, Marilee rarely forms alliances with those she views as giving her too much "competition," but with Sarah, she had made an exception:

Sarah's very pretty. She's the only friend of mine that I have competition with, 'cause all my other friends I have no competition with, but she's the only one that I do...

As well as experiencing anger in relation to many people in her life that she identifies as important to her, Marilee is still angry with Sally, and had actually called her a bitch the last time she saw her because:

she had the snarkest look on her face when we saw her the other day. It was like just two days ago, and I had the perfect chance, just to go and punch her, but I go to my friend, I go, "Well let's just jerk her around and follow her..."

--which they did. As far as Marilee is concerned, Sally caused her own beating, and Sally is still in the wrong. In the aftermath of having beaten Sally, Sarah and Marilee and their boyfriends actually went to MacDonald's and had something to eat, and except for making a few remarks like "Oh that bitch broke my nail!" and "Oh that bitch got blood on my sweater !" didn't really give Sally much thought. Their thoughts and feelings were mostly focused on themselves, and the strongest emotion Sally recalled feeling after the fight was feeling justified. In the end, despite the fact that she acknowledged that "no one should have to put anything, anyone through that pain" (the kind of pain Sally had experienced), Marilee seemed certain that she was right to help Sarah beat up Sally because:

I don't know how strong Sally is, and I don't know what she could have done to Sarah, so I basically saved Sarah if Sally had done damage to her.

Feeling justified shifted to another of Marilee's recurring feelings, the feeling of fear, for a short time, when during the course of the meal at MacDonald's, a policeman walked in. This caused quite a reaction in Marilee, who experienced her heart going "boom",

'Cause I, I think that's what scares me the most, is seeing the cop afterwards. It's like, he's gonna come up to me and say, "Hey you're comin' with me", You know, it's just quite scary.

The policeman actually did nothing to Marilee, he came over briefly and said hello, bought his coffee and left. Further probing into what was so bad about all this, revealed that the most frightening thing for Marilee in all this was facing the possibility of punishment. Her biggest concern was that if she were caught, she might not be allowed to get her driver's license. She wasn't frightened about what she had done, nor was she concerned about the effects of the beating on Sally's physical and emotional health. Empathy for Sally, or some understanding that Sally had suffered as a result of what had been done to her was largely absent. During the fight, Sally's fear and Sally's blood only served to escalate the situation because these were interpreted as wrong doing on Sally's part. That is, Sally's desire to escape was seen by Marilee as an act of defiance against Sarah which called for action on Marilee's part, and prompted her to grab Sally and swing her around to face Sarah while yelling at Sally, "You stand there until she's done with you!" (See Appendix I.) At the same time, when Sally's blood spurted onto Sarah's sweater this was seen by Sarah as all the more reason to beat up Sally. The fear of punishment turns out to have been the only thing that stood in the way of Marilee's more active engagement in beating Sally. As she described it

If there was no punishment at the time that Sarah was beating up Sally, I mean if there was nothing about going to Juvey, nothing about court, nothing about getting busted for it, I would have just killed her right

there. Not like literally killed her, but I would have punched her as well.

What stopped her was the fear that she might be punished and nothing more. Sarah, on the other hand had no such inhibitor. In fact, according to Marilee, Sarah's strongest reaction to the fight was one of pride. According to Marilee, after the fight, Sarah was "all proud and was like, "Oh ya, wicked! I beat somebody up" And she got all this attention for it from everyone." Marilee also got a lot of attention for having been involved, attention she tried very hard to divert because,

That got me scared at the time, because everybody's thinkin' that I did it, so I'm thinkin' the word's gonna get around and then finally a parent was gonna get hold of the cops and say that I was the one who did it.

Interestingly, word did get around almost immediately to Marilee's mother who did nothing. She talked with Marilee about the fight, and asked her questions about what happened, but she did not hold Marilee responsible, even though she had most of the details which she later relayed to me. Ultimately Marilee's mother's only response was to suggest to Marilee that,

The only way I can fight is with her permission, if they've got me backed into a corner and I have no way out. You know if I have to fight that person to get myself out of there, then that's what I have to do.

For Marilee, the "have to" in fighting depends on how angry and how scared she is. It also depends on her commitment to what is for her an inviolable rule, that she must hate those her friends hate and fight for her friends when called upon to do so. Thus the fear that Marilee experiences from engaging in fighting is not only the fear of getting caught, it is also the fear that accompanies "having to" fight for one's friends, which ultimately leads to a fear of being harmed. As a consequence of having become involved with other young people who fight (girls and boys) Marilee fears that she will

be attacked or jumped from behind. This fear keeps Marilee tied to certain parts of her neighbourhood and keeps her from going to school. It also keeps her from going downtown, an area which she believes is rife with the threat of violence. But it is not only downtown that frightens Marilee, it is the whole world, which for Marilee is an altogether awful place, a place which she describes in the following way:

I don't like the world right now, I think it's a piece of shit. It's filled with drugs and guns. I mean it's the guns that bother me. Because those kids, the ones that were by that park and the one that got shot, those were my friends (a claim that Sally also made). All of them were my friends, the one guy that got shot in the leg was my friend and the guy that shot him was my friend too. So it was, I was involved with that.

It would seem from Marilee's point of view, that guns are easy enough to get. The friend who was the shooter in the incident alluded to above, was able to procure a gun by selling his stereo and using the money to buy the gun through the illegal underground market. Marilee and her boyfriend have access to guns through the boyfriend's father who takes them both out into the countryside to shoot off rifles. One of her closest girlfriend's mothers has a handgun which she keeps loaded and ready to shoot because "her and Daniella's dad are getting divorced right now and her mom's so mad at her dad that she's ready to shoot him". Marilee herself, although she states with emphasis that she hates guns and would never have one in the house or use one also states that she would never-the-less use one if "like I had to use one, like there was no other choice." Thus Marilee lives with the ever present threat of violence and death.

Death is already a very real part of Marilee's life. Two weeks before our interview, Marilee lost two friends. One fourteen year old was killed when a sixteen year old he was driving with lost control of a sportscar he had

persuaded a salesman to let him test drive. The sixteen year old had just passed his driver's test and was inexperienced with fast cars. He attempted to negotiate a sharp curve in the road near his house at 112 km per hour and wrapped the demonstrator around a telephone pole and killed his passenger. The other friend, a fourteen year old girl, died of leukaemia. As well, in the past year, Marilee's sister's boyfriend's best friend committed suicide by pulling his car into the family garage, attaching a hose to the exhaust system and gassing himself. Marilee's explanation was:

Uhm, he was really screwed up mentally. Like not screwed up, screwed up, but he did a lot of drugs. And he didn't handle life. And people just thought of him as a party person, like, "Hey there's party Chris". People never thought about Chris.

After telling me this story, Marilee noticed the time and abruptly ended the interview, because her boyfriend was coming over. As I was thanking her for allowing me to talk with her, and was sitting on the steps by the door and tying up my shoe laces, she said to me,

So, do you ever talk to girls about rape and molesting and that kind of thing?" and I said "Well sometimes they tell me about it when we're talking together, is there something you'd like to say to me about that?" She said, "Well only that when I was three I was molested by a baby sitter who put his fingers inside me, but just that, and when I was fourteen and on summer vacation and visiting some friends, a twenty year old guy got me drunk and raped me, and my mother knows and my counsellor knows, and I still wake up every morning angry about it and hurt by it and wondering whether I should charge him.

And on that note, she left me standing in her driveway and got into her boyfriend's truck and drove away.

Molly's Story

My older brother molested me, he abused me up to about a year and a half ago, and I have these feelings, these flashbacks, it's like I can feel it happening all over again. When it happened, my mother didn't really believe me at first, but then my older brother went to live with my grandparents for six months and we all went for counselling, even

him. And we talked a lot about what happened to my other brother, the one who's two years younger than me, when he was little, when he lost some of his fingers and the whole family got disrupted. We talked about this stuff [sexual abuse] too, but I don't like to bring it up because I get this feeling like they think I'm lying and everything, and then especially when it did everything to the family, I just don't want to talk about it. It's taken me forever to feel comfortable around my parents. With your parents, they love you so much and in your brother's case, they love him so much and they don't want to believe that he could do that to their daughter. They just want to try and block it out of their minds, they think it will just go away. My parents didn't really believe me until about uh, two weeks after I told them, I tried committing suicide by slitting my wrists and I tried taking an overdose of pills and all that, and that's when they finally believed me, and that really hurt. (excerpt from taped interview with Molly)

Both Molly and her mother, whom I also interviewed, took great pains to tell me that theirs is a "loving and close family" in which people really care about each other. But what is "loving and close?" For Molly close became too close, especially where her older brother is concerned, and "loving" requires clarification. Does it mean you swallow your own experience and keep your mouth shut because your parents love you and your brothers so much and you don't want there to be any trouble? Does it mean when you go for counselling to deal with sexual abuse in your family, you let your brother's experience become more important than your own so that you can put it all behind you and he can come home?

According to Molly, two events stand out with regard to her experience with her family: The first event, a traumatic accident involving Molly's second brother, happened when Molly was four, her older brother was six, her second brother was nearly two and her mother was pregnant with her youngest brother. The second event is her long standing sexual abuse at the hands of her older brother, abuse that began when she was about eight and continued until she was twelve. As Molly's family lore would have it, the first event, the younger brother's accident, is an explanation for the second

event, the older brother's abuse of his sister, and the second event, according to Molly, has actually been subsumed by the first.

So what did happen? As I pieced it together from both Molly's and her mother's remarks, the family climate is as follows: Molly's family is one in which "everyone feels everyone else's feelings," that is, mother gauges the state of the family through the state of her own feelings, in that "if they're fine, chances are Mom's okay, if they're in distress, Mom is;" other extended family members are the source of the family's closest friendships; parents and kids become intensely involved in each other's lives; father and sons engage in physical combat, but that's "only natural"; people yell and scream at each other at close range when they are angry with each other, but that "happens in every family"; the family closes ranks against outsiders; women make demands by yelling, but men hold sway; doors are left open, including doors to bedrooms, and Molly, despite advice from counsellors given directly to Molly's mother, still does not have a lock on her bedroom door.

The family's central organising story, the one which family members tell when they want to illustrate what kind of family theirs is, was told to me as follows: While Molly's family and her maternal uncle were visiting at Molly's maternal grandparent's home to help to build a retaining wall, someone took their eye's off Molly's next youngest brother for just a moment, and he got his hand caught in a power mixer. (The "someone" was actually Molly's maternal uncle, a fact Molly's mother was careful to mention in that she elaborated with a great deal of detail about just how her brother took his eyes off his nephew, and equally careful to excuse, because she didn't want to blame him and has "forgiven" him.). The end result was that the two year old boy lost two fingers on his right hand, and has had to adjust to this since then. This event caused much upset and turmoil in the family

largely because the young boy was airlifted to Vancouver and underwent a series of reconstructive surgeries, but the family members pulled together and supported each other through it all.

This event is still central to the telling of the family's story, even today. It is the event which the family uses to show how everyone helped out, how everyone can forgive, how important it is to take the second youngest brother's special needs into consideration and how the family can make it through anything. In fact, as Molly tells it, this event (an event which happened ten years ago) became central to the family's counselling experience when they went to deal with Molly's sexual abuse by her older brother. Somehow, the focus shifted from Molly's sexual abuse to the early life chaos and trauma caused by her younger brother's accident. Somehow this became the reason why the older brother molested his sister. Somehow this became the reason why no one noticed.

When Molly's mother told the family's story, she didn't mention her oldest son's sexual abuse of her daughter, although she knew that I had been told about it, that Molly had discussed it with her school counsellor, and that Molly had created a great deal of trouble between herself and Linda by disclosing Linda's sexual abuse to other students while knowing how painful it had been for Molly herself to have it known within her family that she had been abused. Even when I provided openings for the topic, Molly's mother side-stepped the issue and opted instead to tell me about the trauma of the second youngest son's accident, an event she brought forward by way of illustrating the family's closeness because of how they had all rallied round to deal with it.

It may be true that this family experiences closeness and tries to support its members. It is also true that much that happens is denied, that much is

concealed and overlooked and that conflict happens frequently. Despite being characterised by his mother as a bright student who was accelerated through his school program, Molly's older brother has often been in trouble. And while he and Molly participate in sports and play on school teams and work at part-time jobs, they also fight and get kicked out of school. Molly's father rules the family with force (physical force for boys, angry silence and bad moods for wife and daughter) and Molly's mother, while vocal in her opinions, ultimately defers to her husband. Molly herself is quite confused as to how to relate to peers and adults. She spends a great deal of time seeking out school counsellors. She tells conflicting stories about her own and others' personal experiences and engages in much gossip and factionalism. Jennifer Halliday, the school counsellor, seemed most concerned about Molly. Without disclosing material that had been given to her in confidence she gave me to understand that much in Molly's family was not as it should be, and that violence and conflict were part of the fabric of Molly's family's everyday life.

After talking extensively with Molly, with her teachers, and with Linda who has stayed overnight at Molly's house, I believe that Jennifer Halliday's picture of Molly's family is an accurate one, largely because in formulating her picture of Molly and Molly's life, she had the opportunity to interact with both Molly and her mother, and the opportunity to observe Molly's interaction with her peers and her teachers in a number of different circumstances. I also believe that if I had relied only upon Molly's mother to give me insight into Molly's family and Molly's participation in violence (a situation which sometimes prevails when adults talk only to other adults about children, as was the case in the Parent Forums mentioned earlier), I would have been given a very different picture. I would have been told the

story of "the family that pulls together against great odds and does whatever it can to be supportive of its members". I would have been allowed to share in Molly's mother's frustration and anger with the fact that her daughter was beaten up and I would have been treated primarily to a version of Molly's family life that highlighted the strengths of the parental relationship and the talents of the children. And with respect to this family's children's participation in violence, I would have heard only that kids get involved in violence because,

everybody starts to buck for their rank. It starts in grade six, when well, we're eleven years old and we're starting to develop and we're starting to look to who we're gonna be and some kids (like Molly) do very well, she's on every committee, she does extremely well in sports activities, she was "Miss Popularity" and all that. And those that aren't at that stage can either turn around and shoot you down to make themselves look better or to pull you down to their level. And then it's like, "I hate her," and she doesn't know how to handle it...and it all grows out of a kind of teenage rivalry (Molly's mother's explanation for adolescent violence).

Molly's version of herself and her involvement with violence was quite different from the analysis offered by her mother. Molly revealed her story as I met with her in the context of the group consisting of Molly, Linda and Mary, which I mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Three. Within these conversations, Molly was always the least vocal participant, and sometimes needed a little assistance from me to be heard, especially because Mary was very quick to jump into any pause in the discussion. There were however, two topics of conversation to which Molly returned time and time again, that of having been beaten, and that of having been sexually abused.

When I met with the girls for the first time, I actually invited Molly to speak before the others because at that time, her victimisation at the hands of Mary's friend Cathy was still fresh and I wanted to give her the opportunity to say whatever was on her mind about that, but she declined to say much until

we were well into the first hour of our conversation. At that point, having been assured that her anonymity would be preserved, that neither of the other girls would repeat her story to others, and that what she said would be used only as research data, she began to speak about the experience of having been beaten by Cathy while thirty or forty students stood by and watched.

She began by outlining the history of her interactions with Cathy in order to help me to understand the reasons why the fight inevitably happened. Molly, like Sally, had shown an interest in a boy who had already been designated as someone else's boyfriend, in this case Cathy's. The competition with Cathy for male attention began in September right at the beginning of Molly's grade eight year, and culminated in a vicious beating in the following January :

It was like right in September, right, in my TAG* group, there was this guy I was talking to and Cathy came over and talked to us too. So later I told Jessica that Cathy was a real bitch. So Jessica told Cathy at lunch that I'd said she was a bitch, so I like, kinda apologised, like a lot, but she kept mouthing me off and she kept pushing me in the hallway wanting to fight, but that time a whole bunch of people stopped her. But another time, we were by the side of the school and there was this big rumour going around that I said that two guys molested me at a party or whatever and all that and she walks up to me and goes, "What happened?" and I said, "Nothing fucking happened", and she goes, "Bullcrap!" and then she punched me and goes, "Hit me back!" and I was going to hit her, but then I wanted to get her in crap with the principal so I didn't hit her back. I know it's not good to rat on people, but I was mad. And then, like last week, I was talking about some guy that Cathy likes, and so a couple of days ago when I was walking home from school by the store, Cathy saw me and wanted me to fight her in front of a whole bunch of people, and she wouldn't stop, and started

* TAG refers to Teacher Advisor Group, which is a mixed grade group of students which one enters in one's first year of junior high and stays with throughout one's time in a particular school. The rationale behind such groups is that students will have at least one teacher who will see them every day in the capacity of an advisor rather than a classroom teacher and thus afford them a personal relationship based on support and guidance. Furthermore, students will also have contact with students from other higher and lower grades and thereby move past the limitations imposed by spending all one's time with students in one's same school year. That is the ideal, the reality is not always so perfect.

hitting me and she kept hitting me until Mr. Robertson came along in his car and made her stop and brought me home.

When I asked her how she made sense out of all this, she put Cathy's behaviour down to Cathy's hating her and wanting to get her:

It's like I don't know, the first time, you know like I don't know where it came from, but I did call her a bitch, but then there were a lot of other things that people told me that I said, that I didn't and I apologised to her like crazy and everything, and then after that she said like, "Okay," and everything, but then I heard that she just didn't like me like no matter what and if she could think of a reason she'd use it against me. And so after a lot of incidents like pushing and calling me names, she just, I think that was like her chance by the store, and she took it.

When I then asked whether Molly herself subscribed to the notion that if she hated someone she too would find a way to beat them up, Mary jumped in before Molly had a chance to answer and informed me that she would probably not do that, but that she would like to. And when I asked her what would stop her she explained,

It's because I've got morals which I got from my mom, and there's certain rules, like, if they're older than me, if they're bigger than me, I would fight them, but if they're younger than me and smaller than me, there's no way that I would. I couldn't, I couldn't unless they were sitting there and just taunting me, If someone taunts me, then I get mad, and it's like it takes a lot to get me mad enough to fight. I don't like seeing it in myself, and I don't like being around it. And so when, if, and like if they taunt me and I get mad at them, there's no way in hell I'm gonna put up with it.

I turned again to Molly to ask for her perspective on this. She informed me that she had no real morals to speak of and that those she did have had come from her mother, and had mostly to do with sex because

My mom didn't really have any morals until, uhm, like my brother had this big accident, and then I think after that she started to have all kinds of morals that she didn't show before, that she didn't really talk about. After that, everything came out, and after that she's like always letting us know how she's feeling. Like now she says, she sits me down and she goes, "You think sex is a game", and stuff, and she gives me this big lecture...But when it comes to fighting, like if I get really

mad, like with Jenny last night, I just felt like belting her cause she just kept coming up to me and bugging me and then saying she was sorry that she'd challenged me to a fight and "I hope we can be friends" and then following me around, and I was going, "Take a hike Jenny, I'm not going to hit you or anything, but if you keep following me around, I'm going to fuckin' belt you."

These remarks led to further discussions about fighting and how girls became embroiled in physical battles with each other. Again Mary leapt in with her explanation before Molly had a chance to speak:

I don't know, I have this feeling, it's like instinct...If someone does something wrong to you there's a certain extent where you're gonna put up with it, and when that, when you stop putting up with it, that's when you get mad. And, and I usually give them another chance after I get mad, like if they make me mad, okay, okay, I'll let it boil for awhile. and if they piss me off again, then they're just gonna have to deal with it...

When Mary finished her explanation, both Molly and Linda agreed that they fought physically with others whenever someone "made them mad." Thus Molly wanted to "fuckin' belt" Jenny because Jenny was making her mad by following her around and apologising to her for having challenged her to a fight, and both Mary and Linda recalled several instances when they felt perfectly justified in hauling off and smashing someone because they were angry. Again, Mary supplied the words for all three:

I hate being angry, 'cause it gets me in a bad mood. So I get rid of that anger and I take it out on something or someone, it gets rid of it.

That seemed clear enough to me, even though I could not agree with the sentiments expressed. What I still had trouble understanding was why those who were not angry and basically had no personal involvement in the fight, stood by and watched while others were being beaten. Here, Mary was again the quickest to supply the answer:

Well, if there's a fight, everybody in the school just basically goes to watch it because it's different, entertainment sort of, a lot of people

want to see somebody get their butt kicked in real life. It's kind of like T.V., but only it's real life, and that's entertainment kind of, except if you're the one being beaten up.

When I still had trouble understanding how people could watch without intervening when someone was clearly being badly hurt as Molly had been, Molly went on to tell me that,

The crowd was yelling to Cathy, "C'mon hit her!" It wasn't the girls, it was the guys who did it, 'cause they want to see girls fight. It gets them pumped. It gets them excited, not in the physical, in the sexual...Like this guy I was walking with when Cathy saw me said to me "That's the chick who wants to beat you up", and then he waved at her and she started saying all these things to me and he just took off, and I felt like shit, but I'm fine now...

This reference to girls fighting as entertainment for boys which "got them excited, not in the physical in the sexual", prompted me to ask what it was like to be a girl in this day and age. This time, Molly was the first to speak, and what she said was unquestioningly echoed by Linda and Mary.

Here is what they told me:

The guys here degrade you, they try to do that all the time. Like at the beginning of the year, there was like quite a bit of us that in my class, wore body suits and stuff and the guys would sit there staring at you, and you'd go, "What are you lookin' at?" and then they'd start saying all these things to you, stuff that made you feel really low. It was sort of sleazy, they'd say things like, "Oh close your legs", like and "You smell like a fish", or whatever, and "Watch it, flies are comin' in", and "Flies are attacking", and "You smell like tuna".

When I asked how the girls made sense out of the boy's behaviour, they told me, "Oh, they think it's cool, and "It's their hormones and stuff". Molly then went on to talk about feeling a great deal of pressure from boys and also from certain girlfriends to engage in sex. As she put it,

I've noticed that there is pressure, like I've had people try to pressure me. Like more the pressure is from your boyfriend, or it's like from friends who are like, "Have you got laid yet?" And this is from the friends of the boyfriend, or it could be your friends. It's like with your

friends, they sort of like when they're, when you're talking about it and you get into a conversation, they sort of get the hint that you have been or you haven't been by how you talk about it, but the guys, they're just like, "Oh you're still a virgin", and they block their eyes and stuff. But if the guys do it they're like big studs and stuff and we're sluts. Like if they do it, they can be doin' it like many times and they think people consider them studs, and when we do it, we're sluts. Like they dump you if you don't have sex with them, but when you break up with them and they've taken your virginity or whatever, he, he, he calls you a slut...Guys, I think guys perceive us to be playing hard to get, and they perceive themselves as trying hard to get it constantly, and if we're just, if you're not playing hard to get then they think you're a slut.

After hearing this, I asked whether the girls saw this as a double standard, one rule for the boys and one rule for the girls. They seemed confused by what I meant, and required a further explanation. After I gave it, to my great astonishment they told me that they didn't really think it was a double standard, it was just that "that's the way guys are". In many ways, the girls had largely accepted the notion that they were sex objects. This was borne out by the women they chose as female role models. Like Sally, they chose Madonna as their number one favourite, and then Marilyn Monroe and Cindy Crawford. They chose these women because they saw them as having the power to direct their own lives, the power to "do whatever they want". In other words, they saw them as independent and able to be completely in charge of their own lives and failed to see that any power these women have or in Marilyn Munroe's case, had, was directly related to their desirability as sex objects, which therefore makes their power dependent and male controlled. All the girls saw was that the women they had chosen as role models were wanted and worshipped because they were sexually desirable. They therefore, looked to their role models for direction for how to become desirable and thus feel both powerful and loved. Given that they had bought into the old myth that women's power is derived mainly from their

sexual currency, they saw no way out, and endured harassment and abuse because "that's just the way it is."

At the end of one of our meetings, I had my own encounter with sexual harassment in action. This incident took place as Molly and Linda and I were getting into my car so that I could drive them home. It involved a group of boys lined up at the top of some steps leading to the entrance of a school. From this vantage point, the boys ogled the girls as they went by while one boy called out comments like "Hey Melissa, nice bazongas! (referring to her breasts) You're doing a great job, keep growing them just like that." When I asked him to account for himself, he told me that he was "just a bad boy, I guess", and laughed and was applauded by a chorus of admiring louts. Both Molly's and Linda's perception of this was that "that's just how it is, you put up with it, because if you don't it just gets worse". They told me that they didn't like these kinds of encounters, and that they "really hated macho guys", but they informed me that "you gotta expect guys to be pigheaded, it's the way they are."

Our discussions about the difficulties of being young women in the 1990's did not confine themselves to talking about sexual harassment. As already outlined in the previous chapter, Molly and Linda had both experienced sexual abuse before becoming adolescents, and it was in the context of our conversations about sexual harassment that the girls volunteered this information. Molly had actually alluded to this before we began to talk about sexual harassment when she made her remarks about her mother's morality and her brother's big accident. Her brother's accident turned out to be his sexual abuse of her. Her mother's morality turned out to be Molly's mother's discourse on the sexuality of adolescent girls. I will elaborate below:

After spending some time talking about the general level of harassment the girls were experiencing, first Linda and then Molly talked about having been sexually abused. Mary also had a story about having been abused, which she told after the other two told theirs. Mary's story was about date rape. I will elaborate on this in the section devoted to Mary. I mention it here mostly because all this information came out in the same conversation, a conversation which started out being about what it meant to be a young woman in the 1990's and ended with three disclosures of sexual abuse. Parts of Molly's and Linda's stories have already been described in the last chapter, so in fact, the reader is already aware that both these key informants have had to deal with being treated in this way, but the circumstances of their disclosures have not yet been described, nor have some of the extenuating aspects of these experiences.

As the reader knows, Molly's parents had some difficulty accepting that Molly's brother had abused her, and it took a suicide attempt on Molly's part to help them to believe her. The reader also knows at this point, that Molly's parents explained these painful events as being somehow tied to the turmoil caused by an accident which befell Molly's younger brother, an accident which cost him the loss of two fingers at the age of two, an accident which focused both parents' attention on this younger boy perhaps at the expense of their oldest son, who later acted out his need for attention by molesting his sister, or so the story goes. But the story has yet another dimension, one that did not immediately become clear to me, namely that Molly's older brother's abuse of her is also explained by Molly's mother as an "accident". Furthermore, according to Molly's perceptions of how her mother sees things, this second "accident" is somehow tied not only to Molly's older brother's accident-connected need for attention, (i.e., it is really something that happened

through no fault of his) it is also something that was caused at least in part by Molly's interest in sex as a game. Here is Molly's explanation of this:

It all happened like that last year, like I was driving with her in the car and I told her about like what happened, and she was like, "Oh yeah", and she gave me a lecture on it and she said, "Well, did your brother do any of that to you?" and I felt so low, I felt so crummy. She was going back to work early. It was like the first time I told her what my brother did to me, and she gave me a lecture. She goes, "Did he have sex with you then?" It was really stupid. It was like she ended up giving me a lecture on sex for me to know what it is, and she said, "You think sex is a game"...Like I hate it when we're driving in the car and I mention something to my mom, and she goes, "Well I don't need to give you this lecture, because you got it after everything your brother did to you, and then she starts giving me the lecture all over again...Then after that, after my brother's big accident [i.e. his sexual abuse of Molly which her parents denied until she attempted suicide], she had all these morals, these morals that she never had before, all to do with sex.

Disclosing her sexual abuse to her parents did not bring Molly much comfort, nor did engaging in a brief period of family counselling. She found these aspects of her experience embarrassing and wanted all discussion with family to end as quickly as possible. At the time of her disclosure to me, she was however, far from having resolved these issues, and apparently in need of more help. When I offered to facilitate this by finding her a counsellor through a local agency, she rejected the idea because she knew that because of her age, her parents would have to be informed that she was receiving help and she was unwilling to participate in anything that would put the subject of her sexual abuse back on the table because she did not want to hurt her family.

And Molly had more to say on the subject of sex. Her experiences of abuse did not end with being harassed at school and molested by her brother. About two months before our first meeting, Molly had been to a party where

she and most of the other adolescents who attended got drunk*. At the time. Molly, who had hurt herself in gym class, was taking medication for pain. In the course of the evening she mixed pain killers with alcohol and got as she described it "really out of it". This is what happened:

Like, at the time I'd hurt myself in gym, and I was hurtin' pretty badly, and I took ten extra strength Tylenols and I just chugged back a bottle of rum and Coke and had a reaction, like I was really out of it, and I was like all over these guys. Like people said I was acting like the biggest slut, but I didn't know what was going on. I was like really out of it, and I fell asleep in this chair, and everybody said that all these people were doing all this stuff to me, like these two guys were sitting at the party doing stuff to me...

This incident was actually the one referred to by Molly near the beginning of our conversations as the one used by Cathy on at least one occasion, as justification for challenging Molly to a fight. When Molly would not engage with Cathy, Cathy merely tucked it away until the next opportunity arose. After all in Cathy's mind Molly was a slut who deserved a beating, a beating that must inevitably come, given what she had done.

For Molly, and for Linda and Mary, sex and female sexuality has been fraught with difficulties. It has involved sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and date rape, as well as violence at the hands of other females just like themselves. But the difficulties did not end there. They arose again in their sex education classes. Here they were presented with material which they had difficulty relating to and which left them frightened of and disgusted with the

* Molly started drinking alcohol in grade seven, at the age of thirteen. She started smoking cigarettes in grade eight. She is currently also beginning to experiment with marijuana. All these substances are freely available to her through older friends. Her understanding of alcohol use is limited. When she consumes alcohol, she tends to drink large quantities. The last time she drank, which was the week-end before one of our interviews, she said that she "drank a bottle of rum with Coke, but I've never drank it straight, and I can't drink whiskey unless it's mixed".

prospect of having children. What follows is a composite of all three girls' perceptions of sex education and child birth:

We got this video all day yesterday, and one of the guys in the class passed out. It was so gross. I've never seen it in my life and I was just horrified. I'm never gonna have kids, it scared me big. It looked so painful. And the interviewer is sitting there and [the woman he was talking to] she goes, "I was pregnant", like she was talking about how the doctor put his things in to make the hole bigger and all this, and it hurt, but she didn't care, 'cause it would be for her own good and all this, 'cause he got some kind of gel and all this, but I would never do that. I think it's gross and scary, and it looks like it would hurt...The lady giving birth just looked a mess, and I don't, I wouldn't want, like if I was a man, I don't know if I'd wanna be attracted to her anymore...the labour that we watched, it lasted for something like ten hours, and the lady would like, she'd go and have a shower and she was, while she was giving birth. And the girls in the class are just sittin' there going "ahh", and, and then as soon as she gave birth, and after, all that stuff came out after the baby, just as the bell rang and we just got up and "Uhm, gotta go"...and I wouldn't want to do it, I wouldn't want to have a baby.

At the end of this sex education class, the students were left hanging. There was no discussion, no time for debriefing, no time to deal with their feelings of fear and disgust. In the end, for these young women, sex is something that for the most part is frightening, painful and embarrassing, something that happens almost inevitably, but not something that they view as a source of personal joy and pleasure. Mostly sex is associated with confusion and a sense of alienation and a sense of humiliation.

Having talked about sex education, we began to discuss their experience of being educated, of going to school and working with teachers. Molly's response to her process of being educated mostly involved living down her older brother's reputation and struggling with feeling that she was being "stereotyped", that is, categorised as being just like her older brother. Of the eight teachers she had encountered in her first year in junior high, she picked

only two that she liked and respected. She found that if she could like and respect a teacher and work hard in such an individual's class if they were,

laid back and understanding, and I can have some kind of relationship with them. Like most teachers don't remember what it's like to be a kid or whatever. I don't think we're supposed to be angels, but they want us to be angels...If I like a teacher, I work harder in his class, and I get better marks if I like the teacher...

When I inquired about marks, Molly described herself as a "C+, B student, but I'm not working to the max, if I wanted to I could get A's, but that would take work." For Molly school wasn't so much about going to classes, it was about the complex social world she was a part of, a social world which involved dealing with a network of friends and acquaintances, with gossip, with defending her reputation and finally with violence.

At the time of our meetings, Molly was spending much of her time leaving classes to go to talk with the female school counsellor. She was also spending a great deal of time in class and in the breaks discussing other people, and busying herself with the details of her own and others' private lives. At one point, all her teachers had a meeting in order to develop a strategy for dealing with Molly. At that time it was decided that Molly would no longer be given permission to leave classes to go for counselling. Molly's mother was consulted and she agreed with this approach. She believed that this would somehow normalise Molly's behaviour and help her get back on track. Molly's school counsellor thought otherwise, although her opinion was over-ruled. In her estimation, much of Molly's behaviour stemmed from unresolved issues relating to Molly's sexual abuse experiences, and to the aftermath of having been beaten. It was the counsellor's considered opinion that without extensive therapy, Molly would continue to experience

difficulties, both at school and at home. And Molly did experience more difficulties.

After returning to school several days after she had been beaten up by Cathy, she spent several weeks being treated as somewhat of a sensation. She also became a target for attention from Jenny, who wanted to challenge Molly to a fight, because she thought it would enhance her own reputation if she were able to beat up a celebrity like Molly. Molly didn't engage in fighting Jenny, but did give her the message that if she didn't leave her alone, she would beat her up with help from Mary and Linda. Jenny backed down, and apologised and then tried to make friends. This led to Molly being infuriated with Jenny, and very nearly "belting" her. The problem with all this was not only that Molly found it annoying and frustrating to be dogged by Jenny, but that Jenny's behaviour and Molly's lack of retaliation would eventually call Molly's social position into question because Jenny was "hacking" her down. The social rules which operate among these girls demanded that Molly stick up for herself. All three girls took pains to explain this to me because I expressed the opinion that if someone was calling me names and following me around, that I would think she was making a fool of herself, and that I was looking pretty good by contrast. But for them it was exactly the opposite. Here is how it works:

If someone is hacking you down, they're making you look like an idiot, 'cause like, people look at you and mock you and they're thinking, "Oh that person must be an idiot now". If you let somebody hack you down, and you don't do something about it and other people are watching you, they're going to think you're a goof, so you have to do it. You have to do it because you get angry and because you have to teach them a lesson.

Molly's problem with Jenny was solved for a time because Mary and Linda came to her aid. All three girls issued threats against Jenny. This

brought action from Jenny's parents who came to the school Christmas dance with the express purpose of keeping an eye on Linda, Mary, and Molly. At one point during the evening, Jenny's mother actually walked by Linda and gave her a push. This drew a great deal of wrath from the girls, although they did refrain from retaliating. What irked them most was their sense that Jenny's mother wasn't behaving as she should:

Jenny's mother was being an immature little bitch. When you're an adult, you're supposed to be an adult, you're not supposed to be pushing around teenagers, I mean it's over and done with. You shouldn't be doing that. She was setting a bad example for her daughter...

After the Christmas dance episode, Mary and Linda rallied around Molly for some time. Mary, who it turned out was a key witness to Cathy's beating of Molly, even offered to be a witness for the crown at Cathy's upcoming trial, and then Molly blew it all. One day during a lull in one of her classes she took it upon herself to tell four friends the details of Linda's sexual abuse experiences. This information was then passed along from person to person until Linda came to hear of it. At that point, Molly was once again in danger of being beaten up, this time by Linda and Mary. But Linda and Mary thought better of it. Because they had been meeting with me to discuss violence and all its ramifications, they had begun to question violence as a means to an end. And although they wanted to beat up Molly and felt completely justified about wanting to do so, they had also begun to entertain the notion that there were other ways to deal with problems. This was a new and difficult way of thinking for them because they felt so very angry about what Molly had done. They felt she had betrayed our sworn oath of confidentiality, and Linda in particular, felt humiliated and exposed. But instead of ambushing Molly and beating her to a pulp, which is what they

wanted to do, they made an appointment with Jennifer Halliday and arranged a meeting with Molly. It was their intention to confront her and to give her an opportunity to account for herself. They also called me and invited me to come to speak with them about what had happened.

Molly came to the meeting, but avoided taking even the smallest step toward taking responsibility for her actions. She excused herself by saying that she just couldn't hold the things she knew about Linda in anymore, because it caused her too much stress to have this knowledge, so she just had to tell someone. She had trouble apologising to Linda, and sought instead to blame the situation for her actions. She lied to her mother and said that she was being scapegoated by the other two girls. She told her brother that she was being threatened and he escorted her to and from school for several weeks. Her brother complained that he was receiving death threats by telephone, and Molly told her parents and her friends that these were coming from Mary. (The threats were real enough, they were in fact related to this incident, but they were coming from the boyfriend of a girlfriend of Linda's, a young woman who recently dropped out of school and is living with her boyfriend. She had told her boyfriend about Molly's treatment of Linda, and he took it upon himself to threaten Molly's brother.) Fortunately the school counsellor intervened and gave Molly's mother the facts. Molly's mother put Molly's behaviour down to what she called "school girl hysteria", and had trouble with actually acknowledging what Molly had done. She characterised Molly's behaviour as an unfortunate "accidental" slip of the tongue.

Linda and Mary were shocked, hurt, and angered by Molly's behaviour, but by this time they were also committed to trying a non-violent approach to solving this dilemma. They met with the Jennifer Halliday three more times,

and I joined them once more. We worked through their feelings and continued to meet until Linda felt she had resolved the incident in a way that she could live with. They decided that they would exclude Molly from all their activities, school and social. They decided that they would like to continue to meet with me as a twosome, and they decided that they wanted an apology from Molly and a contract that she would stay completely away from them in the hallways and on the school grounds. Molly complied with their requests. She withdrew from contact with me, even though I offered to meet with her on her own. She made plans to change school districts in the coming year, and she stayed away from the counselling area for some time. I saw her once more. She was getting into a car full of her basketball team mates. She made eye contact with me but said nothing, and that's the last I saw of her.

Mary's Story

Yeah, well my dad's punched me a couple of times, and we've gotten into fist fights actually quite a few times. Usually that happens when there are other people around like my mom, but one time it happened when my mother wasn't around, then my brother jumped in and pulled him off me and started beating him up. And one time that I remember, this happened when I was about eight or nine years old, and this is just horrifying to me, but I want to talk about it. I remember my brother was locked in his room [he had been caught stealing Dinky toys at a local store, and this was part of his punishment] and my dad punched a hole through the door and then went into my brother's room and got on top of him and started hitting him and my mom grabbed a mirror, about the size of that calendar there [dimensions approximately 12" by 16"] and she grabbed it and had to smash it over my dad's head to make him stop. And I was just sitting in the kitchen just hollerin'. I didn't know what was going on. I was about ready to call the police. I was scared and I still get scared. (excerpt from taped interview with Mary)

Mary's family is characterised by violent behaviour on all fronts.

Family members all engage in violence outside, as well as inside, the home.

Mary's father has long been involved in fighting, although now his targets are not other males, as was the case when he was a younger man, but young people in the community which he sees as threatening to his children. Lately he has taken it upon himself to push around the young woman who fought Mary at the local fair and incited her friends to beat up Mary's brother. Mary's brother has often engaged in violence with young men his own age. Mary's mother admitted to punching a postal worker in the nose because he wouldn't let her into the local post office during the last postal strike. Just before I began conducting this study, Mary's father had an affair with Mary's mother's best friend while she was renting an upstairs room in their house. When Mary's mother discovered her husband and her best friend in bed together, Mary's mother was deeply upset, but didn't know at first what to do. The friend continued to stay at the house, but over the space of two weeks tension and hostility among the three adults escalated considerably and finally, Mary's parents joined forces against the friend, threatened her with violence, pushed her around, ordered her out of their house, and threw all her belongings out of the upstairs window with Mary and her brother as witnesses. Mary found her mother's continued acceptance of her father under these circumstances very difficult to deal with and couldn't understand how her mother was able to continue the relationship. She has been unable to forgive her father for what he has done, and is still extremely angry with him.

Mary's father is central to the in-home violence. He fights physically with both his children. When he does this either his wife or the child with whom he is not fighting, will intervene and attack him physically to stop him from going too far. As well, Mary and her brother sometimes fight each other. This happened more frequently when they were younger, but still

happens on occasion now that they have both reached adolescence (Mary is nearly sixteen, her brother is eighteen). In general, violent altercations between family members take place about once every three or four weeks. In the intervening periods, family members start out by "tiptoeing around in order not to upset Dad". However, eventually something someone does leads to irritation, which leads to verbal exchanges, which lead to physical combat between father and children. This physical combat is usually stopped by Mother, but also on occasion by one of the siblings who uses physical force to end the father-child battles. Mother than "straightens" Dad out by "reaming him out and making him smarten up". Father never hits Mother. Through Mother's intervention, a kind of peace is restored, and the cycle begins all over again.

Mary's family members expressed strong feelings about each other. Mary frequently referred to her brother as her best friend and as one of the few people she feels she loves and can rely on. She also talked about loving her mother and loving and hating her father. When talking to me about her husband, Mary's mother referred to her husband as her best friend and made it very clear that she loves him very much. When I interviewed Mary's mother she showed her feelings easily. She cried when things upset or moved her and she showed a range of emotions from anger to joy, which she made no effort to conceal them from me. She told me quite clearly that she gets "very emotional very easily, I'll cry in cartoons if they're sad, and I'm stubborn, and I won't back down, and I stand up for myself and demand the respect I deserve."

When I asked her about standing up for herself, she told me that she had to do that every day, especially where her husband was concerned, because he believes so strongly in traditional gender roles, and demands daily

that his wife look after him by taking on all the domestic chores.

Furthermore, if his wife is not available to cook and clean and deal with his feelings, he expects his daughter to jump into the breach. In fact, when I asked Mary's mother what she thought might be contributing to girls' violence, she suggested it was because "girls have always been repressed" and that they were presently "ripping each other's faces off" because they are "frustrated that things are not equal". Other than that, she had "no idea where they get their ideas" and had no further insights into girls and violence.

Mary also discussed her on-going gender related battles with her father and expressed the same frustration, sadness, anger and determination I heard her mother express. Mary described it as follows:

I think he should do more around the house. And he's such a slob. I mean half the stuff around this house is from him. I mean all this shit right here, a'1 those papers there are his. All those over by the phone are his. Normally he's got a mess all over this table, like old statements and estimates and stuff. The computer room upstairs is a mess because he's just a slob and he walks into the house with his big work boots on and tracks dirt everywhere and it pisses me off...and when I say , "Take your damn boots off your feet for the last time!" he goes, "I'm doing business, so get out of here".

While I talked with Mary's mother, her husband "hovered".

Although we chose to conduct our interview in the dining room which is removed from the kitchen where Mary's father was working, by about twenty or more feet of hallway as well as being at the opposite side of the house from the kitchen, Mary's father seemed to find it suddenly necessary to pass by the dining room and frequently look through the closed French doors. He also went up and down the stairs outside the dining room a number of times. Once, he came bursting through the doors with a portable telephone in hand, insisting that the only plug that would work for the telephone was in the

dining room. Another time, he saw his wife crying, so he came into the room to comfort her and to question me. In reassuring his wife, he hugged her and brought her Kleenex, and told me with much feeling that he needed to know she was okay. As I observed these behaviours and interactions, I was reminded of the kinds of behaviours that young children engage in when their mother is talking with another adult or is engaged in doing something which takes her focus off the children.

During my discussions with Mary and her mother, I learned that Mary's father left home when he was fifteen years old. It appears that he left when conflict with his father reached the point at which neither could live in the other's presence. Mary's father's father is a life-long alcoholic who is not "allowed" to drink in his son's house, and chooses to make his visits to his son in a mobile home so that he can drink. After he left home, Mary's father lived on the street for a while and found shelter under a bridge. He managed to find work first as a janitor and then in the building trades and was able to save enough money to buy his own house by the time he was eighteen years old. Mary's mother and father met when he was seventeen and she was fifteen, and married when he was twenty-one and she was nineteen and soon after had two children two years apart. According to Mary's mother, her husband has made it a daily crusade to be the center of her attention. She describes him as having

a very controlling personality, and he likes to have complete control of everything and he can't. I have to keep telling him he can't have complete control of everything, and I have to do that almost every day.

Mary describes her father as a "power tripper" and an "asshole", "who's got to have everything his way", and her feelings about him are really mixed. On the one hand she hates him for power tripping and she is clear that she

doesn't like him and is prepared to fight with him and tell him off. On the other hand she also said:

I just don't like him, but I love him as my dad and I'll always love him as a dad, but I don't like him. I love him for being my dad and I love him for all the things he has done for me, but I hate him for the things he's done to me and the family.

Mixed emotions and a movement back and forth between love and hate were often apparent when Mary talked about her father. Sometimes she would recount good times she had with her father such as going skiing with him and her brother. Other times she would be full of rage and hurt about something he had done, like turning down her offer to help him with his construction projects or criticising her work, or refusing to help her with chores and expecting her to serve him.

On one occasion I overheard a loudly-voiced exchange between father and daughter that I found quite instructive. While I was visiting with Mary at her home, Mary's father called. His truck had broken down, so he was unable to pick up his wife from school and his son from work, and he wanted Mary to find them and tell them what had happened. He also wanted Mary to tell her brother to find a ride home, and then get in the family's second car which was parked in the driveway, and drive to where his father was in order to bring him home. Mary lost her temper with her father. She was angry with him for being in the pub and calling from there in order to make arrangements for someone else to take care of his business. She wanted him to leave the pub and to take a bus home and take care of picking up the rest of the family from there. In fact, Mary's father appeared to have no idea how to find the bus and take it home. He preferred spending \$20.00 to take a taxi if no one could be found to pick him up. Mary very carefully, albeit loudly and angrily, outlined how he could do what she believed he should do. She got

out a bus schedule, and gave detailed instructions for getting the bus home. Mary's father simply said he wouldn't take a bus and that was that. Mary then swore at him and told him how irresponsible he was. As I listened to this conversation, I was struck by the role reversal I was witnessing. To me, Mary sounded like an angry out-of-control parent, while her father sounded like a lost and difficult child who did not want to take responsibility for his own actions. The language that flew back and forth was also instructive. Words like "fuck", "bitch" and "asshole" were used freely and frequently. After the exchange, Mary was quite agitated and talked at length about her father.

According to Mary things in the family were not always as volatile and difficult, but much has changed since she was about twelve years old. Although violence happened on occasion, (recall the story of father's breaking down the door to Mary's brother's bedroom when she was nine years old) Mary describes her relationship with her father up to the age of twelve and when she was a "little kid" as a relatively happy time when they often did things as a family and when she could relate to her father in a friendly fashion. Now he and his children fight constantly, and her father threatens to leave the family because of the children and makes it clear that he is only staying because of his love for his wife. She traced the breakdown of her father's positive relationships with his children back to the first time her brother got into trouble for stealing, (an event already described above) and to her father's becoming stressed by his children and his work. It seems that in the year that Mary turned twelve, her father had a number of anxiety attacks, and eventually took time off work and began to take Prozac (an antidepressant). The family saw a counsellor for some time, but Mary and her brother refused to co-operate with the counselling process largely because

they were angry with their father for blaming them for his state. Eventually, counselling did help somewhat, and the family learned to use strategies like family meetings to deal with their issues. However, the approaches learned in counselling appear to have worked best when the counsellor was present, and less well when the family was on its own. Left to themselves, the family found themselves returning to old patterns of attacking, blaming and defensiveness when problems arose. Mary gave the following example of her father's behaviour:

Well, every time he got sick or something went wrong with him it was me and my brother's fault. Like it was us that were around, or it was us that made him get all stressed out. If he gets stressed out about something, it's usually because me and my brother were fighting, or we were fighting with him or he was frustrated at us because we were being stupid or something like that. Like he'd pulled a muscle. He tore a muscle and he was having muscle spasms underneath his ribs when he was hooking up a trailer to our car so we could go motorbike riding, me and my dad and my brother. Because we used to motorbike all the time. And any way, he was hooking up the trailer for us to do that and it happened [he pulled a muscle and had a muscle spasm] and he was on his back for about two weeks and he blamed it on us because he said we weren't helping enough.

When Mary's father blames Mary and her brother for his difficulties, Mary worries that her father may be right, that she or her brother may indeed be at fault. When I asked her what she tells herself after her father has blamed her for something she answered:

I don't know, it just sounds to me like every time, the way I see it is, me and my brother both see it like it was something that we did wrong...Because he's fine with my mom. They get along great. She's the only reason why he hasn't left. All the times he's threatened to leave was because of me and my brother.

For Mary, the change in her father and the accompanying change in her relationship with him is "like he died or something, because it's not him anymore". And when she is not angry with her father for being "such a jerk"

she is deeply saddened by the absence of the father she once knew, the man she describes as someone who "would never do anything to hurt anybody in our family. He'd do anything he could to make us happy and now he does anything possible to make us sad". For Mary, her home has become a battleground. The battles are not constant, they are interspersed with good times, but they happen with predictable regularity, and Mary has learned to expect them, and also learned how to conduct battles outside her own home.

Mary has lived and breathed conflict for so long, that she finds herself engaged in it wherever she goes. She takes on causes. She defends small animals against would-be torturers. She takes on teachers she believes are "acting like assholes". She tries to stop older and bigger people from beating up younger and smaller people, and when pushed or insulted she stands up for herself immediately. And while her "cause celebre" is still her father who Mary wants to "straighten out" whenever "that jerk steps out of line", Mary also described taking on some of her teachers and the vice-principal of her school with particular relish.

For Mary, going to school was always a problematic experience. Bullied as a young girl because of her weight, and stereotyped (like Molly) because of her older brother as a "tough" kid, Mary soon found school to be a battle ground not unlike home. As with everything we touched upon, Mary has strong opinions about her school experiences and her teachers. As she sees it, "a lot of my teachers don't like me because of my brother". For Mary, this approach on the part of her teachers reaches all the way to the vice-principal who

will pick me and my friends out of a crowd and blame everything on us even though we're not involved in it at all. Like he'll do that just for something to do, because we're his pet peeve...He stereotypes people, and when I told him I didn't like being stereotyped, he told me

if I didn't like it, then stop hanging around with my friends. Like we hang around at the corner, and he and the counsellor told me I was with the wrong crowd. Not all the corner people are bad, like a lot of them have a good head on their shoulders...We like to hang out at the corner and I don't think we're different from anybody else, except for the fact we smoke. And some of the people out there do drugs and drink on weekends, but then again, I, the people in the school do drugs too. I mean you don't have to smoke to do drugs...

Being centered out and judged in this way made Mary angry and left her believing that her school vice-principal was not fair in his approach to her and to others like her. This was confirmed for her on two more occasions that she described at length and with a great deal of feeling.

Occasion Number One:

I remember one time I was just totally mad at someone. I went into the office and I was just fumin' and I went to the office and the vice-principal started giving me trouble when I was already mad, and I just wanted to totally deck him. I was just sitting there going like this (demonstrates) my fists were clenched, I was so mad. These guys at the corner were kicking around a squirrel, and I went to the office and I was totally choked, like I was just furious. I wanted to beat the crap out of the guys for doing this and I poured my pop over these guys' heads and I told the vice-principal what happened and he said, "Well you're at fault, you insulted those guys by pouring pop over their heads." And I'm going, "Oh my god, what an asshole!"...I told my mom about it, and she gave me permission to give him the third degree on the last day of school, right after my last exam.

Occasion Number Two:

I remember last year, I was so mad. Like because I had Mr. Jackson, it was the second year in a row, and he didn't like me because of my brother, and I had this guy, and I just couldn't stand him. And it was getting to the end of the year and he just, we, he tried so hard with me but there's no, like, he treated us like children and I hated him. I'd do my work and I was getting good grades like B's and stuff and, Mr. Jackson, one day, we were, we were doin' our work and I was, Roberta was helping me because I was absent the day before. I finished all my work from the day before plus the work of that day. And he said that I was talking to Roberta and, uhm, he's like, and he goes, he's just checkin' everybody's work so to see if they can be dismissed, and I go "I've done all my work," and he, he glanced at it and he looked away

and he goes, "No you haven't, it's not all there," and I hadn't been able to flip over the page and I'd try, like, for about a half an hour I tried to tell him that I've done my work but it's all finished because I was finished five minutes before the end of class, and I was talking to Roberta because we were finished. And he was just like, and he, he said, "You have a detention," and I go "Whatever!" and I just, I didn't want, I didn't want to swear and I didn't want to get totally choked so I sat there and he said, "You haven't done any work", and I go "You haven't checked, I've done all my work," and he wouldn't check again. And he refused to. And so I said, "This is bull!" and I walked out of the classroom, and he's going, "Mary, get back here!" and I go "Whatever!" and I kept walking. And then I went out for lunch and then next class was like, that was a Friday and the next class was on the next Tuesday, and I went into class and he's like he, he goes, "Hey, Mary can you, can you come here for a sec?" and he called me up to his desk, and everybody's watching eh, and he goes, he has a big sheet and it's a behaviour sheet, and it says 'Mary talks constantly, Mary never, uhm, brings her books to class,' which I always did, I, I tried hard. Well, I did talk, but only when I knew I could finish my work. And, 'Mary, Mary, Mary obstructs the class,' and all these different things and he'd circled the ones that I did, and I looked at him and I go "You're full of shit!" and I slammed the paper down on his desk and he goes, "Get to the office!" and I go, and I go, "You're a waste of my time" and I kept on walking and I, I went, and I fff... and I go "You're a waste of my time!" And then I walked. And I walked down to the office and then the vice-principal called me into the office and he goes, uhm, "What did you say to Mr., Mr. Johnson?" And I go, I told him, "You're full of shit," and he said, "Okay, pack your books up, you're out of here for four days." He didn't ask me why I said it, he didn't give me any chance to explain myself, and I was just, "This is bullshit." And my dad went in with me the, the next day, my dad is uhm, he's a business man, so he knows how to conduct meetings, he, the vice-principal sat down, Mr. Johnson sat down, I sat down and my dad stood there and took a stand with his arms crossed. He wouldn't sit down, and the vice-principal says "Would you like to have a seat?" and he said, "No," 'cause my dad likes to look down on people, especially the vice-principal, cause he doesn't like him. Uhm, and, he's, he's like, my dad's standing there going, "Well, you, you have no right to, uhm, to, like, limit my daughters' education just for an outburst in class which is caused by the teacher," and the vice-principal said, "No. She said the words. It came out of her lips. She has no excuse." And that was it. I mean, I, we tried. And he was gonna give me, something like, he didn't tell me that I was suspended when he said, "Go home," and he's just, he was a total utter asshole over the whole deal...If you ask me he's the most disgusting, disliked guy. He disrespects most every student in the

school and he, he uhm, stereotypes the people who I want to hang out with.

Ultimately, what mattered most to Mary where teachers and school vice-principals were concerned, was respect. Mary defined respect as being listened to, being treated fairly, not being lied to, being treated with consideration and being liked by the teacher. Whenever she did not encounter respect from teachers, she would dislike them and engage with them in battles that went on for years at a time. To illustrate her perspective she gave an example of what not being respected looked like:

It's when they look down on us. Like uhm as a teacher sitting there and they're like, "I'm Mr. or Mrs. whatever, and you are my student and you're a thing and you are supposed to learn"...Like school is for learning, but you can't learn from that. You can't learn if you're frustrated, you can't learn if you're upset. And when the teacher gets you upset, it's just like, "Go to hell!"...When the teacher gets me upset I feel like hell inside and I can't learn. It's like Mr. Gray, He said something to me, we were just starting a test, and it was the first test of the year right, and I asked him, "Well does spelling count?" And he said, "Of course, are you stupid?" and he started putting me down, and I looked up and just gave him the dirtiest look, I go, "You are the biggest goof I've ever met in my entire life", and I went down and I wrote the test out, right, and I did, I failed the test 'cause I was so mad. I ended up breaking my pencil. And I wrote on the top before, like, just before I'd start yelling at him. I wrote on the top of my test, "You respect me and I'll respect you. Until then, I won't".

For Mary being respected and being liked by her teachers is vitally important. When she finds a teacher who likes her and shows her respect she works harder, even if she has difficulty with the subject matter. Mary described herself as an average student with marks that range from a C to a C+ who occasionally gets D's in those classes which are taught by teachers she describes as "iffy". When a teacher likes her and she likes the teacher, she works hard. As she put it,

Usually if a teacher likes you, then you try in his class. So when you try, you get a better mark when you try, so even if you're not good in a

subject, like in math. I was getting really bad grades, but he gave me a C because I tried...And I tried the whole term, and I didn't stop trying, and I practised, like I did extra questions and whatever it took to get at least half the marks on the test, and he uhm, see, he never had my brother, so he never had a negative outlook on me, and I worked hard in his class. And my science teacher, he didn't have negative outlook on me either, he liked my brother. And when I first got to his class, I didn't know how to behave, but like I worked through all his classes. And so, he's the type of person that likes people who are good in science, and if you answer a lot of questions, or if you ask a lot of questions, so I started asking a lot of questions because I sort of figured it out, "Ya, he likes people to ask questions or answer questions", so I started asking questions and I got a better mark on my booklet.

Despite their belligerent stance with many of their teachers, Mary, and also Linda and Molly believe that teachers actually deserve their respect, provided they show that same respect for their students.

As Mary said,

I don't know, I think you have to respect teachers, you know, if you get in their classes. I know that there's some I don't like, so I kinda act up or whatever, but I also got teachers I respect, so I'm good in their classes.

For the girls the line is clearly drawn. If they don't like a teacher, he or she becomes fair game for acting out behaviour, and acting out can take any form from talking in class to hurling insults and even books and other objects at the teacher because they don't like him or her, and most of all because they are angry with that teacher. Mary provided another example:

One time I got kicked out of class for doing something I wasn't supposed to be doing, and he goes. "Get out", and I'm like, "You're wearing a hearing aid buddy, so you can't hear me whispering, right?" And he's like, "Just get out". And I'm like, "I wasn't talking", and he's like, "I heard you," and I go, "You, you have to wear a hearing aid, so how can you possibly have heard me?" And then he kicked me out and the next day the exact same thing happened. It was like a replay, so I just picked up my books and threw them at him (Mary then laughs) and I said, "Screw you!" and I walked out. Then the vice-principal had to teach me math for the rest of the term....So when I get treated like that, I get mad, and when I get mad I get the person back.

For Mary, being angry was justification enough for any kind of acting out or violent behaviour. At the time of our working together on this study, she had a firm belief that if she was angry with someone, that she owed it to herself to discharge that anger at that person and that she should in effect punish people for making her angry, because if she didn't, she was only doing harm to herself. Thus, lashing out both verbally and physically was acceptable behaviour for Mary because,

It lets you get in the last word, and it also gets your anger out at the same time, like you sort of go, "Ahh...It's over with".

This, along with permission from her parents to engage in violence under conditions which they deemed as demanding it, such as the vice-principal's expulsion of Mary, provided Mary's justification for engaging in violence.

Conditions which demanded a violent response from Mary generally involved some kind of power imbalance. This could be an older bigger person picking on a younger smaller person, a teacher picking on a student, a parent picking on a child, and anyone hurting an animal. Mary calls such behaviour "power tripping" and was very clear that she hates power trippers. For her, the ultimate power tripper is her school vice-principal, closely followed by her father. In speaking of the school vice-principal she said,

He's a real power tripper, and I hate power trippers, and he looks down on his students. And I hate him because, like if I'm mad at somebody, I usually go up and tell them and blow my top. But you know, if there's somebody you really hate and they're in higher authority than you, you can't really say anything, and I can't do that, so the hatred just built and built...

If she sees her father power tripping, she usually takes him on as she does anyone she believes is abusing their power over others. We have already seen how she deals with those teachers who treat others with what looks like disrespect to Mary. With fellow students she wades in as follows:

My friend Cathy was going to beat up Sylvia Rivers, and I stepped in front of her and said, "Don't you touch her, she's my friend". And she goes, "Well, she called me a bitch," and I go, "I don't care if she called you a bitch, she's a hell of a lot smaller than you, and you're not touching her because if you do, I'll kick you back". And she's like, "Fine!" and she walked away. And then she tried to -- as soon as I came out of the school and was walking over there and everybody's going, "There's a fight, there's a fight", and I said, "Who's fighting?" and they said, Cathy and Sylvia Rivers." And I'm like, "What the hell?!" So I run over there and jumped right in front of Cathy and I'm going, "What the hell is going on here?" And Cathy started telling me, "She's being a total bitch to me", and I just like stopped her. She would have had to fight me, so she didn't...

Mary's intervention on Sylvia Rivers' behalf was also a move to try to help Cathy. At the time of our meetings, Mary was deeply concerned about Cathy, whom she saw as needing not only help with self-control, but help with the conditions of her life, because Cathy's home life is fraught with difficulty. Cathy lives with her mother, who is known in the community as a "biker's moll." She is a heavy drinker, and former drug addict who is the source of a great deal of concern for Cathy. Cathy's stepfather, who lives in another city, is "not allowed" in Cathy's mother's house because he "treated Cathy like shit." Cathy's mother "threw him out" for beating up Cathy. He also used to beat up Cathy's mother. According to Mary, who has seen this man in action, "you have to tiptoe around this man much like you have to around my father, only he's much worse, he gets mad easier." Mary's reaction to her friend Cathy's situation is to try to act as a counsellor to her. She gives Cathy advice, and on many more occasions than the one described above, has tried to prevent Cathy from engaging in fights. Mary also plays this role with other students, and is frequently called upon to act as a mediator between people who are known to be making up their minds to fight others. She even believes that Molly should follow through on pressing charges against Cathy because she believes Cathy "needs to be taught a

lesson". Mary can always be drawn into a fight if she sees her engagement as one which upholds her stand against an imbalance of power. Her well-publicised fight with Andrea also involved what Mary saw as a power imbalance, in that Andrea was older and bigger than Mary. Mary therefore felt perfectly justified in beating Andrea up:

I didn't start it. She's like seventeen or eighteen and she's like six foot one and two hundred pounds. All's I did was call a girl a bitch, and she got her older friends, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen year olds to come after me, and Andrea was one of them. She cursed at me, and I just laughed in her face. And she did it again the next night, and I laughed in her face again, and her friends wanted me to fight her, but I wouldn't because she was on drugs, and I don't fight people on drugs, 'cause if they fight when they're on drugs, it doesn't hurt them as much and they can't feel things, so they don't know when they're hurt. But they kept spreading rumours about me, saying I was going to fight them all, so they showed up one night to fight me and they started swearin' at me, and I just laughed in their faces, I thought they were pathetic. And then Andrea grabbed me by the hair and started pulling me away from the lights into the dark, so I started to fight back. I kicked her in the stomach and pulled her coat over her head and won the fight. I caused her internal bleeding because she was on some kind of acid, and her stomach lining was really sensitive, only I didn't know that 'til later.

Paradoxically, along with Mary's finely tuned appreciation for power imbalances, she also has a finely tuned appreciation for hierarchies and her place in them, especially when she sees herself as having more authority and status than someone else. And while she may abhor others looking down on her and rebels against anyone who suggests that she should bow to their authority, she also dislikes it intensely when those she considers beneath her don't stay in their places. In Mary's eyes, such behaviour also calls for immediate redress. This is most apparent when younger and lower grade girls try to step out of line. For example, at the time of our interviews, Mary was quite angry with Jenny (as was Linda) because,

She walks around acting like King Shit because she can fight, and you're not King Shit until you're in grade ten. While you're in grade eight, you're a nobody.

In Mary's eyes, Jenny is "a cocky little bitch" who has brought the problems she is having with older students on herself not only because she doesn't know her place, but because she shows signs of being what Mary hates most, signs of being a power tripper:

I've had my run-ins with her. She's sort of a power tripper too. I mean, I can see when the grade tens leave, Jenny will be the queen of the school, like sort of putting herself in a position of power, I don't know.

At this point, Mary shared a bit of insight into the kind of behaviour she hated in Jenny:

I think one reason why I haven't gotten really mad at her yet, is because she reminds me of me when I was in grade eight. I didn't fight like that, but I mouthed people off. I was really cocky.

When I asked Mary to tell me more about what all this was about, she explained that,

When you're in grade eight, everybody tries to set up their own reputation. Yeah, grade eights are always like that. That's why the grade eight boys are usually the cocky ones, because they want to set up a class-clown-type, cool person reputation. And then there's the people in grade eight who are always trying to fit in somewhere because they haven't really got into a big school yet. They're like in a big sea and they're little fish instead of big fish, so they're trying to get a position where they're comfortable and sometimes they find the wrong position that they're in, like Jenny. I mean she's gotten so many people mad at her. She thinks that it's cool, and you have to mouth off a lot of people and get into a lot of fights to be cool.

It was around the notion of cool that Mary saw herself as different from and far more justified than Jenny in engaging in fights. Mary did not enter into fights with people because she wanted to be cool, she saw herself as entering into fights only to redress imbalances of power, to keep those who should be in their places in those places and most importantly, to discharge

her anger. In her mind, older and more mature and more righteous people like herself, entered into fights because they were angry about an injustice, and that made a big difference in Mary's mind. Those older people like Andrea, her school vice-principal and her father, who were on the wrong side of any interaction as far as Mary was concerned, did so because they, in relation to Mary, were "immature jerks and assholes" who had a poor sense of right and wrong because they were power trippers.

Mary had one further reason for engaging in confrontations and fights: equality with the males in her life. Mary, who describe herself as a tomboy who has to prove again and again to her father that she is as capable as her brother is of helping him out with construction work and any other kind of manual labour, and who resents deeply that she and her mother must perform all the domestic chores around the house, believes that in order to achieve equality, she must prove to men that she can handle herself in a fight. As she explained it,

There's more equality now between girls and guys. And the guys think that if we're going to have equality, then we gotta be equal with them...We were having this discussion in English class, and the guys think that girls are wimps because whenever they get in a fight they don't just duke it out, they just cry and about a month later they finally talk to each other, and then they cry again and they get all sappy and they're friends. Or they hate each other one day, and the next day they're friends. Guys are just like, "All we do is duke it out and then go for a beer."

This made good sense to Mary especially in view of her daily quest to get her father to acknowledge her and to help her with her chores by doing things like taking his shoes off when she has washed the floor. It also makes sense for Mary in view of her mother's battles for equality with her husband, but neither Molly or Linda agreed with this explanation. Linda believed that girls fight because, "In some ways we're trying to be equal and in other ways,

we're just doing what we want." Molly suggested that, "I think it's more just kinda the image I want...like don't mess with me!" In any case, the bottom line for Mary wasn't really equality, it was getting rid of her anger, an anger fuelled by anything she perceived as unjust and unfair. With the view in mind that she wanted to be prepared to take on any physically threatening challenges, Mary has been taking karate lessons for some time, as have her mother and her brother. Mary is truly proud that she can handle herself physically.

In fact, much of Mary's talk focused on her ability to take people on, and to take charge and be in control. This had limitations however, because despite all her readiness to fight for herself and others weaker than herself, Mary did not fight for herself on the night that she was date raped. Mary's rape happened a year before she took part in this study, when for about six months, Mary was living at her grandmother's house because she and her father had reached such an impasse in their relationship that they couldn't live under the same roof. During that time, Mary, who rarely dates, was "hanging around" with a twenty-eight year old man who supplied her with drugs and alcohol and drove her around in his car. On the night of her rape, she was completely confused, and did nothing to protect herself. Here is her story:

...one of my boyfriends, uhm, we were seeing each other for about, I guess a week or two weeks or whatever, I didn't want to have sex with him, but I never really told him that, because I was basically pissed out of my tree* and I didn't want to tell him because I, I felt really insecure

* Mary has been drinking alcohol since about the age of ten, when she began to sneak drinks from the adult's glasses at her parents parties. Both Mary's parents consume quite a bit of alcohol and appear, according to Mary, to combine most social events with heavy drinking. For Mary's parents, drinking socially usually leads to getting drunk. Mary appears to follow her parents' pattern with drinking and described herself as not liking to go far when she was at a party because she liked to drink steadily when she was drinking, and therefore did not want to have to struggle to get home. She gave two examples of her drinking style: "Last New Years, I

because like I, I, it doesn't , I don't get very many chances to go out with people because I'm not socially active like in that way, and so I wasn't prepared, I wasn't like, I, I wasn't expecting it at all, and I just did it anyways. But I didn't want to and so ever since, I've just like...I broke up with him after. But I've like, you know, I didn't want to and I can't believe I did that.

This experience has left Mary with lasting questions about herself, because she believes that what happened was really her fault. This sense of guilt and shame was further complicated by the reactions of her mother and grandmother who found out about what happened to Mary by reading Mary's diary:

When my mom, see when my mom found out about this, this guy, she found out from my Gramma 'cause I was kicked out, actually I left my house and I was living with my Gramma because my dad and I, like I was into a hassle with my dad again, and my Gramma read my diary, 'cause I left it there, but actually, 'cause you know I was like, "I don't mind," and it was underneath my bed and she read everything and that's when I was like heavily into drugs and I was heavily into alcohol and I was seeing this twenty-eight year old guy and I was fourteen years old...And my mom said to me, she said, "You," she started crying and then she told me that my Gramma, she said, "My mom invaded my trust by doing that when I was little [reading her diary]. I would have never done it to you, but she showed me the pages and I regret looking at them". She goes, "I'm not disappointed in you. I know everybody goes through it, and I just want you to know I'm there for you." But I didn't talk to my Gramma for about a year after that, even though she'd hound me, for that invading of trust.

Thus in the aftermath of Mary's date rape, the issue was not the rape any longer; that experience was sidelined. The issue was one of betrayal of trust because of the reading of the diary, and the damaging betrayal of trust that is

drank a bottle of Crown Royal whiskey straight--I chugged it back straight and I just kept going and going and going and there was just about one inch left out of the whole bottle and I was just like, "Oh this is fun, Happy New Years!"--but after like a half an hour, I was in the bathroom throwing up...And about three or four weeks ago, I got drunk with some friends, we had a beach party and I drank two thirds of a bottle of rye, another half of a two litre and I drank four maximum lights...

rape, was left untouched by her mother and her grandmother, as were all further references to Mary's understanding of sexuality.

We, however, talked a great deal about sex and sexuality during our group meetings, largely because the girls wanted to talk about their experiences and express their feelings about what they had been through and because they said felt better when they had an opportunity to do this. In many ways, given what they have been through the girls summed up sex in one word, "gross". They struggled with mixed feelings about whether or not they wanted to engage in sex, and had harsh things to say about girls who were sexually active. For the most part, when they did engage in sex, they were usually drinking alcohol in large quantities. By the time they were drunk and engaging in sex, they were also feeling ill from too much alcohol and were not in control of any of their bodily functions to any great degree. In the aftermath of having taken part in sex under these conditions they felt disgusted with themselves and with their sexual partners. And, if on occasion, they did not participate in this way but happened to witness others engaging as has been described, they felt righteously angry, particularly with the girls who were involved, and then used their knowledge and their anger as a justifiable basis for harassing, threatening and beating such girls.

Alcohol and drug use plays a large part in the girls participation in both sex and, on occasion, violence. The two footnotes provided on the preceding pages outline the attitudes both Molly and Mary have towards alcohol. For them, alcohol use is actually synonymous with alcohol misuse. When they drink, they rarely stop at one or two drinks. Mary has already been drunk to the point of being ill so many times that there are certain kinds of alcohol that she cannot even smell because she begins to feel sick. Here is how she describes it:

I remember, me and my friend shared a mickey of tequila shooters where you get the lemons and salt and water...That was harsh, we were on our butts soon, flat out. My cousins, [who were with Mary and her friend in the family trailer, drinking on their own, while their parents were getting drunk with Mary's parents up at the house] they were like mad at me though, the next morning. They didn't tell my parents, and they were like, "We're cleaning up all your throw up!"--there was throw up from one end of the trailer to the other, it was so bad. And they're like, "We were thinking of getting your stomach pumped, 'cause you were starting to throw up blood and all that." And I can't even smell hard liquor any more. I can drink beer or coolers...

Sometimes when Mary gets drunk she "feels like punching people", and because of this, she prefers to drink only with people she feels she can trust. To illustrate her reasoning she gave an example of an experience she had while drinking around people she couldn't trust:

One of my friends, one of my ex--well he's never been my friend, we hang around the same crowd, his name is Grant. He is the most violent drunk I've ever met in my life. He was just brutal. He'd throw around his friends and beat the crap out of them when he was drunk. Like Brent, he was pissed one night, and I was drunk and Grant was drunk and we were all down at Taylor Lake and Grant's throwing around Brent, just beating him up. I threw Grant off Brent and I go, "Don't you fucking touch him!" and I freaked out on Grant--he wanted to hit me, and Brent's like, "You hit this person, and I'll kill ya, literally." And Brent's not a violent drunk, like he'll run around and he'll fall and laugh 'cause he's falling...and I'm a happy drunk, unless I'm pukin...and I don't feel good after...

After telling this story, Mary went on to express the opinion that she actually preferred drugs to alcohol, because,

when you're smoking dope, you just break out laughing, you don't feel like punching people because it's just too hard. It takes too much...You're mellow...You just want to sit there and trip out on everybody...It's even good for school work. When I used to get stoned all the time last year, I remember, I used to sit in class and do my work because I didn't want the teacher to catch me and this year I'm getting failing marks 'cause I'm not doing my work 'cause I'm never stoned.

Mary had good things to say about marijuana, but it was not the only drug she had used on a regular basis. In the past year, she was also a regular user of L.S.D. She had a less favourable opinion of this drug, because she had seen people become "freaked out" while "doing acid". In her opinion, "People that are violent when they're on drugs are usually on acid or coke or something like that", and for the moment, this was reason enough to stop using it. But Mary had a further reason for quitting:

I used to use acid myself, and I quit completely because it was the type of drug, if you like it, you like it and if you don't you don't, and I liked it, and I quit because I liked it...It's not an addictive drug, but if you like it you want to do it again. And if you want it, you'll do it again and again. And okay it got to the point where I was almost critically insane, like clinically, 'cause after, a certain point of doing so much you can be clinically insane or, and I was just like, "There's no way!"...I didn't want to be like Jeanette LeBlanc last year, who did acid so much that I like noticed a big change in her attitude...Like she got weird. She wore weird clothes and she was kind of a 'low life' and she was different. She, like they get less brain cells, they lose their values. She got violent. She picked on smaller people.

In the end, despite her preference for marijuana and acid, Mary found herself using alcohol as her substance of choice because it didn't make her "weird", it was easy to get, and if she stayed home or near home to drink, her parents would give her permission to do so.

Mary's parents seem to make the abuse of alcohol relatively easy, they also seem to have encouraged the use of tobacco. Mary has been smoking since the age of ten, as has her brother, who gave her first cigarette. Everyone in Mary's home smokes, and her parents frequently pay her with cigarettes to do chores, or alternately give her cash for extra chores so that she can buy her own cigarettes.

Much of Mary's social time revolves around cigarettes, alcohol and drugs. She is a "corner person", that is, a smoker who hangs around at the

intersection at the corner of the street nearest her school. This puts her in touch with other smokers, smokers who on occasion also smoke marijuana both in and out of school, drop acid and use cocaine when they can get it, and on week-ends, especially, drink large quantities of alcohol. As Mary pointed out, not all kids who smoke cigarettes automatically progress to drug and alcohol use and misuse, but the chances of coming into contact with kids who do are greater when one gathers with the smokers at the corner. For Mary, substance misuse is a part of life in that all social occasions involve this. She spends much of her time hanging around spots where other kids congregate to "party". Near her house, there are several such haunts, an ocean beach, a lake front, and a wilderness trail, where young people regularly gather to drink and smoke. Partying at friends' houses when parents are away is also a favourite pastime. Mary described such an occasion at her house:

When my parents went away this time it was really great, because we had a whole lot, we had about twenty to thirty people, we had an all night party. Nothing got broken, nothing got stolen. There were no problems at all. Like the music wasn't loud, 'cause we have renters. The music wasn't loud and they, there were no complaints from them, so everything went really smoothly, and there was no hassles. Like everybody helped us to clean up the pizza boxes and everything. It worked because I managed it, my brother didn't. He had all his friends over, and I, I was the one with the authority. I was the one who was, you know, looking after things and making sure nothing was going out of hand with his friends, that there was no fights or anything and he, he went to bed actually, and I, I stayed up until the next morning, then went to bed about one the next day.

For Mary such occasions are wonderful times, times to spend in close company with others, times when she can shine, when she can be in charge and make sure that things run smoothly. Mary likes it best when she has control in social situations. She likes to keep order and see that her form of justice prevails, and she likes to be physically active. With both her male and her female friends, she likes to engage in sports, in riding and in biking. She

likes to compete and she likes to win. She often plays the role of peace broker and protector/enforcer with her friends, a role she backs up with physical threats when people she is trying to help step out of line. She gave several examples of this:

1. With her friend Cathy:

Cathy's not tough. She's got this butch layout, but she's not tough, 'cause when we were best friends, I'd start wrestling with her on the trampoline or something in my front yard, and I'd hit her lighter than I'd hit my other friends and we were just joking around, we were just play fighting, and Cathy'd go, "Ow, that hurts", and it's just like, I didn't even swing hard. She doesn't know how to hit properly, she'd go something like this (shows twisted arm) when you're supposed to keep a straight fist and you should follow through like that (demonstrates how it's done properly). But now she's hanging out with this chick Eileen, she's wears these spiked rings, and ever since Cathy started hanging around with her, she thinks she's tough and her and Eileen will go around looking for fights and I just want to get Eileen completely out of the picture...I just want to beat the crap out of Eileen and get her out of the picture so that Cathy can straighten up...

2. With Molly after Molly told friends about Linda's sexual abuse:

I don't really ever see her. I just see her in the halls and we just sort of keep walking, I don't really notice her or anything, but Linda's had sort of a run in with Molly's brother. Linda's pretty choked, and one of her friends found out [about what Molly did]. And her friend Vicki from downtown, she hangs around with a pretty big crowd, and her boyfriend's pretty big guy and he's like good friends with Linda and so when he found out about it, Linda didn't know this, but when he found out about it he sort of phoned up Molly's brother and sort of, yeah...he sort of made threats, like that's what I heard. I don't know exactly what he said, all I know he said I heard from Linda was that he reamed him out over the phone or something...but I remember her telling me that he phoned up and said stay away from her -- meaning Molly and her brother whom Molly had enlisted to protect her from Linda, should stay away from Linda == and he swore a couple of times and I don't know exactly what he said though...So I just went up to Molly and I asked her, I said, "Well what's the matter?" and she goes, "Well, I didn't get anybody involved." --meaning she tried to discount the fact that she had asked her brother for assistance -- And I said,

"Well, you should get people involved because you know Linda can get people involved too and you wouldn't want that to happen now would you?" And she's like, "No, but I didn't do it." and I said , Okay, well I'll pass that on to her," and she said, "Okay."

3. With Jenny when Jenny provoked Linda:

I was in the mall, and Jenny was there and I go, "Jenny, come here," and she broke down in tears. She was crying and she comes up to me and she goes, "I did not call you a bitch," and I go, "I'm talking to you right now, I never said I was gonna kick your ass, but other people said I was gonna kick your ass. I'm gonna ream you out right now, 'cause I'm pissed off at you. I'm gonna give you a second chance. You think you're King Shit of this school, you're not King Shit, me and Linda and all the other grade tens are King Shit of the school and don't mess with us, 'cause we stick together, we're friends." And I go, "If you're not one of our friends and you piss us off, we stick together and we'll gang up on you." And she said, "Well why haven't you then?" And I go, "You know, you really got a mouth on your face you know., and she goes, "Oh?" And I freaked out and I just started yelling at her again, and then I when on for another fifteen minutes. I really know how to talk when I'm mad...but she doesn't know when to quit. There's a point when you stop scowling at someone and calling them a bitch, like after they ream you out and threaten to beat the crap out of you, you should stop, most people would stop, but Jenny doesn't.

In most of her relationships, Mary takes on a leader/guardian role.

With her best friends Brent, Tanya and Faye, she takes it upon herself to suggest activities they can do together and if they encounter problems in the course of their every day life, she sets out to solve these problems. She does this with her parents and her brother as well. Thus when Brent, who had to move away because his father found a job in another province missed his friends and wanted to come back to this community, Mary lobbied long and hard to get her parents to allow Brent to come and live with Mary's family as a boarder. With Tanya and Faye, who live nearby she takes it upon herself to organise their social life and keep them involved in activities which she herself wanted to pursue. With her father, she takes control of his behaviour.

With her mother, she acts as support and confidant. With her brother she acts as defender and comrade in the battle with their father. In each of these relationships, Mary has definite expectations with regard to how her counterparts should behave, and when they do not, she becomes first disappointed and hurt and then furiously angry. When Brent moved back to town and struck up a relationship with Faye, which on occasion excluded Mary, she was devastated and began to take exception to many of Brent's behaviours (drinking, misusing drugs and skipping school) which she had previously either joined him in pursuing or overlooked. Eventually, she persuaded her parents to send Brent back to his parents. When, on several occasions, Tanya disagreed with Mary's opinions about other people, Mary became frustrated and angry and wanted to beat Tanya up. When Faye became involved with Brent, Mary felt deserted and betrayed and stopped being friends with Faye. When her father "steps out of line", she "reams him out and gives him the third degree". When her mother is not available for emotional support she feels angry and abandoned. When her brother became mentally ill, after first urging him to call me so that he could talk to someone she saw as trustworthy and then urging her parents to follow my suggestion to immediately seek medical help for their son, she became irritated with the amount of time and attention her brother was receiving and then angry with both her parents and her brother for failing to give her the attention she herself felt she needed.

Mostly Mary believes that what she does benefits those she cares about. She does what she does because she wants her friends to like her and to spend time with her. She wants her brother to be healthy and happy so that she can continue to be his comrade. She wants her father to be easy to get along with and to parent her by acknowledging her contributions to the family and by

supplying her with other than violent and intimidating ways to deal with conflict. She wants her mother to be less occupied with her father, and she wants other people to see her as a friendly person, someone who likes to have fun. Here is how she expressed herself about these aspects of her life:

With friends:

I just like to ride bikes and keep in shape, and I like to go down to the lake and hang out and have a few laughs and a few drinks. I don't know why I have this image. I didn't make my image, everybody else did. Like I fool around with my friends, just to rough house them, just like any other girls does. Why am I the butch? Everybody thinks I'm Mrs. Tough, and half of them have never even seen me fight before...I've just always been a tomboy and acted like a fighter. I've duked around with my friends, just like they do with me, but they don't have the same image. I don't know what it is, but everybody's scared of me and I'm not big -- I'm just a little person!

With her brother:

Like my brother, we're really good friends, but now he's moved out because him and my dad almost got in another fist fight and my mom broke them up and I just went upstairs and started doing my make-up and stuff and got ready for school. And my brother said, "this is bullshit, I'm out of here!" so he went to his girlfriend's for a week and a half and on Sunday he moved into an apartment just up the road...So he gave me a key and stuff, so if I wanted to get away, I can just run over there...But with my brother leaving now, it's like well what am I going to do now, because it's [the situation at home and all the household chores] all going to be dropped on me, instead of me being able to push a little on him.

With her father:

Well, with my dad, the only time he ever talks to me nicely is when he says "Hi," Like when I cook dinner and bring out the food, he says "Hi," when he comes in and then he says, "Good, I'm hungry." Like I don't mind him just sitting down and eating the dinner because it's a regular routine and I don't expect him to say thank you. But if it's something that you know, takes me out of my way, like say, if I'm supposed to be going somewhere and he wants me to work or something and I'm like, "Sure, " you know and I don't get any thanks for it, that's what really annoys me...And like that time when we met with the vice-principal when I got suspended from school and the vice-

principal was a power tripper and my dad was acting like power tripper because you know, he's a business person...It was kind of uncomfortable because I hate anybody who's a power tripper. I just don't like it, I don't care who it is. I would have liked a normal meeting. If my dad hadn't acted like such a jerk about it, then maybe I wouldn't have been suspended.

With regard to her parents' relationship:

Like my parents spoil themselves, but they don't really, like compared to other teenagers I know, myself, I get not very much compared to them, and it's sort of, I don't know what it is. For example, all my friends -- I was pretty upset on Valentine's Day, 'cause all my friends, every single one of them got a flower or a card or some candies or whatever from their parents. I got nothing. And that was really depressing for me and same with my brother. Every year that happens...My mom bought my dad a black forest cake and my dad gave her flowers and a card, and she was going to give him a card, but she forgot that at school and she forgot me and my brother...It never used to bother me, but this year, I don't know why, it really did. I guess because my brother isn't here. Usually me and my brother, you know, we do something on Valentine's Day. This year he wasn't here and so I sort of felt like I was outcasted a bit.

In the end, Mary often feels like an "outcasted little person", a person who is very much alone. In many ways she feels somehow deprived of what she needs and sees herself as entitled to more. Frequently, although she is actually in charge of cooking dinner, she finds ways to avoid eating with the family in order to side-step the arguments which occur with regularity at the dinner table. Thus she finds herself feeling alone at a time when she would actually like to have some company. When she finds herself struggling with her school work, which is not an uncommon occurrence for Mary, she seeks help from her parents or her brother, but finds herself unable to pin them down long enough to assist her. When she does have the opportunity to discuss this, especially with her father, it is usual for the discussion to deteriorate into a shouting match. As well as struggling with her school

work, Mary struggles with a daily roster of chores. All this takes time, and sometimes Mary can't do it all. Here is how she described it to me:

I was really stressed out this time when the report cards came out, because I've never had a report card that bad. I mean the worst I ever had was a C average, and this term I had a C- average and I didn't like it. And my mom knew I didn't like it and my dad knew I didn't like it, but they still gave me shit for it. But I think that I was more upset about it than they were, and that's what they didn't see. My mom knew I was upset. She can tell. My dad didn't care...He just decided to get his spew out before anybody. He said, "This is bullshit, raw, raw, raw, you're incompetent, you gotta do your homework, you're lazy, and why are you getting stupid grades like this? And you're starting to become just like your brother, blah, blah, blah."...And my brother got four E's and I got one E, and that's because I was having a really hard time in that subject -- Business Ed.-- Last term I didn't hand in any assignments because I didn't understand how to do them because the teacher didn't really explain and my mom was supposed to help me. My dad was supposed to help me, but my dad was never around. My mom was never around, so nobody could help me. And my brother was never home, he was supposed to help me too, but we just didn't have enough time because I was catching up on everything else because I was sick, like the last two weeks of the term almost...And I'm really busy around here. When I get home, well I automatically stoke up the stove. That takes me about fifteen minutes, because by the time I get home it's died down a lot. Then when the house gets warmer, I sit down for about half an hour, then it's about 5:30, and then I get going and I go outside and do the animals. I have to feed the chickens, do their water. If it's cold outside, I bring them water from the house because the pipes freeze and stuff. Sometimes I have to take the horse out -- it depends on what time my dad's getting home -- out of the barn. I usually have to tidy the kitchen before my mom gets home and then I have to come in and cook the dinner...

Sometimes Mary gets some assistance with all this, but not often. The day before one of our interviews, she had actually received help from her mother and, after some urging, from her father. Here is how Mary described what took place:

...I've been sick the last couple of nights and I haven't done anything. Like yesterday I just helped my mom make dinner, well we both made dinner, and I didn't really do anything other than that. I've just been totally zonked. And I was sitting in -- I blew up at my dad for this

yesterday -- I was tired, I was grumpy and I was sick and I was sitting in the family room, and my dad, when he's sick, he expects everybody to drop everything to do something for him. And I asked him to run to the store to get me some cough medicine and he was sitting down watching TV, he got up about half an hour before I asked him, so I let him sit down and then I asked him again to go to the store to get some cough syrup or something, and he said, "Ho, ho, give me a minute, you won't even let me sit down, raw, raw, raw." And I just freaked on him and I said, "Look you asshole, you expect me to do everything when you're sick, and you won't even get off your lazy ass and go to the store to get me some cough syrup. Well I'll tell you something, next time you're sick, I'm not going to do jack shit for you and you're gonna learn from that, 'cause then you're gonna have to get off your lazy ass and do something yourself!" And so he got up and went and got it for me, and that really fixed him for about two hours after that.

When I asked her where she had learned to talk to people like she does, especially to her father, and where she had learned to expect that if she did talk to people in this manner, she would actually "fix" them, she was quick to answer, "Probably my dad, that's the way he talks to me all the time." And in fact, every interaction between Mary and her father that I overheard, (there were six such occasions) rang exactly as described above. Despite it all, Mary still holds out the hope that one day she will no longer feel lonely and abandoned in her own home, that her father will see the light and straighten himself out, preferably with direction from Mary, and that she can hang onto her dream of a family that is held together by love. As she puts it,

I love my dad, like I love him as a dad and I'll always love him as a dad, but I just don't like him. When I was a little girl, me and my dad were best friends and now he doesn't even talk to me. [This is being said while she is sobbing.] I don't know who he is any more...And I don't know. It just sounds to me like every time [he gets mad and does things to hurt the family] the way I see it, me and my brother both see it like it was something that we did wrong...All of this just makes me feel shitty about myself.

Ultimately what Mary seems to be looking for is recognition and love, especially from her father, with whom she has now built a pattern of reaction that neither of them seems even remotely close to breaking. When Mary

talks about this, after first being angry and speaking stridently about how she will "fix" her father, she also becomes quiet and sad and small and fills the room with a palpable loneliness mixed with the deepest sorrow.

Linda's Story

My dad just doesn't trust me with guys, he thinks they'll just use me. One time when I got suspended from school for fighting, he said to me "What do you think you are, a biker bitch? Why don't you go out and get filled up by the titties and done up by the ass and stuff"...It goes back to when I was younger, when uhm, I was uhm molested for four years, by like a friend of the family and my parents didn't believe me. Like I remember, I was like in grade three and they had this good feelings, good touches and bad touches program, and I told my teacher and she, like told my principal and then my principal called my parents and my parents woke me up and I was in grade three, grade two or three, and they're like "Well what did he do to you?" uhm and I didn't, just, I didn't, I was scared to answer them so they like "Did he do this, did he do that?" and I'm like, "Well ya", and they go, "Okay, well we don't think he'd really do anything like that" And he kept coming over after that. He was my baby-sitter, and my parents kept having him over for dinner, and I remember one time when I was sitting at the table and there he was, this guy, he was just seventeen and he used to help my dad build his car and stuff. And I remember sittin' at the table and I was just like, I felt embarrassed to be there in front of him, and I remember he had this headband on and I was just staring and my dad took me in the next room and told me I'd better stop acting rude and stuff. And later my dad made me watch a TV program on kids who, uhm say they've been molested but have lied, and I just can't talk to my parents about sex or anything. (excerpt from taped interview with Linda)

Linda's description of her family focused primarily around her description of her father's domination of her mother, her sister and herself. Linda talked about her father often, and brought him up within the first ten minutes of our first meeting with Mary and Molly. Like Mary she describes herself as not being able to get along with her father because "he has to prove his authority all the time". Linda experiences her father as a man who doesn't listen to her, because "he never listens to anyone", which according to Linda, makes him "like most guys, because guys never listen anyway". As

Linda describes it, rather than listening, her father "gives ultimatums and gets the belt". Not only does Linda's father use a belt to enforce his ultimatums, he also uses a martial arts exercise tool made up of two wooden batons joined by a chain, with which he hits his daughters across the legs. On occasion being hit in this way has left the girls with bruises. In assessing her father's behaviour, Linda suggested that he does what he does to her because she has a bad temper and she therefore "kind of like deserve what I get". As well as using physical abuse, Linda's father makes frequent use of put-downs and lectures to straighten out his wife and his daughters. For example, Linda's father wants his wife, a woman described by Linda as "all sweet and cute and quiet" who manages her husband by "holding everything in until it hurts her", to change into a more outgoing person. In order to force her to do this, he has for the past three years, refused to wear his wedding ring because his wife is not behaving the way he wants her to.

Linda seemed deeply troubled by her father's treatment of her mother and expressed the wish that her mother would speak out more often. As Linda put it,

I don't want my mom to sit back and like hold everything in 'cause she'll just explode. And just like, I think it's better when she let's it out, cause it makes me feel better too. Like then she's like, not hurting herself...And when she wouldn't stick up for her rights, I don't know, we'd have some problems, like my mom and me, 'cause like, I'd just, I get mad at her and stuff, 'cause she wouldn't spend any time with me. And like it was my dad that told me about sex, cause she won't even talk about it, and I want her to talk about it 'cause when mothers talk to you it's comforting, and I can't talk to my mother about anything personal whatsoever. Some of my friends go home and ask their parents a question, and I don't want to ask my parents, and my friends are like "Well doesn't this girl have a mom?" Like I just don't feel comfortable. Like she doesn't feel comfortable talking about it, then it makes me feel uncomfortable talking to her.

Linda spends much of her time at home both craving contact with her parents and very carefully avoiding it. Although she wants desperately to be able to talk to her parents, particularly her mother, about her life, the risks are really too great. Although her father has often encouraged her to talk to him about "anything", on the few occasions that she has actually tried to do this, he has greeted her openness with verbal and physical abuse. Her mother has never issued an invitation to talk, and has mostly kept her mouth tightly shut with regard to her private feelings on any subject. She has however joined her husband in denouncing Linda when he has seen fit to do so. Linda's present way of dealing with her parents is to spend as much time as possible by herself. This angers her parents who believe she is being rude and secretive. In some ways, Linda's parents' perceptions that she has a secret life are accurate. According to Linda, her parents "don't have a clue" what she really does, and she does in fact take a number of precautions to keep her life completely separate from theirs.

Her chief allies in maintaining her secrecy are her best friend, a girl who has been suspended a number of times from school for fighting, and her best friend's mother. This mother "covers" for Linda by lying to Linda's parents about her whereabouts. She also occasionally joins Linda and her own daughter at parties with other adolescents and allows them to drink and use drugs in her presence. When Linda is out with her friends on weekends, she often drinks a great deal. Unlike her friend and her friend's mother, she doesn't engage in much sexual experimentation. She is too overcome with revulsion and often frightened by flashbacks from her own sexual abuse to allow herself much pleasure in sex.

When talking about how she perceived herself, Linda described herself as having a short temper and needing to prove that she has authority. By way

of illustrating this point, she talked extensively about school, where her main focus was engaging in fights with fellow students and in power struggles with the vice-principal and with some of her teachers. She described the students she fights with as "cocky, little obnoxious kids who mouth you off and are trying to be cool and fit in, but they look like idiots." She described the vice-principal as someone who told her that she would be a "nobody" and who, just like her father, won't let anybody talk and won't listen. Linda was clear with me right from the outset that she has what she called an "anger problem" which comes out in her interactions with the vice-principal, her teachers and those students she describes as cocky and obnoxious. Chief among those she described this way was Jenny with whom she had several altercations, one of which culminated in Linda being suspended from school for backhanding Jenny across the face after Jenny told her to "kiss my god-damned ass". Within the first half hour of our meeting, the themes of anger, struggling with authority figures and fighting with fellow students which preoccupied much of Linda's time and motivated her actions, were being discussed. These were recurring themes for Linda, and came up in every meeting I had with her.

Linda described herself as being both capable of anger that can explode into a vicious rage and having a deep capacity to hate. For Linda anger, rage and hate come into play especially when she is confronted by someone she has deemed as treating her with disrespect. Jenny, and after Jenny, the vice-principal have been most instrumental in triggering Linda's rage. Here is how she described what happens in relation to Jenny:

I just got a lot of hatred for some people...When I don't like somebody, say if somebody goes around, especially if they're, it really bother's me, 'cause it's that respect thing. If they're younger and they're calling me a bitch, I'll go up to them and confront them...and I'll say, "Look! Don't

call me a bitch unless you're looking for a fight. Because I never did anything to you, so don't worry about it. You've got a problem here and you'll have even more of a problem if you keep your attitude up!" And like people, the crowd might see me, I can't really like see myself when I'm doing it, I just know I got a lot of hatred. But when people like see me they're like, "Calm down". I mean it's like they had a bet going with me that I can't go two days without saying a negative thing and all that, and I couldn't...And there's one person (Jenny) and it just kinda happened after she mouthed me off, I was just like totally freaked with her and now I just want to slam her head into something. I wanna shoot her with a gun or something. I wanna kill her...If I could I get away with it I'd kill her. I wouldn't necessarily kill her, but I'd get her good. I just want to teach her a lesson. I'd beat the crap out of her. She's pissed me off so badly, I just want to give her two black eyes. Then I'd be fine. I'd have gotten the last word in.

With the vice-principal, she gave an example of her rage being triggered by a telephone call he made to her home. The call was made after Linda took part in an incident which took place in a school hallway and involved one of her closest friends tripping a male student "by accident". The male student reported the "accident" to the vice-principal and came back from his visit to the office to tell Linda and her best friend that he was told by the vice-principal that if he had in fact been tripped, he could press charges against Linda's best friend. Linda saw this as the vice-principal being "out to get people", specifically herself and her friends. This made her angry. Her anger grew when later that same day, the vice-principal called her at home to discuss her behaviour with her. She was not actually at home, but her mother relayed the call to the home of the her "best friend" who Linda was visiting at the time. The call was received by Linda's friend's mother who handed her the phone with the remark that, "It's that asshole of the year!" a remark which only served to solidify Linda's sense of having been wronged. By the time she took the phone, Linda was very angry, mostly because she found it intrusive and strange that she would be called first at home, then at a friend's home. When the vice-principal told her that he was calling because

he wanted to discuss his impression of her and to let her know that several younger students had come to him with complaints about her, Linda flew into a rage. As she said,

He didn't necessarily have to go and call me, he could have told me at the office. [When he called] I was so mad at the time, I was so mad. It just ruined my evening. I was just like "Oh my God, I can't believe this! When I find out who did that [complained to the vice-principal] I'm going to kill them!". I was so mad!

This anger reaches into Linda's life even under conditions which she herself describes as occasions when she actually knows better or has some understanding of the other person's position. For example, even though she herself has been picked on and bullied when she was younger, she finds herself picking on and bullying those students in her school who are picked on by others. Her reason for this is simple: "I've just got a lot of hatred."

The anger also comes out in her interactions with teachers, particularly those she has identified as "trying to be like your enemy". A teacher who is "trying to be like your enemy" is one who in Linda's mind has placed her or himself "above" the students and appears to convey dislike. With such a teacher, Linda goes out of her way to create disorder and distraction. Linda gave the following example:

Miss Sangster, she doesn't like us. She just doesn't like anybody. She thinks that she's better than you. She struts around and points her finger. She, she's rude. The other day I walked out of her class 'cause I turned around and like, everybody was talking, and she doesn't like me, so I turned around like, I just turned around and laughed and she sent me to the back of the room...She's got no right to do that. She's very negative, she's got no right!

Linda, in an attempt to "get her teacher back," purposefully set this teacher up the next time she attended her class, by complaining that she had a headache and asking her teacher for a Tylenol, knowing full well that her teacher could not supply her with a headache pill because teachers cannot

dispense medication to students. Linda then kept requesting a Tylenol and complaining about her headache until another student in the class offered to leave class and run across the street to her home to get a pill for Linda. Miss Sangster refused the student permission. Linda then challenged her with the remark, "So this is the way you care for your students!" and was subsequently sent to the office. At the office she encountered her Math teacher who asked her if she was being mouthy again, and her English teacher, a teacher with whom she had so far had a reasonably good relationship, who remarked that he "had now seen the other side" of Linda. The whole incident left Linda feeling angry and humiliated but also fully justified in her behaviour. For Linda, every aspect of the experience confirmed how wrong and bad teachers could be. Nothing that happened prompted her to revisit her own behaviour because in her mind, she was fully justified in everything that she did.

Linda, unlike Mary, who prefers the direct assault approach to teachers and anyone else who gets in her way, chooses to try to undermine and undercut those teachers she dislikes in a more indirect way by being an irritant. She saves the direct attack for fellow students, usually those who are younger and in a lower grade than herself, although one of the four incidents she was involved in over one three month period, included an altercation between herself and the same-aged "best" friend who had "accidentally" tripped the male student in the hall. This friend was suspended for five days for fighting with another female student, as Linda was for hitting Jenny. When Linda engages in a direct attack on another student, she usually feels fully justified because she does this only when she feels provoked. Provocation for Linda is being called names either behind her back or to her face. That is enough to get her going. Here is how she described a typical incident:

So I had this miff with a girl, actually a couple of days ago, and she, she ended up calling me a "bitch" and she would talk about me behind my back, and she's got a carrot stuck up her rear so far that she, it's true, (laughter) she walks standing straight. No one likes her. That's just how bad she is. And she, she, you know like I gave her the chance in the first place, like I was friends with her and then she messed it up by calling me a "bitch" like in front of everybody. And I said, "Did you call me a bitch?" And it makes me so mad especially when they're younger. My parents have always said, "Just walk away from it", but when other people walk away, I just get so mad, 'cause I think, "Oh they're not gonna listen to me," so I just want to pound the crap out of them. So I wanted to beat the crap out of her. And I told her, and Mary told her too, that I could hit her. I mean I can take her, I mean I could just slam her down on the ground and that would be it. She's just a weakling, and she uses her snootiness to look down on people and I don't like it. People like her shouldn't do that.

With Jenny, Linda was even more harsh. Here is Linda's perception of their interaction:

I told her she was in my face, she was calling me names and everything, like on the third day of school and I'm walking out on the thing and she's like giving me dirty look and I'm like, whatever, okay, and then a couple of days later, I'm walking out and I hear this, "Fucking slut," and I turn around and say, "What the hell is that for?" and we kinda get in an argument and then I walked away. The next day it's, "There goes the bitch," and I'm like this is a grade eight talking to a grade ten. And then at the dance she pushed me and I go, "Nice fucking outfit!" and then she went and told the vice-principal and then about a week went by and like I hadn't talked to her or anything and I was standing in the hall talking to my friend and I hear, "Kiss my ass!" so I said, "Say it to my face!" and so she did and then it was just like a reflex and I just went like that (motions a backhand smack) and I backhanded her. I should have punched her. She pissed me off so badly.

For Linda, the kind of provocation that Jenny engaged in was enough to justify her own behaviour of smacking Jenny across the face. When we arrived at this point in the discussion, I told Linda, and Mary and Molly who were also present, that I could understand that Linda might get very angry with Jenny but that I had a great deal of difficulty accepting that she or anyone

could resort to smacking someone across the face merely because of being angry. She explained it to me this way:

Well, we've got to, because the teachers don't really help you, and there's not anything you can do to get them [people like Jenny] back. I mean if you go to a teacher, they don't really do anything. They just say, "Oh well, she's in grade eight, you should be able to handle it yourself. And it's just like, well, what can I do, I'm not allowed to hit her? And if you do hit her, it's like you get the message to her, "Don't mess with me again," basically, and you've got to get her back, 'cause we're older and they make us look like idiots by sitting and mouthing us off. And I definitely want to do it because I want to get her back.

Furthermore, where Jenny was concerned, Linda believed she had further justification for "getting her back". According to Linda,

Jenny's a little liar. I even told her that. There is no way I'll ever resolve anything with her, and there's no way I'll ever be friends with her. She's a little liar, she's a slut, she wears clothes that don't fit her, and we have every right to call her a slut. No offence [in this case to me, the interviewer] but she's a slut. She slept with people at the beginning of the year, and then she was denying it, she's got a screw loose... and anyway, she really pisses me off right now because since she got in this one fight, she thinks she can beat up anybody. And that's like just so annoying. She fought that other chick just because she wanted to, she really didn't have any reason...Now she's running around saying that I couldn't fight worth a shit and that she's going to beat me up at the store and she's going to flatten me and stuff. And she goes to the elementary school where my sister goes and threatens grade sixes...and then she started giving my sister lip, so I turn around to her and I go, "Don't you even think about my sister, you don't even look at her, don't even walk by her!" I go, "Don't even think of her!"

Linda had no doubts at all that Jenny deserved a beating. In the final analysis, Linda had no doubts about what should happen whenever she was provoked. The rule was simple: when provoked, get them back! Neither Mary nor Molly offered a dissenting voice. For all three the choice was clear:

You have to do it because if you don't you'll get angry, and that's just the way it is when you're a teenager. You don't really care if you get in trouble or whatever, There's not much maturity, I guess. And any way, the trouble part isn't when you're hitting someone, because at

least then you're not sittin' there fumin' anymore, the trouble part comes after that.

At this point in the conversation, the discussion moved from violence to the use of drugs. Some of this material has been covered in Mary's story, but Linda's view on drugs will be covered separately here. For Linda, drugs (marijuana and L.S.D.) were now in the past, a past that began a few short weeks before our interviews. For the moment, Linda had "quit doing dope", because she had had enough for now. Having smoked pot nearly every day in grades eight and nine and in the first two months of grade ten, she thought she would leave it alone for now. She didn't offer an explanation, other than agreeing with Mary that maybe smoking dope and doing drugs like L.S.D. could become psychologically addictive and might therefore pose problems. Linda had an image of a former friend that she kept in mind when she thought about smoking dope:

Melody, do you remember Melody, she smoked pot and she did acid, and she got really weird, like she'd dress weird and she did so much dope, like it made her violent sometimes, even when she wasn't violent, and she didn't really like people, I don't know...

But while Linda may have put marijuana and L.S.D. aside for now, she had not done the same with alcohol. Like Molly and Mary, Linda drank regularly, especially on weekends, and like the other two, she drank to get drunk. Linda had discovered alcohol when she was seven years old:

When I was seven, I went to a wedding and me and my friends sat under a table drinking. It was like they [Linda's parents] didn't know, they were all up having a great time, and we just sat there drinking out of these little glasses. I got really out of it, and I was throwing up and they were all like, "Food poisoning!" Parents are so naive, like they couldn't imagine their seven year old daughter getting drunk you know...

As we continued to talk about alcohol and drugs and Linda, Molly and Mary also talked about sex and about morals. Much of what was said has

already been covered in the section devoted to Mary. With Linda, what stood out was the extent to which she had been subjected to sexual abuse and the clarity with which she could discuss what she had experienced. After disclosing her story (see page 121) she talked about what it has been like for her to live with this experience:

I just kept pushing it back and back and I, I even forgot about it. Like that might sound weird, but uhm, uhm, I, I, I forgot it for a lot of years, and then last year it started coming back and I'd like seclude myself from my family, I'd just sit in my room. And, uhm, my parents would get mad like, 'cause I was, like I wasn't spending time with the family. And uhm, and then they'd, I just, I kept, I had like dreams, and this feeling that I kept having of how I felt like all the time that that happened. But now it gets more, I like get it more often. I, it's hard to, like, there's two different feelings, like one that like, if I hold something it will feel gross, and I like just like I let go of it...Like it could be anything I'm holding onto, like I could be pulling my covers over me, and I just get grossed out like...And then there's this one [the other feeling] where it's in my head and I can hear something, but it's like a feeling but it's also what I'm hearing, and every time I hear it, I like kinda get...it's like something, something is being said to me and every time I hear it comes in more clearer sort of. It's weird, I and Uhm, now but, it's like I noticed like over the years it's not like before when it was just a blur, now it's like I can almost hear what it says, but I can't...It's in my head...and uhm it, it only like it only, I can only have like maybe not even five seconds to figure out what it is because once it goes away, then I just forget what it was like until it happens again, then it's like, "Oh ya." And then right after it happens it's like, I can't remember what it was like, but it's a voice...

Linda has experienced a number of difficulties with regard to dealing with the aftermath of her abuse. As well as what she described above, she has experienced nightmares and more flashbacks and feelings of distrust for those around her. She described her reactions as follows:

I'm not used to putting down on myself, but this made me really put down on myself. So when I put down on myself, I go into deep depression at home, and I won't talk to anybody and when I come to school I put on a fake smile and nobody can tell. And it's just like really stressful for me and for my friends when I tell them and that's why I have a hard time...I just get really sensitive and a lot of people

just, they don't know exactly why and it really hurts me more when my dad gets mad.

Linda's loneliness is poignantly clear. So far, only lying and putting on a fake smile has made it possible to cope with her parents. As we continued to talk more about how Linda was dealing with her experiences, Linda revealed more of the dimensions of the abuse she had been subjected to:

It's weird, 'cause I, last year I thought, "Well, I can handle this myself, right?" Like I'm going, "I don't need counselling for this." Like, I, in a way I sort of think that, but it just bugs me that not knowing wh. I'm feeling, and I certainly can't talk to my parents about anything. And my mom just kinda looks at me as if I was lying, so does my dad. And I remember, he [the abuser] used to get me and this other little boy that lived down the road to do things with him, and he'd sit and watch...Uh, he'd like, he'd get me and him [the boy from down the road] to do something and we'd have to like do the same back to him [the abuser]. Uhm, I remember one time like I was only young, I was about five 'cause I was still in play school, I remember. And we were in the back of this car and we thought it was normal. Like we didn't think there was anything wrong, and I just feel so embarrassed...We, like I, we did just like normal people would have sex. That's sort of what happened, and my mom walked in and I was grounded for two weeks, I remember that. I was grounded, and I just feel so uncomfortable around my parents now...What, another thing that really bugs me, uhm, like shortly after that was done, they, we -- I didn't have many friends when I was little 'cause we lived in a small town and like-- but uhm we had this tree house that we used to play on where, and we'd always play house and uhm this guy would like always play house with us and stuff, and he, he like told us that the kids, the parents have to do such and such to the kids, that sort of thing. So, like, we're like playing the role, and then, me and this other boy, like we had to uhm do stuff to him [the abuser] and uhm we had to do the same to this other little boy. Like he got us to do it to another kid, like we molested him...and nobody wants to feel as bad as I do...I've always thought I was a bad person...

After hearing this, I asked Linda if she had ever had any help with what she had experienced and with what she was still going through as a result of being abused. She told me that she had in fact approached the

school-based family worker for help, but was not at all happy with the outcome of this worker's intervention. Here is what happened:

I don't wanna talk to anybody about this, 'cause I remember, the family worker tried to go to Social Services and then go to the cops and all that and I was like really mad at her for that. I didn't, like it was done, over with and I just wanted to like leave it at that, and just like live with this sort of thing. Like inside I kinda felt like when I found out that now these other people knew, it was like, well, I wonder...were they talking about me when they were discussing my business? ..It, it's never like, she's [the family worker] never gone through with it, it's like I was so mad I wouldn't even come out and talk to her or like do anything. It just made me feel worse, and I didn't, like I couldn't concentrate in school...

And yet, despite saying that she didn't want to talk with anyone about her sexual abuse, Linda did talk about this almost every time we met. In fact, talking about it actually helped her to feel better. At the end of each meeting, before we parted, I asked each participant how she was feeling and what effect if any, having told her story to the group had on her. Linda, and Molly and Mary for that matter, replied each time that talking helped them a great deal. For Linda and for Mary and Molly having the opportunity to talk and most of all to actually be listened to was vitally important. As Linda put it,

Ever since we started doing this, I kinda got everything out, so I kinda feel fine...I've learned a lot from it too, just sort of things that you know you have it, but you never recognised it before. Like it sort of brings you from the top [surface] to the inside. Like before [we met as a group] I thought it'd be spooky, that's basically what I thought, and I don't know, now I think you guys are totally smart, and when Mary and I went to the dance together and all those people were like interested and they're like it couldn't be [that we're actually doing something together] and they're like Mary looks so nice and I'm like...I feel a whole lot better...I feel better every time I talk about it.

In fact, talking about how she felt about what had happened to her prompted Linda to open up the question of her sexual abuse one more time with her father. Here is how she described what happened:

Remember when I told you guys about how my parents didn't believe and stuff [about being sexually abused]. Well, it was weird, 'cause about two weeks ago we were arguing and I've always had resentment towards my dad and he was like, "Why do you always treat me that way? and stuff like that, and it took about two hours, but we kinda got down to it. And he asked me why I never go to him to talk to him. And I said, "'Cause I don't trust you," and he said "Why?" and I said, "Because I don't." And he goes, "Why?" and I go, "Because you don't believe a thing I say." And he's like, "What, what, what?" getting all mad at me, and then I told him and he was like, "Well?" and I felt so ashamed about telling him, but he believed me this time. Then he said, he goes, "Yeah, well, all he did was show you his private parts and make you touch them." And I was like, "Well that's not all," and I didn't want to tell him anything else, but he was like, "We, I can't believe that we didn't believe you, but it's just like you were a little kid at the time and we just thought you were getting ideas from something or whatever." He's like, "I'm sorry we didn't believe you," and then he was trying to make up , going, "Are you okay, blah, blah, blah?" They [both parents] were crying...But I wish now that I didn't tell them because they treat me like a kid...my dad's calling me his buddy, and then saying, "Oh, I better not call you that, 'cause that was the guy's [the abuser's] name, and he makes a big deal about it...It's like I wish I hadn't told him, I don't feel comfortable...And I told him that I went to counselling, and he was like, "Well, it's water under the bridge, you shouldn't let it get you," and he told me to quit seeing a counsellor....

Thus while Linda did eventually feel better because at least now she was believed by her parents, she felt uncomfortable and uneasy with their having intimate knowledge of her sexuality. As well, she felt unsure what to do with those feelings because her parents frowned upon counselling since it involved seeking help outside the family and because she still had a great deal of unresolved anger around how the school-based family worker she had approached for help had dealt with her situation. When I suggested a different counsellor, one who would make herself available merely to talk and to listen, Linda and Mary and Molly all declined because,

We just don't want to tell our parents about this, and we've kind of resolved this in our families and we don't want to go to Social Services again, 'cause I've [Linda] already had it happen twice [meaning the family worker she had talked to tried to contact her family on two

occasions]. And if that's any of the things [we have to do], I'm totally against it, 'cause that worker tried to press charges against him, and I'm like well...She called my parents the day after I told her and she questioned my parents about everything. My parents said it was true, and that's when it got brought up again, and she like went to social Services and all that was really ahhh....and I was so mad at her 'cause I didn't even want to bring it up and she went to the police and stuff...

What Linda wanted was to be able to talk freely about her experiences without anyone but herself taking action. She wanted to be heard, and she wanted to hear what had happened to other people. She expressly did not want me or anyone else, to do anything with the information she had shared. Most of all, she did not want her parents involved in what for her, was a deeply painful and embarrassing experience. Given that she had already talked with another counsellor who had satisfied the requirements of the law about sexual abuse disclosure by alerting Social Services and the police, I was able to do what she wanted. I listened, as did the other two members of our small group. This seemed to help. It helped until Molly broke her commitment to confidentiality, and Linda was once again exposed to invasion. One day, during an interlude in one of her classes, Molly took it upon herself to tell her fellow students about Linda's sexual abuse experiences (see Molly's story). Despite the fact that Mary, Molly and Linda had sworn to keep all of our discussions confidential, and despite her own first-hand experience with the shame and embarrassment of having others know about her sexual abuse, Molly disclosed Linda's experiences to her friends. And despite the fact that Jennifer Halliday and I met a number of times with Linda and with Linda and Mary and were able to work through all aspects of this latest betrayal with Linda until she felt she was able to move forward while continuing to use us both for support, the message to Linda was clear. There is no really safe place anywhere. And while she continued

to make meetings with Mary and me after this happened, I believe the experience of being violated yet again could only serve to confirm for Linda that the world is a hostile place.

Jenny's Story

We're a very close family, and they always back me up whenever I want them to. And I stand up for my sister. I learned to stand up for myself from my uncle. He didn't have the same problems like I did with kids picking on him, but he did get called out for a fight and he beat the guy up and broke his nose, so he tells me how to box because he had to take boxing when he was younger. So he showed me, he said "You've got to do this", and he'd push me over, and he's always play fighting. He always says "Don't let anybody push you around". So he pushes me and I push him back. He's bigger than me, and he showed me how to defend myself. So did my grandfather. He's got eight guns. He told me "Don't let anybody push you around", too and so did my grandmother. My grandparents don't like it when I get pushed around, and my parents don't either. When another kid tried to push me around at the mall my dad went over and said "You better watch it", and started yelling at her. And my grandfather wanted to run over these girls that wanted to beat me up. I've seen him when he's mad. He throws things and breaks them. Like if he's got a glass he'll just throw it up and like smash it on a table. He's been in fights like at weddings like with some of my cousins, when they were all drunk. And my dad, he's been in lots of fights like when he lived on the streets. He sort of lived on the streets and at home, because his parents were alcoholics and they died. His mom died when he was thirteen or fourteen, and his dad when I was five, but they were alcoholics so they beat him, so he didn't live at home and he couldn't go to school. He doesn't hit people anymore though, he doesn't believe in it unless it's another guy. But when he gets mad he calls me horrible names and that makes me mad and it makes me cry. And when I'm mad I punch, I'm so used to punching I punch everything. I punch my sister, and when I'm mad at school, I punch the lockers, but it doesn't hurt.

Jenny's family, like Molly's is described by its members as "close". And indeed, with regard to actual physical proximity, the word "close" is an apt descriptor. As stated previously, Jenny's parents, her sister, her grandmother and grandfather and her uncle (mother's family) all live together in two houses set about one hundred feet apart on a piece of country property.

Mother and grandmother work together, and the family spends most of its social and recreational time together. This family togetherness does however, have some limits, limits which are dictated by rigid family rules. For example, several of Jenny's mother's siblings and their children are very definitely excluded from anything to do with family because Jenny's grandparents strongly disapprove of their lifestyles and the fact that they exist on social assistance. Not only are these family members disapproved of, they are not spoken to, never invited to family gatherings and should they appear anyway, are fair game for a beating. Family exclusion also extends to Jenny's father's brothers, mostly because they do such things as not return tools which they have borrowed. At the moment one such brother-to-brother fight has evolved into a court battle and a family rift which involves Jenny "hating" her cousins and not speaking to them at school.

Closeness is also withheld from other members of Jenny's extended family, specifically Jenny's father's son who was born to a woman he had a relationship with before he became involved with Jenny's mother some sixteen years ago. Jenny's father has never acknowledged his now eighteen year old son, who has often been trouble with the law and is currently in jail. For many years, Jenny's father kept this boy's existence a secret which was only revealed through the intervention of the boy's mother. For the past two years, this woman has made numerous phone calls to Jenny's father, her mother, and on some occasions to Jenny. When she is able to keep someone on the line, she demands recognition of her son and child support. Jenny's father's response to this is to say that he will not acknowledge his son or pay child support because his former girlfriend could have chosen not to have her son in the first place; that is, she could have had an abortion and chose not to, therefore, Jenny's father does not see himself as responsible for his

son's existence or his welfare. Upon receiving this response, the boy's mother has increased her telephone calls and begun to issue threats. Recently she appeared at the family home, and parked her car in the driveway and sat there and watched the family enter and exit. Another time she told Jenny that she wanted to kill Jenny and her mother and her sister and get Jenny's father back. At the point of this writing, this dispute is still unresolved, but a decision has been made to try to keep the boy's existence a secret in so far as Jenny's ten year old sister is concerned because Jenny's parents believe she will not be "old enough" to understand about the boy until she is thirteen. In this family, being "close" sometimes means protecting each other to the point of keeping family secrets, even secrets that have no chance of staying secret.

Being close also means a high degree of emotional reactivity to things that immediate family members do. For example, when Jenny became involved with a boyfriend who did not meet with the approval of her parents, her parents and grandparents became quite angry with her. Because the boy in question had been suspended from school and was known to be in trouble, Jenny's parents demanded that she stop seeing him. Jenny however was adamant that she cared deeply for her boyfriend and refused to stop seeing him and frequently lied about how often she was with him. A conflict arose immediately between Jenny and her parents which escalated into a six week long battle during which people yelled and screamed at each other and Jenny's father referred to her as a "bitch", a "tramp" and a "whore".

While this was going on, Jenny's mother became quite ill with migraines and stomach pains, and exhibited symptoms similar to those she had experienced when she had stomach cancer nine years ago. At this point, Jenny's grandmother became very angry with Jenny and told her she was causing her mother's illness because she was the source of her mother's

stress. Jenny became the center of a family storm in which everyone concerned came down hard on her for upsetting her mother. Finally, Jenny's father told her, "If you can't live by my rules you can't live here at all!" and kicked her out of the house. Her mother then began to cry and asked Jenny if she really wanted to leave the family while Jenny retorted with "If you can't stand my fighting with you why don't you just sign me over to a group home!" This brought on more tears from Jenny's mother who then pleaded with Jenny to stay. This led to her father's relenting and Jenny being allowed to remain at home. Promises about better behaviour were then extracted from Jenny, who made the promises willingly enough, but lied about her whereabouts and continued to see her boyfriend until he broke up with her because he found a girl he liked better. Looking back on the incident, Jenny's mother identifies it as a time when Jenny "ruined Christmas for us" and speaks of the time that led up to this confrontation as a time when Jenny shocked her family and "changed her personality one hundred and eighty degrees". Until that time, Jenny's mother had regarded her as a quiet and "perfect" child who didn't require much attention, thus allowing her mother to put more time and effort into her younger daughter who appeared to need more.

In general, conflicts in Jenny's family quickly become extremely emotionally charged. When any two people become involved in a conflict, all the others choose up sides. Here is Jenny's description of her ongoing conflict with her younger sister:

When we get mad in my family, we just yell and scream. So if I get mad at my sister and I push her, she'll yell at me and I'll get back at her. Then I'll go to my room and turn on the music. I hate my sister, and my mom gets mad at me...if my mom gets mad she'll hit me in the back of the head, and she tells me to ignore my sister but I can't. She comes right up to me and yells in my face and I get mad, so I hit her or

push her, and it happens every day...We don't get along because we're totally different people. Like I take after my dad and she takes after my mom. My dad wants everybody to like him. He gets thirty people in a room and he talks to everybody, and I do the same thing. I like people to like me, and I don't like people hating me. And my mom, she's got a bad temper, and my sister does. So if I do something wrong, my mom will get mad and my dad will get mad at her, so I don't get grounded. But if my dad gets mad at my sister then my mom yells at my dad.

Taking of sides within the family is a common practice, and while a family member has taken up sides against another family member within the family, "hate" and anger prevail. However, if the same family member one is currently at odds with on the "inside" should encounter trouble on the "outside," (that is, outside the family circle), the "inside" hate is suspended for the moment, and the family closes ranks against outsiders. Thus, while Jenny "hates" her sister at home, she never-the-less goes to her sister's school and threatens anyone her sister has identified as difficult for her to deal with. And while Jenny was in the middle of "ruining Christmas for the family", Jenny's mother marched down to Jenny's school to confront one of Jenny's fellow-students whom Jenny had identified as bothering her. As well, at the same time as Jenny's father was threatening Jenny with throwing her out of the house he and Jenny's mother attended a school Christmas dance in order to "keep an eye on" Linda, who had previously been suspended for hitting Jenny and had returned to school in time to attend the dance. I found Linda's description of Jenny's parents behaviour quite illustrative and provide it here as an example of family style:

Jenny got her mom and dad to go to the dance because she said we [Linda, Mary and Molly] were going to beat her up or something, and her mom came up to me and pushed me. It happened when Jenny was pointing me out to her mom and all that and she was walking one way and I was walking the other way and she just kinda of pushed me. And her dad's a total asshole. He's like at the dance the whole time. He's like eyeing us all and all that, he's just an idiot.

Perhaps the best summation of the family's style and their stance towards those they consider to be in opposition, is the one provided by the bumper sticker which festoons the family camper: *A boss is like a diaper: full of shit and always on your ass.*

The aggressive and combative stance of the family in which she lives seemed to be completely lost to Jenny's mother. She was unable to make a connection between her own behaviour and that of her husband, her brother and her father and Jenny's involvement in fighting. When she talked about her own and her husband's involvements in Jenny's fights she relayed the information in a very matter of fact manner and called what she did "talking to" people. Nor can she account for how Jenny might have learned to fight, because in her mind, nothing that happens at home could be connected to Jenny's behaviour at school and on the street. Jenny's mother explains Jenny's actions as connected to moving from elementary school to junior secondary school and to a change in friends and by the fact that "nowadays, girls compete to be equal because you don't have to be a wallflower, you sort of have to do what the boys do to be accepted as an equal". For Jenny's mother, Jenny's friends provided the central influence in Jenny's move to violence because many of Jenny's new friends (male and female) come from homes that are in constant turmoil, where children and parents battle frequently and strife is nothing out of the ordinary. What she could not see was that her own home is not all that different from the homes of her daughter's friends. She believes instead that her home is a place where people care about each other, something that she sees as being absent in the homes of Jenny's friends. Jenny's mother is astounded by what she describes as a complete personality change in Jenny, a change which Jenny's mother has difficulty accounting for. Interestingly enough, Mary who attended grade

school with Jenny and has known her and her family for seven years, had no difficulty in seeing a connection between Jenny's behaviour and that of the rest of the members of Jenny's family whom she has frequently observed in the midst of some altercation or other either in the school yard, on the street or in the mall. Jenny's mother however, like Molly's, can only see her family's closeness.

Jenny herself likes her personality change, and doesn't see it in quite the light in which her mother sees it. Jenny, who has been much discussed by Mary, Molly and Linda, spent a great deal of our time talking about how her life has changed since she began to engage in fights, and about her very strong her involvement in and attachment to fighting. For Jenny being known as a fighter had become a vitally important part of her self image. She was very clear with me that she had a great deal invested in being tough and that she was, at this point, unwilling to do anything which would undermine her reputation as a force to be reckoned with. Jenny, who is 5'3" and weighs about 107 pounds, and is in my view delicately built, described herself to me as,

Kid's are scared of me, because I can look really tough, especially when I'm mad. It's because I'm built big. My parents even say that. I've got big shoulders compared to my mom, and when I'm big, everyone tells me, "You're going to be scary," and I stand up and I look down on them and I always give them a dirty look, and everyone's sure I'm going to get them. And if I get mad, I don't yell, I get mad and I hit.

When I asked Jenny what she thought about herself when she was doing these things she answered, "I don't think I like myself. I don't think I'm pretty, and I think I'm fat..." She then disclosed that hating herself and being hated by others reaches back to earlier experiences with being bullied and scapegoated in school and to her eventual evolution into a fighter, a "tough girl" with an image to protect.

Years ago, when Jenny started school she was what she described as, "shy and quiet, and the teacher didn't think I understood well, so I was put back in grade two." It seems then, from what Jenny and her mother both told me, that Jenny was a very quiet child, one described by her mother as "perfect", who spoke on so few occasions that her elementary school teachers were concerned that she hadn't grasped her school work, and was perhaps, developmentally delayed. Jenny was therefore held back a grade and began to have her first experiences with being bullied. She was picked on and ridiculed by her fellow students, first for being slow, and then as time went on, also for being fat. This went on for several years until, in grade five, Jenny decided to take action. She did two things:

I was shy and quiet until grade five, and then I stood up for myself. I was getting tired of being pushed around by everybody saying I was fat and I didn't like that, so I started to stand up for myself. And in grade six, I was so tired of being told I was so fat, I started going on a diet...I went right down to eighty pounds, I didn't eat for two weeks...I won't do that again, I felt terrible, but in a way I felt good because I was getting thinner and I had to get new clothes. But then I got so sick [Jenny developed shingles at age thirteen], so I just watch what I eat now.

Since that time, given that she got immediate results when she hit back and forced herself to loose weight, Jenny has worked hard to stay thin and to cultivate her reputation as a fighter who will take on all comers. Dieting and being thin brought Jenny immediate attention from a number of people, both at the time she first began to do this and continue to do so at present. Here's how Jenny described her experiences with not eating and with dieting:

I didn't eat and I got sick...and my doctor, he was just telling me that I shouldn't do that because you can get sick and you can die, so I started eating again...I can't eat cookies or cake, I get sick, I think because I'm not used to eating sugar now...or chocolate ...Sometimes I skip breakfast, and I don't really eat lunch. I eat very little for supper...I watch my weight all the time. I weigh myself every day, but sometimes I don't look...Nobody ever thinks I'm fat. Everybody tells me to eat.

They all tell me to eat, like my best friend. She was over the other night and I'll give her a cookie, but I won't eat any. Then she'll get mad until I at least have one. My friends want me to eat, because sometimes I go the whole day without eating...My mom doesn't like it. That's why I started eating, because she got upset. She told the doctor and phoned the school to make sure I ate my lunch. She kept me home a couple of days and told me to eat this...The doctor phones once in a while to see how I am...There was a time when I got shingles. He said that I was run down from not eating. My doctor said it was strange for a thirteen year old girl to have it...I got it when I wasn't eating and I'd go out and then I went to a concert and I didn't have anything to eat...and I collapsed a couple of times at the concert. I had like lots of money to buy food, but I'd already bought a T-shirt instead, so my friends bought me something to drink...

Thus while Jenny has certainly suffered from not eating, she has also been given a great deal of caring attention, attention she did not get when she was a "perfect", shy and very quiet kid.

Fighting has also brought with it a number of rewards: Almost as soon as Jenny began to stand up for herself, the amount of bullying and ridicule she was subjected to declined, and her fellow students began to see her in different light. Some saw her as someone to turn to when they felt they needed protection, others saw her as someone who could provide them with entertainment because she could so easily be goaded into fighting. Overall, Jenny was no longer alone, and rarely without some form of attention. In the end, Jenny's, "rep of a fighter", provides her with a role to play that is far better than the one she was originally assigned to play by those who had bullied her. In fact, Jenny's investment in fighting has become so central to her sense of self, that for her it is now "just something I do," something she would find extremely difficult to stop. When we discussed just how much a part of Jenny's sense of self fighting had become, Jenny described her involvement as follows:

I could only stop fighting if I get arrested, 'cause I haven't got arrested yet, and if I was taken out of school or put in an alternative, then I'd try

to stop, or if it's hurting my parents really bad. I'd stop if I really got into trouble for it. Like I would never stab anybody because I don't believe in using weapons,[except rings in lieu of knuckle dusters] but I don't know, if I really got in trouble because I really hurt them, like if I broke their nose and I was getting charged for that or I hit them first and I got arrested for it, then I'd try not to fight because I wouldn't want that to happen again because I don't really like getting in trouble with the police. But I can't stop myself, because it's just because everybody I know is so used to me fighting that, "Oh this person's bugging me," and half my friends can't take care of themselves and I say, "Fine, I'll take care of it." And I guess too, if like, I got beaten up really bad, I'd definitely learn to walk away --beaten up like in the hospital beaten up. Like if I get a black eye or a broken nose, that wouldn't stop me, because that can happen to anybody. But mostly there's no other way I can think of [to stop] 'cause everybody, everybody, like I've got people at both [junior secondary] schools knowing me as a fighter, and it would be just kind of awkward like, "Now there's going to be a fight, do you want to go?" I'll probably go. I'd still go 'cause everybody's just used to me going, "Yeah, sure, I'll go," and I'll be the first one there. And all my friends, a lot of people said, "Well, if you want to stop go ahead. Like we're not going to stop being your friend or anything," but in a way, I might lose a couple of my friends, and a lot of people won't like me after a while, and I like having a lot of friends.

Friends are the most important thing in Jenny's life especially in view of her years of suffering as a friendless scapegoat. Placing a high level of importance on having friends is not an entirely unexpected finding with someone Jenny's age, even if she had never had the experience of being bullied, because friends are generally rated as of the highest importance by most adolescents (Bibby & Posterski, 1992; Artz & Riecken, 1994). But with Jenny, there is an added level of intensity to how firmly she grasps onto her friendships, largely because she never again wants to find herself in the position she was in during her early years in elementary school. About this she left absolutely no doubt:

Right now, my friends --I don't really think my family's not important -- but I'd rather spend most of my time with my friends because my family is so boring and right now my friends are the most important thing.

However, while Jenny places a great deal of importance on having friends, she also described some of her individual friendships as difficult and fraught with contradictions. With two of her female friends, Jenny has a history of shifting from enemy to friend and back again. Here is how she described one such relationship:

Janet Williams, she was my friend and we were enemies first and she didn't like my friends, so she'd always get me into trouble. Like there was a new girl who came and we said this and that about each other and we got mad at each other, so we hated each other for two years and then the new girl left, and we found out what she did, that she said things about each other to us, so we apologised for every thing, so we were friends, but then she didn't like that I liked Todd, and she didn't like my clothes, so she called me out, and that's how we had a big fight (a fight which was watched by over 100 spectators).

In order to keep the attention of her friends and maintain her role as a fighter who will stand up for her friends, Jenny engages in fights to the degree that if she hasn't had a fight for some time she will systematically work her way through the people she knows or knows about until she finds someone she can provoke into fighting; she diets continually so that she will never again be fat; and she spends as much money as possible on clothes.

Where friends are concerned, Jenny is however, primarily concerned with forming attachments to boys. Her greatest source of joy at the moment is the fact that she is attracting positive male attention. Jenny attributes this directly to having lost weight. It seems that since Jenny was in grade three, and at least until she was in grade six, her tormentors were largely male:

It started in about grade three, all the boys used to pick on me. They used to go around calling me fat and ugly...It bothered me, and after a while, even my good friends started doing that, so I couldn't take it anymore. So I started pushing them or yell back and they stopped bugging me. It didn't matter how big they were...

Things are different now and although Jenny still believes that she is "fat and ugly" and still hates herself, she feels good when she is getting attention from

boys. Her best day of the year was her first day of junior high school because on that day, she got fifteen phone calls from fifteen different boys. At times like that, Jenny likes herself at least momentarily because,

It's really important to have a guy ask you out. I thought it was neat [when they all called me]. And I like myself when all the guys I hang out with don't think I'm fat and ugly. They like me, and my friend, she doesn't really get that many boyfriends because of her weight. She doesn't like if she's around me and I get a guy asking me out and a couple of hours later someone else asked me out...I feel good about myself, I have a boyfriend.

Not all Jenny's relationships with males are confined to the level of boyfriend/girlfriend. For while Jenny enjoys having a boyfriend and tries hard never to be without one, she also likes having male friends, and on occasion, she will fight with males as well as with females. When Jenny fights with males, her reasons for engaging in physical conflict are different than those she gives for fighting with females.

With females, Jenny will engage in fights for male attention. The fights are usually triggered by a dispute about who has the right to look at or talk to a particular boy, or who has the right to wear a particular style or article of clothing, clothing which is meant to attract boys. Jenny will also try to provoke fights with girls whose attitudes she doesn't like; she will fight girls who appear to be threatening her friends; and in the last analysis she will fight anyone (male or female) with a reputation for being tough, in order to continue to both uphold and increase her own reputation as a fighter. Here is how Jenny described a fight with a female opponent:

I got in a fight with a girl at school because she didn't like the way I wear my clothes. It got started when umm I was going out with this boy from another school, and she was mad, she liked him and she didn't like the fact I was going out with him so she picked on me about my clothes and my attitude and I just kept ignoring her 'til the point where she called a fight. She said, "You probably are scared to have a fight," so I went [to the place where the fight had been called] but I

wasn't scared [just] 'cause she's in grade nine, but she was [scared]. I found out where she was hiding and I said, "If you want to fight," I said, "Come on, let's go!" Okay, so well, we ended up fighting and we haven't seen each other since...She pulled my hair and slapped my face, and I punched her in the face. I cut her right by the eye [with my rings] and I scratched her and she backed off and left...There were about fifty people watching.

With male opponents, the dynamics are somewhat different. The dynamics still involve competition and tension about things female, because as Jenny described it, she engages in fights with males either over derogatory (usually sexual) comments males have made about Jenny or her friends, or because males see her as a threat to their girlfriends and want to beat her up in order to stop her from intimidating or hurting these girlfriends. Additionally, the dynamics also involve a desire on Jenny's part to be considered equal to males. As an example of a fight with a male, Jenny told me the story of her fight with a boy called Marty. It appears that Marty, a boy from another junior high school in the district, had shown an interest in Jenny, but Jenny had rejected him. This made him angry, so he began to express a dislike for Jenny. At the same time, he also found another girlfriend. When Jenny heard about the new girlfriend, she and a friend of hers began to make phone calls to Marty's house. This angered Marty's new girlfriend who promptly told Jenny and her friend that they had to stop calling Marty. Jenny and her friend then took Marty's girlfriend aside and threatened her and told her that they could call anyone they wanted to. This angered Marty even further, and according to Jenny, he now began telling some of her friends that, "Yeah, I'll get Jenny, and I'll jump her from behind and I'll stab her!" As Jenny understood it, "He was going to kill me with a knife, a machete." This prompted her to enlist several friends, male and female to set up Marty by inviting him to go to the movies with the express

understanding that Jenny would not be there. Of course she was there, along with her male friends Jim and Ted, who began to beat up Marty for her. Here is how the fight developed into a brawl:

First Jim [my boyfriend] started punching Marty in the face, Jim and Ted did and then Derek Holmes came and said, "What's going on?" and they told Derek that Marty wanted to beat me up, so Derek took Marty and slammed his head into a wall. And then he started punching him, and then Marty's dad came around the corner to pick up Marty, so he got in the truck, and then his dad said, "You want to fight? All of you come down to the house!" So at the time when I got there, there was about seventy-five kids there on my side, but only about twenty of us went down to the house because people couldn't stay because they were getting picked up...So twenty of us went down, and Marty wouldn't come out of the house until I got off the property, because I went right up to the door and said, "Come on outside! You wanted to fight!" and he says "I ain't coming out till Jenny's off the property!" So I got dragged off by Jim and Matt and Andy. They had to drag me off because I was really mad. And then Marty came outside and it was going to be a one-on-one fight with Derek, and like Derek didn't even know about it till that night, so they started fighting. Derek was fighting because he was afraid I'd really get hurt and because it wasn't right for a girl to fight a guy, he didn't think. And I'm like, "I want to get in there!" I wanted to get in there because it wasn't fair that Derek was doing it for me, but then it stopped and the dad, he was there, yelling at me, and I was yelling and screaming, "Yeah well your oldest son tried running me over, he tried hitting me with his car!" -- But he didn't hit me because I got pulled out of the way by Carey Henderson. He pulled me out of the way. I fell, but I was okay-- and then I was yelling and Derek and Marty stopped and Marty yelled, "Come on, you wanted to hit me, so hit me!" And he spat in my face. I got really mad. I took off my coat, I had a leather coat, and dropped it and grabbed him by his hair and he turned around and hit me...so I punched him in the face. I cut him and then he got mad and he sort of punched me in the face...and Derek was busy talking to the dad and yelling at the dad. The dad was telling us to, "Leave! The fight's over!" But then I sort of attacked his son and then the dad came over, and I tripped and fell. Marty pushed me into his brother's car and I dented the door with my shoulder and my head, so I had big bruises. Jim came and he's yelling, "Get off her, get off her!" He's kicking Marty trying to get him away and Derek came over to try and get Marty away from me. Marty's dad came over and took Derek and punched him in the jaw and held him on the ground and so Marty jumped off me and I got up and walked away, and he started kicking Derek in the face. So the dad

let go, and Derek was like, "Oh my jaw, oh my jaw!" He thought he broke it, and we all took off and the dad got in his truck and started it so he thought he was going to chase us. And we all took off and he got out of his truck, so we all went back and then the police showed up and took down all our names...

That ended the fight for the time being, but it continued on the following day as follows:

And the next day like, when I was walking with my friend down the road, he [Marty's dad] saw me and I'm like "Whatever!" and I gave him a dirty look and he drove by so he stopped just like dead in the middle of the road, turned around and started chasing me. I'm running down the road towards the mall and Jim and about fifteen guys I know from school came around the corner and I'm screaming. They came over and got all around me. The dad pulled in the parking lot and was yelling at me, so they're all yelling at him and he went to leave and he stopped and came out because this boy, Carey Henderson was yelling at him. He came out and just started strangling Carey. He picked him up and strangled him and put him down and then like left. And then we left and the dad followed us for the rest of the day...And then I went home, and I felt really bad because I don't know what the dad was going to do because he's so mental, so I told my parents and they got mad, but then we were going to press charges but we didn't because I would have got in the most trouble if anybody pressed charges because it was because of me, but so then everything cooled down after that...

When I asked Jenny how she felt about all this, she had a great deal to say both about her feelings and about further developments with Marty and his father. The story continues:

I was mad for Derek because of what happened to him, and if he didn't know [about Marty wanting to stab me] it would never have happened...And I felt bad in the fight because I wanted to fight Marty. I wanted to fight him to see if he would hit me or not, because if he did and hurt me, I had nineteen other people behind me. They would have all jumped in...They were all trying to hold me back because I was really wanting to get in. I didn't even think about anything, I was just so mad. After a while, I didn't even know where I was I was so mad...I didn't want Derek fighting, I wanted to do it. But Derek did fight so I gave him hugs for that. I was hugging him because his jaw was all sore and he got bit. Marty bit him, so we were trying to make him laugh, and then after a while, he got so mad and he just wanted to fight

again...I was so mad, I wasn't scared [even though] Marty told everyone he has a gun...He really has a gun because he lives with his dad and his older brother and they don't have a mom. So his dad has a gun for hunting. So Marty has a gun and he was gonna use it on me if he saw me going down the road. I heard he was gonna, but I didn't think he would because he knows if he did anything he wouldn't live. And he's not gonna use it anymore because I talked to the dad, and the dad didn't know anything about it. He thought it just started that Friday night. And I told him, "Your f'ing son this and your son that, he was going to use his gun on me and he was going to stab me and hit me." And he's going, "Yeah, well I gave him permission to hit you, but I promise he will not use any weapons on you." I said, "Well just make sure of that, because if he uses any weapons on me, you'll have weapons used on you." My dad would use weapons on him, he was really mad. My grandfather's a hunter. He has eight guns. So if like I got shot, my grandfather would. That's what he was saying.

When I probed further into how Jenny felt about this kind of fighting she was once again almost emphatic that all in all fighting was a good thing:

I like fighting. It's exciting. I like the power of being able to beat up people. Like, if I fight them, and I'm winning, I feel good about myself, and I think of myself as tough...I'm not scared of anybody, so that feels good. My friends are scared of a lot of people, and I go, "Oh yeah, but I'm not scared of them." Some of my friends, like this one girl from the other junior high school, admires me...It's getting on my nerves because she phones me fifteen times a night, it's boring...She admires me because like if someone's picking on her, I said, "Well tell them I'll have a talk with them." And I did, and she told all her friends and they're all scared of me now and they don't even know me." (chuckle) All these people in grade eight at that junior high are scared of me, they don't even know me, and they're scared of me. It makes me feel powerful.

In fact, Jenny has come to like this feeling of power so well, that she finds fights wherever she can, in her own school, at the other junior high school in the district, and even in the elementary school her sister attends. On occasion, Jenny threatens and bullies students attending grade five and six. When I suggested to her that her behaviour sounded quite a bit like that of those who had bullied her, she assured me that what she was doing was really different. In her mind, she was keeping order and threatening only

those who appeared to be intimidating or otherwise irritating to the people she knew. To Jenny, this meant she was doing the right thing. Again, Jenny told me that where fighting was concerned, she generally felt "good". She also told me that she was interested in knowing people in gangs (and like Sally she was enamoured with the "Bloods) because,

Like they're always there for you...Like I watched this show "Geraldo". There's like six of them, girls that belong to gangs and mom says, "You admire them don't you?" I go, "Yeah, I do." Like they're always there for you, like if you need something, they're there for you...They're tough. They're all pretty too. Everybody's scared of them... I like it when people are scared of me. It just makes me feel good. I feel like, "Oh, finally someone's scared of me."

I asked more questions about her attraction to the six gang girls displayed on "Geraldo". (For those who are not familiar with daytime television, "Geraldo" is a talk show named after its host. "Geraldo" specialises in sensationalising anything that is topical, and particularly likes to interview guests who are having problems with violence and sex.) I wondered if Jenny wanted to be like the six girls she seemed to admire so much. Her answer was illuminating, especially in light of her extensive endorsement of violence and her own pleasure in finding power through engaging in violence. Here is what she said:

I admired them, but I didn't really like them, not really, because they were bad, and they were all dumb. There was this one girl, she was thirteen. I'm older than her and she looked like she was seventeen and she could only say three words. It seemed like she could only say three words, "Fuck you, you're a fucking bitch," like three or four words, and she couldn't say anything else. And none of them were in school. But this one girl, I admire out of them all because she was getting out of the gang. She's got a baby. She's fifteen and her boyfriend is in the gang as well. He's leaving and they're in school so they can get a job. It's like I want an education. I want a good job, I just don't know what I want to be...

Although friends, fighting and being tough and powerful were most important to Jenny, she also placed some value upon school and finishing high school and stated that she didn't think that she would drop out of school before completing grade twelve despite the fact that she doesn't like school at all. But Jenny's main focus with regard to the future is not on further training or education, it is on getting married:

I wanted to be an airline stewardess, but that changed. I don't want to do that because I love travelling, but I got to thinking that if I have to travel, I can't have a husband and kids. I plan to have a husband and have kids and get a job, a good paying job...I want to get married when I'm twenty and have two kids, a boy and a girl, and I plan to stay with all my friends that I have now...I don't want to go to university. I don't like school that much, I wouldn't be able to take it...Some teachers told me I could be a cop because I've already experienced everything so I'd understand, but I don't like police at all... I won't be able to be a teacher at all, it's just I don't like kids, 'cause like I have a bad temper sometimes, but I can be a counsellor, 'cause of this fighting and everything, I'll be able to help other kids that's fighting...I'd probably be against it later on, but right now, I like it...

Thus, although Jenny envisions a very traditional future, for the moment, fighting and its connection to having friends and being feared takes precedence over anything else. Along with her interest in fighting, Jenny also has fascination for death and for gangs. After more discussion, it turned out that Jenny's fascination with knowing gang members revolved around wanting to believe that if she were to join a gang, she would be forever safe from possible attack because then she would not only have herself to depend upon, she would have the gang. Somehow, she wanted to have the option to be in a gang. The attraction to the gang was not so much the gang itself, it was the safety that Jenny thought the gang would provide. In fact, she was clear that if joining a gang meant either upsetting or losing her friends, she would forego seeking out a gang to join. When I asked about the violence that

seems to be connected to most gangs, she told me that that wasn't an issue, only losing her friends was an issue, because all the violence,

doesn't bother me, like my mother thinks there's something wrong with me 'cause I'm so into death. I'm very much into death. When we're moving into my grandma's house, she goes, "What colour do you want your room?" I go, "Black, what other colour?" She goes, "Fine." So I got black walls, carpet, absolutely everything I own is black. I'm getting rid of all my stuff that's not black. I sit and draw crosses that are black and I draw so that they're bleeding. Like I sit in class and I write about death. Once in a while, I'll have the devil's star. I don't worship the devil, but like, I like believing in the devil more than I believe in God because there's something evil, I don't know...I know about this stuff because I read a book called "Michelle Remembers" [this book was written by a Victoria-based psychiatrist about one of his patients who had been ritually abused] and it was all about the devil and what really got me is my uncle's ex-girlfriend lived in the house where all this stuff happened to her [Michelle] by the devil when she was five. So, and I like knowing what happened...I didn't like them, [the people who abused Michelle] but I like the devil himself...I don't know...What I don't like about it is if you get possessed, like I watched the Exorcist and I go, "Oh my god, I don't want to be possessed by the devil!" I don't know, I just admire death...I like the devil. He's evil. He's powerful. He likes killing people. I don't like killing people, but I like death.

When I probed further into Jenny's fascination with death she had trouble elaborating, but was able to make a few more statements. I asked her to tell me what it was about death that really interested her, she told me that,

It's hard to say, I like it, it's just black, black and someone being dead. You know like, watching TV, like I like horror movies. Sometimes I like the way people die in the movies, like in the Exorcist, when she got possessed, she was able to throw people out the windows, so that's what she did...It's just I like the devil and evil...I don't like God. I don't go to church. It's boring. It's very boring...If I was possessed I could sit here and this glass would explode. And I can make just anything happen. Like I admire that...I like death and the colour black, but I don't like watching "live" someone who is really dying. I cry when someone in my family dies...

I was somewhat relieved to hear that Jenny did not want to see an actual death, but I probed further to assure myself that Jenny's fascination for

evil and death did not carry with it a plan to harm either herself or someone else. Jenny was quite clear that she did not want to kill anyone. She was also clear that she herself did not want to die, but she had considered suicide:

I don't want to go, it makes me sad, but I did. Like I don't know, like I thought about ways I could and I know that if I ever wanted to I know how to do it. But I don't like pain. I wouldn't be able to stab myself or like shoot myself, I wouldn't be able to stand the pain. I was thinking about doing that last year. My friend and I were sitting and talking about ways that we could kill ourselves. Like she was really into it. She still is. She's like one of those people who, "Oh yeah, I'll slit my wrist and my throat." I'm like, Oh, I wouldn't be able to stand the pain...She's weird. She's unhappy. She doesn't like herself...She's overweight...She thinks she's ugly because she's fat. She doesn't really like herself and she has weird ways of doing things.

Upon hearing this, I checked again to see how Jenny felt about herself, and again she told me she thought she was ugly and fat, but that she felt good about herself for now because she has a boyfriend and is getting a great deal of attention from boys. As noted earlier, most of Jenny's self esteem seemed to depend upon being sought after by boys, and most of her investment in fighting was connected to this, whether she was fighting with girls for the attention of the boys or with boys for their respect as an equal. When I asked Jenny about how she felt about being a girl, she replied,

It's hard, just because everybody's fighting, so like if you don't fight, you're going to get beaten up. Like we, [girls] can't do most things...I can't box because only guys are allowed to...There's so many things you have to do, like watch who you are. If you're not a fighter, and there's a gang, and they don't like you, you can get hurt, so you have to watch your back. Like I have to watch my back all the time... In a way it's scary, but in a way it's not, because I don't have to do as much because like now I'm friends sort of with the Bloods [a gang] and I don't have them after me, I stay away, it's sort of hard...It's hard too because everybody wants to have friends and wants to be cool and if you're not, if you're some sort of geek [it's hard]. And right now, I'm not considered as a geek. If you're not a geek, you can have hundreds of friends, but you have to do a lot to keep them...

When I asked Jenny about the things she "has to do" to keep friends, a number of things emerged which were not directly related to violence but nevertheless had a connection. To join with her friends Jenny engages in the following: She drinks alcohol to the point of throwing up, but does not, interestingly enough, smoke cigarettes or experiment with drugs. Jenny's reason for abstaining from cigarettes and drugs was simple, she thought they would interfere with her physical fitness and thereby put her mark in Physical Education in jeopardy. Also, smoking made it impossible for her to stop from eating, because she would get sick to her stomach if she tried to smoke when she hadn't eaten. Therefore, since abstaining from food was more important than smoking, Jenny quit smoking. Jenny also joins with her friends by aspiring to follow the current fashion of body piercing and tattooing. Her "best friend" the one she described as being termed "fat and ugly" by the boys, wants to have her eyebrow, belly button, and nose pierced, while Jenny wants to begin with having only her belly button pierced. Part of the attraction to body piercing is that doing this would be a direct rebellion against both girls' mothers, and therefore a statement of autonomy and power vis-a-vis those people in their lives who are in charge of discipline at home. Along this vein, both girls also say they want to get a tattoo. Jenny envisioned, "a black panther that's walking on my shoulder, since I like black, it's going to be black." When I asked Jenny where she got the idea for this tattoo, she told me,

My dad. He's got a black panther and an eagle, and I admire my dad. He's like I don't know...Like he's very tough. He's not a wimp. If someone's bugging me, he'll go and beat him up.

Thus, getting a tattoo not only signals kinship with her friend for Jenny, it also signals a connection to her father and to his image of toughness.

In order to visibly identify with a group she can call her own, Jenny calls herself a "Rapper" and embraces Rap music and Rapper fashions as well as the values of antagonism and hostility to outsiders which come along with this. For Jenny, being a Rapper means hanging out primarily with boys, wearing baggy clothes and listening to music that Jenny describes as

heavy, with lots of swearing, and some of them say bad things about girls and women like they should be told when they should have a baby and stuff, but some of them don't, and I always listen to that...Women are equal... I think that women being equal is fair. I don't think it's fair that they can't do certain things. Like I don't think it's fair, there's this boxing club that I'm supposed to join, but they won't let me in because I'm a girl...

And once again our conversation came around to Jenny's enthrallment with fighting. She elaborated with regard to boxing by saying,

[When they said I couldn't join] I was mad. But my uncle's friends with the guy [who runs the boxing club] so he's gonna come out to my house every night when I box, 'cause it's a law no girls can join, but I'm gonna learn to box...because I'm good with my hands. I tried Tae Kwan Do, and I feel that by the time you get your leg up to their head, they've already hit you in the nose. They've already broken your nose. So boxing...I'm so used to punching...

Jenny returned again and again to the importance of being able to fight, and seemed unable to see fighting in anything but a positive light. At one point we were discussing this while sitting in the food emporium of a local mall. Sitting near us was a man with a five or six year old boy. They were laughing and talking and appeared to be enjoying each other's company. I pointed them out to Jenny just after she had finished telling me about yet another fight she had been in which made her feel "good" because she won, and because the other person had more injuries than she had. I then asked her what she saw when she looked at the man and boy sitting at the next table. She saw them as a father and son who were out having a good time together. I asked her next what it might be like if the boy were to be beaten up

by someone and had to go home to his father with his face all beaten and bruised, and then I asked her how she thought the father might feel upon seeing his son in that state. Suddenly, Jenny dropped her face into her hands and ran both hands over her face and into her hair and groaned. Then she looked at me and said,

Don't ask me to think about that. If you ask me to think about that, I'll have to stop what I'm doing, and I don't want to stop what I'm doing.

Jenny, at the time of our meetings, was unprepared to stop fighting on her own volition.

The last time I saw her, I visited Jenny at home where she was spending her time under her mother's supervision. She had been suspended from school for participating in two fights in one day. The "main event," a planned battle with a girl who was sometimes her "good" friend, was called by both girls as a way of deciding which of the two had the right to wear certain clothes and go out with a certain boy. This fight was held in front of a crowd of over three hundred students. It was broken up by the principal of Jenny's school with assistance from the male counsellor. The two men had driven to the fight as soon as they heard what was going on, and put an end to it as quickly as they could. The "warm up" before the main event took place as Jenny made her way to the fight. As she walked along the road to the corner store which was the designated arena for the fight, a car pulled up and another girl, also a rival for the attention of a boy, jumped out and attacked Jenny from behind. Jenny fought her off and managed to best her and continued on in order to fight the agreed upon battle. Both Jenny and her opponents were battered and bruised. No charges were laid because it was difficult to decide who was the victim and who was the assailant. Jenny was proud of herself, but she was definitely grounded from further action. Her

mother took time off work and stayed home with Jenny. She went to Jenny's school and brought back a stack of books and homework and when Jenny was finished, she went back for more. Jenny's mother had decided to take action. She intended to do everything in her power to prevent Jenny from participating in any more fights and was receiving backing from Jenny's school. I gave Jenny and her mother the name of a violence counsellor at a local social services agency and the name of a youth group leader who works with young people who like Jenny, are moving rapidly towards involvement with the juvenile justice system. When I left them, Jenny and her mother were making phone calls to the people I suggested. Eventually, Jenny joined the youth group and saw the counsellor. While she may still value fighting and toughness, she has not been engaged in a major physical battle since that time.

CHAPTER FIVE -- MAKING SENSE

[Young] women, the focus of this [dissertation], develop into social beings in the following sequence. Initially copying other's gestures, the infant girl progresses through play and game stages until she forms a *mind* with the rational ability to understand symbolic gestures. This mind allows her to become an object to herself with the capacity to make moral judgements and decisions on courses of action. Each woman develops in this way a *self* that is reflective and capable of viewing actions from both her own point of view and that of *others*. She is historically located in the community through this learning process, called socialisation (Deegan, 1987; from Mead, 1934).

Making Sense: A Summary of the Key Informants' Perceptions and Interpretations of Self and World and the Relationship of This to Existing Theory

In this chapter, I will summarise the perspectives and interpretations the key informants brought to bear on themselves and their worlds and offer my analysis of the meaning of what they have said. I will also revisit those theories offered in Chapter Two as a means of understanding deviant and delinquent behaviour in females in the light of what the key informants have told me and outline what I have come to understand about violent girls as a result of engaging with the participants in this study.

The Dynamics of the Families of the Six Key Informants

In their book on Families in Canada, Larson, Goltz & Hobart, (1994) make the statement that "Whatever the form, and wherever it is found, the family is the primary source of meaningful relationships from birth to death" (p. 3). The authors offer three basic assumptions which speak to the depth of impact and the endurance of familial experience. These are as follows:

- (1) The family is primarily responsible for the reproduction and nurturant care of children.
- (2) The family is primarily responsible for the establishment of an individual's social identity, social role and social status.
- (3) The family is the primary source of intimacy and need fulfilment for the individual throughout the life span (pp. 3-6).

If we accept the above, the family is the primary matrix within which the process of internalisation of social processes takes place, in that the family mediates and interprets the larger social context to its members, particularly its children. The internalisation of social processes (noted by both Vygotsky, 1978, and Blumer, 1969) is of course, not limited to the family, but in looking to the family, one may uncover the core social and interpersonal processes which have been used by individual actors as a basis for drawing meaning and creating a foundation for their perspectives of self and others and the world.

In the course of our discussions, the six key informants frequently talked about family. Within the first five minutes of meeting with Molly, Mary and Linda, parents and brothers and sisters were brought into the discussion. Throughout our time together, these three continued to refer to family, and to ponder their own actions and feelings in the light of their experiences with their families. Sally, Marilee and Jenny also mentioned family members each time we met to talk. Many times, the girls used their parents' behaviours and viewpoints as reference points for their own. Although each girl had her own unique family story to tell, all six had in common an experience of family that included strife and disruption, and deep pain and sorrow.

Often, after meeting with the six girls and their parents, I would drive home in a state of grief. At times I was completely overwhelmed by the conditions of the lives they were revealing to me. Despite my eighteen years of front-line child and youth care work and my four years of working with adult women survivors of abuse, and despite the fact that I know well that children are used and abused by their family members and others with whom they share their lives on a daily basis, the raw immediacy of the stories I was

hearing hit me hard. There was something in the matter of fact way in which they recounted their experiences that particularly bothered me, for while they did not shy away from expressing their anger and frustration with regard to what they were experiencing, they also took it for granted that this is simply the way life is. Basically, they saw their own families as "okay", although they saw the families of others who lived similar lives as "bad". Both the girls and their parents appeared to be "looking through a glass darkly" and not really seeing their own reflections.

The mothers seemed unable to make the connection between life as lived within the family and their daughters' involvement in violence. They welcomed me into their homes, gave me of their time, made me cups of coffee, met me for lunch, attended parent forums, had discussions with me on the telephone, and told me details about their private lives which in some cases, they had not shared with anyone else. They wanted to help me to "do something" about youth violence, and I believe they were completely sincere in that desire. They were committed to the project, as were their daughters, but what they seemed unable to do was to look inward for the answers.

Perhaps the greatest source of my grief was that I saw families in deep trouble, families with multiple and serious problems, who were constructing life worlds and ways of dealing with life which passed on to their daughters ways of being and doing that could not and did not serve them well. And while these families were engaging in this sad and sorry game of "pass it on", they were also looking around for someone to blame and punish for youth violence. The Young Offenders Act, the Ministry of Social Services, the schools, adolescence itself and hormones, other families, all were candidates for the role of chief culprit, only not they themselves. And while they looked

elsewhere, I looked to them, not so much as culprits, but as the place to start the work. And as I looked to them, I wondered where one could begin.

My answer to myself was "begin at the beginning". The beginning was, as I saw it, the parents' families of origin. In that case I have data from Mariëe, Mary, and Jenny which are quite similar. They each have fathers who come from families who ejected them at an early age after subjecting them to abuse and to the ravages of parental alcoholism. These three men spent time living on the streets and surviving by dint of hard physical labour and the willingness to use their fists. They got married early in life, around the age of twenty or twenty-one, to women as young as themselves or younger. The women they married (or who married them) also share similar backgrounds.

Two of these women (Mary's and Jenny's mothers) were clear that they had been silenced and undervalued as they grew up. Mary's mother describes her father, an educated man with a Ph.D., as a domineering individual who gave her very clear messages about the unimportance of women and women's ideas and who to this day, believes that women should be led by the men they are there to serve. Mary's mother articulated her experiences as follows:

When it came to getting a college or a university education, my dad just said things like "You can't" and "Girls can't do this" and messages like "Look after your man" type messages instead of "Look after yourself" type messages...And I had a hard time talking because I was always scared of people judging me and giving me a hard time. I guess my parents are very judgmental people. You know, whatever you say you get judged on, instead of being okay.

Jenny's mother describes herself as feeling unhappy and invisible as she grew up. As she put it,

I was the one daughter, middle child, with an older brother and a younger brother, And my parents were geared towards sports, men's

sports, hunting, and I'm not. I didn't really have much to contribute to any conversation. My brothers and my dad, they worked the same type of job so they had all those things in common, so when I was growing up, I always felt I had nothing to contribute, so I didn't need to say anything. I didn't need to be in the same room...I always felt out of place because I'm different, I think I'm different from my family.

The silencing and devaluing at the hands of, and in the name of men, which Mary's and Jenny's mothers describe is not unlike Linda's account of her mother's experience of "holding everything in until it hurts her" in order to avoid her husband's wrath. It also ties in to Sally's mother's struggle with what she calls her co-dependency, that is, her well-ingrained habit of putting other's (particularly men's) feelings and needs before her own, and her propensity to arrange her life and that of her family to satisfy the demands of her male partner (witness her battle with her husband and ex-husband over Sally's school plans).

The fathers in each of these families behave in ways which destroy family harmony. Sally's stepfather enters into a sibling rivalry with her out of which come shouting matches which cause the neighbours to call the police. Marilee's father drinks, gets angry and hits his wife and daughters. Molly's father uses physical force to control his sons and his sons live out the dominance message in a number of ways, one of which includes sexual abuse. Mary's father regularly physically abuses his children. Linda's father rules his household with intimidation and physical abuse, and Jenny's grandfather and uncle engage in physical violence, while her father models intimidation in his approach to Jenny's rivals in the community. A particularly virulent and damaging form of male oppression holds sway in each of these households.

In some cases, the mothers fight back. Mary's mother engages in daily battles with her husband over her rights and the rights of her children.

Sometimes she uses physical force to restrain her husband's violence. Sometimes she uses physical force to make her point outside the family. Jenny's mother is no longer silent, and where her husband and her daughters are concerned, expresses her views loudly and clearly, as do Molly's and Marilee's mothers. Jenny's mother also engages in verbal battles and pushing and shoving matches with Jenny's friends. Sally's mother does what she can to "make" her husband and her daughter fight less. Sometimes she accomplishes this by yelling and screaming at them. And while the mothers may yell and scream, the effect of this is only momentary especially where their husbands are concerned. With their husbands, the mothers of the key informants appear to be committed to fighting the same battles over and over again. Linda's mother still maintains a guarded silence, and she too has been willing to do this for many years.

All these couples, with the exception of Sally's parents, have been married for between sixteen and twenty-six years. There appears to be a strong commitment to marriage and family among these couples, for while Sally's mother and father have been divorced, they have each sought out other partners with whom they intend to remain. When I discussed this with the mothers, they let me know that they were proud of having stayed married for so many years. They interpreted the fact that they had not divorced as a strong indicator that their families were good families. In fact, several mothers told me that they were mystified by their daughter's behaviour because after all, mom and dad were still together.

Typically, these women appear to act as both wife and mother to their husbands. In the role of wife, they remain subordinate even while attempting to fight for equality because despite their considerable efforts, nothing really changes. In the role of mother-to-their-husbands, they

admonish and lecture and attempt to teach, they make rules and give ultimatums, and they punish. They also demand of their children that they behave in ways which won't upset their oldest "man-children". For while they fight for equality on the one hand, they help to maintain their subordinate positions on the other, by assuming responsibility for the family's feeling climate and specifically for the emotional states of their husbands. Sally's mother's struggle with what she has learned to call her "co-dependency" is a good example of this. While fighting to get free of mothering her husband by managing his emotional world for him, she finds herself not knowing how to understand her own experiences without referring to herself by her label, and thus encumbered, she becomes unsure just how to respond to the inequities around her. Each move she makes must be second guessed in the light of her "co-dependent" problems, whether it is to counsel her daughter to stay home because she intuitively senses trouble on the horizon, whether it is to ask her husband and her daughter to stay away from escalating conflicts with each other, whether it is to hold the police accountable for following through on laying charges against her daughter's assailant. Everything she does is coloured by the possibility that she may be doing it because she is "co-dependent", thus inaction or wavering action keeps her tied to precisely what she is working so hard to leave behind.

Despite the obvious tension and conflict apparent in all these families, both the mothers of the key informants and their daughters, believe they have good families because all family members are "close". In working to understand the meaning of "close", I came to realise that for these people being "close" means being deeply emotionally enmeshed, especially in a negative way. That is, the more family members felt each other's feelings, took on each other's battles, engaged in knowing each other's business, told

each other what to do and attempted to exert control over each other's behaviour, the "closer" they were. One way one can be especially "close" to someone in these families, is to know something about them that no one else knows. Thus, to share a secret, or to know the latest family gossip and to team up with a family member in the effort to take charge of another person's life makes one especially close to someone. Furthermore, "close" is often equated with the right to place demands upon or have expectations of the person one is close to. For example, when Mary described herself as close to her brother, she meant that she saw herself as having special privileges in his direction which gave her the right to expect first call on his time and attention, in other words, she owned a part of him.

Closeness also extends to causing others' mental, physical and emotional states. Thus Jenny's parents and grandparents believe that Jenny made her mother physically ill, Mary's father believes that his children are responsible for his stress and sees them as the cause of injuries that he suffers while doing things which relate to them, and Molly's mother measures her family's emotional health according to the state of her own feelings. Finally, being close to someone in one of these families does not mean that one understands and accepts family members on their terms while making an effort to respect their individuality and value their unique contributions. Closeness does not appear to extend to attempting to understand why people do what they do. It means that one expects other people to be as much like oneself as possible. In fact, the state of being close, which is really the state of being the-same-as, is strongly connected to the state of being right and good. Individual differences are not applauded, they are seen as threats to connectedness and goodness. When differences exist, closeness is withheld, family members are rejected, ejected and excluded, sometimes, for many

years. A refined individuation of self and other is largely absent here. Closeness is not based in an understanding of individual differences, nor is it based on an acceptance of the kind of mutual independence which ultimately leads to secure notions of relatedness and the possibility of truly loving others for themselves. It is based on rigid notions of self and others which demand conformity.

Often violation of the expectations which arise out of closeness lead to conflict. Conflict very quickly becomes vehement and ugly, and frequently includes physical as well as emotional violence, largely because the perspective in which righteous action is grounded is one that endorses the use of power over others and construes others as the source and cause of one's feelings. Power in these families is anchored in two things, physical might, and the right to determine and enforce rigidly held rules and one's point of view. This right is usually tied to one's role in the family, and roles are hierarchically arranged with fathers at the top, mothers a distant second, and children at the bottom arranged in descending order according to age.

Fathers can delegate disciplinary duties within the household to mothers, which is the case in both Jenny's and Sally's families. So for example, when Jenny's mother struggles with Jenny, she engages on the following grounds: (1) because she believes that when she is frustrated with Jenny it is because of something Jenny has done to her (emotional enmeshment); and (2) because she sees it as her job to enforce the household rules which Jenny is violating. These rules are largely premised on absolute and hierarchical notions of power like "I'm your mother, therefore you do what I say", or "as long as you're under my roof, I'll call the shots."

Therefore, if Jenny does not uphold the rules which are always connected to

personally hurting or offending the rule maker, Jenny is wrong and bad and deserves to be punished.

In Jenny's family, given the personalising of all offences, punishment involves personal rejection which in its ultimate form means getting thrown out -- out of the house or in some cases, out of the family. Mary's father proceeds in a similar fashion. If his children displease him, he sees them as the source of his frustration and anger and believes himself to be perfectly justified in yelling at them and pushing them around or beating them if they dare to answer back. When his anger reaches its pinnacle, he threatens to desert his family, or he threatens to eject the designated offender, as he did his son, when he threw him out of the house. If Molly's mother feels angry or frustrated, she takes this as a signal that something is wrong in the family and goes looking for the source of her frustration among her children. In Marilee's family the rules are well known, one either upholds them or gets out. Linda's father takes for himself the right to decide what is right and wrong and who deserves punishment and enforces his views with the aid of belts and sticks. Sally's stepfather yells and screams to make his point. Sally's mother, while somewhat milder than the rest, uses her anger to make her family members behave. All of the enforcement involves the use of rough and foul language. People call each other assholes, jerks, and idiots. Girls and women are referred to as whores and sluts. Family members tell each other that they are stupid and worthless. The general tone created by the use of such crude language is punitive and judgmental in the extreme.

When conflict arises, resolution is achieved by first establishing the identity of the offender. The offender is relatively easy to find, she is usually the one who has broken the rules and "made" the offended person feel frustrated and angry. When the identity of the offending person has been

established, she is then judged and blamed and held responsible for the offended person's feelings and those of anyone else who has taken the offended person's part. This makes the offender fair game for punishment at the hands of the offended person and his or her allies. Punishment involves calling the offender names, screaming at her and if the offended person is not yet satisfied, pushing the offender around or punching her. Type of punishment and its duration is decided upon by the offended person and tied directly to that individual's personal sense of satisfaction. When the offended person is satisfied that punishment has been carried out, order has been restored, and the problem is, for the moment, resolved.

The use of physical and emotional violence is justified on instrumental grounds, in that violence is used as means for stopping or controlling those who are upsetting to the person who is applying the violence. Not much has really changed however, because source and problem have been collapsed into one. The source of the problematic behaviour has been punished, but the problem itself, (usually a behaviour) has not been addressed. No new approaches or strategies have been discussed, negotiated and modelled. No distinction between person and behaviour is made. The message being delivered loudly and clearly is that the offender behaves badly because she is bad. This person-based badness makes the offender deserving of punishment which is specifically aimed at her personhood, that is, punishment that is purposefully designed to hurt and degrade the offender. Acts are overlooked because the focus is on actors. Behavioural alternatives are not considered, because only differences in states of being are entertained. Thus people are not asked to consider different courses of action, they are asked to *be* different people. In the end, people

don't really change what they are doing, they just get better at hiding it and most of all themselves.

What then are the bases for the formation of interpretations of self and world which these families offer their daughters? What has been conveyed to them about men and women, about power, about relationships, about attachment, about feelings, about conflict, about rules, about punishment and most of all about themselves? They have seen that men are far more important and more powerful than women, and that men's importance is not connected to the contributions they make to the greater good, it is bound up in their being stronger and more forceful than women. Thus they have seen that power resides for the most part in physical force, that right is tied to might, and rules have their source in those who have the power to impose them.

Where relationships are concerned, they have seen that pride is taken in the duration of relationships rather than in their quality, and that relationships are based upon roles rather than the development of mutual understanding. Thus, one stays married because one is a wife, one loves one's child because she is one's daughter, and not necessarily because one has developed a deep sense of understanding for that person and they for oneself. In this way, they have seen their parents partake of relationships which last for many years, but which bring with them continuous cycles of abuse and pain, in which role-bound behaviour never shifts. They have seen that being "close" means having no personal boundaries, that closeness demands sameness and does not tolerate deviation from the narrow confines of being like the person one is close to. Furthermore, this closeness also demands the ability to anticipate the needs and wants of others and the ability to feel another's feelings. They have seen that feelings are caused by forces outside

themselves, that feelings happen because of what others do and must be controlled through controlling others. They have seen that conflict arises out of creating negative feelings in others, feelings for which the offending person is solely responsible, feelings which justify the offended person's wrath. They have seen that when wrath has been aroused, punishment must follow, a punishment that is administered in a fit of rage and is designed to maximise the pain of the offending person.

Within all this, they have seen that when someone behaves badly it is because they are bad. This sense of badness is intensified by the shared language of these interactions. The message that speaks to the badness of the offender is delivered with voice tones and gestures that underline the worthlessness of the offending person, while the labels and judgements which are being hurled at her make clear exactly how she is being construed. "Look what you've done to your mother, you fucking little whore!" leaves little room for doubt. How these interactions translate into notions of self and world will be explored below.

Experiences of Self

Each of the key informants left me with a unique impression of how she saw herself. Sally presented herself as a "Skate," a member of a recognisable street group and as an individual, enamoured with being "weird, original and different," someone who loves attention and enjoys provoking shocked reactions in other people. Marilee presented herself as a person very much involved in trying to be "the person she is supposed to be," someone who plans to break the cycle of family violence through creating a traditional and harmonious, almost "white picket fence" future for herself. Molly presented herself mostly as confused and stressed by her experiences with abuse. Mary presented herself as the champion of just causes and defender of

the underdog, a person who takes charge and takes people on. Linda presented herself as struggling with overcoming her experiences with sexual abuse. Jenny presented herself as loving to fight and intrigued by death. As well as being unique, each of the six had a great deal in common with the other five, whether they happened to be opponents or on the same side. Each had come forward as a participant in the study first of all because she had identified herself as a victim of female-to-female violence. After some discussion, each participant also emerged as a perpetrator, an individual as experienced with threatening, intimidating and beating others as she was with being attacked.

Together, they presented themselves as tough and streetwise, knowledgeable about and connected to most aspects of youth violence in their community, and willing to take on those who dared to question their ability to defend their carefully crafted images of power. They also shared a deeply felt anger which at times turns into rage, even hate, and they shared a painful sense of loneliness and abandonment. As the girls discussed their anger, I saw it as having a strong connection to the physical and emotional abuse they suffered at home, and in Jenny's case also to the bullying and degradation she experienced while in elementary school. In addition, I saw it as strongly connected to the sexual abuse that four of the six suffered at the hands of someone they knew and trusted. Their loneliness and abandonment, exemplified through Sally's and Jenny's search for connectedness and belonging in groups like the "Skates" and the "Rappers," Mary's notion of herself as "an outcasted little person", Linda's isolation from her family, Molly's unfulfilled need to be safe and understood in her own home and Marilee's view of the world as a "piece of shit," seem to be tied in large part, to the same experiences that engender the key informants' anger. Having

been violated physically, emotionally and in some cases also sexually, the key informants seemed to have little hope that they could trust even those closest to them. Even when the girls thought that they could in some ways depend upon their families, as Jenny did when she expressed the belief that her father and grandfather would protect and defend her or at least take retaliatory action if someone did hurt her, they seemed unable to let their guards down for any length of time. Backing from family did not exempt Jenny from feeling that she must always "watch her back," and from hoping to find refuge through knowing members of a local gang. The notion of having to "watch one's back" was one that also affected the other informants. It exhibited itself with Marilee in her fear of leaving her own neighbourhood to go downtown, her fear of going to school and her fear of being found out and labelled once more as a "narc" if any of her friends and acquaintances heard that she had talked to me. It showed itself with Mary in her offensive and belligerent approach to adult authority figures. It also came out in the generally defensive way in which all six girls positioned themselves in relation to those around them.

Despite describing themselves as tough and powerful, the key informants also described themselves as lacking worth in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. Jenny spoke out most clearly about her misgivings about herself, when she described herself as "fat and ugly." Marilee also presented a telling example of how poorly she judged herself, when she described herself as one of the "scummy" people, who was not afraid to align herself with "losers." Linda, in the aftermath of having been sexually abused, talked about always thinking of herself as a "bad person." She also described herself as bad-tempered and deserving of the abuse she receives at the hands of her father. Mary described herself as not liked by her teachers and

stereotyped as a "bad kid" by the vice-principal of her school. She also talked about feeling blamed, perhaps rightly so, for her father's problems and about being considered less important and less able by him because she is a girl. Sally, in her persona as a Skate, saw herself as a member of a group of outcasts, people who are generally singled out by others, especially Rappers, as targets for aggression. She also saw herself as ignored by her parents and rejected and disliked by her step-mother. Molly, who struggled with having been designated a slut after being sexually abused while she was drunk at a party, described herself as having no morals and as being somehow hurtful to her family because she disclosed that she had been sexually abused by her brother.

The key informants' sense of worthlessness became even more clear when they talked about their bodies. In describing how they believed they should look, the key informants endorsed the standard for beauty identified and questioned by Wolf (1990), as a "mass disseminated physical ideal" which holds up the "gaunt youthful model" as the example of what all women must embody in order to have personal and social worth (pp. 11-12). Each girl looked at herself through the eyes of those who might be looking at her and judged herself according to that mass disseminated ideal. None of the key informants believed that they measured up. Instead, they believed that they were constantly in competition with other girls and most of all with the examples of ideal womanhood created by the entertainment and fashion industries. All of them felt a great deal of pressure to be "thin and perfect." Sally put it most clearly when she said that in her world, most boys and many girls believe that all young women should look like super model Cindy Crawford, "who is underweight, and has like a perfect body." Jenny, in describing her struggle with being bullied for being fat and her subsequent

refusal to eat, made clear how difficult and painful non-conformity to socially sanctioned standards of female beauty can be. Marilee was so focused on competition from other females, that having a female friend who "gave her competition," that is, was as attractive as Marilee herself, was a rare exception, because mostly she deliberately chose friends whom she considered not competitive.

All the key informants looked to males for acceptance and confirmation of their worth. For Jenny and Marilee, confirmation of worth came from having a boyfriend. Jenny, in particular, placed a great deal of importance upon being sought after by boys, and was only happy with herself as long as she received attention from males. For Sally, confirmation of worth came from being accepted by male Skaters as more than a mere "poser" and from being listened to and treated with respect by her step-father, an experience that was fleeting at best, because her step-father has much invested in being "young and cool," more like one of Sally's peers than one of Sally's parents, and thus acted more like sibling rival than a caring parent. For Mary and Linda, confirmation of worth was very much tied to acknowledgement from their fathers, something which they experienced only rarely. For Molly, confirmation of worth came from being protected by her older brother, the same brother who also abused her.

The desire for acceptance and acknowledgement from males also makes its presence felt in the key informants' plans for the future. Their aspirations are very traditional. The key informants want to get married and raise children even though they have strong fears and revulsions when it comes to pregnancy and childbirth. They want to get jobs which are merely jobs, that is, a way of making money which will help achieve their central goals which are to get married. They have no career plans and no goals or

plans for further education beyond finishing high school. Marilee and Jenny are so certain that they will get married and have children, that they are already making present choices in view of marriage in the future. With this in mind, they behave in very male-focused ways.

Overall, despite their desire and their efforts, positive acknowledgement from males is not a common experience for the key informants. Mostly they see themselves as being discriminated against because of being female. Sally gave examples of being excluded from a number of aspects of skateboarding and its companion sport, snow boarding, because of being female. Jenny lamented being barred from boxing for the same reason. Mary talked about not being considered a viable helper in her father's construction business despite having demonstrated both skill and reliability, merely because she was female. She also talked about having her workday extended through having to serve both her father and her brother by being responsible for all the domestic chores including the care of the family's animals, while father's and son's workday ended when they stepped inside the door of the home. Mary, Marilee and Linda also described being emotionally and physically abused by their fathers. In general, in each of the key informants' households, the orientation is not one of equality and respect for women, it is the opposite of that.

All six key informants have been on the receiving end of sexually abusive messages and various kinds of sexually harassing and abusive treatment from males which have affected the ways in which "made them feel low." They described being female as difficult, and did not have much to say that was favourable about the experience. The degradation they experienced as part of being female was graphically illustrated by the examples they gave of being sexually harassed at school (see *Molly's Story*). As part of

everyday life, they believe that they must run the gauntlet of staring eyes and on occasion, groping hands, and they must endure derogatory comments about their bodies. Despite hating this, they see no way out. For them, being treated this way is so much a part of being female and the males' behaviour is so much a part of being male, that they explained it to themselves and to me, as caused by hormones -- physical urges beyond the control of the offensive males.

As the key informants see it, there is nothing particularly positive about being female. One has to constantly watch that one stays thin. One is restricted with regard to the kinds of activities one can undertake. One is less respected and less important than males. One is routinely subject to a sexual discrimination and sexual harassment and if one attempts to take the initiative or experiment sexually, one is a "slut". If one has children, one faces a great deal of pain, and if one's husband is present to see the "mess," one risks losing him because, through pregnancy and childbirth, one's body becomes unattractive. For the key informants this all seemed to be a given, something they could do very little about. They seemed resigned to what they saw as standard practice where males and females are concerned and assessed themselves and other girls accordingly. Males are of such major importance to them that they will beat up girls who appear to threaten their connections to boys. Girls who show interest in a boy who is already spoken for, are designated "sluts" by other girls. This designation justifies girls beating other girls. Ultimately these young women have internalised both the importance of male desire and their own demeaning positions to such a degree that they knowingly engage in fights with other females in order to excite males and thereby get their attention.

This notion that women achieve their greatest importance when they are able to command attention from males was further elaborated when the key informants and I discussed the females they looked to as role models. Sally, Marilee, Molly, Linda and Jenny, while they each had one or two others in mind all settled on Madonna as their number one female idol. The reason they each gave was best expressed by Sally when she said, "She can do anything she wants and not care what anybody thinks of her." But can she? Madonna's power and her freedom rest on her ability to capitalise on the sexual double standard. She derives her position primarily from displaying herself sexually, from "holding onto the sustained mass patriarchal gaze for as long as she can keep the public's attention" (hooks, 1994, p.12). That is, Madonna is powerful only as long as she is able to induce those with voyeuristic needs to gape at her body. As long as she "consents to being represented within a field of image production that is over determined by patriarchy and the needs of a heterosexist pornographic gaze," she is not free or powerful, she is being corrupted by the very standards she appears at first glance, to be flaunting (hooks, 1994, p.12). Far from being a symbol of female power and creativity, Madonna, in offering herself as a sex goddess and the heir to Marilyn Munroe, has played into exactly those images and values which serve to underline women's roles as sexual objects. Who would Madonna be if she were not a major link in what hooks (1994) describes as "the marketing chain that exploits representations of sexuality and the body for profit, a chain which focuses on images that were once taboo," a chain aimed directly at those conventional consumers of pornography, men (pp. 14-15).

The role that Madonna offers to women is that of the classic whore. The joke is in her name. It seems doubtful to me that the girls who

participated in this study understood this. They see her as powerful because she can get away with what they cannot get away with. If they acted like her, someone, probably a group of girls, would beat them up. They see her as being able outdo all other women and attract the desiring gaze of millions of men, with no one to beat her at her game. They missed the point, because they failed to recognise Madonna's extreme dependence. They also missed the significance of her violent marriage to Sean Penn. Furthermore, they missed the ignorance, and the danger and hate for females in Madonna's statement about male violence against women when she said, "I think for the most part if women are in an abusive relationship and they know it and they stay in it they must be digging it" (hooks, 1994, p. 17). Far from offering women freedom and power, Madonna offers them the most standard form of enslavement that exists for women.

Of the six key informants, only Mary did not completely accept all of the above. She believed that "sluts" deserved to be beaten. She accepted that males could and would treat females in demeaning ways, but she did not want to be like Madonna. She had given up on being thin and sexy and on attracting male attention through conforming to what for her, were standards of beauty which were impossible to achieve. Instead, she concentrated on getting her father's attention through proving to him that she was as good as any male, and she focused on correcting her father's behaviour and making him over into the kind of man she could relate to. She saw nothing intrinsically useful or valuable in being female. She found value in emulating males and described herself proudly as a tomboy. In saying, "There's more equality now between girls and guys. And the guys think that if we're going to have equality, then we gotta be equal with them," meaning

that girls have to be the same as boys, she did not understand that being one of the boys offered girls no autonomous value at all.

In according women and girls so little intrinsic value, and particularly in selecting girls whom they see as having lost all worth because they appear to be sexually accessible, as targets for female-to-female violence, the key informants seem to be exhibiting what Roberts (1983) after Friere (1971) calls "oppressed group behaviour." Such behaviour is premised upon an "attitude of adhesion to the oppressor" (Friere 1984, p. 30) which demands that those who suffer at the hands of the dominant group turn upon members of their own kind whenever their own kind behave in ways that are deemed as unacceptable to the dominant group. Because all standards and roles are prescribed by the dominant group, the subordinate group's greatest hope lies in achieving dominant group standards and fully enacting the roles assigned to them. At the same time, another possibility is held out to the subordinate group: if their members could but emulate the dominant group well enough, they might be offered acceptance by, perhaps even membership in, the dominant group. (Note that this is the approach Mary has taken.)

In the world in general, and in the life worlds of the key informants in particular, males are the dominant group. As young women, the key informants are necessarily members of a subordinate group. As members of a subgroup of girls who come from homes where women are given even less value than they might otherwise be given, these six girls and others like them, are even more vulnerable and exposed to oppression and to the internalisation of oppressed group behaviour. It is not surprising that they should think of girls and women in the way that they do. In accepting without question that girls and women must submit themselves to the needs and expectations of boys and men, the key informants make manifest the

values which permeate their lives and engage in behaviour which is characteristic of oppressed groups. In beating up each other, they engage in "horizontal violence" largely in the hope of finally gaining power.

Roberts (1983) however, shows that such behaviour does nothing more than support the status quo. Noting that leaders of powerless groups are generally controlling, coercive and rigid, and that members of oppressed groups often spend most of their aggressive energy on hurting each other, Roberts (1983) suggests that such "horizontal violence" is a safe way to release tension because the threat posed by members of one's own group is never as great as that posed by the dominant group. When aggression is directed at members of the dominant group, little changes because subordinate group members can never fully assimilate since they will always remain members of the group to which, by definition, they were originally assigned. Thus a girl or woman can never be a boy or a man, no matter how much she takes on the characteristics of males. In the end, she will always be what she is: female. As long as being female is worth less than being male, no amount of emulation can change the bottom line. In fact, too much emulation puts a girl or woman in danger of losing any kind of group membership and with it, any chance of belonging. Too much emulation leads to marginalization, the inability to belong either to one's group of origin because one has assimilated so many characteristics of the dominant group, or to the dominant group, because of one's origins. Thus relegated to the fringes, one has nowhere to go except to those who are similarly marginalized (Roberts, 1983). It is no accident that the six key informants are so well-known to each other.

The low value the six key informants placed upon women and girls also came through in part, in the way that they discussed their friends and their notions of friendship.

Friends and Friendship

For the key informants, friendships are tenuous relationships that shift over time. In some cases, their friendships with other girls seemed more like alliances made on the basis of having a common female enemy than a genuine bond based on relations of care and trust. Each girl described a relationship with a "best friend" which involved a great deal of ambivalence and conflict. Thus Sally described her friendship with Adel, who had betrayed her into being beaten by Marilee, as a close friendship, but one which involved loving to see each other get pushed around. Marilee described her friendship with Sarah as a relationship which required her to defend Sarah and to help beat up Sally, but also as a relationship which she didn't really want to bother with, and which she had decided to continue largely because Sarah proved to be a good source of information about boys in their shared social circle. Mary described her friendship with Cathy (the girl who beat up Molly) as one in which she saw herself as having to take the role of preventing Cathy from descending further into violence, but in which Mary herself was prepared to use violence against Cathy in order to accomplish her goal. As well, Mary believed that it would be for Cathy's own good if Cathy were to be charged with assault for beating Molly, and was willing to go to court as a witness against her. Furthermore, Mary was also prepared to use violence against Tanya, her closest female friend, when Tanya disagreed with her. Jenny's friendships with girls were characterised by shifts from enemy to friend and back again, and revolved around competition for male attention, a theme that was echoed by Marilee in her friendships with girls.

During the time that I spent meeting with Molly, Linda and Mary as a group, I witnessed some of the above described shifting in alliance and loyalty. When Molly, despite swearing an oath of confidentiality to Linda and

Mary, broke that oath and disclosed Linda's sexual abuse history to others, she sacrificed Linda to her own immediate need for attention. Linda and Mary then banded together with Molly as their common enemy, but later, when Linda did not include Mary in a social outing, Mary got angry with her and became Linda's enemy for a time. Also, Mary, who was involved closely with Faye and Brent as "best friends" ended up cutting her ties with both of them when they became friends with each other. While Mary was struggling with the changes in the dynamics between herself, Faye and Brent, she called me up several times to discuss how angry and alone she felt, and to wrestle with the question of whether or not she should beat up Faye. She decided against this, largely because I made it clear that I did not consider beating someone up as a viable method for dispute resolution. She in turn, also made it clear that refraining from violence in this case, carried a high price for her. It meant that she would have to forego the cathartic experience of unleashing her anger against her friend and "letting her have what she deserved."

Consistent with the already explored notion that connections with boys were more important than connections with girls, Mary ultimately placed more importance on her friendship with Brent, and while she cut her ties with him as she cut her ties with Faye, it was the loss of her friendship with Brent that she mourned.

Sally, in describing her friendships with Beverley and Lorraine (the other two "Beastie Girls") provided an example of two relationships which were not as subject to the kinds of shifts in alliance that characterised most of the inter-personal connections the key informants discussed. What struck me about this friendship group however, was the underlying sense of isolation, especially from family, which brought these three girls together. In seeking each other out, and in seeking out groups like the "Skates", the

"Rappers" and the "Bloods," Sally and her friends and Jenny also, seemed to be looking for somewhere to belong. What Sally and Jenny both want from their affiliation with a group is attention and a sense that they have worth in other people's eyes, a feeling of safety, an identity and a surrogate family. They, like others they described, are willing to put themselves at considerable risk in order to achieve this.

The groups which the key informants chose to join are those which provided a context in which much takes place that has the potential to be harmful to its members. Drugs and alcohol are regularly misused, violence is a pastime as well as a means to an end, sex is largely akin to sexual abuse and danger is glamorised.

Social Activities

The kinds of social activities which the key informants have chosen to engage in leave them open to considerable risk. The six girls and their friends seem to gravitate together for want of strong affiliations elsewhere. Sites like corner stores, Seven-Eleven convenience markets, fast food restaurants, shopping malls and school yards become gathering places for those who lack connection. The main attraction is other people and the possibility of excitement, any kind of excitement. Sally and the three friends with whom she plays Barbies and practices to become a rock star seem innocent enough in their pursuits until one peels back the layers and looks in upon how they conduct themselves as a result of these activities. In imitating the "Beastie Boys" Sally and her friends regularly take chances. They engage strangers on street corners in order to try to provoke some kind of action or reaction. Sally's romantic notions about gangs as safe havens and gang members as friendly people make her vulnerable to being drawn into activities which involve harm to herself and others. This is also true for Jenny, who referred

to gangs with the same kind of enthrallment that Sally did. Marilee is similarly attracted to people who participate in deviant and criminal activities and told me proudly, as did Sally and Jenny, that she was a personal friend of an individual (he was the same person in each case) who committed a drive-by shooting. All three girls seemed to value the notoriety which they believed rubbed off on them as a consequence of knowing someone "really bad."

Mary's description of an ideal social event as one where twenty to thirty young people get together and drink and do drugs without interruption during an all night party, is indicative of what all six key informants would call a "really good time." In the midst of such parties, which happen almost every week-end, whether they take place at the house of someone whose parents are away, or at the beach or in some other place chosen for its remoteness from adults, "accidents" happen. People drink so much that they become violently ill and in some cases incur alcohol poisoning. Sexual intercourse takes place in a way that leaves no participant free of the taint of having taken part, voluntarily or otherwise, in a degrading act. People drive cars while "under the influence" and harm or kill themselves and others. Furthermore, the adults involved in these young people's lives seem to have provided ample modelling of such behaviour in that they themselves engage in just such activities, and while they may take exception to this kind of behaviour in their children, they never-the-less provide the necessary examples, and in Marilee's and Mary's cases, also the means, since these parents purchase alcohol for their children. Each of the girls had her first encounter with drunken behaviour in her own family.

In all these social interactions one finds an ever-present undercurrent of violence. In fact, violence which seems poised to erupt at any moment, is

sometimes the actual focus of social engagement. Thus fights don't only happen, they are arranged. Factions are formed, audiences gather, violence is orchestrated. As Mary pointed out, fighting is "entertainment sort of, a lot of people want to see somebody get their butt kicked in real life. It's kind of like T.V...." Fighting between girls carries added entertainment value, it is, as Molly pointed out, not only physically exciting, it's sexually exciting for the boys. According to Molly, (Mary and Linda concurred with this, as did Jenny) boys like to watch girls fighting because, "it gets them pumped. It gets them excited, not in the physical, in the sexual." Thus, given their internalised attitudes of adhesion to the oppressor and their propensity for horizontal violence coupled with their need for attention from males, these girls oblige.

Violence

As well as acknowledging the entertainment value of fighting, especially for the onlooker, the key informants made it clear that for them, violence is not principally a matter of unrestrained lashing out in the heat of the moment. Instead it is a quite rigidly rule-bound and purposeful activity engaged in to redress what is perceived as intolerable imbalance in their largely hierarchical social world. The imbalance usually arises when the rules which form a kind of "code of conduct" have been broken. For example, a grade eight girl has "mouthed off" a grade nine or ten girl. A lower grade, lower status girl conducts herself in a way which indicates that she is attempting to operate in a way which has been designated as rightful conduct only for someone with higher status in a higher grade, for example, she acts "cocky" when she should be subordinate. A girl has decided it is her right (usually because she is older or stronger or tougher or prettier or more established) to proclaim that she does not wish other girls to wear certain kinds of clothing, but another girl wears the clothes anyway, either in

defiance or out of sheer ignorance. Given that it is never-the-less expected that she should "know better" she is now at risk for attack. A girl has entered territory which is not her turf but is the turf of another girl perhaps a "gang" girl, and she looks the other girl over in a way that provokes her, or worse yet, looks at the girl's boyfriend, or talks to him, or asks him for a cigarette. A girl has talked to other girls about being interested in a boy already designated as another girl's boyfriend or potential boyfriend. One girl has called another girl a "slut".

Some rules, if broken, are sufficient of and by themselves to be construed as provocation for violence. Others need to be broken several times or in combination before they constitute cause for retribution. For example, mouthing off an older girl might not be enough cause for a fight, but it will "start the meter ticking" in the provocation count. Eyeing the wrong boy could start a fight, especially if the girl who is "casting an eye" is dressed in a way which meets with the disapproval of the girl who has claimed the boy who is being "eyed", but then again, it might not, because provocation, while definitely a rule-bound construct, is also governed to some degree by personal perception and mood (note Mary's second-chancing of Jenny, who received many warnings from Mary, while Linda did not afford her the same leeway). If "casting an eye" does not provoke a fight or at least a move towards fighting, it will probably earn either a strongly worded warning or lead to the "eye caster" being labelled as a "slut," which in itself would definitely escalate the possibility of a fight. Talking to other girls about being interested in someone else's boyfriend or boyfriend-designate is most certainly seen as breaking the code and would almost invariably earn the label "slut" for the interested girl. Being called a "slut" rates highest on the list of provocations and demands the most immediate redress.

If the rules are broken, girls will set upon each other, usually one-on-one, but often with help from a best friend, who is bound by further aspects of the code of conduct to come to the aid of her friend. Others, sometimes as many as three hundred, will look on without attempting to stop the fight. Spectators too are bound by the code which regulates their behaviour as passive -- passive to the point that very few witnesses ever "snitch" in any formal sense, because their role is to keep silence. The combatants will beat each other mercilessly until one, most often the chosen victim who has "brought the beating on herself," by breaking the code, is black and blue with bruises and covered with cuts, usually to her face. The bruises are part of the action, the cuts are deliberate, put there by rings worn expressly as weapons. In the eyes of the assailants no wrong has been done. Why not? Because, as all the girls I spoke with told me one by one, "I never hit anyone unless I have to," and "I only hit people who deserve it." For them, the beatings they dole out are punishment and the punishment fits the crime.

This notion that hitting and beating one's chosen victims is the "right thing to do" bears further examination. At various times during our conversations, the six key informants actually told me that they were against violence. Each informant told me she thought violence was stupid. Sally called violence disgusting. Each girl was participating in the study because she saw herself as contributing to violence prevention, but each one also felt completely justified in beating those girls she had beaten. Sally justified her threatening, bullying, and hitting of others on the grounds that they were hurting and upsetting her because they were calling her friends and sometimes Sally herself, "sluts." Marilee was certain that she had to help beat up Sally because the possibility existed in Marilee's mind at least, that Sally might have been stronger than Sarah and therefore constituted a threat to

Sarah and an obligation for Marilee to "save" Sarah. Molly, Linda, and Mary felt fully justified in wanting to beat up Jenny because she was annoying, "cocky", and did not act as her age and grade demanded. Also, Mary and Molly believed as did Linda, that it was Linda who was wronged when she was suspended for hitting Jenny. Mary believed that hitting others when she was angry with them was the best way to deal with her anger because these people were after all, the one's who had caused her anger in the first place. Jenny rationalised her own engagement in fighting on a number grounds: it freed her from bullying and oppression by others, it gave her power and status and it ensured that she had friends. Thus, even though she was fully aware that fighting was wrong and could potentially get her arrested, even though she had personal rules about not using weapons like knives and not hurting people so much that she could be charged by the police, Jenny saw herself as needing to fight to preserve her image, and thereby justified violence as useful to herself. When it came to particular fights with particular people, Jenny always saw her own behaviour as warranted because of what these people had done to her. In every case, the six key informants found ways to shift the responsibility for beating others onto those they were beating. In many cases, their opponents were doing exactly the same thing. None of the key informants could find her way to feeling empathy for her victims. As each girl saw it, she was meting out just punishment, she was "doing the right thing."

In shifting the moral and causal responsibility for their violent action from themselves to their victims, the key informants appeared to be recreating their parents' ways of making sense of their own punitive and violent behaviour. When lashing out against, berating and physically beating the key informants, their parents regularly blame them for creating the

feelings and behaviours exhibited by the parents. Using the premise "look what you made me do" as justification, the key informants' parents and the girls themselves, locate the source of their own violence in those they attack, and thereby excuse themselves from taking responsibility for their actions. The actions as such, are not considered because they are seen as seamlessly connected to an imperative which has its origin in the behaviour of the individuals singled out for punishment. In constructing others as deserving of punishments, the key informants always believe that their own actions are both just and inevitable, that is, determined by their victims. True to symbolic interactionist notions that people "act towards each other and toward things in terms of the meanings that these people and things have for them, and these perspectives are the basis for their reality" (Prus, p. 19) the key informants beat their victims because of the meanings they impute to their victims behaviours.

This way of making sense of aggressive and violent behaviour is reminiscent of Katz's (1988) analysis of the dynamics which obtain between interrogator and interrogee in war zones. As Katz (1988), a symbolic interactionist in the tradition of Blumer (1969), describes in his book, Seductions of crime: Moral and sensual attractions of doing evil, interrogators routinely escalate the amount of physical assault and torture to which they subject interrogees in the name of "having to" keep up the pressure in order to achieve their goal of procuring the required information. Beginning with the premise that the captured interrogee is undoubtedly somehow connected to the enemy, the interrogator moves forward on what Katz calls the "paths of determinism" which demand it of him to fulfil his obligation to extract the necessary intelligence. Citing the "Americal Rule"

(sic): if he wasn't a Vietcong then, he sure as hell is one now," employed by the U. S. military in Vietnam as an example, Katz (1988, p. 6) noted:

At the start, interrogators were often unsure of the political sympathies of the interrogee, but in the end it did not matter. Either the interrogee was a Vietcong sympathiser or, if not, the eminently dispassionate reasoning went, he was likely to turn hostile after being slapped unjustly. In either case, it was reasonable after a while to consider his failure to cooperate as being motivated by malevolence. At that point, the interrogee's hostility is blocking the progress of the interrogation and thus is provocative: the *interrogee* is giving the *interrogator* a hard time!

Marilee, in making sense of her involvement in beating Sally used just such reasoning (See Appendix I for a transcript of Marilee's description of Sally's beating). Citing the determinants that Sally had (1) expressed an interest in Sarah's boyfriend, (2) apparently called Sarah a "slut" behind her back, and (3) in the course of attempting to resist being beaten, broken one of Marilee's nails and spurted blood on Sarah's sweater, Marilee construed Sally's behaviour as the cause of (that which determined) what followed. Each of the key informants, in describing her involvement in physical violence against others expunged herself of responsibility in the name of being forced to respond as she had *because of* her victim's behaviour. This construction of the victim as the original assailant who called forth violence as a defensive move was not reserved only for other girls. Jenny and Mary used it to attack boys. Mary used it to justify attacking her father, and she and Linda used it to justify their verbal assaults of teachers and administrators. As well, the sense-making employed here by the key informants vis-à-vis their victims was clearly reminiscent of that used by their parents towards them.

Noticeably absent in this way of viewing victims, is the "Different Voice" the voice of a morality of care and response to others, found by Carol

Gilligan (1983) in her work on the moral development of women and girls. Gilligan and those who work with her, (Gilligan, Ward & Taylor 1988; Gilligan, Lyons & Hanmer 1990; Brown & Gilligan 1992) have conducted research with students at a the Emma Willard School, an independent girls' high school in Boston from 1981 to 1984 and the Laurel School, an independent co-educational high school in Cleveland, from 1985 to 1989. They have consistently found that adolescent girls are strongly motivated by relational concerns and by a desire to help others even on occasion, at the expense of self. Although Gilligan and her colleagues have never made the claim that all girls approach life in this way, they have stated that girls, more than boys, demonstrate the inclination to avoid conflict and understand moral problems in the light of a commitment to the preservation of relationships. They found little evidence of victim blaming and the displacing of moral responsibility from assailant to victim in the way that Katz (1988) and the key informants describe it.

Victim blaming as a phenomena was not however, discovered by Katz (1988) alone. It has previously been recorded and explored by psychologists focusing on moral development. Arbuthnot (1992) points out that nearly all the studies examining moral reasoning of delinquents (male and female) which he reviewed, give examples of the kind shifting of moral and causal responsibility from assailant to victim that the key informants in this study displayed. Basing his analysis on Kohlberg (1969, 1984), Arbuthnot suggests that this kind of moral reasoning is both limited, and indicative of Stages 1 and 2 of a possible 6, of Kohlberg's Stages of Sociomoral Reasoning. These stages are described by Kohlberg as "Preconventional" (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 18) and circumscribed by a social perspective which is both self-centered and self-serving. In Kohlberg's terms, in Stage 1 of moral

development, an individual will exhibit a "heteronomous morality [one that is subject to external controls] which equates right behaviour with concrete rules backed by power and punishment" (Arbuthnot, 1992, p. 286). In Stage 2, an individual will take an individualistic utilitarian approach in which "right behaviour is that which serves one's own interests," and one is "aware of others' needs in an elementary fashion, but not of others' rights" (Arbuthnot, 1992, p. 286). Thus fairness is "strict, rigid, [and] concrete," and "reciprocal agreements are pragmatic" (Arbuthnot, 1992, p. 286). According to Kohlberg & Colby (1987), one can expect to find a clear relationship between age and moral judgment stage, and one typically finds Stage 1-2 and Stage 2 moral reasoning at around age ten. At age thirteen to fourteen one may expect to find evidence of a move from Stage 2 to Stage 3 with a concomitant perspectival shift to a "Conventional" level of moral reasoning which implies that the individual is now able to see beyond him or herself (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 18). At a Conventional Level, one's social perspective is no longer merely self-centered; it is centered upon the good of the group and later the good of society. In Stage 3, an individual will exhibit the need to be a good person, the desire to care for others, and a belief in the Golden Rule. If such reasoning is not found in those who have reached age thirteen to fourteen and beyond, the individual is said to be exhibiting a developmental delay (Arbuthnot, 1992; Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).

In attempting to understand the key informants' behaviour in the light of both Katz (1988) and Arbuthnot (1992) and Colby & Kohlberg (1987), the question then arises, "Are we to take their behaviour as the outcome of a symbolic interaction in which they have pursued the "good" by constructing as necessary though undesirable, the use of violence against someone because that person has violated or threatened group norms; or are we are to take

their behaviour as the outcome of delayed moral development?" The answer to this question is beyond the scope of this study. It is posed as groundwork for further research.

Elisabeth J. Porter (1991) provides some direction for such an undertaking. She has grappled with these kinds of questions in her book, Women and moral identity. She suggests that by construing moral decisions as the outcomes of underlying developmentally driven cognitive structures, systems like Kohlberg's fail to take into account both the agency of persons as self-interpreting beings and the personal context of moral dilemmas. It is her contention that if one is to understand moral judgment, one must first of all understand the interpretive, contextual basis of that judgment. To that end, one must engage the interpretive self of those involved and work from there. If one were to engage another person's interpretive self with the notion in mind that this individual suffers from a developmental delay and must therefore be stimulated to mature along appropriate lines, one may foreclose the kind of dialogue that can promote understanding and with it, change.

Violence in Schools

Much of the violence in which the key informants involve themselves takes place in school corridors, school yards, on the way to and from school, in front of the corner stores and in the shopping malls closest to the schools. Schools are sites for violence. Schools and school districts don't cause violence, they do however play a part in providing the ground for the social networks which support violence because they draw together all the young people of a certain age in a given area and demand of them that they operate within a certain set of rules in a certain building under the guidance and supervision of a relatively small number of adults. With few exceptions, most people between the ages of five and eighteen go to school. In British

Columbia, one cannot legally leave school before the age of fifteen, and school boards are obliged to provide students, all students within their jurisdiction, with educational programming until they are fifteen.

The key informants most often meet their victims and are themselves selected by others as targets while they are at school. Structural aspects of the education system like graduated grades and the investment of authority and power in educators and administrators (older and stronger) over students (younger and weaker) become models (along with the examples set by rigid and controlling parents and those teacher who act like authoritarians) for the rule-bound and hierarchical system the students themselves set up in order to control each other. Within the forced confinement of a school building, human dramas are enacted which necessarily involve rubbing up against other people in ways which are not always optimal or pleasant. Invariably conflict arises, and when it does, violence is sometimes the result.

The students alone are not responsible for all the conflict found in schools as sites. Educators, administrators and support staff each make their own contributions to the overall climate which is on occasion hostile. In the *Survey of Student Life* (Artz & Riecken, 1994) 28.2% of students (this includes males and females) reported that they agreed with the statement, "If I don't like my teacher, it's okay to act up in school." The notion of acting out when faced with teachers who are not liked by students is not foreign to a number of those attending school, but high deviant girls and girls who identified themselves as having beaten up another kid at least once or twice or more in the past year, reported subscribing to this notion with an agreement rate of 41.9%, while girls who were not in the high deviant/violence group reported an agreement rate of 11.9%. As the examples provided by the key informants showed, whenever actions and responses from school personnel or other

students could be interpreted as: (1) showing the key informants a lack of respect; (2) subjecting them to a loss of status or power; or (3) perpetrating an injustice against them; the six key informants have concluded that such actions demand aggressive and violent reactions. Whether these reactions are directed against their teachers and school administrators or against fellow students is immaterial. For them, violence is not necessarily desirable, but it is necessary. When they resort to violence, it is because as they see it, they have to.

Further Dimensions of Violence

Along with the above described shifting of moral and causal responsibility for their violent action from themselves to their victims, the key informants share one other similarity with the interrogators described by Katz. They, like the subjects of Katz's (1988) study, are drawn further into violence by the sensual dimensions of participating in violent behaviour. As Katz (1988) describes it, assailants appear to experience first of all an imperative to attack their victims, an imperative that is based on moral righteousness borne of construing the victim as the cause of the aggressor's displeasure. This engenders a heightened sense of excitement and passion which the assailants experience as a seductive compulsion to act that is further fuelled by engaging in violence until that passion is spent. According to Katz (1988), the emotions which seem to be most potent when it comes to fuelling the assailants' moral righteousness are those like frustration, humiliation, shame, hurt, and anger which call forth a need to redress what appears to be an imbalance of power in which the assailant has been disadvantaged by the victim (Katz, 1988, pp. 4-11).

In singling out these emotions, Katz selected the very ones the key informants also selected. For them, especially humiliation, that is, being seen

to be put down, threatened or otherwise undercut either through the way in which they were treated or through being labelled in a derogatory way, calls forth their anger and their need to retaliate. Once anger is involved, the perceived need to punish the source of the anger comes into play, and violent action usually follows. In interpreting victims' actions as demeaning to the assailant, the assailant's senses and the emotions are engaged and serve to heighten the conviction that the assailant must act.

In describing what it felt like to engage in violence, the key informants talked about feeling excitement and experiencing adrenaline rushes and about "getting pumped." They talked about the anger and rage they felt towards their victims. They talked about feeling good and feeling powerful when they had beaten someone up. They talked about the importance of discharging their anger against the victim who had, after all, caused that anger in the first place.

The emotional quality of the violent interactions in which the key informants participate can be further understood through listening to the language of those interactions. Describing one's victims as "sluts," "total bitches" or "cocky little bitches" and as "assholes" and "jerks" suggests an orientation towards one's opponents that has configured them as detestable and worthy only of contempt. Using such language suggests that the user is herself acquainted with harsh and coarse linguistic formulations. As I have said elsewhere (Artz, 1994) the language we use to describe our experiences is crucial to our understanding of that experience. The words we use are the windows to the worlds in which we live. This is not a new notion, but one that has been considered and explored by others, among them the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century philosopher Wilhem von Humboldt who wrote that,

because of the mutual dependency of thought and word, it is evident that languages [words] are not really a means of representing the truth that has already been ascertained, but far more a means of discovering the truth not previously known (cited in Edwards, 1967, p. 74).

He thereby suggested that it is in the way in which we use words to describe our experience that we can discover how we have interpreted what we have experienced. If we listen to the language of the key informants, we can hear in their choice of words and phrases an interpretation of the world as harsh and mean and crude. For them, sometimes the world is, as Marilee said, "a piece of shit," or it is, as Linda and Mary both pointed out, a place where one is forlorn and lonely, in fact "outcasted," a place where as Jenny says, "you've gotta watch your back."

What the Key informants Want

In all facets of their lives, the key informants seem to want to be respected and liked, and they want to belong. They want their parents and their teachers to listen to them and to treat them as if they have value and importance. They want their friends to do the same, and they want their peers, that is those with whom they interact at school and in their social milieu, to give them what they believe is their due. This means that younger students should defer to older students, and no one should behave as Jenny does; that is, no one should be "mouthy and cocky and try to act like King Shit," especially if she is "merely" a grade eight in the presence of grade tens. For the key informants, hierarchies seem to make sense. As well, being heard and being acknowledged seems to take precedence over just about everything else. Over and over the key informants emphasised the importance of being heard and of receiving respect and attention. Positive attention is best, but negative attention is better than no attention at all. Status is of great importance, and status can be achieved through acquiring a "tough rep" as

surely as it can be achieved through more conventional means like good grades and participation on school teams. Notoriety has its attractions. At least it insures being known. Being feared or knowing people who are feared also has its uses. It seems to offer a sense of security however false. As Sally said, while discussing her experiences with being beaten up and sharing her knowledge of gang life in her community, "I have like tons of friends in gangs and I'm not even scared."

When I asked how girls should be dealt with when they were being asked to be accountable for their own participation in violence, Mary, acting as a spokesperson for violent girls during a two day community think tank on youth violence, said the following:

Girls who get into trouble probably have some sort of self-confidence problems, and they need to figure out who they are, like by going to counselling. And like I think they should get community work, not just community hours. They should do something which is working within the community, doing something constructive instead of just sweeping grounds or whatever, something they can learn from instead of the punishment type thing, something they might want to carry on after it's all done...And their parents need counselling, their fathers need help, they're like the main source of the problem and their mothers need something like a "Speak Out" group, a group where you get together with a bunch of people and learn to tell your feelings and thoughts and things instead of just being in a corner and being quiet. The mothers need to learn to be their own person and not be ordered around by their husband or being pushed around by their husband. If they're not being pushed around then they can get out of the situations they're in...And the victims need help, they need to get their self-conscious built, or their self-esteem built, because most people don't try to steal other people's boyfriends and go around calling people sluts and whatnot. There's gotta be something wrong there. Seems to me that those people are doing things the wrong way, trying to get on top in a negative way, and then they get pounded on. When you're a teenager you're in kind of a conflict position where you have to keep your own position and not let people put you down.

On the subject of violence prevention and intervention, Mary offered several suggestions:

(1) With regard to the large number of students who choose to be spectators when there is a fight:

Watching fights is just a normal occurrence. I mean if there's a fight happening, then everyone goes, "Oh, oh, I wanna see it." It's sort of like an entertainment type thing 'cause they're bored 'cause there's nothing else to do, and it's not like it's an everyday occurrence. So there's some people where they're just like going, "I wanna be there," kind of thing. I remember last year they tried to suspend people who were viewing fights, and there ended up being so many people around the fights that they couldn't suspend everybody so...I think if they sorta prepared people or like suggest and say, "Look, it's not right," and teach it in schools or family life skills, or life skills in grade eight, or something in grade nine or ten...You could get a teacher, you could stop it...

(2) With regard to suspensions:

...and if you suspend someone, they should give them an in-school suspension and get them to work like with the victims, not just their victims, but other victims, so they can see how victims are feeling, and how the victims' families are feeling. In-schools [suspensions] work better than regular suspensions, I mean I was suspended for being mouthy with my teacher and I went to the beach every day. Got a nice suntan for a week...

(3) With regard to treatment of victims:

...[usually] the victim doesn't wanna go back to school. But I think if they got her together [with the girl who beat her up] the day it happened or the day after or whatever, when she's feeling better and she wants to come, if there's an environment where she knows she's safe, then she can come to school and talk it out with the other girl, and she can say her thoughts and feelings and how she's been hurt, not only physically, but other ways...and the other girl [the one who beat her up] can say *her* thoughts and feelings and how she's been hurt...

(4) with regard to the use of counsellors:

The counsellors' area is kind of a safe place, and it's used, but not with people like...With friends and stuff, you can talk it out, but with people who aren't really your friends, and you just don't like 'em, and say

someone wants to beat them up, they're not gonna talk it out, they're gonna go ahead and do it and then talk about it after, 'cause there's no real connection that can get them in there, unless the person that's gonna get beat up comes in and says, "Look, this person, I've heard threats that she was gonna beat me up -- they often know it's gonna happen to them -- so you can get them down and ask them why...But you gotta watch it, 'cause when you're angry, you don't wanna work it out...But I think there needs to be a lot of talking done, people need to talk to each other.

To summarise the above, Mary seemed to be saying that for her, violence among adolescent females needs to be understood as a problem that has its beginnings in families where parents need help along with their children, where fathers are violent and "push around" mothers who "need to learn to be their own persons" and girls lack self-confidence and "don't know who they are." According to Mary, adolescent female violence also needs to be understood as a problem which involves both perpetrators and victims, victims who have the same kinds of self-confidence problems that perpetrators have, victims and perpetrators who need to be able to talk to each other and in a climate of safety, begin to understand each others feelings and thoughts, and thereby begin to develop the empathy and connectedness which makes the working through of problems more possible.

For Mary, connectedness seems to play a key role, because from her perspective, girls are more willing to talk with those they can consider as "friends and stuff," i.e. with those they know and hold in some regard. But anger management is also key here, because when anger sets in, it over-rules the girls' willingness to talk, even with friends, therefore; something is needed which helps in dealing with anger so that talking and listening can take place. As well, Mary believes that teachers and counsellors and the life skills they teach, have a major role to play in the prevention of violence. Mary seems to suggest that teachers and counsellors and the skills they teach

and the rules they make with regard to what is right and wrong will have some impact on students' behaviour.

In part this may have something to do with the hierarchical universe in which Mary and the other key informants live. Since they believe that being older equates with having more power and a concomitant requirement for greater respect, they may be willing to give certain adults, especially those who don't abuse their power, the authority to stop fights and to create rules for what is right and what is wrong. For Mary and for the other key informants, those counsellors who have listened and who have paid attention to the feelings and thoughts of their clients, have been role models for positive problem solving. It is to these people that Mary and the other girls have turned when it came to finding alternatives for violence.

It was my experience that being listened to and being treated with respect (that is being treated as if what one has to say is important) meant so much, that none of the key informants engaged in violence while she was involved in this research project. Instead of resorting to violence, they would call me or their counsellor, and would discuss alternatives. Even when the alternatives did not appear to be as satisfying as "belting" someone, to my knowledge, the girls refrained from resorting to violence because they knew that their counsellors and I did not hold with violence as a way of settling anything. In reflecting on this, I find this to be of some significance because it suggests that there may be some value in the kind of relationships the counsellors and I built with the six key informants when it comes to finding ways to prevent the girls' further engagement in violence.

My Own Understanding of What the Key Informants Have Told Me

In contemplating all that I have heard and seen in the course of doing this work, what stands out for me, is what appears to be a clear pattern in the

key informants' lives which has prepared them for involvement in violence. They come from families which are giving them a grounding in multigenerational experiences with family violence, alcohol misuse and a kind of generalised dysfunction which leaves them with a way of constructing self and world which is different and less positive than more accepted (normative) forms of social interaction. They have internalised notions of being female which assign low general worth to women, hold that women achieve their greatest importance when they command the attention of males and support the entrenchment of the sexual double standard. In all of this they have accepted the objectification of women and support the monitoring of women's sexuality, and monitor each other's sexual activities closely and judge any girl or woman harshly if she shows signs of engaging in "unsanctioned" sex (sex that is not legitimated through a long term relationship, and more often flirting, or other kinds of sexually based interacting with males, especially males who are already spoken for).

In their immediate families, and in their social circle, they have been exposed to no forms of conflict resolution other than those which settle disputes through threat, intimidation, and violence. They have internalised a way of perceiving those who displease them which shifts moral and causal responsibility for their own displeasure onto those with whom they are displeased and thus makes lashing out and punitive action justifiable. As well, they have accepted their own and others' subordination to hierarchies built upon power and domination to such a degree that they become extremely incensed with those they consider below them on the ladder who dare to buck the system. They do, of course, buck the system themselves, especially with adult authority figures, but only when in their eyes, these authority figures act in ways which displease or otherwise stymie the key

informants, at which point they invoke their retaliation as a necessity. Finally, given their extensive personal experiences with being abused emotionally, physically and sexually, they are quick to assume that others have it in for them and quick to anger, but are also strangely blind to those situations which bode great risks for them because the territory is so familiar. It is the known, and therefore not recognised as dangerous.

When they engage in violence, which they do most often with girls just like themselves, they enact all that they have come to take as given and exhibit (as I have said earlier in this chapter) a classic form of oppressed group behaviour. On some level, some of the girls, like Mary for example, and Jenny to a certain extent, realise they are doing this, but changing is hard. It means giving up the only form of gaining status and power -- and rightness and goodness even -- that they understand.

How What I Have Found Ties In With Previous Research and the Implications of This

In pointing to family dysfunction, abuse and neglect, as part of the grounding which prepared the six key informants for their participation in violence, I have found what many researchers who have concerned themselves with understanding the lives of violent children before me have also found (see Flowers, 1990, for an overview). Although the six girls in my study were white and by comparison, far more affluent and privileged than the participants in Campbell's (1984, 1991) studies, Chesney-Lind's & Koroki's (1985) study and Chesney-Lind's & Shelden's (1992) overview of Girls delinquency and juvenile justice, the lived experiences of my key informants are quite similar to those of the participants in the other studies. The families of the six key informants are characterised by the same kinds of problems with alcohol misuse, marital discord and family violence encountered by the

participants in the above mentioned studies. Despite their mothers' claims of family unity as evidenced by enduring marriages and the experience of "closeness" to other family members, the key informants' experiences with family are largely negative. The kind of social bond, premised upon attachment which is seen by Hirschi (1969) as contributing to the containment of delinquency, is not operative here. Instead, the key informants report experiencing a kind of enmeshment with family members which violates their personal boundaries and leaves them in a state of emotional abandonment.

Their families are battlegrounds organised along traditional lines. Men rule over women who are charged with the care and control of the children. On the surface, these families, while they are not "ideal patriarchal" families because the fathers are blue-collar workers and the mothers also work, are none-the less similar (by virtue of their traditional organisation) to those described by Hagan(1987) as the kinds of families which generally have lower rates of female delinquency. That is not however, the case here. Although males are dominant and the women take care of the children, these families are producing girls who are violent. In these families, dominance is synonymous with petty tyranny and the negation of women. The kinds of gender divisions which are modelled and reinforced serve the production of internalised oppression and appear to contribute to the horizontal violence the key informants exhibit. These families make one further contribution towards the violent behaviour of their daughters; they also serve the internalisation of a way of interpreting others' behaviour which supports the shifting of moral and causal responsibility for one's actions to those others.

In suggesting that the internalisation of a way of thinking about ones' victims which makes those victims responsible for the abuse one metes out

to them is central to the final step towards violence, I join Katz (1988) in drawing attention to the fact that sociological and psychological factors alone are not sufficient to understanding why some people engage in violence. If we are to work effectively both at understanding how violence happens and at creating interventions which serve to prevent violent engagement and its rationalisation, I believe we must take into account how people make sense of their violent behaviour beyond the psychosocial factors which form the context of their experience. After all, not all people who have been abused become abusers (Gelles & Strauss, 1988), therefore, more must be at work than past experience alone. So far, an understanding of how girls understand and rationalise their behaviour which moves beyond the confines of a moral developmental stage analysis is missing from the literature, and I believe that there is much that can be learned from exploring this further.

In uncovering evidence that sexual abuse and sexual harassment play an important role with regard to the six girls' low sense of self-worth and negative views of other girls and women, I have once more raised issues which particularly Chesney-Lind and Koroki (1985) and Chesney-Lind & Shelden (1992) also raise. I take this one step further by suggesting that the key informants and perhaps others like them, use a negative view of females as a basis for making moral judgements about their largely female victims. They have drawn the conclusion that girls and women deserve to be beaten for certain kinds of behaviour (behaviour judged as unacceptable according to a rigid reading of the sexual double standard) and in so doing, exhibit horizontal violence and oppressed group behaviour. This is also an understanding of female violence that is missing from the literature on violent girls. There is more here that needs to be understood, particularly in

the light of the kinds of theorising that attempts to understand female violence as the dark side of feminism (Adler, 1975; McGovern, 1995) .

The kind of thinking about women exhibited by the key informants does not arise because these young women are becoming more emancipated. It arises because within their life worlds, they are oppressed and still adopting narrow notions of male focused behaviour as the standard for what is right and good for women. I believe that this is of special significance because it implies that if we are to find ways to prevent female-to-female violence (which is the bulk of the violence in which the key participants engaged in) and a perpetuation of cycles of violence which involve generation upon generation, we must include the valuing of women not in male terms, but as individuals who have worth of and by themselves as women, in any interventions that hope to prevent violence. Gelles & Straus (1988), in their exhaustive study on the causes and consequences of abuse in the American family, suggest that "sexual inequality is a prime cause of family violence" and suggest that "eliminating sexism can prevent violence in the home" (p. 203). Evidence provided by the key informants suggests that sexual inequality also has a major role to play in the violence participated in by adolescent school girls outside their homes. Therefore, by extension, eliminating sexism may contribute substantially to preventing violence among these girls. Violence prevention programming aimed at adolescent school girls should focus on violence against women and should not assume that is only men who act violently towards women.

Furthermore, given that the six key informants and the participants in the other studies mentioned above, all spoke eloquently about their experiences with abuse and about the emotional pain and anger they live with as a result of this, we must also consider violence prevention

programming which has an abuse survivor recovery component as part of what is offered. Again, sexual inequality and sexism were heavily implicated in the kinds of abuse the key informants experienced. Thus, violence recovery programs aimed at adolescent school girls would do well to include material which addresses being female in a positive and strength-giving way.

Finally given the loneliness and abandonment that the key informants spoke about with such frequency and such anguish and given that lack of attachment was something that other researchers have also underlined as contributing significantly to deviance, delinquency and violence, (Hirschi, 1969; Jensen & Eve, 1976; Cernkovich & Giordano, 1987) we must find the means to help young women to belong and to participate in our social institutions in ways which are important and relevant to them. In other words, we must find ways to allow them to experience respect, positive attention and a sense of connectedness because if we don't, they will pay every price asked of them in order to be somebody to someone.

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APPENDIX I

...a perspective is a point of view, placing observers at various angles in relation to events and influencing them to see these events from those angles. By its very nature, then a point of view, or perspective, limits what the observer sees by allowing only one side of what is "out there" to be seen...Each perspective is a different approach to "reality", and each tells us something which but cannot include everything...Human beings are limited by their perspectives. Yet perspectives are vitally important: they make it possible for human beings to make sense of what is "out there" (Charon, 1979, pp. 3-4).

*"You stand there until she's done with you!": The Anatomy of a Fight in the Words of One Teenage Girl**

S: Now, you've, I think, seen some fights between girls.

M: Ya.

S: Ya. Can you describe any?

M: (laughs) Uh, well the one my Mom was talking about with you, the one I was in with Sarah..

S: Ya. And you know, I've heard about that fight from a number of people so I'd like to hear. about it from you.

M: Ya, uhm....Well, let's see. Basically, O.K., Sarah was goin' out with Chris at the time.

S: Chris?

M: They were goin' out for like a year. (S: Mmhm) You know, almost years. (S: Mmhm) And uh, Sally was new in junior high. (S: Mmhm) And uh, she uh, I guess she liked Chris or something like that. (S: Mmhm) I don't know the whole story. Actually I wasn't going to school so I have no idea what went on there. (S: Mmhm) And she, supposedly she was saying stuff that uhm, that Chris would

* This is Marilee's (one of the key participants in the study) description of the beating of Sally (another participant in the study). This is a direct transcription of this event as Marilee told it to the author.

break up with Sarah any day to go out with her, and all this stuff. (S: Mmhm) You know, and calling Sarah this and that, na na na (S: Mmhm) and all this stuff, right? So Sarah got real mad. (S: Mmhm) Uhm, I mean I would get mad if someone called me a slut, behind my back. (S: Mmhm. Would you.?...) But I would not fight them. (S: Mmhm) Because I know what I'll lose if I do. (S: Mmhm) So uhm... I guess Sarah, I can't really remember exactly how it first began but, I remember she phoned me saying "Meet me down at the store". We were all gonna go out that night or something.

S: Now where is this store?

M: It's the store down here. The little store there by the corner.

S: Yes, there's a little store.

M: Right. 'Cause I guess Sally lives in this neighbourhood. I didn't know she lived in it, just like me.

S: Ya.

M: So I went "O.K. fine". So we made up this big plan to get Sally. We went down to the store and Sally and two of her friends were there. Like, they were friends of ours too but really, they were friends of Sally.

S: Now who were these friends?

M: Uhm, Adel and Eileen.

S: O.K.

M: I believe. So, they went up there to Sally's house and told Sally that Chris was down at the store.

S: Now why do you think that Adel and Eileen, who were friends of Sally's, would do this?

M: I have no idea, I mean they were in tears after because of what happened.

- S: Do you have any guess, at all. What, what might have prompted them?
- M: No. I uh, I mean it's I guess it has alot to do with, because we were older than them. (S: Mmhm) 'Cause we all were, they were in grade, I think they were in grade, well Eileen's in, Eileen's in grade ten. (S: Mmhm) I think Adel's in grade eight or something like that. And I think it's the fact that we're older than them. (S: Mmhm) And they would like to be able to hang around with us. And so they....
- S: So they kinda look up to you in a way or something?
- M: Sorta, ya.
- S: Ya.
- M: 'Cause uh, me and Daniella go down to the store eh. (S: Mmhm) And we kinda just stand there sometimes when people are down there. And nothing will happen when me and Daniella are there. (S: Mmhm) 'Cause we're alot bigger (laughs) than other kids that are down there.
- S: Oh ya.
- M: And 'cause for awhile, me and Daniella weren't hanging down there, and (S: Mmhm) the store got robbed. (S: Mmhm) And you know, the owner, he's like asking me where I had been, where I had been (S: Mmhm) because we're never down there anymore. Right?
- S: Oh right, ya.
- M: So, that's.. I don't know, but, anyway. Back to the fight. Uhm, but uh, so they went up and got her. And so they....
- S: They went up to her house.
- M: Ya. And said that Chris was down at the store.
- S: Mmhm.

M: And she's like "Is Sarah there? Is Sarah there?" And they're like "No. Sarah's not there. Sarah's not there." And uh, so there was like... oh there was like, at least fifteen people over there. So there was at least fifteen others down at the store. (S: Mmhm) More or less. I can't remember but there was quite a few of us down there. (S: Mmhm) And uh, Sally thought she heard Sarah's voice and she's like "I'm not going. I'm not going." right. And then finally she came down. (S: Mmhm) And uh, she's just standing there and I walked up to her and go "Hey do you have a smoke I can borrow?" And she didn't answer right. I said "Hey, do you have a smoke I can borrow?" (S: Mmm) She just looks at me. I go "Do you have a smoke I can borrow?!" And she's like... and, and then I was just buggin' her going "What do you not speak English?" And all of that stuff, right? (S: Mmhm) And then she, she goes "No I don't have any smokes". I'm like "O.K. whatever". And then Sarah starts yelling at her. (S: Mmhm) Right? And just... uhm, she was just yelling at her and yelling at her, and Sally just kept, you know, walking away and walking away, and Sarah kept pulling her back. And finally Sally started walking totally away (S: Mmhm) and Sarah went up, grabbed her, and punched her, right?(S: Mmhm) So then Sally was just like "Leave me alone! Leave me alone!" And then that kept goin' on and goin' on.

S: What, what kept going on?

M: Just, just her punching her and stuff.

S: Sarah's punching (M: Ya) Sally?

M: And uh, finally they were standing just up from the store a bit and Sarah was standing there, Sally was there, and I was here.

S: Mmhm. So you were behind Sally?.

M: Ya.

S: Mmhm.

M: And uh, she started walking away, and somehow she broke my nail. I don't know I, I grabbed her at one time just to put her back, like I grabbed her arm.

S: What, to push her back in the crowd?

M: Ya. And I think she broke my nail or something. So I was pissed off at that. (laughs) And then she starts walking by me and Rick like and I turn around, just natural reflex, turn around and grabbed her, swung her around and told her to stand there and I was just yelling at her. (S: Mmm) I said "You stand there until she's done with you!" Right? So then, it was O.K., and she kept walking away and I kept pulling her back. And then finally Sarah let her go. And uh, she like was all bleeding and stuff.

S: She was pretty badly beaten wasn't she?

M: Oh ya. Ya, she was pretty bad. And uh, and then, we took off to MacDonald's.

S: "We" is?

M: Uh, it was me, Sarah, Rick, Tanya, Tim, and Mike I think.

S: Mmhm.

M: I can't remember. I, it was, but, it was basically that. Then we went to MacDonald's. So we went there and... we just uhm, hung around back. And then Sarah went home and...no. They dropped me off or something and I phoned Sarah's house, and her Mom's like "So you mind telling what happened tonight?" I'm like "What d'ya mean?" She goes "With Sally tonight". "What do ya mean with Sally?" She's

like "Marilee I know you know" I'm like "O.K. whatever". So I just phoned there. So then she told me the cops were coming to talk to Sarah. And I was like (laughs) You, you know, we didn't think....

S: 'Cause they were in the right?

M: Ya. And I was scared. 'Cause (S: Mmhm) at one point I had my, my hand around like this, around her neck. (S: Mmhm) Right? But I didn't intentionally mean to have it there. It's just the way that the motion had ended up. (S: Mmhm) When I turned, tried to grab her right?

(S: Mmhm) So, I'm like "Great. Great, great". So, uhm, the cops had charged Sarah. (S: Mmhm) Because as soon as Sally got home, her mother phoned 911. (S: Mmhm) And the cops have to charge the person that did the damage. Just because (S: Yes) of the fact that they reported to you, the damage. (S: Mmhm) And uh.... So then, Sarah got taken to court, and her Mom said I might, might have to testify. But I never did. And Sally started, 'cause if anyone had talked to, if anyone talked to Sally (S: Mmhm) that was friends with Sarah or said anything to Sally uhm about, about Sarah, (S: Mmhm) Sarah would get charged for it. (S: Mmhm) So, Daniella phoned Sally and said she was gonna have a fight with her and stuff, right. (S: Mmhm) I wasn't there at the time. It was Mike and Sarah that were there and stuff like that, right? So then, Daniella just phoned Sally and started talking to her and talking to her and Sally's going "Only reason why I wouldn't fight her back is 'cause her big friend Marilee was there". (S: Mmhm) 'Cause she was scared of me. She wouldn't fight back with Sarah. She's just sca...she was scared I was gonna jump in, right? (S: Mmhm) So then, and then she said, then she started saying like she, I guess she

said to the judge, or she said to somebody, I don't know who she said it to, that I was holding her hands behind her back. (S: Mmhm) So that she couldn't punch anyone. (S: Mmhm) So Sally turned the whole story around. (S: Mmhm) You know, she was saying she doesn't hate Sarah "na na na na na" and all this stuff. (S: Mmhm) You know, and so she changed the whole entire story around. (S: Mmhm) So then me and Daniella saw her, saw her the other day and she was just scared shitless. (laughs) She started walking so fast. Like...

S: Mmhm. So tell me something. What were you feeling like when you were in the middle of that fight?

M: At the time that... at the beginning I didn't wanna be there. (S: Mmhm) 'Cause as I was walking to the store I knew something was gonna happen. (S: Mmhm) I just had a feeling that something....

S: Well you knew. 'Cause it was set up to....

M: Ya, well ya.

S: Ya.

M: But I didn't figure Sally would come down. (S: Mmhm) That's the only thing I was thinking "Oh no. She's not gonna come down. She's gonna figure Sarah's there. She's not even gonna bother comin' down". Right? (S: Mmhm) So I just.. I had a bad feeling when I was going down there. (S: Mmhm) And when I got down, down there, you know, I was O.K. Everybody started comin' and I was fine. I was talkin'.

S: You were O.K. meaning... how'd you feel?

M: I was ju... I kinda forgot about the bad feeling I had.

S: Ya.

M: Because all my friends were there and I was talkin' and laughin' and stuff and...

S: So what did that do?

M: Sally wasn't there yet so...

S: So what did that do? To have all your friends there talking and laughing?

M: It just made me forget.

S: Made you forget.

M: Uh... forget what was happening. What was going to happen.

S: Uh huh. Yes.

M: So Sally got there and I was just like all excited, you know, all hyper and stuff right?

S: Hyper?

M: Ya, just....

S: Tell me a little bit more. I've never been in this kind of situation.

M: Uhm, I guess my adrenaline was up.

S: Uh huh.

M: I was just in a good mood. You know.

S: In a good mood?

M: Excited, you know.

S: Excited. Ya.

M: And so, I just started buggin' her. I usually bug people when I'm in a good mood so....

S: "Buggin'" meaning? You started to.....

M: Just, I didn't touch her or nothin'. Just verbally bugging her.

S: Saying things.

M: Just like asking for the smoke, you know...

S: Yes.

M: Something like, I just like, you know. And uh, so I was just... and then Sarah started punching her and stuff. And...

S: Mmhm. How'd you feel then?

M: I wanted to walk away the first second I saw it. (S: Mmhm) 'Cause I said "Someone's gonna phone the cops and I'm gonna busted for this".

S: Did you want to walk away 'cause you were afraid of getting busted?

M: Ya. I was afraid 'cause I had everything going for me.

S: You had everything going for you. Meaning?

M: Like I had my car comin' up. I had, you know, I'm in school, I have a nice home.

S: Mmhm.

M: You know, it was just... everything was there.

S: How d'you feel about the hitting part?

M: I kind of.... see I've never been hit in my life. (S: Mmhm) Knock on wood. Like by someone else.

S: But you have been beaten by your Dad.

M: Ya.

S: Ya.

M: Ya, but it's never been like, you know, a fist fight.

S: Smashing like that.

M: Ya.

S: Ya.

M: So, I don't know how it feels, really.

S: Ya. So how did you feel when you saw?

M: I kind of felt sorry for her. (S: Mmhm) Because she would not fight back. (S: Mmhm) At the time I didn't know why. You know I found

it funny when she told everyone why she wouldn't fight back. (S: Mmhm) Just because of the fact I was there. (S: Mmhm) But uhm...

S: So she was pretty scared.

M: Ya. Well I could see why. 'Cause I mean I was right there behind her every time she turned around.

S: And how big are you?

M: How big am I?

S: Ya. I can only see you sitting down. How tall are you?

M: Uhm. (laughs) I don't know really how tall I am.

S: Oh, you're probably five eight, five nine huh.

M: Ya, something like that.

S: Ya.

M: Uhm...

S: And what's, what's your muscle strength like? Have you got good muscles?

M: I, they're fine, I don't (S: Ya) really work on them but I do sometimes. Just... (S: Ya) when I work and stuff sometimes,(S: Mmhm) in jobs, I have to use them so....

S: Ya.

M: Uhm...

S: You're strong.

M: Ya.

S: Ya.

M: I'm strong inside. (laughs)

S: Ya.

M: You can put it that way. Uhm....

S: So.. here somebody was punching this girl (J: Ya) and she wasn't....

M: Ya, I, I felt sorry for her.

S: And you felt, found it funny.

M: I found it funny because after, like I didn't find it funny at the time, but after when she was telling everyone that...

S: She was scared of you.

M: Ya. I just found it funny.

S: And you were very much a presence there. You were always behind her.

M: Ya. Ya.

S: And sometimes you pushed her back and (J: Ya) once your hands ended up around her throat and (J: Ya) another time you, you got tangled somehow.

M: I got, ya, I don't know how it happened. I don't remember what happened there.

S: So you were kinda really in the fight.

M: I was... ya. You could say I was.

S: It was kinda like two people against one person.

M: Ya.

S: Ya.

M: Uhm.... I wouldn't want to be in her position.

S: You wouldn't.

M: No. Not with all the people around.

S: No.

M: You know, it just... I'd feel awful.

S: You would.

M: Ya.

S: How did you feel though? 'Cause you weren't in her position. You were in a different position.

M: Ya. See when I started to get to the point that I was pushin' her back and stuff, (S: Mmhm) that's when I started to get mad.

S: Got mad.

M: Just at myself. I was mad 'cause I wanted to punch her so bad.

S: What d'you wanna punch her for?

M: Just 'cause my adrenaline was pumped again.

S: Mmhm.

M: I was just all in there, all, you know, excited again, and I was just like "O.K. here's someone here that my friend hates" and, basically when you, when your friend hates someone you're supposed to hate them too.

S: Oh ya.

M: But I don't always go by that so... (laughs)

S: Mmhm.

M: But uhm, so...

S: You wanted to punch her.

M: I wanted to. (S: MMhm) At one time I came this close.

S: Did you?

M: My hand was up and ready just to punch her.

S: What stopped you?

M: First thing that went through my head is my car.

S: So, you'd get punished.

M: Ya. That's the only thing that goes through my head at the time is my car.

S: And so you weren't thinking about her at all.

M: No. I was....

S: No. You were mad and you wanted to punch her (J: Ya) but you thought "Well if I do this I might (J: Ya) not get my car".

M: So I just basically forgot about it.

S: Mmhm.

M: And.. just basically stood there and made sure she stayed there.

S: So you kept pushing her back, ya.

M: Ya. And, and then, and then Sarah just finished it off and stuff.

S: Mmhm.

M: But I wouldn't want to be in her position.

S: No, you wouldn't, and you wouldn't want to be in her position 'cause of what?

M: Just for the fact that I think it's stupid.

S: Stupid.

M: I, I think fighting is... I've never been in an actual fight in my whole entire life. Like, uh, the only time I got in a fight was with my friend Roweena Hollander. (S: Mmhm) And we didn't even hit each other. She hit me in the, in the skull (S: Mmhm) and it wasn't really a real fight. (S: Mmhm) So, I just think fighting's stupid. (S: Mmhm) I mean, on Saturday night when we got drunk my boyfriend got in a fight with my old friend.

S: Mmhm.

M: 'Cause that's... I get so angry, I get so excited. (S: Mmhm) I get angry and my adrenaline pumps up and I'm just like "Ya let's go do it" you know.

S: Mmhm. Mmhm.

M: And I'm just.. and then like, I get there and I'm like "This is really stupid". (S: Mmhm) You know. Like we'll always talk about it. We'll always go "Oh ya, let's go beat up her over there". (S: Mmhm) "Let's go bug him over there." (S: Mmhm) You know, but would never do it.

S: So we uh, are those the friends that you just said you hung out with earlier?

M: Not right now. (S: Ya. Ya) Not my friends right now. No. No. They, you know, we joke about people and stuff but we keep it to ourselves.

S: Mmhm. Mmhm.

M: You know, we don't go up to someone and go "Hey you're a goof". (S: Mmhm) You know. (laughs)

S: And sort of get them into it.

M: Ya.

S: Uhm, that whole thing about watching someone get punched, and Sally was, I think, really quite badly hurt wasn't she?

M: She.... she supposedly had a broken nose but it, it turned out not to be or something, I don't know. She uh, she had a bruised eye, like swollen eye. She was bleeding alot.

S: And bleeding.

M: I think she's emotionally hurt more than anything.

S: Mmhm. Well ya, people do get uh.... become emotionally hurt don't they.

APPENDIX II

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY ENTITLED: "A STUDY OF VIOLENCE AMONG ADOLESCENT FEMALE STUDENTS IN A SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT"

I understand that this research project is studying the rise in violence among teen-age girls in British Columbia schools. I understand that I will be asked about my personal experiences with violence. I realize I am being asked to participate in this study because I am someone who has suffered violence and abuse at the hands of a teen-age girl or girls, or because I have engaged in violent behaviour myself. I understand that I will be asked to contribute not only a description of what happened to me, what I witnessed or what I did, but also my thoughts, feelings and explanations for what happened. I also understand that my audio and video taped responses will be used by Sibylle Artz of the University of Victoria's School of Child and Youth Care and her research assistants as data for their research project on violence among adolescent females.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that my responses will be kept confidential, that is, only the researcher will know my name, and all research materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. I do understand that my image may appear on an edited tape of the research findings which may be presented at research conferences. This means that under certain circumstances it may be possible for someone to recognize me. In all other respects my anonymity will be guaranteed and my name will not appear in any materials which result from this project. Once the research has been completed, all audio and video taped material not relevant to the presentation of research findings will be erased. I understand that if I do not want my interview audiotaped or videotaped I can participate in the study by simply being interviewed and allowing the researcher to make field notes. I understand that I am free to refuse to answer any question that I do not want to answer and that I am free to stop answering questions completely. If I withdraw from participating in this study, which I am free to do at any time, Sibylle Artz will erase any audio or video taped conversations we have had.

Consent for videotaping_____

Consent for audiotaping_____

Consent for interviewing_____

Signed_____ Participant

Researcher_____

Date_____

As the parent/guardian of the above participant, I fully understand what my child is participating in and give my consent. I also understand that if at any time I wish to withdraw my consent I may do so and my wishes will be

respected and all materials (audio or videotapes involving my child will be erased.

Consent for videotaping_____ Consent for audiotaping_____

Consent for interviewing_____

Signed_____

Parent/Guardian of_____

Researcher_____

Date_____

VITA

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Title of Dissertation:

The Life Worlds and Practices of Violent School Girls

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