

Young People and Learning Processes in School and
Everyday Life 2

Johannes Lunneblad *Editor*

Policing Schools: School Violence and the Juridification of Youth

 Springer

Young People and Learning Processes in School and Everyday Life

Volume 2

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Policing Schools: School Violence and the Juridification of Youth

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Contents

1	Introduction: School Violence in the Nordic Countries – A Changing Sociocultural Landscape	1
	Johannes Lunneblad	
2	What Is the Most Violent Thing to Do? Mapping the Definitions and Complexities of Violence.	17
	Nils Hammarén	
3	Youth and Crime in a Welfare State. Trends, Inequalities and Societal Response.	33
	Felipe Estrada	
4	Juridification of Swedish Education – Changing Conditions for Teachers’ Professional Work	53
	Andreas Bergh and Emma Arneback	
5	The Many Faces of School Violence: Ambivalent Categorizations of Perpetrators and Victims	71
	Johannes Lunneblad and Thomas Johansson	
6	Policing the School: Dialogues and Crime Reports	85
	Thomas Johansson and Johannes Lunneblad	
7	Segregation, Class, “Race” and School Violence	97
	Kristina Hunehäll Berndtsson	
8	The Juridification of School Bullying in Sweden: The Emerging Struggle Between the Scientific-Based Pedagogical Discourse and the Legal Discourse.	113
	Robert Thornberg	
9	Juridification and the Ungendering of School Bullying	127
	Paul Horton and Camilla Forsberg	

10 Cyberbullying in Childhood and Adolescence: Assessment, Negative Consequences and Prevention Strategies 141
Sofia Berne, Ann Friséen, and Jesper Berne

11 The Rules of Violence: Young People’s Moral Work around Violence and Fighting 153
Sara Uhnöo

12 Democratic Dilemmas in Education Against Violent Extremism 173
Jennie Sivenbring

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Chapter 1

Introduction: School Violence in the Nordic Countries – A Changing Sociocultural Landscape



Johannes Lunneblad

Introduction

This book brings together researchers who are interested in different ways in questions surrounding school violence in the Nordic context. School violence is a global phenomenon that encompasses a wide range of behaviours, from school shootings to minor theft, bullying and sexual harassment. Most of the research on school violence has been done in post-industrial democracies such as the US, the UK and Australia. This research has shown that there are numerous significant parallels across nations, but also many significant differences between them (Robinson et al. 2012). Sweden and the other Nordic countries have long been viewed as exceptions, in that they focus on care and social pedagogical measures rather than punishment (Lappi-Seppälä 2008; Estrada et al. 2012). However, since most of the research on school violence has been carried out in the Anglosphere, it is important to bear in mind the differences between schools in, for example, the US and UK and schools in the Nordic countries.

The Nordic countries are known for their progressive education, which places a strong emphasis on equality. However, during the past two decades, Nordic societies have undergone a number of significant school reforms (Bergh and Englund 2014). The debate on the so-called ‘crisis in the schools’, which emerged from the US in the 1980s, has been a travelling discourse that has transferred into the European and Nordic context, advocating for stricter measures against ‘youth problems’. As a result, in recent decades, the policies and governance of most educational systems in Western Europe and Australia, New Zealand and the US have experienced substantial changes. One commonality has been a series of initiatives

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to improve education outcomes (Ball et al. 2012). This has been pursued through decentralization of responsibility and adaptation to market-based principles in a number of welfare institutions, including schools. This push for change has been closely intertwined with the idea that high quality and efficiency are best achieved through competition. The idea here comes from a customer perspective, according to which citizens should choose the institutions that can deliver the desired results (Dahlstedt and Fejes 2017). One consequence of this development has been increasing demands on professionals working at different welfare institutions to be accountable for goals, strategies and results (Ball et al. 2012). In the Nordic context, this development may have been most significant in Sweden. Our purpose is, therefore, to use Sweden as a case study and as an example of recent changes in policies and attitudes concerning the handling of violence in schools. We aim to situate the Swedish case in relation to developments in the Nordic countries and in other countries such as the UK and the US; nevertheless, the main parts of the empirical studies are conducted in Sweden.

There has been a long tradition of Nordic collaboration between researchers in sociology and criminology, with a focus on juvenile delinquency. A majority of these studies are based on students' self-reports of being subjected to a crime or having committed a crime, and most of this research is quantitative (Kivivuori and Bernburg 2011). As the contributions in this book are primarily based on qualitative research, they are thus complementary to the existing research.

The first studies in this field were conducted in the early 1960s. The results from these studies generally indicated a major similarity in the prevalence of young offenders among young people in the Nordic countries. During the 1960s and 1970s, the differences between Nordic countries in this area were primarily that theft was more common among young people in Sweden, Denmark and Norway compared with Finland, whereas sexual harassment and the use of alcohol were more common in Finland. These differences were explained by the fact that the Finnish economy was weak for a long period after the Second World War, in comparison with the other Nordic countries. Since the 1990s, when the Finnish economy reached a similar economic level to that of the other Nordic countries, these differences have disappeared (Kivivuori and Bernburg 2011). Later studies on self-reported crimes among young people in the Nordic countries showed no major differences between countries with regard to theft and violent crime (Ring and Svensson 2007). However, the use of alcohol and drugs among young people in Denmark is more similar to the situation in countries such as the Netherlands and Germany than to the situation in other Nordic countries (Kivivuori and Bernburg 2011).

In the earliest studies conducted in this field, only the prevalence of boys' crime was investigated (Träskman 2015). Later studies included participation from both girls and boys. The results show that boys are overrepresented – both as victims and as perpetrators – in most forms of crime, in a pattern that is similar to that revealed by other international research. This situation is also similar among the Nordic countries over time (Elonheimo et al. 2014). All in all, the research reveals a picture in which the similarities of juvenile delinquency among the Nordic countries are distinctive in many ways (Estrada et al. 2012).

In Nordic research, there has been a development in which the students of each generation state that they have committed fewer crimes than previous generations of students. There are several interpretations of this development (Träskman 2015; Svensson and Ring 2007). One interpretation is that social control has increased in public places such as streets and parks through camera surveillance and a greater presence of security guards. In addition, the development of security tags and alarms have made it riskier to shoplift. Another interpretation, which is related to recent technological development regarding computers and social media, is that young people now spend more time at home, with much of the social relations that once took place in the streets and squares now having shifted to social media. Even if this shift has led to the development of new (online) forms of criminality, violence and harassment, which will be further discussed in this book, it has generally reduced the time spent by adolescents in insecure environments (Kivivuori and Bernburg 2011). Furthermore, research has indicated an attitude change among students that makes it increasingly unacceptable to commit crimes. Violence is being increasingly associated with failure and with the status of a 'loser'. Young people are aware that committing criminal acts carries the risk of reducing and complicating their prospects for a successful professional life (Vainik and Kassman 2018; Kivivuori and Bernburg 2011; Löfstrand 2009).

Research on juvenile delinquency has included a discussion on whether a decreasing inclination to commit crimes can be viewed as an increased polarization between young people who commit crimes and those who follow the law (Svensson and Ring 2007). This theory is based on the fact that most adolescents have become increasingly law-abiding, with a minority of adolescents being accountable for the greater part of the crime committed. The research shows different results, however. Statistics do not show that the rate of serious crime has increased among the proportion of adolescents who commit most of the crime (Estrade et al 2012; Ring and Svensson 2007; Wikström and Loeber 2000). Nevertheless, there have been serious incidents of deadly violence in school environments (Kivivuori and Bernburg 2011).

The conclusions drawn from the polarization theory can also be related to research on how school failure affects students' risk of being involved in criminal activities. This research shows how this risk is mediated by difficulties in school, especially for students growing up in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Vainik and Kassman 2018). Furthermore, research shows that it is often the same students who report that they are bullied in school and other situations. An overlap has also been revealed between students who are involved in graffiti and illegal file-sharing of movies, music and games, and students who report that they have performed a number of other illegal acts (Ring and Svensson 2007).

To conclude, a great deal of research indicates that it is not primarily the social or ethnic backgrounds of young people that explains which adolescents are involved in violence and bullying in school. Rather, it is how students are treated by school staff, and the support that students receive at school, that are significant in determining students' risk of being exposed to and exposing other students to violence and harassment. This conclusion leads us to the main issue addressed in this book, which will be examined in the following chapters.

Violence in School – Historical Aspects

Today, the notion that violence, degrading treatment and bullying are unacceptable is well established. From a historical standpoint, education has played a central role in reproducing the social and moral order (Englund 2016). What is commonly perceived as degrading treatment against and between students today was previously not considered unacceptable. In Swedish schools, for example, corporal punishment was used as a method of disciplining children until 1958. The teacher was the obvious authority figure and had the right to use physical and psychological punishment. Older students also had the obligation to educate younger students. In secondary schools, bullying was an approved system for integrating new and younger members into the student community. Students who were particularly vulnerable were characterized as ‘whipping boys’. If the violence and harsh treatment of these students went over the limit, it was considered a moral problem and a violation of the ‘moral contract’, rather than a violation of the law and of the individual victim (Hammarén et al. 2015). Since the 1990s, however, the Swedish school system has become an institution that focuses on social order in terms of law and legal issues. Behaviours previously described as ‘teasing’ and ‘fighting’ have gradually come to be positioned as issues for juridical judgment, rather than as pedagogical problems (Swedish National Agency for Education 2012).

In the Nordic context, the tendency of schools to treat unruly behaviour, bullying and violence as crimes is a partly new phenomenon. Compared with other democratic post-industrial countries, the Nordic countries have been known for their strong welfare state and low incarceration rate (Estrada et al. 2012). However, there has been a change in Nordic policies emphasizing care and treatment since 1990 that has been described as a new punitive attitude. This transformation has several dimensions. First, the Nordic countries have adapted to the punitive laws and policies in place in the European Union. Second, there is criticism of, and a break with, the former social democratic welfare state that dominated the post-war period in the Nordic countries. As a result, a new criminal law was introduced that emphasized that society would not tolerate criminal acts (Lappi-Seppälä 2016). Third, there has been a development of movements and interest groups that speak for the victim and emphasize the importance of the victim’s perspective in legislation. These dimensions are reflected in the changes that have taken place when dealing with violence and degrading treatment in Swedish schools (Träskman 2015). Since 1990, these changes have been part of a radical change in schools’ approaches to violent behaviour. Increasingly, schools tend to treat violence in schools as a crime, making violence a police matter rather than a pedagogical problem (Hammarén et al. 2015).

The Educational Crisis and the Individualization of the School Landscape

In Sweden, the political debate on both academic performance and students' behaviour has been tightly linked to issues of educational quality. Today, schools in Sweden are competing on an educational quasi-market of free choice regulated by the state, where safe and supportive learning environments have become a selling point (Dahlstedt and Fejes 2017). Researchers argue that this education policy reform has favoured a combination of neoliberal demands for marketing, competition and accountability, along with neoconservative demands for traditional values. The result is a mixture of contradictory demands being placed on both schools and students, including neoconservative ideals of students being disciplined, well-behaved and respectful, along with neoliberal ideals of students learning to take initiative and become self-governing entrepreneurs (Ball et al. 2012; Bergh and Englund 2014).

The debate on the school crisis, and on how children and youth are at risk in schools, must be integrated into a wider perspective. An ongoing standardization and individualization of the Swedish school system is taking place, such that it is up to the individual to navigate and find his or her way through the school system. This development is tied to the construction of the *entrepreneurial self*. Certain attitudes and behaviours are promoted and encouraged, whereas others are seen as constricting and limiting factors. Learning has become a personal responsibility, which often results in societal and political factors being under-emphasized and neglected. Failure to fit into the image of the entrepreneurial self is mainly viewed as being caused by personal defects and shortcomings. When addressing the problems of children and youth, there is a risk that rather than examining the problems at the institutional and structural level, the problems are lifted out by teachers and other professionals of the school context by and placed on the individual level – and thus transformed into personal and/or psychological problems. This development is notable in the increasing tendency to use different diagnoses in schools than were previously used.

In the Nordic countries, the number of school children diagnosed with an issue in a school context has increased during recent decades. There is currently a debate concerning the over-representation of school-related diagnoses in the Nordic countries (Hjörne and Säljö 2014). One of the most common diagnoses is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Nordic researchers have noted that the Nordic countries have the largest proportion of children with such diagnoses in Europe, in relation to the population (Hellblom-Thibblin 2017). This difference can partly be explained by the fact that different mapping methods are used in different countries. Other explanations may include national and cultural differences regarding what it means to be a child, or how an adolescent is understood. Differences between countries in terms of routines for treating children with school-related diagnoses may

offer another explanation (Madsen 2014). In the Nordic countries, biomedical definitions are predominant, and the definition of ADHD is based on behaviours such as hyperactivity, concentration difficulties and lack of impulse control. This definition has been critically discussed, as there is a risk that diagnoses such as ADHD will be used to explain problems that may be better explained by a child's or youth's life situation. Different definitions of 'problems' such as diagnoses have been used to deal with what has been socially and culturally defined as a 'problem' during different historical periods.

In addition to the increasing use of psychiatric diagnoses, another twist has taken place in the discussion around the poor results obtained by Swedish students on international comparison tests: that is, the poor results are being explained by behavioural factors. Similar developments can be seen in the UK, for example, where students' school results have been related to a lack of discipline at school (Ball et al. 2012). These changes have led to greater opportunities and requirements for schools to take action when students are subjected to violence; they have also resulted in schools having a greater inclination to report school trouble to the police, and thereby make it into a legal problem (Hammarén et al. 2015). A parallel example of how schools are supposed to solve or counteract societal issues is when education is mentioned in relation to safeguarding democracy against terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization – a task that was previously the sole responsibility of national security services and the police. In recent action plans and in the objectives and measures recommended by governmental institutions in the Nordic countries, schools are given two main guidelines for solving the problem of radicalization and extremism: (1) to safeguard democracy and (2) to identify and report individuals who might be at risk of becoming radicalized (Sivenbring 2017).

From a wider perspective, the majority of students in Sweden are doing well: most complete secondary school, find a job and become functioning adults (Cater et al. 2014). At the same time, increased polarization can be seen between those who manage to navigate the individualized school landscape and those who fall out of the system (Beach and Sernhede 2011). There is a close relationship between the discussion on the 'global school crisis' and moral panics involving stereotypical images of violent and threatening young people (Ball et al. 2012; Ostrowicka 2012).

Changing Policies

The transformation of school policies for managing school violence has been reflected in the political debate, in which schools are increasingly encouraged to file police reports on actions that violate the rules of order (Larsson 2014). In 2006, a new Swedish government was elected. During the pre-election period, the issues of social order and discipline in schools were emphasized in the political debate. The former social democratic government was accused by the present liberal right-wing government of having created 'slacker schools'. Hence, the new government's

education policy claimed to aim to re-establish order and discipline in schools. The education policy established on this basis can be understood as the beginning of policy reforms that emphasize discipline, place greater demands, introduce grading at younger ages and conduct more frequent school inspections (Hammarén et al. 2015). The meanings of concepts such as degrading treatment, bullying and harassment were transformed and situated in an intertextual relation to concepts such as attitudes and discipline. This change resulted in a gradual shift from a focus on the child at risk to a stronger focus on order, discipline and student achievement. This initiative can be understood as politically motivated; it is not primarily intended to protect vulnerable children, but rather to improve academic results in Swedish schools (Larsson 2014).

Through these political changes, school governance has shifted from being an issue of responding to central goals to an issue of being responsible for reaching these goals. This shift implies a change from a situation in which professionals are responsible for achieving a number of centrally established goals and regulations, to a situation in which professionals are accountable for reaching the centrally set goals through locally formulated goals (Ball et al. 2012). *Responsibility* as an idea springs from the trust professionals embody in their work. *Accountability*, on other hand, is based on the idea that professionals can be held accountable for proving that they have done their work. For example, accountability involves taking responsibility to make work against degrading treatment transparent through local policies and documenting and evaluating this measure, so that other agencies can inspect and judge the measure (Hatch 2013).

The Juridification of Schools

Increased regulation by law has been described as a *process of juridification*. In general terms, juridification means that decisions that were previously considered to be political concerns are replaced by a juridical process, along with juridical concepts and interpretations. Hence, problems are solved to a greater degree by turning to rules and laws. Juridification also affects the relation between citizens, who begin to see each other primarily as legal subjects. Criticism against this development describes how issues that were previously solved through dialogue and informal processes – from political and cultural perspectives – have been transformed into legal concerns. This narrow focus on what the law permits and demands carries the risk of overshadowing ethical and professional judgments (Bergh and Arneback 2016).

The phenomenon of schools being regulated through laws and legal jurisdictions is not new. Nevertheless, it is clear that legal concepts and perspectives now have greater influence on the governance of education, in comparison with only a decade ago. Previous regulations have changed, and new regulations have been put in place in areas that were once not considered to be legal issues. This shift has been part of a more general transformation of education towards a system of control, in which

authorities have obligations to report results, conduct external inspections and make repeated quality measurements. As a result, what were previously considered to be primarily pedagogical responsibilities and challenges have now become the subject of legal consideration (Blichner and Molander 2008; Fransson 2016). For example, the concept of bullying – which has long been an established perspective among researchers in pedagogy and psychology as well as among school professionals – is no longer present in the educational act or in policy recommendations from the education agency. This transformation has contributed to the reinforcement of legal language and has made it possible for students and parents to transfer complaints to the school inspection agency. Overall, this change has led to increased control of education. For example, municipalities can be required to pay an indemnity if students are exposed to degrading treatment at school (Carlbaum 2016).

The juridification of education has thus come to influence not only the requirements placed on professionals working at schools, but also how various situations are perceived. This has made schools' obligations to support the individual child even stronger. However, as juridical language aims to clarify what obligations and responsibilities schools do and do not have, it tends to narrow the perspective regarding what can be legally defined. This narrowing raises questions about what happens to responsibilities that have traditionally been among schools' obligations, but that are impossible to define legally (Carlbaum 2016). While a pedagogical discourse is occupied with the question of how to accomplish objectives, these are not issues that can be addressed using a legal discourse. Different rationales concerning encounters with violence and degrading treatment in schools can therefore create tensions for professionals. Previous research has discussed how these tensions can lead to situations in which professionals do what they are legally required to do, but at the price of what they consider to be pedagogically desirable (Bergh and Arneback 2016).

The connection between the juridification of schools and more general crime-control efforts is stronger in the US than in the Nordic countries (Theriot 2009). In the US, this transformation was rooted in a set of policies and practices often known as 'zero tolerance'. Zero-tolerance policies spread fast in the US during the early 1990s. From the beginning, such policies had the aim of ensuring gun-free schools. The mandate to adopt zero tolerance for weapons was soon generalized to include zero tolerance for alcohol, tobacco, drugs and violence (Hirschfield 2008). Unlike other policies regarding mandatory criminal sentences, however, zero-tolerance policies often give little consideration to explanatory circumstances (Gregory et al. 2010). The shift from disciplinary discretion based on teachers' and school authorities' judgment to disciplinary rules that stipulate exclusionary punishments has led to more frequent use of suspension for students who violate school rules. This shift has been discussed as a form of symbolic criminalization, irrespective of whether such judgment follows strict penal guidelines or is decided by school authorities (Hirschfield 2008). Research has repeatedly reported that minority students and students growing up in disadvantaged circumstances are subject to suspension more often than white middle-class students (Skiba et al. 2011).

Conclusion

No positive evidence suggests that an exclusive emphasis on police reporting and the implementation of sanctions reduces the extent of violence in schools. It seems unlikely that the criminalization of unwanted behaviour can mitigate the complex social problem of violence in schools. Moreover, allocating additional resources to surveillance and discipline may not facilitate mutual respect, dialogue and inclusivity in schools. By criminalizing certain forms of behaviour and legally prosecuting degrading treatment, the legal discourse may result in an increased focus on schools' legal responsibility to create a safe, equitable learning environment. Furthermore, there is no clear evidence that violence and degrading treatment are actually increasing in Nordic schools. However, there is evidence suggesting that it is societal norms and school policies that are changing, rather than the actual prevalence of violence. The various contributions in this edited volume present and explore a map of relevant changes over the past decades along with more recent policy changes and research. This anthology is thus of great interest from an international perspective, and can contribute to broadening the perspective on school violence. Taken together, the chapters in this volume provide a nuanced and rich picture of school violence today and in the future. Our ambition is also to promote a critical pedagogical perspective on how schools and society are dealing with young people's sometimes precarious situation in late modern times.

Three of the chapters in this book (Chaps. 4, 5 and 6) are part of a research project titled *Schools and Crime: Policing Violence and Intimidation at Schools*, funded by the Swedish Research Council. This project focuses on how a number of Swedish schools define and categorize students involved in and situations involving different forms of violent or abusive acts in schools. Professionals working in schools encounter students with different needs, cultural backgrounds and social backgrounds. Therefore, schools must deal with a wide range of situations and dilemmas on a daily basis. Students' disagreements and situations involving violence and harassment are a part of such dilemmas. In institutions such as schools, narratives and categories are significant tools professionals use when making sense of their daily work; such tools also support them in managing various dilemmas and difficulties. In terms of methodology, we approach these different narratives and categorizations from a discourse analytical perspective. Here, we have been influenced by discourse theory in the broadest sense; however, we also try to place the different discourses within a sociological and theoretical framework. Our ambition has been to theoretically explore and use quotations to study how educators shape and reshape their understanding of low- and high-level violence and of harassment in schools. The study comprises extensive case studies of nine Swedish secondary schools. Key informants include the school professionals at each school who are part of the student welfare team. In Sweden, each school must have a student welfare team composed of a school nurse, psychologist and curator, along with staff possessing special educational skills. The welfare team usually has a weekly meeting at which key staff members such as the principal, school nurse, counsellor and special

education teacher are present, along with other school officials if necessary. The aim of these meetings is to discuss issues such as students' well-being, students with poor academic achievement, students with health-related problems and students enacting criminal behaviour or who are at risk of committing crimes. At most schools, the members of the school welfare team have a special responsibility to handle issues related to violence, bullying and conflicts among students. During the fieldwork, we conducted interviews, focus group interviews, observation and data collection from the police registration of crimes in school. The schools selected for the study were located in different geographical and socioeconomic areas.

Organization of This Book

The rest of this book is arranged as follows. In Chap. 2, titled 'What is the most violent thing to do? Mapping the definitions and complexities of violence', Hammarén explores the concept of (school) violence. Different categorizations, interpretations and manifestations of violence are presented, and the dividing lines between them are discussed and problematized. The author indicates that the concept of violence includes a variety of forms and manifestations. The ways in which human aggressiveness and violence are characterized and comprehended vary between decades, contexts, disciplines and scholars. In general, however, violence can manifest itself through physical, relational, verbal, cyber and sexual expressions, as well as through systemic, structural, symbolic and objective forms. The former relate to more explicit, concrete and direct types of violence, while the latter focus on less visible, indirect and subtle forms. This division is partially dependent on whether the definition of violence being used is psychologically or sociologically produced.

In Chap. 3, Estrada focuses on the causes of youth crime, and examines how its levels and trends are important for social policy. In this chapter, titled 'Youth and crime in Sweden. Trends, inequalities and societal response in a welfare state', Estrada highlights how debate in Europe often includes descriptions of constantly rising youth crime, and demands that society be tougher on juvenile delinquents. However, an analysis of crime statistics, questionnaire surveys and medical data does not support the view that youth crime is on the rise – rather, it supports the opposite view. This chapter addresses a number of issues that should be regarded as central by everyone interested in the life conditions of young people: how has the nature of youth crime changed? Why do some groups of young people commit more offences than others? In this chapter, the author also elaborates how the welfare society deals with young people who engage in offending.

Chapter 4 is titled 'Juridification of Swedish education – changing conditions for teachers' professional work'. Here, Bergh and Arneback examine the changes that have occurred in the governance of Swedish education during the last two decades. The aim of this chapter is to study how the juridification of education conditions teachers' view on the knowledge and values expressed in national policy documents.

The results demonstrate that the increase of juridical language clearly affects teachers' professional work. In the worst case, the use of legal concepts may result in more instrumental relationships in which teachers focus on their role as assessors and monitors. However, this depends on how legal concepts are interpreted and enacted by school staff.

In Chap. 5, 'The many faces of school violence: ambivalent categorizations of perpetrators and victims', Lunneblad and Johansson discuss how school officials at different schools describe various measures taken to deal with school violence. In the case studies, the school officials mainly reported physical violence to the police. However, reporting to the police was not necessarily linked to the degree of violence inflicted on the students. Furthermore, the professionals filed police reports in order to clearly delineate what behaviour was not tolerated. However, rather than reporting to the police, the school officials sometimes tried to solve the 'problems' through social pedagogical interventions. As regards criminality and subversive behaviour, young people are seen as both a risk group and a security risk. Consequently, there is a need to investigate categorizations and definitions of young people 'at risk'.

Chapter 6 by Johansson and Lunneblad, titled 'Policing the school: dialogues and crime reports', is based on a study comprising two interlinked case studies. The first case consists of principals and school health teams working closely with young students in the school; the second case involves police officers. The design of this study allows us to discuss and analyse different professional views and attitudes regarding school violence. Whereas the school professionals tend to work relationally and try to solve conflicts and violence through dialogue and interaction, the police officers primarily see their role as identifying offenders and crimes. Furthermore, the results reveal that both professional groups focus more on policing in segregated than in "unsegregated" areas. The police placed segregated areas under surveillance, targeted young people and defined them as potential suspects. The teachers in segregated areas also tended to use a more juridical approach to school violence, especially in comparison with teachers in more affluent middle-class neighbourhoods.

Social and ethnic residential segregation has increased in recent years in Sweden, making residential areas more ethnically and socioeconomically homogeneous.

In Chap. 7, titled "'race" and school violence', Hunchäll Berndtsson illustrates how school violence is understood and handled by school staff in demographically diverse areas. A comparison between the schools in the study shows that the strategies used and the ways in which school staff talk about students differ significantly. At a school located in an upper-middle-class area, the school staff adapted to expectations and demands from the upper-middle-class parents. At a school located in a lower-working-class area with only immigrant students, on the other hand, the school staff adapted to expectations from other authorities, such as the social services and the police. These cases indicate that the Swedish education system adjusts according to students' social class and 'race' in terms of how professionals describe school violence and violations, and what strategies are employed to address these problems. This chapter shows how segregation, class, place and 'race' play a

decisive role in schools' institutional practices and challenge the image of the Swedish education system as a cornerstone of Swedish society.

In Chap. 8, 'School bullying in Sweden', Thornberg describes how the historical definition of bullying has been disputed and developed. International research on school bullying first began in Sweden, initiated by the work of Olweus during the 1970s. His definition of bullying is the most widespread definition used in this field. However, there has been and still is debate and criticism regarding the definition of bullying among international scholars. These shifts in perspectives are discussed and problematized in this chapter. The chapter then discusses the prevalence of school bullying in Sweden, both over time and cross-culturally. In Swedish school policy, shifts have occurred in how bullying is viewed: in perspective, from a psychological and pedagogical matter to a legal matter (juridification); and in terminology, from focusing on the term 'bullying' to use of the more inclusive term 'degrading treatment' and, later on, 'harassment'. The chapter ends with a discussion on anti-bullying policy and practice in Sweden, including a change from anti-bullying practice as a pedagogical matter to a legal matter, and a shift from programmes to general recommendations.

As seen in legal and educational documents, school bullying has been ungendered through its legal separation from discrimination and harassment and its reduction to a form of degrading treatment against someone's dignity.

In Chap. 9, 'Juridification and the ungendering of school bullying', Horton and Forsberg investigate the juridification of school violence in the Swedish context by focusing on the issue of school bullying and gendered perceptions of difference. Emphasis is placed on the legal ungendering of school bullying as being unconnected to issues of social difference – a view that aligns with the majority of school bullying research, which has shifted from being distinctly gender blind to being somewhat gender essentialist. The authors problematize dominant conceptualizations of sex/gender 'roles' through a discussion of power relations, and argue that the juridification of school bullying does not adequately account for the importance of dominant gendered societal norms. They also argue that school bullying may be a form of 'normative cruelty' that is socially learned and underpinned by dominant gendered discourses.

A substantial part of many young people's everyday lives now takes place online.

In Chap. 10, titled 'Cyberbullying in childhood and adolescence: assessment, negative consequences and prevention strategies', Berne, Frisé and Berne discuss possible negative aspects of this situation, as peer interaction on the Internet carries the risk of cyberbullying. This form of bullying is conducted through modern information and communication technology; it can involve hurtful photos, videos and texts that are uploaded to pages on the Internet, and offensive text messages. Cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon; therefore, this chapter begins with a short overview of how cyberbullying can be defined and which behaviours are included in this form of aggressive peer interaction. Research shows that being bullied online is associated with several negative consequences such as somatic symptoms and poor body esteem. Hence, the chapter includes a section on students' experiences of and reactions to cyberbullying. The chapter poses this question: what

can be done to counteract cyberbullying? Suggestions given by Swedish youths are then presented as possible answers.

In Chap. 11, ‘The rules of violence: young people’s moral work around violence and fighting’, Uhnoo examines how young people approach and deal with violent conflicts arising both in and outside of school settings. The results show the complexity of such moral work, and how young people’s rules regarding violence remain open to negotiation and vary according to the situation and the type of relationship between the parties involved. A typology of violence and fighting among young people is presented that considers and compares the rules for different types of violence and fighting, while noting the kinds of violence and fighting that can be seen as normalized and legitimized for different situations and social relationships, based on the rules in use.

Finally in Chap. 12, titled ‘Democratic dilemmas in education against violent extremism’, Sivenbring addresses preventive measures that are suggested for education against so-called radicalization and various forms of violent extremism in the Nordic region. Education in the Nordic countries is founded upon common values and a strong tradition of democratic governance. School plays a key role in preventive work through democracy education and in equipping young people with norm-critical values and critical skills that support them in resisting extremist propaganda. Schools can also offer forums for discussions of differing world views in order to strengthen democratic values such as equality and freedom of speech. However, the national action plans for prevention against radicalization and violent extremism in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden prompt teachers and school staff to identify, investigate and report students who show signs of being radicalized. If freedom in expressing views and attitudes can lead to investigation and registration, this situation may result in restrictions of the democratic rights of young citizens.

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Chapter 2

What Is the Most Violent Thing to Do? Mapping the Definitions and Complexities of Violence



Nils Hammarén

If one means by violence a radical upheaval of the basic social relations [i.e. systems of oppression], then, crazy and tasteless as it may sound, the problem with historical monsters who slaughtered millions was that they were not violent enough.
Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six sideways reflections*

Introduction

Violence is considered to be a major concern in society, not least in relation to school. Various kinds of violence have probably always existed in schools; for example, in the Swedish context, the use of corporal punishment to discipline students was institutionalized until 1958 (and still is in many countries), even though its use began to decline in the nineteenth century (Göransson et al. 2011). School violence has been conceptualized, contextualized and expressed differently during various periods of time (Ellmin 2008). From a historical standpoint, school violence is almost exclusively situated in relation to teachers' abuse of the students in their care, or teachers allowing violence to occur between students. The general picture today, however, is one in which students' violence against each other and against teachers is seen as the greatest problem (Göransson et al. 2011). The concept of violence has gradually been reconstructed; for example, the concept of 'illegal violence' has expanded and now includes more actions than it did a century ago (Wästerfors 2016).

Much of the existing research on school violence has been devoted to physical and verbal violence and conflicts between students and, to a large extent, to bullying (Knight et al. 2011). The Nordic countries in particular have been at the forefront of

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research on bullying. However, in recent decades, research on teacher-related violence, coarser forms of violence such as school shootings, and school violence other than physical violence (e.g. cyber violence) has increased considerably (Saltmarsh et al. 2012).

In spite of a long historical presence of violence in schools, it is only in fairly recent decades that an increased interest has been directed towards the issue. During the 1990s, scholarly and public interest in school violence increased considerably, and the label ‘school violence’ began to be widely used to describe the occurrence of aggressive acts on school campuses (Furlong and Morrison 2000). The issue of violence in schools gradually gained interest from researchers, as well as from practitioners and legislators. Numerous books, articles, studies and research projects on this issue have been conducted over the years, and seminars, conferences and even journals focusing solely on school violence now exist (see e.g. the *Journal of School Violence*, which was launched in 2002). This increased attention and interest have contributed to the establishment of a distinct research field that problematizes the issue of school violence. This research field emphasizes both empirical and theoretical issues and questions, and focuses on victimization and the extent, prevention and consequences of school violence for the students and staff of educational systems. Of course, the current volume is part of this emergence and reinforcement of the research field of school violence.

There is no overall consensus among scholars on how to define and classify violence, or on what the concept might include. Although many concepts appear and reappear in scholarly discourse, they are not always clearly distinguished and often overlap. In addition, diverse scholars operationalize concepts in various ways, making it difficult to comprehend and summarize interpretations and results from studies in the field. Furthermore, definitions of violence are dependent on dissimilar periods of time and geographical contexts. Different manifestations of violence can also have similar consequences, making it difficult to classify forms of violence. For example, both physical and psychological expressions of violence can result in long-lasting somatic symptoms for the victim. Common existing and reoccurring concepts that have been used in research in order to conceptualize school violence include aggressiveness, bullying, direct/indirect violence, physical violence, verbal violence, harassment, relational violence, cyber violence and sexual violence (Knight et al. 2011). This plethora of concepts reflects the difficulty in comprehending violence in a distinct way, as well as in understanding the configurations and expressions violence might include.

Accordingly, and as a backdrop to forthcoming chapters discussing and problematizing school violence in a Nordic context, this chapter explores the concept of violence, its content and its building blocks. Different categorizations, interpretations and manifestations of violence are presented, and the dividing lines between them are discussed and problematized. Questions highlighted in the chapter include: (1) How is violence usually defined, and what taxonomies of violence are frequently present in research? (2) How and in what ways is violence theorized and comprehended? This chapter is divided into three sections, as follows. First, different

taxonomies of violence are presented and discussed. The focus here is on how violence is commonly thematized and what methods of violence have been identified in research, and particularly in psychological research. Second, sociological perspectives on different levels of violence are presented, from so-called individual to structural and symbolic configurations. Third, some generally defined discourses with a focus on physical violence are highlighted and explored. Here, the main question is: what is physical violence actually a case of? At the end, the conclusive statements made in this chapter are summarized and discussed. This chapter is somewhat descriptive and is not in any way comprehensive; it emphasizes and describes central and recurrent conceptualizations and interpretations of violence. Issues related to violence, such as prevalence, consequences, prevention and motives, are also in focus to a lesser degree.

Is Violence Always Physically Painful?

Violence is a wide-ranging and ambiguous concept that includes many different aspects and expressions. It may be seen in anything from subtle neglect, a quick push, a derogatory comment, threats, suicide or sexual assault, to a massive and long-lasting war that includes killing, terrorist attacks and genocide. Violence can be aggressive, vicious and extremely frightening or, as in popular culture and sports, entertaining, thrilling and even funny. It can be private or public, individual or collective, obvious or subtle and comprehended as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. It can be a separate incident such as a slap in the face or a recurrent pattern such as bullying, harassment or domestic abuse. It can be legal or illegal, as well as legitimate or illegitimate. In some contexts, violence may even be enjoyable.

Of course, a concept with such a variety of aspects is difficult to grasp; however, one general possible definition is to comprehend violence as actions or words that are intended to abuse, injure or cause pain to people or that are likely to damage something. Such a definition might also include forcing people to act or preventing them from acting in certain ways (Cambridge Dictionary 2019; Oxford Dictionary 2019). In a general sense, violence involves exerting power over others, and can be interpreted as ‘an exploitation of that primary tie, that primary way in which we are, as bodies, outside ourselves and for one another’ (Butler 2004, p. 27). Violence thus also refers to domination (Foucault 1997) or to the prevention of the potential to act otherwise (Arendt 1970, see Maze 2018). This overall definition is very extensive, as it encompasses physical, relational and symbolic types of violence.

Violence is many things but it is not everything, and forms of violence, such as physical violence, may not be as common as we imagine. In opposition to everyday depictions in popular culture and explanations by certain authorities of violence being easy and natural under specific circumstances such as family dysfunction or poverty, the American sociologist Randall Collins (2008) argues that actual violent confrontations are essentially quite rare and are avoided by humans, despite societal

conflicts, inequalities and power relations. Collins claims that violence is the exception, not the rule, regardless of motivations and conditions. In section three of this chapter, 'Violence as a case of situation and relation', Collins' arguments are elaborated further.

In general, the most typical and everyday way to comprehend violence seems to be to situate it in a physical frame. Research on school violence has traditionally defined violence in relation to *physical violence* against a person or property, thus excluding many other aspects of violence in school such as bullying, threats or more subtle configurations (Knight et al. 2011). Physical violence has been conceptualized in various ways by different scholars and in different studies, decades and disciplines. It is often defined as a person intentionally physically attacking someone else, which may include hitting, kicking, pushing, slapping or other forms of assault (Felix et al. 2009). Some scholars include violence against material artefacts (*material violence*) (Mynard and Joseph 2000) or *threats* in the concept of physical violence (Göransson et al. 2011), while others classify threats as so-called *verbal violence*. Threats can be expressed in ways other than verbal, however, and are thus not always a form of verbal violence. For example, a threat could be written, or could be expressed non-verbally through intimidating stares or gestures.

In contrast to physical violence, the concept of verbal violence relates to the use of words to hurt someone (Dzuka and Dalbert 2007). It may include degrading, teasing or insulting a person, calling him/her degrading or derogatory things, or making fun of him/her. As mentioned earlier, threats are occasionally included in this category, as are rumours and racist and sexist insults (Olweus 2010). Verbal violence hence overlaps with other categories such as physical violence, relational/social violence and harassment (Knight et al. 2011). Different configurations of verbal violence, such as threats, are sometimes equated with *psychological violence*. However, all types of violence may have psychological implications, which may make this concept somewhat diffuse and superfluous.

Violence does not always involve hitting or insulting someone, for example. It can also target someone's personal relations, sense of belonging among a specific group, self-esteem or social status. This type of violence is often labelled as *relational* or *social violence* (Little et al. 2003; Espelage and Swearer 2003; Povedano et al. 2015), and typically involves various kinds of exclusion, name-calling, rumour spreading, ignoring others and so forth. Research indicates that girls are more often victims of relational violence than boys (Knight et al. 2011). The same is true for so-called *sexual violence*. Although this concept can refer to various kinds of violent acts, definitions of sexual violence often assert that the perpetrator should have superior power, the victim should experience the sexual behaviour as unwanted and the behaviour should have negative consequences for the victim (McKinney 1990). However, as Knight et al. (2011) and Göransson et al. (2011) argue, some behaviours in school that have been defined as sexual violence are normalized to an extent that may prevent the victim from describing them as undesirable. Examples of these behaviours include groping or the use of different forms of sexist jargon, name-calling and invective. Referring to previous research, Knight et al. (2011) argue that it is more accurate to define sexual violence in school as *inappropriate sexual*

behaviour, or as behaviour targeting the victim's gender that results in negative impacts on school results and on the victim's feelings of security. This behaviour could comprise derogatory expressions, insulting behaviours of a sexual nature or sexual coercion.

If sexual violence is expressed specifically in relation to a person's group affinity (e.g. gender or sexuality) and occurs over a period of time as a recurrent pattern, it is usually called *sexual harassment* (Knight et al. 2011). Research indicates that sexual harassment reproduces normative sexual and gender ideals and asymmetric power relations, and thus maintains heterosexual masculine dominance over femininity (Robinson 2005; Gillander Gådin 2012; Messerschmidt 2012; Conroy 2013). Sexual harassment may hence be described as a gendered and sexualized subset of the larger construct of violence.

The definition of harassment in general is very similar to the definition of bullying, although bullying is not necessarily expressed in relation to a person's affiliation with a group. Often-stated criteria of harassment include recurrent and deliberately aggressive activities with the purpose of hurting someone, and the existence of an unequal power relation between the victim and the perpetrator. These criteria link the two expressions of violence referred to as harassment and bullying (Olweus 1994; Craig and Pepler 2007). However, scholars debate the issue of how to define terms such as recurrent activities or unequal power relations, which makes these concepts difficult to unambiguously define (Knight et al. 2011).

Configurations of violence such as harassment, bullying or sexual violence can be expressed in various ways, such as verbally, relationally/socially, physically and non-verbally. These expressions of violence can also manifest themselves electronically, however, through social media, for example. Many young people now spend a substantial part of their time online, interacting with other people and developing social relations. This development has generated new forms of violence. As society changes, not least in terms of technological development, the conditions for how violence is expressed also change. 'Electronic aggression' may comprise many forms, such as organized criminals inciting violence, terrorists projecting force or recruiting into violent extremism, hate group activists encouraging interracial violence or sexual predators gaining access to potential victims (David-Ferdon and Hertz 2007; Peterson and Densley 2017).

Other forms of aggression and so-called 'virtual criminality' occur exclusively online (Grabosky 2001). Some scholars have described how social media has become a vector for youth violence during the last decade, and has changed the landscape of aggressive behaviour, resulting in so-called cyber bullying, cyber harassment or *cyber violence* (Patton et al. 2014; Diamond and Bachmann 2015). This form of violence is communicated through modern information and communication technology and comprises, for example, threatening, sexual, insulting or offensive videos, text messages or photos delivered via social media. What specifically characterizes cyber violence and differentiates it from other types of violence is the fact that offensive material posted online can harm the victim for a long time (Göransson et al. 2011; Knight et al. 2011). For example, something that is posted on the Internet only once may easily and quickly be spread to and noticed by a large

number of people, thus humiliating the victim again and again. Furthermore, the victim is constantly available for this kind of violence, regardless of time and location – at least, as long as the victim’s mobile phone is switched on or he/she is online. Cyber violence can comprise harassment, cyber stalking and humiliation, for example. It may also include abusing someone’s social media or e-mail account in order to send messages from the victim’s account (e.g. so-called ‘facerape’), thus putting the victim in danger or damaging his/her reputation or relationships.

After this review of potential methods of violence, the next section changes focus and highlights different sociologically informed configurations of violence and how they play out on individual, structural and symbolic levels.

Different Levels of Violence

The old ironic saying that ‘the law is impartial: both rich and poor are forbidden from sleeping under the bridge’ is an implicit recognition of structural violence and the ability of society to both create and ignore it (Metta Center for Nonviolence 2019).

Violence is comprehended as more or less explicit, and as actions that take place on dissimilar levels. School violence, for example, and the different configurations of violence exemplified above, are often manifested in explicit ways and situated within individual(ized) conflicts and relations. School violence may be direct or indirect, depending on whether the victim knows who the perpetrator is (e.g. physical violence) or not (e.g. certain types of relational violence) (Espelage and Swearer 2003). However, violence is not only comprehended and manifested on an individual level; it can also be expressed in relation to groups, institutions or societies. Institutions such as schools and other workplaces may (re)produce oppression and hierarchical structures based on, for example, gender, ‘race’ or sexuality, thus exercising violence on an institutional level. This is so-called *systemic violence*:

Systemic violence operating in schools contributes to the construction of educational contexts as dangerous places. Systemic violence can be defined as any institutionalized policy, practise or procedure that negatively impacts on, or discriminates against disadvantaged individuals or groups (Saltmarsh et al. 2012, p. 4).

The manifestations of violence, whether explicit or implicit in their expression, often correspond with different levels of violence. The more structurally anchored violence is, the more implicit its manifestations seem to be. Consequently, violence on a societal and cultural level, which is connected to whole societies, nations or regimes, often manifests itself in subtle, indirect, normalized and hence not easily recognizable ways. This kind of violence can include societal norms and discourses, such as the normalization of masculine hegemony or a contempt for ‘weakness’ (Henry 2010).

In order to conceptualize societal and indirect aspects of violence, the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung coined and developed the concept of *structural violence*

(Galtung 1969). This refers to a form of hidden and collective violence that is typically embedded in the very structure of social and cultural institutions. Structural violence prevents people from accessing important rights, living out their potential as human beings or satisfying their basic needs. Structural violence is essentially the cause of the differences between people's potential reality and their actual circumstances, such as the difference between their potential life expectancy and actual life expectancy. It comprises prejudices and discrimination against people based on intersecting power relations such as gender, religion, sexuality, 'race' and ethnicity, and manifests itself in institutionalized racism, class discrimination, sexism, ethnocentrism, nationalism and so forth. The concept of structural violence is quite similar to social injustice or oppression, and produces among other things impairment, social and political inequalities, poor health, inadequate education and unemployment.

According to Galtung (1990), structural violence is legitimized and justified through *cultural violence* – that is, aspects of a culture such as religion or science that make the structural violence socially acceptable. Under systems of structural violence, 'good' people may participate in actions that harm other humans without intending to do so, simply by performing their routine obligations, perhaps reproducing what Hanna Arendt named *the banality of evil* (Arendt 1963). Even though structural violence is constructed differently than direct and physical violence, as it works slowly and erodes human values, these forms of violence are inextricably related to each other and overlap in situations such as family- and gender-related violence, sexual violence, hate crimes, terrorism and even political violence such as war (Gilligan 1996; Winter and Leighton 2001). Accordingly, aggressiveness and violence that take place in local institutions such as school are inseparably intertwined with overall societal and structural expressions of violence.

Similar to structural violence is the subtle and indirect violence that falls within the concept of *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1989, 1991; Oxford Reference 2019). Symbolic violence legitimates and naturalizes the status quo – that is, the domination system. In the Bourdieuan sense, symbolic violence is a legitimizing process that refers to imposition on dominated classes/groups by the dominant group/class of an ideology. Through this process, the dominant group legitimizes its own interests, giving them the presence of the naturally right. Symbolic violence refers to 'the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 167). In other words, people contribute to reproducing their own subordination by internalizing structures that tend to subordinate them. In some sense, the concept of symbolic violence seems to theorize an attained hegemony – that is, a 'soft' power that maintains its authority without the need for violent coercion, and that produces complicity (the effect of power beyond dichotomies such as coercion and consent) on the part of the population (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 2000; Connolly and Healy 2004).

Examples of the exercise of symbolic violence include gender relations in which both men and women agree that women are weaker, less intelligent, more unreliable, and so forth (and for Bourdieu gender relations are the paradigm case of the operation of symbolic violence), or class relations in which both working-class and

middle-class people agree that the middle classes are more intelligent, more capable of running the country, more deserving of higher pay (Lawler 2011).

Symbolic violence is produced through language, and its effect is the naturalization of discourses that legitimate power relations and the domination system (Bourdieu 1991; Recuero 2015). Violence – or, according to Butler (2013), linguistic injuries – can thus be a product of discourse and categorizations; that is, violence can stem not only from what is said or from the meaning of what is said, but from a system of knowledge produced by what can and cannot be said, and can be controlled through certain socially accepted rules (Foucault 1972). When sexism or racism is expressed through cyber violence or sexual harassment, for example, stereotypical discourses on gender, sexuality and ‘race’ are reproduced and naturalized, thus creating a ‘knowledge’ of how things are (Foucault 1972; Recuero 2015). Hence, every time sexism or racism is expressed, symbolic violence is reinforced.

While Bourdieu emphasizes the process of *naturalizing* power relations, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2008) interprets symbolic violence as a representation of a subtle and objective type of violence that *sustains* the status quo. Žižek is interested in the ways in which certain types of violence are represented and perceived in society. He argues that *objective violence* refers to the invisible violence inherent in the ‘normal’ state of things. This violence is embedded in the very structures of society, including fundamental political and economic institutions, and generates inequality, poverty and outbursts of subjective violence. ‘Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent’ (Žižek 2008, p. 2). The invisibility of objective violence thus enables us to recognize *subjective violence*, which is a visible and physically constituted dimension of violence that can be related to a recognizable activity, such as terrorism, beating or rioting.

Since it is visible and seems to occur against a backdrop of nonviolence, subjective violence is perceived as abnormal and problematic; it draws popular attention and takes our focus away from what Žižek considers to be the main problem – objective violence. However, subjective violence not only distracts us from paying attention to objective violence, but is also generated from objective violence. Objective violence has no clear perpetrator, so we do not recognize it. People may consider objective violence to be a peaceful and non-ideological normality that is attacked by subjective violence, which is performed by ‘evil individuals’ and ‘fanatical crowds’. When subjective violence erupts as a reaction to a brutal system (i.e. objective violence) we blame the perpetrators of the subjective violence, rather than the system. This process hinders us from recognizing how objective violence actually explains and causes subjective violence. Objective violence thus needs to be acknowledged as commonly accepted in society in order to be challenged (Žižek 2008).

Systemic violence [objective violence comprises symbolic and systemic violence] is thus something like the notorious ‘dark matter’ of physics, the counterpart to an all-too-visible subjective violence. It may be invisible, but it has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seem to be ‘irrational’ explosions of subjective violence (Žižek 2008, p. 2).

Subjective violence, such as sexual and gender violence in schools, or young people rioting in the suburbs, expressing frustration and claiming recognition, can thus only make sense in relation to subtle and ‘unmarked’ (Haavind 1998) types of objective violence, which invisibly exercise their impact via social, cultural and economic inequalities in society.

The next, and final, section of this chapter describes violence in terms of *situation* and *relation*. These two perspectives seem to be connected in their approach, as both claim to grasp what violence is really a case of, how violence in general is triggered and how violence can be comprehended. In their explorations of physical and interpersonal configurations of violence, both differ somewhat from the structural, symbolic and objective types of violence described above.

Violence as a Case of Situation and Relation

One of the most influential scholars problematizing the concept of violence is the American sociologist Randall Collins (2008, also see Wästerfors 2016), who argues that the concept of symbolic violence does not help ‘at all to explain real violence, but muddies the analytical task’ (Collins 2008, p. 24). Unlike symbolic violence, Collins claims, physical violence has a true core referent that can be studied using micro-situational observations. At the start of his comprehensive micro-sociological study, in which he explores the concept of physical violence, Collins explains the importance of analysing violent *situations*:

Two moves will set up the analysis. First, put the interaction in the center of the analysis, not the individual, the social background, the culture, or even the motivation: that is to say, look for the characteristics of violent situations. That means looking for data that gets us as close as possible into the dynamics of situations. Second, compare across different kinds of violence. We need to break down the usual categories – homicides in one research specialty, war in another, child abuse in another, police violence yet elsewhere – and look for the situations that occur within them. Not that all situations are the same; we want to compare the range of variation in situations, which affects the kind and amount of violence that emerges. This will turn the wide variety of violence into a methodological advantage, giving clues to the circumstances that explain when and in what manner violence unfolds (Collins, 2008, p. 1).

Even though physical violence – at least, interpersonal and not governmentally sanctioned violence – is related to certain categories and, for example, is more common among young men than among people in any other category, not all young men are violent (Wästerfors 2016). Or, to put it differently, not all configurations of masculinity are (re)produced through violence (Messerschmidt 1993, 2004), although certain (hetero) masculinities (and occasionally femininities) are performatively produced and, if spoiled, reclaimed within the terms of physical aggression

(Messerschmidt 2012; Saltmarsh et al. 2012). Even if a young man exercises violence, doing so does not mean that he is violent most of the time. Conversely, it is not only young men who can be violent; women, children and older people are also sometimes violent. The fact that violence is statistically associated with certain categories is hence insufficient to explain it and its prevalence (Collins 2008; Wästerfors 2016).

Furthermore, physical violence is expressed in a myriad of ways – not only in the ways described in this chapter thus far, but also in military violence, police violence or violence as resistance, among others – making it difficult to use certain categories as general explanations for *all* physically violent courses of action. According to Collins, it is not enough to explain violence via social stratification and different categorizations. Instead, the characteristics of violent situations should be the object of the analysis, in order to identify patterns in the interactions that may problematize simplistic and essential categories concerning those involved. The cause of violence is neither found ‘inside’ the perpetrators (i.e. in their sorrow, machismo or anger) nor in structures ‘outside’ of them (i.e. their poverty, lack of education or exclusion). Rather, Collins (2008) argues, individuals are not violent; it is situations that are violent. The actual causes of violence are to be found in specific situations, within the micro-dynamics of communicative interaction. Individuals using violence are thus violent during specific circumstances and situations that *enable* violent acts.

Collins (2008) claims that violence is the exception rather than the rule, regardless of motivations and conditions, and despite societal inequalities and injustice. He confronts theories that explain violence as something that is easy and straightforward to perform, and even situates violence as a concept in opposition to the human physiological ‘nature’. Violence comes neither easily nor automatically, in Collins’ view. Antagonists are afraid and reluctant, and their confrontational anxieties put up a powerful emotional barrier of fear and tension against violence. When violence actually does occur – often in ‘incompetent’ and ‘clumsy’ ways, as most people fear violence and are not ‘good’ at it – pathways around these emotional barriers must be found. Violence is thus equivalent to the different pathways or patterns that are found to circumvent human barriers of fear and reluctance. One example of a pattern that triggers violence is a confrontation with a ‘weak’ victim who is in some kind of subordinate position, such as in domestic abuse or bullying. Another pattern is violence that is staged in front of an audience. The cheers of an audience can ‘help’ the aggressor to circumvent the emotional barrier and provide him/her with emotional dominance in relation to the victim. The few people who are ‘skilled’ in violence have discovered how to use these patterns, and have practised doing so.

Instead of focusing on violence in terms of the situation, or the specific circumstances that make an individual violent, Edling (2016) highlights violence as a *relation*. Note that this perspective is not the same as relational/social violence, which was previously described as encompassing exclusionary practices, name-calling and so forth. Violence as a relation is more general, and refers to violence as a social course of action; that is, violence appears in the interpersonal relationships and interactions between people. Similar to Collins’ view, this perspective emphasizes the social dimension of violence; however, it accentuates the relation rather than the

situation. A social relation always comprises at least two subjects, and viewing violence as a relation specifically highlights what is occurring *between* individuals. This perspective explores the significance of violence as a relation and examines how violence, as one of many relations, interacts with other relations (Fiske and Rai 2015; Edling 2016).

Imagine Individual A bullying Individual B at school, because A wants to confirm his/her friendship with Individual C, who is an antagonist of B (Edling 2016). This example provides a snapshot of a social and relational phenomenon in which violence is present as one of several relationships that interlink the subjects (Fiske and Rai 2015; Edling 2016). This relational model assumes that the social life of humans is coordinated by four fundamental motives – solidarity, hierarchy, equality and proportionality – which condition our values and actions (Rai and Fiske 2011). Using this model to analyse the example above, the action from Individual A is motivated by A's need to express solidarity with C. Violent courses of action may thus be considered to be morally right if they are motivated by conceptions of violence that justify its use to create balance in social relations. Consequently, this model can be used to theorize expressions of violence that are conducted to undermine social inequalities or other forms of injustice, such as the organized and violent resistance exercised by social, independent and liberation movements (Lilja and Vinthagen 2009). Like Collins' model, this model shifts attention away from individuals and their characteristics; however, it also shifts attention away from the actual violent situation. The concept of *violence as a relation* emphasizes that the key to comprehending violence is to consider it as a relational phenomenon (Edling 2016).

Conclusions

In this chapter, various types and perspectives of violence were presented and discussed. The concept of violence has been shown to include a variety of forms and manifestations. The ways in which human aggressiveness and violence are characterized and comprehended vary between decades, contexts, disciplines and scholars. Yet, in general, violence can manifest itself through physical, relational, verbal, cyber and sexual expressions, as well as through systemic, structural, symbolic and objective forms. The former manifestations relate to more explicit, concrete and direct types of violence, while the latter focus on less visible, indirect and subtle forms. This division is partially dependent on whether the definition in use is psychologically or sociologically produced.

Upon reviewing these different comprehensions of violence, it becomes obvious that the definitions of violence are numerous, not clearly differentiated from each other and often overlapping. Why are there so many definitions, and why is it difficult to clearly comprehend and delimit them? The answer seems to be related not only to different academic disciplines producing different definitions, but also to the

definitions being linked to and focusing on different, often highly varied, yet inextricable aspects of violence.

For example, the *methods* and *intentions* of violence are often used to define violence; a physical attack is defined as violence that is intended to cause pain or injure someone. Indirect and direct violence are defined through the *relationship* of the subjects – that is, whether the victim knows who the perpetrator is or not. Relationship is also in focus in relational violence and when defining harassment, sexual violence and bullying, which presume an unequal power relation between those involved. Whether the violence is recurrent or not, which involves *extent* and *pattern*, is also constitutive in defining different types of violence. Bullying and harassment, for example, presume a recurrent pattern of violence, as does political violence such as long-lasting wars. Whether violence is explicit or not, which relates to *visibility* and *normalization*, is crucial in clarifying differences between subjective and direct types of violence such as objective, structural and symbolic violence. This chapter also discussed other criteria through which different categories of violence are defined and conceptualized in research: *consequences* (e.g. sexual violence is partly defined by negative consequences), *targets* (e.g. harassment targets a person's group affinity), *participants* (e.g. spouses in domestic violence), *situations* (i.e. Collins' definition of violent situations), *contexts/settings* (e.g. cyber violence and school violence), *levels* (i.e. individual, collective, systemic and structural violence) and *causes* (i.e. violence as relation and situation).

Even more confusingly, several types of violence can be sorted into the same categories according to many of the criteria mentioned above – criteria that highly overlap. Most types of violence are thus inextricably related to each other. As a result, the different definitions of types of violence are far from being unambiguous concepts, and are problematic to define. Nevertheless, perhaps they can be brought together into a temporarily consistent concept by focusing on how violence actually works, how it is ontologically constituted and how it is typically comprehended, as follows. Violence hurts people or damages things. Violence is related to mechanisms that force people to act or prevent them from acting in certain ways, or that otherwise circumscribe their potential, relative freedom and choices. Moreover, violence is often associated with some sort of action or active force that is destructive and has negative consequences. In short, violence is considered to be 'bad' and dangerous. Perhaps the most dangerous form of violence is the one that is hidden from view – that is, symbolic violence, which exercises its control invisibly because it is a part of the structure and is hence normalized. If we do not perceive it, we can neither acknowledge symbolic violence nor undermine it.

To add to the confusion, Žižek (2008) argues that not all types of violence are completely bad, and not all types are active. Whether an act is conceptualized as 'bad' and violent is always contextual. If societal structures generate violence, then we should organize society in new ways, rather than actively validate things as they are. As it is reproduced by media and by economic and political institutions and their representatives (i.e. politicians, bureaucrats etc.), objective violence thrives when people enthusiastically engage in the prevailing order. Žižek complains about such people, who 'make the system run more smoothly', and are 'active' and

‘participate’, such as academics who participate ‘in meaningless debates’. He argues that the truly difficult thing is to step back.

Those in power often prefer even a ‘critical’ participation, a dialogue, to silence – just to engage us in ‘dialogue’, to make sure our ominous passivity is broken (Zizek 2008, p. 217).

Zizek concludes that if violence is progressive and disrupts the social order (including objective violence), then we are, in fact, not violent enough. However, exercising *subjective* violence as an act of resistance against the prevailing order is not the correct thing to do, as this only confirms the naturalness, invisibility and superiority of the objective violence. How, then, can we counteract objective violence? By doing nothing, Zizek replies – that is, by refraining from actions that are based on the premises of the system. By exercising passive and negative activism and resistance, rather than validating the status quo, we can violently disrupt systems of oppression. The ultimate violent act is thus to passively stop an oppressive system from functioning; or, as Zizek eloquently articulates, ‘Sometimes doing nothing is the most violent thing to do’ (2008, p. 217).

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Chapter 3

Youth and Crime in a Welfare State.

Trends, Inequalities and Societal Response



Felipe Estrada

Introduction

The causes of youth crime, its levels and trends have been an important crime and social policy issue in western countries for at least the last century (Muncie 2014). Over recent decades, the social debate in Europe has not been lacking in descriptions of constantly rising youth crime, or of youth violence becoming ever more serious (Estrada 1999, 2001). These grim portrayals, which are often associated with demands that society should be tougher on youth crime, are very often not supported by the research. This chapter addresses a number of issues that should be regarded as central to all those who are interested in the life conditions of young people; how has the nature of youth crime changed? Why do some groups of young people commit more offences than others? How does a welfare society deal with young people who engage in offending?

People's understanding of the factors that lead to youth crime, and views on how society should react to young offenders, vary between different places and over time. These differences may of course be linked to changes in the behaviour of young people, but they are also associated with what a given society views as the "correct" reaction to social problems among youth (for an example of the disciplinary turn in the Swedish educational discourse see Larsson et al. 2010). For a long time, the view that the crime problem should be understood as something that was linked to poverty and problematic living conditions was prominent in both criminological research and the public debate on crime and punishment. Over recent decades, however, views on the causes of crime have shifted both in Sweden and other western countries (Tham 2001; Hagan 2012). On the basis of an analysis of editorials in newspapers with varied political affiliations, for example, it is clear that

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33

there has been an increased focus on crime and punishment both in the media and among politicians, and that this has occurred in parallel with an increasing denunciation of young people who engage in crime (Estrada 2004). Editorials published during the 1990s discussed youth crime in much more alarmistic terms than editorials published during the 1970s. Discussions of measures to combat youth crime have increasingly come to focus on tough responses rather than on supportive measures. In both Sweden and other countries, this change was initiated from the authoritarian political right, with more liberal political forces then subsequently adapting to the same political rhetoric (Hall et al 1978; Beckett 1999; Tham 2001; Estrada 2004; Larsson et al. 2010; Hagan 2012).

For a few decades, the causes of crime, and particularly those related to difficult childhood conditions and structural problems, were ascribed less significance in the public debate. Over recent years, however, we can see a reemergent interest in the negative consequences of economic problems and inequality. The fact that an increasing number of children are growing up in families with unemployed parents, and that unemployment and income-related difficulties are particularly common among young adults, are being viewed as a cause for concern. One example can be seen in the emergence of the debate on NEETs – young people who are “Not in Education, Employment or Training” (Bäckman and Nilsson 2016). What consequences might this produce in terms of the risk for future life chances and involvement in crime?

The chapter now continues with a short description of the available sources for describing youth crime. Sweden has more high-quality data sources than most other countries, which makes it even more interesting to present youth crime trends on the basis of different indicators. This section is followed by an analysis that describes which youths commit the largest numbers of offences, and that discusses the links between youth crime and social inequalities. The chapter’s empirical presentation concludes with a description of the measures and sanctions that are employed in Sweden when young offenders come to the attention of the authorities.

Measuring Youth Crime

The question of the extent of youth crime is a central research topic in the field of criminology. As was noted above, there is an underlying assumption in the public debate that we live in a society in which crime is continuously increasing and becoming more serious or in which ever younger children are becoming involved in crime. People who believe that crime is increasing also report lower levels of confidence in the justice system, higher levels of insecurity and more punitive attitudes with regard to responses to crime (see e.g. Jerre 2013). When politicians and other social commentators present arguments for changes in crime policy, they often also base these arguments on descriptions of rising crime. How can research determine whether there is any basis for these statements about the nature of crime trends?

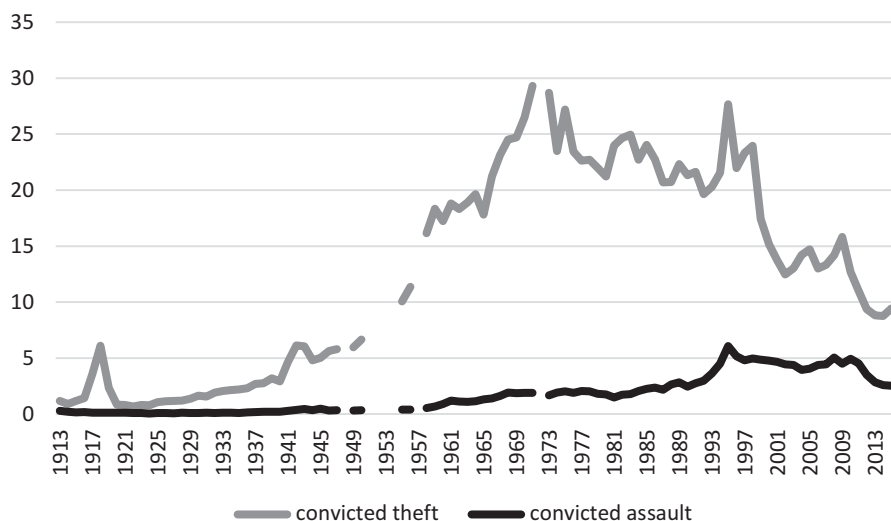


Fig. 3.1 Persons 15–17 years convicted of theft offences (excluding robbery) and assault (including aggravated), per 1000 inhabitants, 1913–2015

The offences committed by young people are largely comprised of theft and violence. Figure 3.1 presents the trend in convictions for theft offences and assault for 15–17-year-olds during the period 1913–2015 in Sweden. Firstly we can see that over the past hundred years, the number of youths convicted of theft offences has been much larger than the number convicted of assault. This difference was small at the beginning of the twentieth century but became considerably larger during the post-war period. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, the difference in the levels theft and violent offences declined (corresponding trends can be seen in the rest of Western Europe, Estrada 1999, 2001). Secondly, the figure shows that the number of youths convicted of theft increased slowly during the decades prior to World War II. After the war, there was a substantial increase, which then ceased at the beginning of the 1970s. Between 1975 and 2015 we see a marked decline in the number of youths convicted of theft offences.

As regards assault offences, we see very low levels throughout the period until the end of the 1950s. There is a marked increase in convictions for assault during the 1960s, and a second rapid increase during the mid-1980s. This second increase ceases in the mid-1990s but the number of convictions remains at a higher level than previously.

To what extent can we argue that these time-series reflect actual trends in youth crime? Unfortunately this is not an easy question to answer, since crime statistics are not only, and perhaps not even predominantly, affected by how many offences young people commit.

Criminological Indicators in Sweden

Crime statistics are often used to describe crime trends, and are also used to analyse differences in levels of involvement in crime with regard to gender, class and ethnicity. The problem with this, however, is that statistics do not represent a direct reflection of actual crime levels, but rather only that portion of the crimes committed in society that come to the attention of the criminal justice system. To be included in the crime statistics, an offence must be both *detected* and *reported* to the police. The dark figure, i.e. that proportion of offences that remain unregistered, varies between different types of crime. For example, Fig. 3.1 shows that hardly any youths were convicted of assault during the 1920s. This does not of course mean that youths did not engage in acts of violence a hundred years ago, but rather that reactions to assault have changed (Estrada 2001). For violent offences that are perceived as less serious, particularly when the victim and the perpetrator know one another, we can expect that reporting propensities will be very low. As a result of this extensive hidden criminality, small changes in reporting propensities can produce substantial effects on levels of registered crime. Estrada (2001) has shown, for example, that views on the reporting of violence in school have undergone precisely this type of change.

In addition, of course, an offender must be identified before it can be determined whether a crime is an example of youth offending. The proportion of offences that are linked to a specific offender in this way comprise only a small proportion of the crimes that are reported to the police. The dark figure and reporting propensities thus constitute two central problems in connection with analyses of crime. In order to address these problems, researchers also make use of other methods of measuring crime.

In Sweden, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) has conducted a large annual victim survey since 2005. These data allow us, for example, to follow the proportion of youths who have been exposed to violence. For the period since 1995, Sweden also has a data series showing levels of self-reported offending among youths in their final year of compulsory schooling (Brå 2016). In the field of criminological research, surveys of this kind are viewed as valuable, since they reveal a large proportion of the crimes that never come to be included in official crime statistics. Questionnaire surveys are of course also subject to various sources of error, such as sampling errors, non-response, difficulties studying more serious types of crime, memory problems and under- or over-reporting. The offences that younger children engage in, or to which they are exposed, are not described at all, since children under the age of 15 are not included in these surveys. Having said this, however, the methodological literature has concluded that studies of this kind provide a good picture of particularly the self-reported offending of young people. Those youths that report higher levels of offending, for example, are also found to be more criminally active in independent surveys among teachers and parents, and also in comparisons based on levels of registered offending.

In studies focused on trends in violent crime, *cause-of-death statistics* constitute an important indicator, since the dark figure for violence that results in death is much smaller than for other forms of violence. One objection that has been raised is that improvements in medical care may have increased the numbers that survive assaults resulting in serious injury. For this reason, studying the number of hospital visits resulting from violence is also of value. This is possible in Sweden on the basis of both a register that records the number of instances of inpatient hospital care (Estrada 2006), and data from victim surveys on violent injuries that have required medical attention.

In summary, the different problems associated with the available crime data mean that it is wise in studies focused on crime levels and crime trends to utilise several of the available sources. By focusing on the composite picture, which will be characterised by both similarities and differences between different indicators, a more correct assessment becomes possible.

Levels and Trends in Youth Crime in Sweden

One central pattern that has emerged from criminological research throughout the western world is that the adolescent years are characterised by a marked peak in registered criminal activity. Figure 3.2a presents the number of individuals suspected of crime per 1000 of population for a range of different age groups. It shows very clearly that offending declines after the teenage years, which suggests that for a large majority of young people, involvement in crime may be viewed as a passing phase (Laub and Sampson 2003). It is important to remember, however that the over-representation of young people among registered crime suspects does not mean that the majority of offences are committed by young people. The majority of crime suspects are in fact adults (Fig. 3.2b). Furthermore, the proportion of offences linked to adult suspects increases with the seriousness of the offending. Youths are

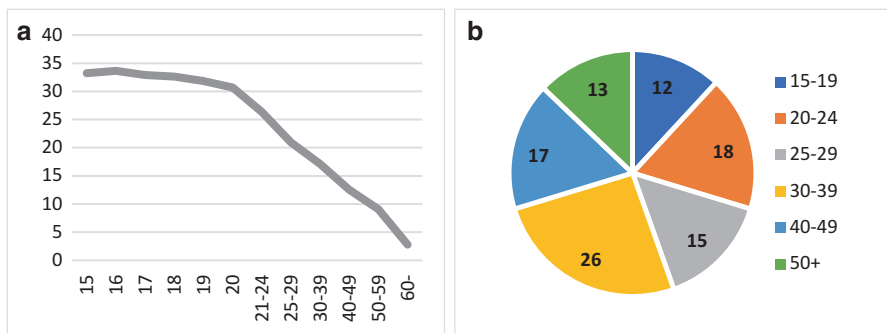


Fig. 3.2 The distribution of youth crime according to official crime statistics. (a) Number of registered suspects per 1000 of population in different age groups. All offences, 2015. (b) Proportion of registered offences committed by different age groups. All offences, 2015

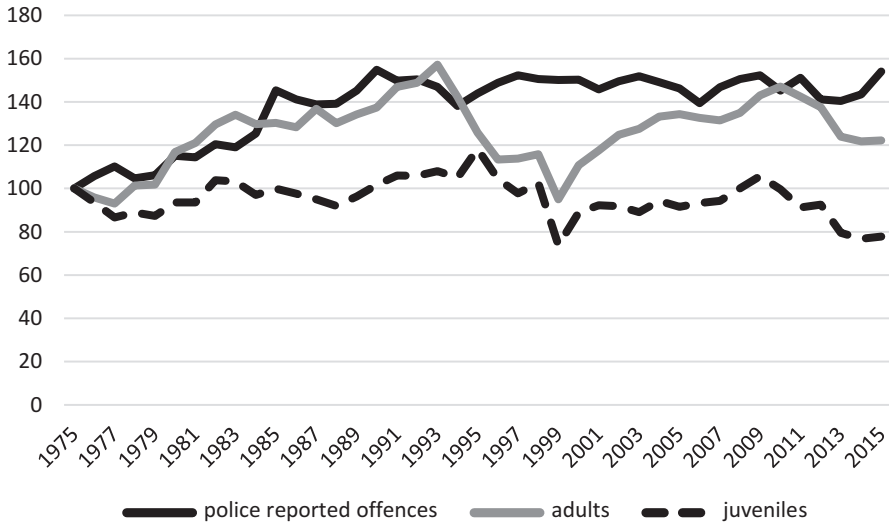


Fig. 3.3 Numbers of registered youth (aged 15–20) and adult (aged 21– ∞) suspects per 1000 of population in the respective age groups, and the number of registered penal code offences per 1000 of population who have reached the age of criminal responsibility (aged 15– ∞), indexed in relation to the levels recorded in 1975 (1975 levels = 100). 1975–2015

most commonly registered for various types of theft and property offences (e.g. shoplifting, vandalism), threats and assault, motoring offences and the use/possession of drugs.

We can see from the above that the majority of offences in Sweden can be attributed to the adult population. This means that when levels of reported crime increase or decrease, the trend in youth crime need not necessarily follow the same pattern. Figure 3.3 compares the trend in the number of registered suspects comprised of youths and adults respectively, and the number of registered penal code offences, given controls for population growth.

The trends over time can be divided into two periods. During the first period, between 1975 and 1990, reported crime increased by 55%. This increase is mirrored in an increase in the number of registered adult suspects. During this period, however, the number of registered youth suspects remains unchanged. Subsequent to 1990, there is no further increase in the number of reported offences. The number of offences reported in 2015 remains at the same level as the number reported in 1990. The trend in the number of registered crime suspects follows a different pattern, however. Particularly during the latter part of the 1990s, the numbers of both adult and youth suspects undergo a marked decline. The changes witnessed during this period are probably not due to a decline in the number of offenders in society at large, but rather to a decline in the number of offenders who were apprehended by the criminal justice system (i.e. a change in the detection rate). This trend has been linked to the implementation of a community policing reform, a reorganisation of

both the police and the prosecution services and a decline in the level of traffic controls. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, we see a reverse in this trend; while the level of reported offences remains stable, there is a substantial increase in the number of registered suspects, and particularly of adult suspects. Over the subsequent years (2010–2015) we once again see a decline in the number of registered suspects, while the number of registered offences remains relatively stable. Viewed over the period as a whole, we see that the number of registered youth suspects has declined somewhat since 1975, and particularly since the peak reached in 1995. The year 1995 constitutes a particularly interesting point of comparison, since from that year onwards we also have access to an alternative indicator of youth crime in Sweden in the form of the Swedish School Survey on Crime.

Trends Based on Alternative Sources

As has been noted, many of the offences committed by young people are never registered. For the period since 1995, however, we can follow the self-reported offending of youths in their final year of compulsory education (for the most part aged 15), although the survey conducted in 2015 is not entirely comparable with those from previous years. Generally speaking more boys than girls report having committed offences (see Fig. 3.4). The surveys also show that the proportion of youths who have committed offences has declined substantially since the mid-1990s, which thus confirms the picture presented above on the basis of the official

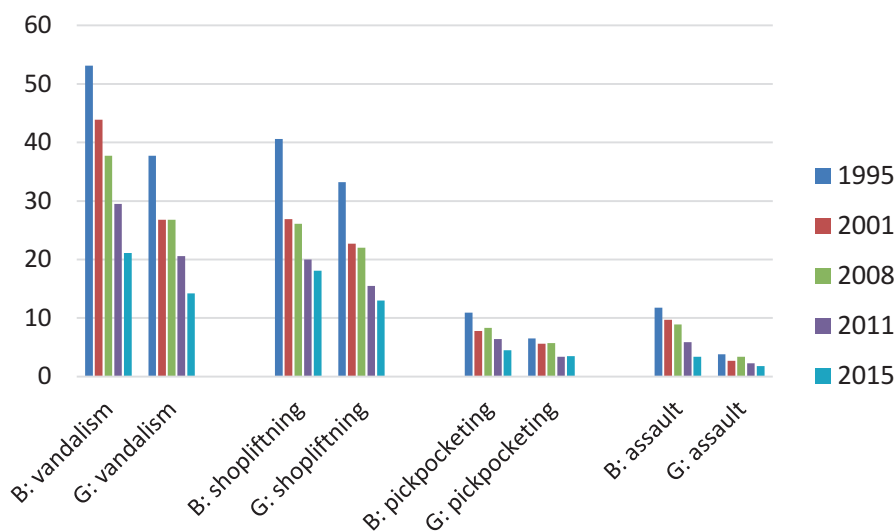


Fig. 3.4 Proportions of boys and girls in year nine who report having committed different types of offences during the past year, 1995–2015. Percent

crime statistics. This trend is found for both boys and girls and also both for those students who report only having committed one or two crimes and for those who report having committed larger numbers of offences.

These school surveys also include questions asking the youths about their exposure to different types of crime. This information is of course important in itself, but may also be viewed as an indicator of trends in youth crime, since violent crime among young people usually takes place between people of roughly the same age. Between 1995 and 2008 approximately 7% of boys reported that they had been exposed to violence that was sufficiently serious for them to require some form of medical attention, as compared with approximately 4% of girls. In the two most recent surveys, from the years 2011 and 2015, the proportion of boys who report having been exposed to serious violence of this kind has declined markedly (to 5%), whereas the level of exposure among the girls has remained more stable (Brå 2016). The level of exposure to less serious violence is of course higher (for example, just over one in five boys report having been hit, kicked or subjected to other forms of violence that resulted in pain) but among the boys, the trend over time follows the same pattern as that found for more serious violence (i.e. a decline). Among girls, the proportion who report having been exposed to less serious violence has declined substantially during the period 2001–2015 (from almost 20% to just over 14%). The overall picture is similar to that found in other Scandinavian countries with long-term time-series data on self-reported youth crime.

By using data from the *Swedish Crime Survey* (SCS) we can also describe exposure to violence among older youths. Figure 3.5 presents the proportion of 16–24-year-olds who report having been exposed to assault and also to violence that was sufficiently serious for them to require some form of medical attention (includ-

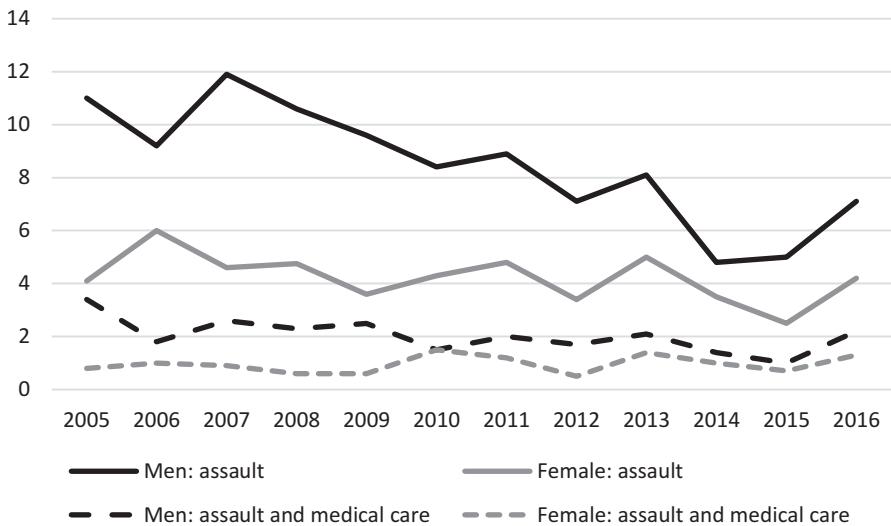


Fig. 3.5 Proportion exposed to violence (assault). Youths aged 16–24

ing dental care). The data provided by these older youths confirm the picture found on the basis of the Swedish School Survey. The proportion of young men who report having been exposed to assault has declined by half since the first wave of the survey in 2005. The trend is not as clear among young women, although here too the level of reported victimisation has declined somewhat, particularly in the most recent surveys. As regards more serious incidents of victimisation, which have required medical attention, we also find a declining trend among the men, while the level of this type of victimisation among the women lies at around one percent. This also means that the substantial sex differences that were previously found in levels of violent victimisation have almost entirely disappeared (for a discussion of the declining gender gap in violent crime see below, and also Estrada et al. 2016).

As was mentioned earlier, in Sweden we also have access to data on the number of people who receive inpatient treatment as a result of violent injuries. One advantage with the use of this inpatient register is that it also provides an insight into trends among younger children. In addition to levels of exposure to serious violence among older youths, Fig. 3.6 therefore also presents the trend for children aged 10–14. We can see that levels of exposure to violence that is sufficiently serious to require inpatient treatment are considerably higher among the older youths. It is also of interest to note that the number of youths admitted to inpatient care has declined markedly since the turn of the millennium. The decline is also found for both males and females (not shown in the figure), although it is more marked among the males.

I began this chapter by noting that in the public debate, it is often argued that youth crime is on the increase. As can be seen from the above, there are a large number of indicators that may be used to analyse trends in youth crime. What picture of youth crime emerges, then, if we bring these indicators together? Irrespective of whether we base our analysis on crime statistics, questionnaire surveys or medical data, it is very difficult to find any support for the view that youth crime is on the rise. I would instead argue that there is much to suggest that Swedish youth crime

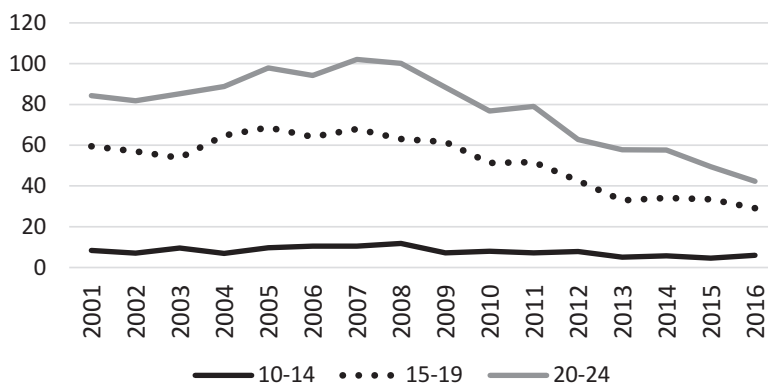


Fig. 3.6 Assault by another person (ICD X85-Y09). Number of patients per 100,000 of population in different age groups

has in fact declined. During the period since 1995, for which we have data from repeated self-report studies, we see a clear reduction in the number of youths who report having committed offences. It may be somewhat more difficult to draw an unequivocal conclusion about the trend in youth violence. The problem here is related to the large dark figure that exists in relation less serious forms of violence on the basis of registered crime data. There is therefore good reason to turn to those indicators of the trend in violent crime that we may assume are less affected by changes in reporting propensities (e.g. surveys and medical data). These sources show no increase in levels of violence, but rather the reverse. Interestingly, the declines are most marked among boys and young men, which leads us onto the subject of the next section.

Youth Crime in Different Social Groups

Crime is to a large extent a male phenomenon. Historically, women have accounted for less than 10% of those convicted of assault, for example, and 25% of those convicted of theft offences (Estrada et al. 2016). Further, this so-called gender gap in registered crime increases substantially the larger the number of offences committed by individual perpetrators. Young males are most often convicted of driving without a license, burglary and car theft, whereas the corresponding offences for young women are shoplifting, fraud and drug offences. Self-report surveys also show that more boys than girls report committing different types of crime, but the differences here are smaller than those found in official crime statistics (see Fig. 3.4 above).

Over recent decades there has been a tendency towards a decline in these gender differences in both registered and self-reported crime. This is an interesting trend and has resulted in some discussion as to how it should be understood. When a trend towards a declining gender gap was first noted in the 1970s in the USA, researchers argued that it was linked to increased levels of gender equality in society at large (Adler 1975). The argument was that women's liberation had a "dark side" (Estrada et al. 2016 present a review of this debate). Similar explanations for the declining gender gap in crime are also easy to find in contemporary Sweden. The following quotation summarises the concerns that have been voiced on both sides of the Atlantic:

The movement for full equality has a darker side/.../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. (Adler 1975: 13)

This trend has both a good and a bad side. It is a good thing that women are doing better for themselves, for example at school and in the labour market. But it is a bad thing when they imitate the destructive behaviours of men. (Aftonbladet 2000-05-17)

The question then is whether this explanation based on advances in gender equality fits the data. The careful reader of this chapter will have noted that there is little

to suggest that youth crime has increased. The data presented above instead show that there has been a decline in young males' levels of involvement in crime, and that it is this that primarily explains the decline in the gender gap. This illustrates a classic feminist criticism of social research, namely that there is a tendency to view male behaviours as constituting the norm. As regards crime and violence, it is in fact more reasonable to view the high levels of crime found among young males as abnormal. Paradoxically, then, the argument based on increased gender equality may in fact fit, but should rather be seen as a (partial) explanation for the observed decline in the criminality of young men. The fact that children and youths are growing up in a more gender-equal society does not necessarily mean that girls are being given the freedom to engage in crime, but rather that boys are being raised to show more consideration for others (see further Estrada et al. 2016).

Increased levels of gender equality are not of course the only explanation for the observed decline in youth crime. Over recent decades patterns of leisure time activities have changed markedly among youth, for example, as a result of the expansion in video and computer gaming and social media use. The fact that young (males) today spend more hours sitting indoors in their rooms has inevitably meant a decline in the opportunities for committing the types of offence that have traditionally been associated with youth crime (Beerthuis et al. 2017). One interesting aspect of this opportunity-focused explanation is that the opportunities for gaming are influenced by the availability of resources in the form of both technological hardware and having a room of one's own. To the extent that access to these resources is unequally distributed across different socio-economic (class) and geographical (urban-rural) groups, this may also have affected the social distribution of youth crime over time.

Inequalities in Youth Crime

Criminological research has repeatedly shown links between childhood conditions and the risk of engaging in youth crime (see e.g. Bäckman et al. 2014). Economic conditions constitute a fundamental factor, which is in turn linked to many other types of resources. Economic problems are often a cause of friction and family conflicts. Parents may also have more serious problems (substance abuse, crime and exposure to physical/sexual assault) that further increase the risk of negative consequences for children. Children who grow up in foster care, or who have extensive contacts with social services during their early years, are particularly vulnerable (Vinnerljung and Sallnäs 2008). There are also clear associations between youth crime and school-related factors such as grades, truancy, levels of engagement in schoolwork and school dropout. The extent to which children succeed at school is in turn also clearly related to social background, which makes schools a central mediating factor between childhood conditions and crime (Bäckman and Nilsson 2010).

A study by Bäckman et al. (2014) based on register data on all individuals born either in 1975 or 1985, shows that the 20% of youths with the lowest final grades from year nine were four times as likely to be repeatedly convicted of offences at

age 15–19 compared to those with intermediate final grades. The same study further shows that society has been unable to significantly reduce this excess risk over time, and that the levels of excess risk instead tend to continue to increase among those who do not succeed in school. By analysing the socio-economic backgrounds of young offenders born in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Nilsson et al. (2017) have shown that there has been a tendency for registered crime to become increasingly linked to young people from poor families. Thus the decline in youth crime described earlier is not necessarily general to all youth, since this study indicates that the decline has primarily occurred among young people who grew up in families with high levels of resources. Among children who have grown up in the poorest 10% of families, the risk of being convicted of offences has instead increased. It is thus possible that the social inequalities associated with youth crime have become even more marked over time. The extent to which this trend is also characteristic of other countries is as yet unclear, and this would appear to be an important question for the research to address.

The broader social debate on crime often focuses on the fact that individuals who were born abroad are over-represented among offenders. Paradoxically, despite the publication of a large number of criminological studies on this issue, it is also often argued that this question has not been examined or taken seriously by the research (for a review of the Scandinavian research see Hällsten et al. 2013; Skardhamar et al. 2014). These studies show that the level of over-representation varies depending on the indicators that are employed and the types of crime examined. In the Swedish School Survey on Crime, for example, the differences are very small (Brå 2016, pp. 56–62). Among those *convicted* of crime, the difference increases to a factor of two (i.e. youth with foreign background have a higher risk of being convicted), and if the focus is restricted to more serious violent offences, those born abroad are over-represented by a factor of three (Hällsten et al. 2013). The fact that persons born abroad are over-represented in crime does *not* mean that youths of foreign background are responsible for the majority of youth crime, or that there are clear cultural patterns in crime with regard to the offenders' ethnicity. The vast majority of offences by young people are committed by youths born in Sweden, and the crime structure is the same irrespective of the ethnic background of the offenders. What, then, might this excess risk for conviction among youths of foreign background be due to?

On the basis of explanations that refer to the significance of social factors, this type of over-representation is to be expected. We know that children and youths of foreign background more often grow up in relatively unfavourable conditions. It is more common, for example, for foreign-background households to be characterised by economic difficulties, lower levels of education and weak ties to the labour market. Furthermore, families of foreign background are more affected by the negative structural effects of residential segregation, since it has long been well-established that migrants and minorities more often live in poorly resourced neighbourhoods (Shaw and McKay 1942; Sampson 2012; Hällsten et al. 2013). Even youths from good family conditions, i.e. those whose home conditions do not involve an increased risk for offending, show higher levels of involvement in crime when they

grow up in poorly resourced residential areas (Wikström and Loeber 2000). Among other things, this is linked to levels of informal social control, the significance of the peer group for youth crime and the more extensive problems that schools in such areas are forced to deal with. In studies that include controls for individual and family conditions, and neighbourhood factors, the differences in crime levels between native and foreign-born individuals are substantially reduced.

Some of the over-representation is also likely to be due to discriminatory practices in the work of the police and the criminal justice system (Bowling and Phillips 2007; Tiratelli et al. 2018). Lunneblad et al. (2018) shows for example that in socially disadvantaged neighborhoods there is more collaboration between the schools and the police. Police reports are part of a strategy to manage problems. Situations that in other areas are handled by professionals and parents are “juridified” (see also Vainik and Kassman 2018). This create a situation where students in social disadvantaged schools “more easily end up with criminal records” (Lunneblad et al. 2018:15). Since the use of school-related police reports have increased substantially during the last decades (Estrada 2001; Vainik and Kassman 2018) this is an important bias.

Thus essentially, youth crime has more to do with childhood and living conditions than the countries in which different children are born. These well-established criminological explanatory factors have not however stopped certain participants in the wider social debate from directing an increasing focus on the ethnic background of offenders. One of the most interesting aspects of Hall et al.’s classic study *Policing the Crisis* (1978) was how it showed that the media and certain politicians stigmatised young black males as perpetrators of crime. Here there is a clear parallel to the focus on “immigrant gangs” and violence in many contemporary European countries. The increased levels of control that resulted from the public debate on muggings in the UK led, according to Hall et al., to an increased control of the black population. This meant an increased control of the poor, the unemployed and their children. In this way, the negative consequences of social change were dealt with by means of increased policing rather than through political reform.

Over recent years racism and right-wing extremism have increased in the western world (Rydgren 2018). The extreme right is exploiting the population’s legitimate concerns about increasing social disparities at the same time as the traditional parties of government are promising and introducing tougher migration laws. Donald Trump’s election victory in the 2016 US presidential election is only one of several examples of a trend which has seen politicians making unbridled use of alarmism and the stigmatisation of minorities in order to win votes.

For a long time, Sweden and Scandinavia justifiably appeared to constitute an exception to the punitive turn in witnessed in the crime policy of many other countries (Pratt 2008). At the same time, however, many Scandinavian researchers have argued that the crime policy rhetoric is shifting in a more repressive direction even here (Tham 2001; Estrada 2004; Smith and Ugelvik 2017). The chapter’s final section will therefore describe how youth crime is handled by the Swedish criminal justice system.

Society's Reactions to Youth Crime

Stated somewhat simplistically, there are two different crime policy positions on how and why society should react to the offences committed by young people. If youth offending is viewed as being the result of negative social conditions, punitive reactions are problematic since such sanctions are assumed to intensify levels of marginalisation in relation to mainstream society and thus paradoxically to increase the risk for continued involvement in crime. On the other hand, in a different society, or at another time, the same youth behaviour might be met with a completely different type of reaction. Instead of focusing on the offender's social background conditions, the focus may instead be directed at the character of the individual offender and the choice made by the individual to engage in crime. Here, the suffering caused to the crime victim is emphasised. A resolute response from society provides redress for the victim, and protects society by locking up the offender (so-called incapacitation). Finally, such a resolute reaction may also serve to scare others into following the law, although this is not the primary objective.

As was seen in Fig. 3.2a above, the majority of young offenders desist from crime in what may be described as a natural maturation process that occurs in connection with the transition to the new roles and relationships that characterise adult life (Laub and Sampson 2003). In a longitudinal study from Scotland, youths who reported having committed offences, but who had not been detected by the police, were compared with youths who reported the same levels of offending and who had come into contact with the justice system as a result (McAra and McVie 2007). The study shows that contacts with the justice system disrupt the natural maturation process towards adult roles and intensify the unfavourable life courses of young offenders, which makes desistance from crime less likely. In another study, Murray et al. (2007) have compared the lives of youths in the UK and Sweden who had experience of their parents serving prison sentences during childhood. These researchers argue that for youths who are experiencing serious problems, it matters which of the two above described reaction systems is predominant in a given society. Their analysis shows that the more punitively focused UK criminal justice system was associated with a greater number of these youths going on to engage in serious crime.

In both Sweden and the other Nordic countries, there is a strong view that children and youths who commit offences should be protected from the negative consequences of punitive sanctions. Since 1905 the age of criminal responsibility in Sweden been higher (15 years) than that seen in many other countries, where children may be convicted of offences even before they become teenagers.¹ There is

¹In 2010–2012, the age of criminal responsibility was reduced from 15 to 14 in Denmark. Politicians were convinced that this would lead to a reduction in youth crime as a result of deterrent effects and more severe consequences for youths who committed offences. Making use of this natural experiment, a well-designed study by Larsen (2017) has shown that the change did not lead to a decline in crime among 14-year-olds. Instead the change meant that the 14-year-olds who were drawn into the criminal justice system more often failed to complete their compulsory education and that they became more likely to reoffend (cf. McAra and McVie 2007).

also a widespread understanding that imprisonment is harmful and that the use of this form of punishment for youths should be minimised as far as possible. The next section of the chapter describes the sanctions to which young offenders are subject in Sweden, and how this sanctioning system has changed over recent years.

Juvenile Justice in Sweden

Children who commit offences prior to the age of 15 are dealt with within the framework of the social services. The responsibility for 15–17-year-olds is shared between the social services and the criminal justice system. For youths aged 18 and over, the criminal justice systems bears the principal responsibility for society's reaction to crime, but even in relation to this group, the Swedish Penal Code states that that youths aged 18–20 may not be sanctioned as severely as persons aged 21 or over. This differential treatment is in part due to the fact that youths are not sufficiently mature to be held fully responsible for their actions, and in part the fact that youths who commit offences are deemed to be in special need of care and support to ensure that sanctions do not produce negative developmental effects.²

Youths who commit offences from the age of 15 may be convicted either by a prosecutor or the courts. Firstly, a prosecutor may determine that the youth should be given a *waiver of prosecution*, which involves a finding of guilt, but at the same time means that the suspect will not be prosecuted for the offence. This type of decision is used in relation to minor offences which the prosecutor can assume will not result in a stiffer sanction than a fine. Secondly, a prosecutor may determine to issue a *summary sanction order*, which most commonly takes the form of a fine. Table 3.1 shows that just over half of all convictions of youths aged 15–17 take one of these two forms, and that waivers of prosecution have over time become the most common type of conviction decision. Among 18–20-year-olds, slightly less than half of conviction decisions are made by prosecutors, and for this age group these decisions are dominated by summary sanction orders. Thus the reaction to the offending of these older youths is somewhat harsher than the reaction to offences committed by 15–17-year-olds.

For youths convicted by the courts, several different types of sanctions may be imposed. The sanctioning system has undergone a number of changes, but since the mid-1990s youth crime cases have resulted in five principal types of sanction: a fine, surrender into the care of the social services (renamed youth care in 2007), conditional sentence or probation, and imprisonment (including a new custodial

²The law and order issue has become a central theme in Sweden in the run up to the general election that will take place in September 2018. The incumbent Social Democratic Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, has appointed an inquiry (Swedish Ministry of Justice 2017) to remove this special consideration given to youths aged over 18 from the legislation. Löfven has stated that: "If you're an adult, you have to take full responsibility for your actions" (<https://www.svd.se/tryggheten-ska-oka-pa-stationer>).

Table 3.1 Conviction decisions based on principal sanction and the convicted individual's age. 15–17-year-olds and 18–20-year-olds. 1995–2015. Percent

Sanction	Age of convicted individuals in respective period							
	15–17-year-olds				18–20-year-olds			
	1995–1999	2001–2005	2007–2011	2012–2015	1995–1999	2001–2005	2007–2011	2012–2015
Prosecutor								
Waiver of prosecution	27.9	21.8	38.1	37.1	7.5	10.3	14.7	14.1
Summary sanction order	39.3	38.6	21.7	19.8	40.6	37.3	34.0	34.4
Court								
Fine	16.1	17.0	11.6	12.7	18.1	17.9	19.8	24.7
Youth care ^a	13.4	19.2	10.5	14.4	1.8	2.3	1.4	1.3
Youth service ^b			16.7	14.7			2.3	1.5
Probation/conditional sentence	2.5	2.2	0.6	0.6	21.2	22.0	20.3	17.3
Custodial sanction ^c	0.2	0.8	0.5	0.5	6.4	7.4	5.0	4.4
Other sanctions	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.2	4.3	2.8	2.5	2.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Number of convictions per year</i>	<i>14,993</i>	<i>12,483</i>	<i>14,297</i>	<i>9,197</i>	<i>11,216</i>	<i>10,910</i>	<i>14,024</i>	<i>11,862</i>

^aUntil 2006 = Surrender into social services care

^bAs a separate sanction

^cPrison only until 1998; from 1999 both prison and youth custody

sanction entitled youth custody since 1999). The sanction *social services care/youth care* means that the determination of the contents of the sanction is left to the social welfare board. In 2007, a change in the legislation meant that the youth care sanction could only be imposed in cases where it could be shown that there was a specific need for care provision. The year 2007 also saw the introduction of a new sanctioning form *youth service* (in the form of work for at least 20 and at most 150 h). Upon its introduction, this sanction quickly was imposed on some of those youths who had previously been sentenced to social services care (see Table 3.1). Youth care and youth service together account for a large proportion of the sanctions imposed on 15–17-year-olds. These sanctions are relatively rare among the older youths, however. Instead, 18–20-year-olds are much more often sentenced to the more severe sanctions *conditional sentence* (with a probationary period of 2 years during which the convicted individual must not re-offend, and which can be imposed together with a fine) or *probation* (with a probationary period of 3 years, and a supervisor).

Youths under 18 years of age may only be sentenced to *prison* if there is exceptional cause, and for 18–20-year-olds there must be special cause for a prison sentence. In the same way as a prison term, *youth custody* is a fixed-term custodial

sentence. In order to keep youths outside the prison system, however, these sentences are served in institutions known as special approved homes. The intention when this new sanction was introduced was that it would only be imposed in those cases in which the courts would previously have sentenced the youth to prison. As can be seen from Table 3.1, however, it is very unusual for youths under 18 to be given a custodial sentence. For those aged 18–20, however, custodial sentences account for approximately 5% of conviction decisions.

On the basis of the above presentation, there appears to be no strong tendency towards an increase over time in the use of the most severe sanctioning forms. Thus in terms of its sanctioning output, the view that young offenders should be protected from the negative consequences of criminal sanctions appears to have retained its influence in the Swedish justice system over recent decades. The planned removal of the age consideration in determining the sentences of youths aged 18–20 would constitute a clear departure from this policy.

Conclusion

As has been shown in this chapter, the problem of youth offending is multi-faceted. The focal point of explanations of this form of crime has shifted over time, and there are no clear links between crime trends and the explanations that are in vogue during different periods. When youth crime increased substantially during the years 1950–1975, i.e. at the same time as Sweden and other western countries developed strong welfare states, theories that emphasised poverty and social disadvantage were prominent both in the research and the broader public debate. Youth crime was not viewed as requiring specific crime policy measures, but was rather seen as being linked to broader social welfare policies. When the public debate underwent a general shift to the right during the 1980s, political interest in using the crime issue as a means of demonstrating efficacy increased (Beckett 1999; Estrada 2001, 2004; Tham 2001; Hagan 2012). Explanatory models that placed a greater focus on the individual characteristics of offenders came to be given more weight. Thus at the same time as we see the beginnings of a decline in levels of youth crime, we see the emergence of a tougher attitude towards young offenders, in which references to social background conditions instead came to be seen as a way of condoning offending.

However, the economic crises that have affected the western world over more recent years have reawakened interest in the negative effects of child poverty and inequality on the life chances of young people. When it comes to youth crime, poverty alone cannot of course explain why certain individuals become offenders, and this is particularly true in relation to the more common, less serious forms of youth crime. Recent research shows, however, that difficult childhood conditions and school failure, in addition to increasing the risk for youth crime, also lead to problems in becoming established on the labour market in early adulthood, which may in turn affect an individual's risk for marginalisation over the long term. The links

between different types of resource deficiencies during childhood thus constitute an important factor for understanding why some youths continue to offend over the longer term.

Given that the associations between negative childhood conditions, youth crime and longer-term life chances would not appear particularly surprising to the majority of us, it is of concern that problems of this kind appear to be coming more, rather than less, apparent among youths who are convicted of crime. At the same time as youth crime is declining, we see that it is also becoming increasingly concentrated to children and youths who come from backgrounds characterised by an extreme lack of resources. This polarisation should probably be understood against the backdrop of a societal trend towards increasing inequalities in the life chances of different social groups.

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Chapter 4

Juridification of Swedish Education – Changing Conditions for Teachers’ Professional Work



Andreas Bergh and Emma Arneback

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, the governing of Swedish schools has changed in many, and quite radical, respects. In this chapter, we are taking an interest in a specific part of this change, that is, the increased judicial regulation.¹ With this focus, we position the chapter in a discussion of a process that hitherto has been little touched upon in educational research. This process is often discussed in terms of juridification, legalization or judicialisation. At the most general level these terms describe ‘a process whereby a situation or an issue takes on a legal or a stronger legal character’² (Brännström 2011, 13, cf. 2009; Blichner and Molander 2008; Rosén et al. 2018). Especially from the Nordic countries, it has been reported that there is no doubt that a stronger juridical discourse has been introduced in the educational sector (Bergh and Arneback 2016; Carlbaum 2016; Colnerud 2014a, b; Hult and Lindgren 2016; Møller and Ottesen 2016; Novak 2016; Runesdotter 2016). Although legal structures are important in democratic societies, they also entail risks. For example, as Jürgen Habermas (1987) has pointed out, an over-regulation of the curriculum might endanger the ‘the pedagogical freedom and initiative of the teacher’ (1987, p. 371).

In this chapter, the focus is on how juridification of Swedish education conditions teachers’ professional work on knowledge and values in school. To study this is important, since juridification may lead to a variety of tensions that we currently

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²In the chapter, citations from texts originally written in Swedish are the chapter authors’ own translations.

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know too little about. The Education Act stipulates that education in the school system aims at students acquiring and developing knowledge and values (SFS 2010:800). In similar terms it is stated in the Curriculum for the compulsory school that the school's aim is to 'promote the development and learning of all pupils, and a life-long desire to learn' (Lgr 11, p. 9).

From a Curriculum Theory perspective, it can initially be noted that a judicial regulation of the Swedish school is not a new occurrence (Lundgren 1977). Yet it is clear that legal concepts and arguments are used more frequently and have become more important in the governing of the school over the past decade. On the one hand, the school's responsibility for knowledge and values is emphasised in the Education Act. In addition, the Government has stipulated that the school's education assignment remains the same as it was when it was formulated in the early 1990s (Bill 2008/09:87). On the other hand, the comprehensive education reforms of the last decade have been driven by a rhetoric focused on raising goal achievement, improving the quality of education and ensuring legal safeguards, but disconnected from issues related to the school's assignment. One important question in this chapter is how knowledge and values that are expected to take shape through interpersonal actions are conditioned when they become subject to legal regulation.

Given this background, the *aim* of the chapter is to study how the juridification of education conditions teachers' work on the knowledge and values expressed in national policy documents. The study is carried out through an analysis of how teachers' work are formulated in authoritative texts from 1990 to the present. The following research questions support the analysis:

1. What views of knowledge and values are expressed in authoritative texts during the studied time period?
2. Which verbs are used to position teacher's work with knowledge and values and what are thereby the conditions for the relations between teachers and students?

In the next section we first present previous research with relevance and then the two theoretical concepts used for the study: management of placement and management of expectation. On the basis of these two, we thereafter analyse authoritative documents from early 1990 and onwards (Curricula, the Education Act and preparatory works such as government reports and bills). The analysis is also related to previous research with relevance to the research questions. In the concluding section, we discuss in what way, and to what extent, it is possible to talk about a shift from management of placement to management of expectation or whether they should rather be understood as complementary to one another.

Governing Knowledge and Values in Education

Understanding juridification is rather complex as it, in a broader sense, is intertwined with several ongoing policy changes. From previous research, it is well known that there are many similarities between countries today. In particular, the emergence of performance management and the impact of New Public Management

and accountability policies has been thoroughly reported and analysed (Ball et al. 2012; Bergh 2010; Dahler-Larsen 2012; Hall and Sivesind 2015; Pettersson 2008). However, as already mentioned, juridification has so far mainly been reported from the Nordic countries.

From an institutional perspective, in Swedish education there have been various directives over time in terms of different expectations regarding the type of knowledge and values that the education should promote. This has affected the shaping of the governing of education as well as the expectations of how teachers should act (Arneback 2012, 2013; Englund and Englund 2012; Landahl 2006; Wahlström 2015). Historically, the school's assignment to educate citizens with specific qualities has over time been expressed in terms of, for example, fostering good Christians, well behaved workers and democratic human beings (see, for example, Englund 1986; Linné 1996).

Even if both the wording regarding the school's assignment and the design of the school system have varied over time, teachers have, historically, been given a relatively high autonomy to choose content and decide on teaching methods (Morawski 2010). In this way, the school has been given a great social mandate to handle important and, at times, difficult issues. In the broader sense, it is an approach that applies not only to education and the Swedish context, but has been applied to other parts of the welfare society, for example, the health care sector (cf. Evetts 2011; Freidson 1970).

Rather than being a pronounced and distinct shift from one type of governing to another, the shift has occurred as a consequence of various decisions taken over time (Bergh 2015). Already at the beginning of the 1990s there was a shift in Swedish educational policy that resulted in a new language use (Englund 1996; Wahlström 2002). During this time, there was a tension between different ways of talking about school, which, for example, was reflected in how the concept of quality was introduced and used in educational policy texts at the national level (Bergh 2010). Already a few years after the quality concept was introduced in 1997, educational discussions on knowledge and values were marginalised. Instead focus shifted to results and systemic aspects such as law and control. As we will show, from a 20-year perspective, it is clear that there is a strong contrast in language use between the discussion of the 1990s and the emphasis of the reforms carried out during the last decade: 'an equivalent school requires that legal security and the quality of education can be ensured' and that, for students' sake, it is of the 'utmost importance to pay early attention to, and point out, shortcomings in a school' (Bill 2009/10:165, p. 538).

The previous governing, in which welfare workers were entrusted a professional responsibility based on their education has been challenged with these reforms. Juridical changes is now combined with a strengthened control system where local processes and results are expected to be reported and where local actors are held accountable (cf. Solbrekke and Englund 2011). If shortcomings in schools are reported, either by students, parents or the Schools Inspectorate, teachers and school leaders must be able to account for how they have worked to guarantee achievement of national goals and compliance with the rule of law. Altogether this means that the content of education, which previously was trusted to the local level, now is framed by a language use that emphasises legal security, goal achievement, minimization of

shortcomings and assurance of quality. Given this background, it is important to pose the question of what happens with the teaching profession and the relations between student, teachers and the content to be taught.

Theoretical Concepts – Management of Placement and Management of Expectation

A central starting point in the chapter is the construction of two theoretical concepts: *management of placement* and *management of expectation*. These two characterizes different ideas of governing which position teachers' mission and actions in different ways (Bergh 2015; Hopmann 2008). Management of placement means that questions regarding interpretation of central goals and decisions on how to organize, enact and evaluate education are transferred to the local level, which signals a high level of trust in teachers' ability to interpret their mission. Management of expectation means that the government stipulates expectations of results to be achieved and requires measurability, which signals that teachers' work needs to be controlled.

By applying the concept management of placement, Stefan Hopmann (2008) characterizes a situation in which various complex societal concerns were entrusted to professionals with special training to deal with so called ill-defined problems. A central feature of management of placement, was that the society provided resources while questions regarding priorities, decisions and follow up were handed over to the professionals at local level (cf. Bergh 2015). However, with societal changes and an increasing concern about whether this way of governing is sustainable over time, the management of placement has gradually been abandoned. The previous mandate, which gave the local level authority to handle complex problems and the resources needed to do so, has thus been challenged and partly replaced by a governing that may be characterised as management of expectation. This governing consists, simply put, of two parts. The first part involves that the government stipulates expectations of what the school, and other welfare areas, should achieve. A central starting point is that the expectations must be measurable and possible to achieve with available resources. As a result, different forms of control and regulatory systems must be developed, which constitutes the second part of this governing.

The Interpretation of Knowledge

In the first of the two following sections, we look at how the concept of knowledge has been expressed in authoritative texts over the last two decades.

Knowledge When Management of Placement Dominates

While the interpretations of knowledge presented in this section are characterized as expressions of management of placement, it is important to note that around 1990 there are also other reasoning that can be understood as expressions of management of expectation. In a broader context, it could therefore be noted that the dominating view of knowledge at this time is part of a larger entity where there are other, and partly contradictory, views. Some illustrative examples from this time are the strong emphasis on freedom of choice, ongoing work with extensive structural changes of the school system (a new distribution of responsibility, a new grading system and the new goal and result oriented school system), as well as a growing engagement in the international education cooperation (Bergh 2010; Pettersson 2008; Wahlström 2002). Taken together, from the early 1990s and during the subsequent years, these changes will successively lead to an emphasis on quality and international knowledge assessments.

When we look at the dominating use of the concept of knowledge in the reform work of the early 1990s, the importance of an interpretation that leaves room for different views on the local level is highlighted. Among other things, inspiration is taken from the growing interest of the era in socio cultural perspectives, where knowledge and learning are viewed as products of active interactions between human beings (Håkansson and Sundberg 2012). The concept of knowledge expressed during this period is also linked to a re-emphasis on the concept of 'bildung'. Furthermore it is stressed that democracy is empty if it does not rest on basic values and that ethics and moral issues are relevant to virtually all subjects (Bill 1992/93:220).

An important starting point for the way the concept of knowledge is expressed in national educational policy documents, is that the government stipulates goals and guidelines and the local level has a great responsibility to decide how to carry out the education within the given framework. The responsibility for maintaining high quality is thereby given to teachers and school leaders, while the municipality, or the school board, is given the overall responsibility for priorities, organization and development. In the pursuit of developing a goal oriented system, with an increased pedagogical professional responsibility, the greater needs and importance of local discussions on the theoretical basis for the school's activities are highlighted (National Agency for Education 2002). Thus, an important prerequisite is to create local processes in which goals can be interpreted and shaped. In addition, it is pointed out that teachers' work is not something that can be governed by government regulations:

Teachers' work requires perspectives on knowledge, learning and teaching, and how these are addressed in the classroom. Such activities cannot be governed by national regulations. Rather, it is the interplay between teachers' theoretical knowledge and the practical activities undertaken that is decisive. (Bill 1992/93:220, p. 18)

In the stated intentions for the so called participatory goal setting, the importance of an active discussion between teachers, but also between teachers and students, is emphasised (cf. Forsberg and Wallin 2006). A teaching practice where the teacher

inspires and together with the students discuss the content and organisation is thought to create good conditions for an education in accordance with the intentions formulated by the Swedish curriculum committee's report (SOU 1992:94). Even if the work is supposed to be directed towards subject knowledge, the government states that the education should not be limited to a set of subject specific knowledge and skills (Bill 1992/93:220). This leads to an understanding that the school's knowledge assignment cannot easily be reduced to a question about the selection of knowledge and skills to teach: 'knowledge can thus not be perceived as a finished product that can be understood in isolation from the context in which it was created' (p. 16). Again, the importance of a process where students' reflections, processing and thinking is emphasised as well as creative, aesthetic and ethical dimensions. By working with different content and perspectives on knowledge, the school is to create opportunities for students to reflect and change perspectives, which is seen as necessary abilities to have in a democracy (Skr 1996/97:112). Thus, in this line of reasoning, there is an idea that includes thoughts on the relationship between the teacher, students and the content of knowledge, but also thoughts on the relationship between school and society. Accordingly, communication becomes central, and is understood as both a means of good teaching and for fostering active participation in society (National Agency for Education 2000).

The verbs used to position teachers' work on knowledge when management of placement dominates are *inspiring* the students to *discuss*, *reflect*, *process*, *think* and *communicate*. We choose to term the key role provided to the teacher here *the teacher as a guide*, which positions the teacher as having the primary task of creating processes where interplay between students' experiences and the knowledge stipulated in the policy documents is made possible.

In summary, we can conclude that during the early 1990s there are relatively few regulations besides the national curriculum and local school and work plans that were introduced to support the decentralised responsibility (Bill 1988/89:4). At the same time, in other educational policy texts, there are other lines of reasoning with a partly different terminology, including the need of checking the quality in the school system as well as evaluate its results (Bill 1988/89:100).

Knowledge When Management of Expectation Dominates

When we move on to the report that preceded the new Swedish curriculum in 2011, which is titled *Clear goals and knowledge demands* (SOU 2007:28), we observe that approximately 130 pages are devoted to describe reasons to why the goal oriented system has not been implemented. As a solution, the report suggests a governing structure with stronger control, a clearer focus on results and assessment as well as increased evaluation where results are reported and used for improvements. Overall, this results in a stronger centralized governing where standardized norms are related to knowledge assessment and grades, that is, a performativity culture focused on student performance (Carlgren 2015).

With management of expectation the former understanding of teachers' work on knowledge is challenged in quite radical ways. The results of teaching must now be made visible and reported as part of a system where not only students, parents, and local authorities are included, but also national and international actors. If teachers were previously entrusted to take responsibility for their students' whole education, they are now rather expected to just be a link in an effective system that requires them to be accountable (cf. Solbrekke and Englund 2011).

A goal and result oriented school system requires a chain of interacting links. The government is required to stipulate goals in the form of policy documents, curriculum and syllabuses that 'speak to' the teachers in a clear and effective way. Teachers, in turn, are required to be able to read the governments intentions in a knowledgeable way. What is stated in a syllabus should be able to be read and interpreted by the teachers in an equivalent manner. (SOU 2007:28, p. 166)

The 2011 curriculum results in a comprehensive increase of centralization with new requirements, measures and increased judicial regulations. For example, the controlling activities are strengthened with the introduction of a new national authority, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate that are given increased powers to impose sanctions, and these activities have bearing on questions related to the school's work on knowledge (see for example 2015a, b). The regulations on teacher certification, national testing, grades and documentation requirements change (see for example Lundahl and Tveit 2014; Solbrekke and Englund 2014). Systematic quality work is given a stronger legal status by being regulated under the Education Act, and a series of new general advice is published, among other things, a general advice on how to plan and organize teaching (SFS 2010:800; National Agency for Education 2011, 2012a).

A characteristic feature, in a comparison between management of placement and management of expectation, is that the language use changes, which we argue is very important. While the school's work on knowledge in previous rhetoric was related to the teacher's task to inspire and encourage the student's process of thinking and reflecting, it is now related to students' rights. The verbs used to position teachers' actions are *clarify*, *adjust*, *assess*, *provide feed-back*, *systemize* and *ensure*. An expression of this is the 'legal guidance' provided by the Swedish National Agency of Education (2015), which contains information about the regulations on 'the students' right to knowledge, additional adjustments and special support'. In the Swedish National Agency of Education's (2011) guidelines on planning and organizing teaching it is further stressed that teachers, in their teaching, should:

Ensure that the education is aiming at the objectives implemented in the planning process by adjusting their teaching to each individual student's needs for support and stimulus, ensure that the students understand the purpose of the classroom activities, what knowledge and skills they are provided opportunity to learn and how they will be able to show their knowledge, continuously provide feed-back regarding hers or his development and clarify what needs to be further developed ... (National Agency for Education 2011, pp. 17–18)

A general advice is not an advice in the everyday sense, but is a legal term that 'aims at affecting the development in a particular direction and at promoting a uniform application of the law' (p. 7). Here it is stated 'how teachers should plan and

organize education ... how teachers should apply the knowledge requirements ... how the principal can support equivalent assessment and grading ... how the different parts should be documented' (National Agency for Education 2011, p. 6). Moreover, it is made clear that 'The evaluation of the planning and organization of the education and the knowledge assessments, the grading and the documentation is a part of the systematic quality work that are conducted on both local authority level and school level' (p. 6).

Researchers have noted that the increased emphasis on results entails a number of risks, even if these risks not have been explicitly linked to the increased judicial governing. For example, the new emphasis on knowledge requirements risks leading to an in-depth control with focus on short-term objectives at the expense of more long-term objectives that are harder to evaluate, which in turn risks to create an education that, rather than resulting in a goal oriented, creative and inquiring educational journey, risks resulting in instrumental surface learning (Wahlström 2015). That these risks are not only feared risks but actual consequences are confirmed by a study of teachers' work on implementing the 2011 curriculum (Bergh and Wahlström 2018). Based on teacher interviews, the study notes that different dilemmas arise when teachers' own ideas about what is a desirable outcome of education encounters requirements on results, clarity, assessment, performance and measurability. As one of the teachers put it: 'Now we try to do what the National Agency for Education and others tell us to do, which is to develop some kind of backward steering' (p. 141). In this way, the governing, with its combination of expectations and increased judicial regulation as well as control, has concrete consequences for teachers' work. These consequences applies to both the teacher's approach to the content of the curriculum and to their relationship with their students.

The consequences for the school's work on knowledge, following the shift to management of expectation, give rise to a new role for the teacher, who is primarily given an *assessment function*. Far from the previous stance – that teachers' work cannot be controlled by governmental provisions (Bill 1992/93:220) – management of expectation reflects an ambition to link the different parts of the school system to each other. That is, teachers and school leaders lead and organize education in relation to the curriculum and other regulations, while the local authorities are responsible for guaranteeing the quality of education and equivalence in relation to the national and international expectations on high achievement, equivalence, legal security and quality.

The Interpretation of Values

In this second section, we look at how the concept of value in school has been expressed during the past 20 years.

Values When Management of Placement Dominates

In the preceding curriculum (Lpo 94), school values are highlighted as a cluster, a ‘value base’ that teachers are expected to work with in school. Historically, the value base can be understood as a melting pot uniting different lines of reasoning on the school’s assignment. Over time there are shifts in what has been emphasized as desirable values. The 1994 curriculum in Sweden is characterized by a stronger emphasis on liberal values in comparison with the foregoing curricula. This is due to the fact that the idea of values as a collective democratic process is complemented by an idea of values as individual rights (Orlenius 2001; Englund and Englund 2012). Most of the words used in the 1994 curriculum to define values in education are *positive value words*, such as democracy, human rights, human self-worth, common environment, individual freedom and integrity, freedom of speech, equal value of all people, gender equality and solidarity. In some sections in the curriculum it is stated that there are *different* aspects of these values that are to be realized in school. The school’s democratic assignment is clarified by the following sentences:

It is not enough to convey knowledge about basic democratic values in teaching. Teaching should be conducted in democratic forms of work and prepare the students to participate actively in societal life. (Lpo 94, p. 6)

Thereby, democracy becomes both a teaching content in school (to learn about democracy), a process concept (to do democracy) and a forward-looking concept (to learn for democracy). In contrast to the positive value words there are also some *negative value words* used in the 1994 curriculum to describe values that the school is supposed to counteract, such as bullying, xenophobia, intolerance and traditional gender roles. Descriptions of the value base provide teachers with a large number of value words to relate to, but, at the same time, the descriptions are relatively vague. The opening for interpretations can be understood as a part of the emerging goal oriented governing, which to a great extent leaves it open for teachers to interpret their assignments at local level (cf. Zackari and Modigh 2000; Orlenius 2001; Arneback 2013).

An example of how the school’s work on the values is discussed during this time period can be found in a report published in relation to ‘the year of value-based education’ in Sweden (Zackari and Modigh 2000). The report distinctively highlights the democratic potential of considering school as a cultural and social meeting place. Its main focus is on the processes that create opportunities for cultural and social encounters and it is stated that ‘the conversation is the school’s most important tool’ (s 27). In the framing of teachers’ interpretations of their assignment, conversation is the hub as well. But in this case in terms of a professional conversation where school staff will support each other in working to realize the intentions of the value base. All at once, research has shown that there is no simple relation between different values in the curriculum, which means that conflicts between dif-

ferent interpretations may arise in the daily work (Orlenius 2001). For example, freedom of speech may clash with the idea that all people have equal value – if freedom of speech leads to someone else being violated (Arneback and Jämte 2015). Gunnel Colnerud has also shown how the school's value base includes words that works on completely different levels 'where social, psychological and moral phenomena came to be bundled together as if they belonged to a common category of issues' (2014a, p. 36).

In the 1994 curriculum, verbs that describe a process where teachers are given the mission to *represent* and *anchor, create conditions for* and *enable* the positive values in the curriculum are used. Few verbs are used to describe teachers' work with the negative values, such as bullying, xenophobia and intolerance, and these verbs can be summed up with the word *counteract* (Lpo 94). Based on this, the school's work on values during this time can be understood in terms of management of placement, a governing signaling great trust in the local level and resting on teachers' decentralised moral responsibility (Arneback 2013). This kind of governing also creates conditions for teachers' interactions with students, and creates a framework that enables local interpretations on how to conduct this work (Orlenius 2001). We choose to term the key role provided for the teacher in this framing *the teacher as a catalyst*, which positions the teacher as having the primary role to create processes that promote the positive values and counteract the negative values in the curriculum. Thereby, questions concerning the teacher's relationship to the students are left relatively open.

After the turn of the century, criticism towards the prevailing governing is emerging. It is reported that students are bullied and subject to other violations despite the stipulated value base (see for example National Agency for Education 2002, Forum för levande historia and Brå 2004). The criticism is also clear in a report published in 2003 by the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement, which highlights issues related to violations in school and how to counteract them in a different way than before. In 2003 a governmental investigation (SOU 2004:50) about school responsibility is ordered and given the task to investigate how the school can address the problem with violations in school. By extension, this contributes to a situation where management by placement is being supplemented by a judicial regulated idea of management of expectation, leading to a new emphasis on the school's responsibility to counteract the negative values in education in certain ways.

Values When Management of Expectation Dominates

Through the introduction of a new law (SFS 2006:67; Bill 2005/06:38), which regulates and bans discrimination and other violations of children and students, it is specified how the school shall work to promote equal treatment and prevent and counteract discrimination and violations. With this comes legal definitions of negative value words and new instructions on how to work in schools. The new language

use is gradually adapted into the 2011 curriculum (Lgr 11), the Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567) and the Education Act (SFS 2010:800).

No one should be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic affiliation, religion or other belief system, transgender identity or its expression, sexual orientation, age or functional impairment or other degrading treatment. (Lgr 11, p. 5)

Furthermore, a new chapter is added to the Education Act (SFS 2010:800, chapter 5) in order to clarify what disciplinary measures teachers may use to ensure a safe and calm study environment. Overall, this development can be described in terms of a juridification of the school's work on values, 'which means that increasing numbers of phenomena are subject to laws and regulations. The school has become a legal arena, which means that problems that were previously considered pedagogical nowadays also are considered legal' (Colnerud 2014b, p. 40, cf. Arneback 2012; Hammarén et al. 2015). The juridification has a number of noteworthy consequences. At conceptual level, one example is how the term 'bullying' is removed from the curriculum in favor of the term 'violation'. Overall, a new juridical terminology becomes the framework that is used to describe negative hierarchies and power orders in school, such as racism, sexism and homophobia. By extension, this contributes 'to shift the main focus from searching for encouraging communicative processes to implementing laws in the school in order to prevent a negative exercise of power' (Arneback 2012, p. 18).

The positive values are still stipulated with the same, or similar, wording as in the previous curriculum. However, there is a difference in how individual rights are given a more prominent importance in the reasoning on basic values: 'Education should impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which the Swedish society is based' (Lgr 11, p. 5). This can be understood as a further strengthening of the liberal values that was introduced in the 1994 curriculum (Lpo 94). The concept of rights thereby becomes a hub for understanding the meaning of both the positive and negative value words in the curriculum.

One way of clarifying how the value base is reframed and reshaped during this time period, can be exemplified by the Swedish National Agency of Education's (2012b) general advice on the work to counteract discrimination and violations, which is published in connection with the new law. It is here specified how staff, by using different measures, may work to prevent and counteract violations and discrimination in school. The main focus is on implementing the new legal concepts and attribute them with content. For example, it is stated that preventive work may include recess guards, surveys and codes of conduct, and, in case of a violation, good routines are necessary to handle measures urgently.

In a time of increased management of expectation, the interpretation of the negative value words is conditioned by a narrower frame of reference which decreases the teachers' and students' possibilities to interpret these words by themselves. In a judicial logic it becomes a central focus for teachers to find a way to relate and adapt to the new language use in the practice of their profession (Hult and Lindgren 2016;

Runesdotter 2016). The new framing also means that teachers need to develop legal skills. All at once, research has shown that some legal concepts, such as violations, are not easy to apply to pedagogical practices (Arneback 2012). For example, how are teachers to know when someone is violated and what are teachers to do if the concept is being over or underused by the students?

While the idea of the teacher as a catalyst for positive values still exists, it now needs to be supplemented with new verbs to describe the teacher's work with negative values. With the new legal framing of negative values comes a shift in expectations on teachers. School is given the assignment to draw up annual plans for its work to counteract discrimination and violations (Lgr 11, SFS 2008:567, SFS 2010:800). In the curriculum it is stipulated that the teacher has the responsibility to: 'Be observant and together with other school staff take the necessary steps to prevent and counteract all forms of discrimination and degrading treatment' (Lgr 11, p. 11). This responsibility is further specified by provisions under the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and the Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567) where the teacher is given the assignment to *map, detect, report and take measures against* negative values in school. We argue that these descriptions provide a stronger *surveillance position for teachers*. The new governing also results in new forms of accountability, and the control of the school's work on negative values is now not only carried out by governmental school inspections. In cases where students or legal guardians experience shortcomings in the school's handling of negative values, they can report this to, and get their case further reviewed by, the Child and School Student Representative or the Equality Ombudsman. In cases where shortcomings in schools are found after a judicial review, the school organizer may be ordered to pay damages to the affected student.

The juridical framing in a time of management of expectations also affects how teacher – student relationships are perceived. The previous assignment to promote positive values is now supplemented with legal concepts that define teachers' work on counteracting negative values in school. Thereby, two parallel discursive frameworks for teachers' work with the school's value base is created. On the one hand, teachers are expected to act as catalysts to maximize positive values, which signals the importance of teachers establishing positive and enabling relationships with their students. On the other hand, teachers are expected to monitor situations to minimize negative values, and to look at both students and colleagues as possible victims or perpetrators in these situations. In this discursive shift, students are referred to in new ways. Students, who previously were described as being subject to bullying, are now described as victims of crime (Hammarén et al. 2015).

Discussion

In this concluding section we first discuss the relationship between management of placement and management of expectation and then some consequences of juridification.

Navigating Between Management of Placement and Management of Expectation

How can the relationship between management by placement and management of expectation be understood? Are we dealing with a shift from one to the other, or do they appear simultaneously and complement each other? A first response is that we understand the two as analytical abstractions and not existing models of governing. Thus, our analysis suggests that there is not a simple shift in which management of expectation replaces management of placement in the government documents from the 2010s. Rather, the previous forms of governing (management of placement) is supplemented with increasing elements from management of expectation.

This situation makes it necessary to navigate between different forms of governing both in policy text and in practice. In policy text, we argue that the way the governing has developed highlights a critical point in the last decade's policy reforms. Namely, the questions that arise in the tension between management of placement and management of expectation have not previously been posed, and, therefore, also are unlikely to have been considered during the policy process. Despite the fact that it is not possible to prove an active stance, in the documents, on the different forms of management and their potential to complement each other, we argue that it is possible to conclude that the two ideas, at least in a formal sense, are expected to do so.

The problems that school is expected to solve are multifaceted and complex. However, the nature of the problems changes if they are framed by one or the other type of governing. Even if, as we have shown, a more pure governing based on either management of placement or management of expectation also includes different problems and dilemmas, these become even more complicated when the two are brought together. While teachers following the management of placement are given the mandate to deal with complex issues, these issues must be simplified and reduced to fit into the idea of management by expectations. However, this does not mean that the issues disappear, why it is important to continue to pay attention to what happens when abstracted juridical regulations meet social practices at the micro level (cf. Brännström 2009).

In relation to school practice, the text analysis presented here has shown that the way education policy has developed over time has changed the conditions for teachers' work (see also Bergh 2010; Arneback 2012; Hult and Lindgren 2016; Runesdotter 2016) and that the school governance holds intrinsic tensions between management of placement and management of expectation (Bergh 2015). Teachers are now expected to carry a decentralised responsibility and, at the same time, be controlled based on centrally stipulated rights and obligations (Arneback 2013). This becomes particularly clear when looking at the strong position given to students' rights in relation to the obligations imposed on schools and local authorities.

The double framing may be perceived in different ways. From a student perspective it can be understood as a stronger protection of rights in a liberal democracy.

From this perspective, we can also see the emergence of reading guarantees and a zero-tolerance discourse. From another perspective it can be understood as a reduced trust in teachers work.

Some Consequences of Juridification

One way to describe the policy development in Sweden is in terms of an ongoing juridification of education (cf. Colnerud 2014a, Hammarén et al. 2015; Hult and Lindgren 2016; Novak 2016; Rosén et al. 2018; Runesdotter 2016). The increased juridification conditions the school's assignment and how it is conceptualised. When legal concepts, such as discrimination, harassment and violation, are given a superior importance in the framing of school, in comparison to positive value words, something happens with what gets into focus. In the worst case, the legal concepts may result in more instrumental relationships where teachers focus on their role as assessors and surveillants. At the same time we wish to emphasise that it all depends on how legal concepts are adapted by school staff, that is, what content they are attributed. Here, there is a need of further analysis and discussions on how different emphasises and combinations of a juridical vocabulary and a pedagogical vocabulary condition the relationships that are formed in local school practices. It is also important to remember that 'the law is not other than the outcome of historical specific processes and showdowns, that is, a result of how it has been made, and are being made, and that it is always possible, yet not always easy, to question, renegotiate and change' (Brännström 2009, p. 17).

Finally, we wish to emphasise that the chapter is not a description of a shift from a good situation to a bad one, but rather a contribution to a problematisation of what happens with the teaching profession, the school's assignment and the interpersonal relationships in the tension between management of placement and management of expectation. The shifts in governing that are brought about by juridification are so radical that one might pose the question if we are facing another system transformation of educational policy, or if the shifts are just a deepening of the previous transformation (cf. Englund ed. 1996). Based on the analysis, we conclude that it is important to continue the discussion on the relationship between pedagogy and law. Can one replace the other, or are both necessary? If the answer is the latter, what can one add that the other cannot? The combination of the idea of a decentralised moral responsibility and the idea of an increased regulation with centrally stipulated rights creates, as shown, a number of dilemmas with consequences for the relationships that are formed in local school practices. Is the answer to the problem to make changes to the governing, or is it possible for strong professional teachers to break the boundaries from within, define the concepts, fill out the blanks and argue for their cause?³

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Chapter 5

The Many Faces of School Violence: Ambivalent Categorizations of Perpetrators and Victims



Johannes Lunneblad and Thomas Johansson

Introduction

Historically, schools have been key institutions in society for fostering and reproducing coming generations. Part of this mission has focused on how children's and young people's unruly behaviour should be dealt with (Hammarén et al. 2015). During the past decades, it is possible to follow a transitional process and development in which schools have become increasingly regulated by legal rules. This transition has been defined as the *juridification of schools* (Fransson 2016; Vainik 2017). Consequently, acts previously understood as political, social or moral issues are now concerns requiring legal decisions and laws (Ring 2013; Bergh and Arneback 2016). Looking at the Swedish Agency of Education's recommendations for handling students' unruly behaviour in school, this development is obvious. In part, these changes can be related to a directive from the European Union about ethnic discrimination. In Sweden, this directive resulted in enquiries and propositions that aimed to increase protection against discrimination in a variety of societal fields. In Swedish schools, the implementation of new laws against discrimination led to a change in how degrading treatment of students was defined in the Education Act and in the national curriculum. For example, the terms 'bullying' and 'racist behaviour', which were present in the previous Education Act, were replaced by the expression 'all kinds of degrading treatment' in the 2010 Educational Act. This change can be interpreted as a shift in the notion of 'degrading treatment', from being viewed from a psychological perspective to being placed within a legal discourse. Thus, a student who was previously categorized as potentially being bullied or harassed is now defined as possibly being the discriminated victim of a

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crime – which implies that the bully has become the criminal. Thus, this discursive shift has positioned students within new and more juridical subject positions. As a result, each school has been required to establish routines to promote equality and to counteract degrading treatment and discrimination (Hammarén et al. 2015). This shift also led to greater responsibility being placed on schools to prevent and investigate situations in which children are at risk of being violated. In certain cases, schools that cannot fulfil this responsibility could be subject to a financial penalty (Vainik and Kassman 2018). In many respects, the juridification of the Swedish schools has led to changing conditions and regulations for how conflicts and violence in school are supposed to be managed (Gibson 2013; Vainik 2017).

A key aspect of the juridification of schools is that it has contributed to stricter and more regulated requirements for documentation in schools. This increased documentation has been framed and discussed as a shift towards focusing more exclusively on explicit violence, which has the potential to undermine pedagogical work on values and norms at school (Ball et al. 2012; Bergh and Arneback 2016). In Sweden, the age of criminal responsibility is 15 years. Children younger than 15 years who commit a crime fall under the responsibility of social services, which have the fundamental obligation to protect children from developing a criminal lifestyle (Vainik and Kassman 2018). In Swedish schools, the principal is required to evaluate each situation to decide whether an incident should be categorized as a crime, and whether a police report should be filed. Furthermore, the recommendation by the Agency of Education is that each school should develop a plan for handling police reports. However, it is unclear what impact these changes in policy documents have on how school personnel deal with disturbances and conflicts between students on a daily basis. Although statistics show that the number of police notifications has increased (Hammarén et al. 2015), statistics from the Swedish National Council for Crime reveal that few students are exposed to serious or extreme violence. Furthermore, self-assessment surveys among students in grade nine have not revealed a clear increase in violence (Ring 2013). Therefore, the current focus on social order in terms of legal concerns may be more related to school policies than to young people's actual behaviour and to the occurrence of violence. The aim of this chapter is to contribute knowledge about how school professionals describe their handling of violent situations among students. Here, 'violence' is used as an umbrella term for acts that violate a person's dignity, through physical acts, threats, rumours, mockery, and exclusion (Robinson et al. 2012).

Reporting School Violence to the Police

Compared with the UK and the US, reporting school violence to the police is a relatively new phenomenon in Sweden. Most of the research on school violence has been conducted in the Anglo-Saxon countries, especially in the US (Na and

Gottfredson 2013). This research shows that educators often have an ambivalent attitude towards collaborating with the police (Theriot 2009). Collaboration between school professionals and the police can be viewed as a resource, on the one hand, or seen as creating uncertainty as to whose responsibility it is to handle students' unruly behaviour at school, on the other (see also Chap. 4). Consequently, where the police see a crime, educators see the risk of students being labelled as perpetrators (Coon and Travis 2012). Research has also shown how educators hesitate to file a police report, not least because they are afraid of losing the initiative in their work to create a safe school environment (Morris 2005).

Research in Sweden and the Nordic countries has often defined violence and conflicts among students at school in terms of *bullying* (Thornberg 2015). Most of these studies have been concerned with investigating bullying typologies and finding psychological dispositions and fixed personality traits among bullied students (Ringrose and Rawlings 2015). Bullying is often articulated as the effect of the behavioural problems of individuals, rather than as originating from complex socio-cultural processes, which underpin the practices of individuals and groups, as well as institutions (Hong and Espelage 2012). Only a few studies in this field of research have explored school professionals' perspectives on school violence (Yoon and Bauman 2014). As a consequence, there have also been few studies investigating the impact of juridification on how school principals, teachers and other school professionals handle students' unruly behaviour (Vainik 2017).

Research also shows that professionals often express uncertainty about what can be considered a crime and which situations can be reported to the police (Lunneblad et al. 2017). One explanation may be that it is common for a given student to be the victim in one situation and involved in offending another student in another situation. It may also be difficult to decide when a playful situation has changed and become serious and violent (Hymel and Swearer 2015). Research also shows that students' own interpretations of what is play and what is violence vary across situations and depend greatly on who is involved (Ringrose and Rawlings 2015). Research has also shown how the position of victim is often related to feelings of shame and weakness, which may be one reason why some students hesitate to seek help from school professionals (Wästerfors 2016; Bjereld 2017).

In this chapter, our focus is on situations that school professionals have reported to the police. We will look further into what kinds of situations school professionals report to police. We will also zoom in on how school professionals describe the students involved in the situations reported to the police, and on how reasons for contacting the police are described. In this chapter, we will discuss the relation between different professional cultures and perspectives in schools. In the next chapter, this discussion will be deepened and qualified further by examining the views of police officers on violence and police reports in Swedish schools.

Researching Violence in Schools

The empirical material analysed in the following parts of this chapter, as well as in the next chapters of the book, derives from a research project aimed at studying the process of *juridification* in the Swedish schools. The study was designed as a number of interlinked case studies at nine compulsory schools located in different geographic and socioeconomic areas. The selection of schools was purposive, intended to ensure variation in the geographical location and socioeconomic conditions of the schools. The Daisy School is located in an upper-middle-class area in a small municipality that is part of a metropolitan area. Violet School is an independent school centrally located in a big city, where the majority of students come from socially disadvantaged areas. Water Lily School and Lilac School are located in middle-class areas in a big city. Thistle School, Honeysuckle School, and Tulip School are located in middle-class and lower-middle-class areas in smaller municipalities within a metropolitan area. Cow Parsnip School and Dandelion School are located in socially vulnerable metropolitan areas.

At each school, we performed individual interviews and focus groups interviews with school officials in the student welfare team. The student welfare team is responsible for preventing and handling situations of violence. In Sweden, all schools are required to have a welfare team, including the principal, a school nurse, a counsellor, and a special education teacher, and sometimes other school officials. In total, 47 interviews were conducted. The interviews lasted 45–60 min, on average, and were audio recorded and later transcribed. The study was conducted in accordance with current research ethics guidelines. This means that all participants received information about the purpose of the study and gave their consent to participate, and that the names of all informants and of the schools surveyed are pseudonyms.

Social Dilemmas in a Multi-discursive Social Context

To define systematic and institutionalized knowledge, practices and explanatory models that have been influential in forming the Swedish school system, we use the concept of *discourse* (Foucault 1979). In many ways, the school context is a *multi-discursive field* of knowledge and social practice. Several and often conflicting discourses structure and colour the work of teachers, principals and other school professionals. In the school professionals' narratives about various violent situations in school, different discourses are used to categorize, define and make sense of the involved students' actions and thoughts (Jenkins 2000). Depending on how a situation or actions are defined and categorized, different measures and perspectives are seen as more or less plausible (Hacking 2004).

Another key concept in the analysis is that of *social dilemma*. Social dilemma refers to arguments that represent different and contradictory positions in relation to a 'problem' in a certain area. In our case, this concerns how school professionals

reason about and deal with questions of violence, disturbance and conflict among students. As an analytical term, social dilemma differs from a common sense definition of dilemmas, where the word is often used to describe an issue that is rendered insoluble. Billig (1988) describes social dilemmas as linguistic resources, widely used to reflect on social and political issues. This can be understood as having several possible ways of categorizing and, thus, defining what the ‘problem’ is as well as how it should be addressed and solved. We may, for example, raise questions about punishment versus care for criminals. In the school context, this can be related to the extent to which violence in schools should be solved through a dialogue between pupils, parents and school staff, or whether school staff should instead report acts of abuse and threats to the police. During the analytical process, we have been specifically interested in how the interviewees’ reason in relation to how situations that have triggered a police report should be understood. In the analysis of the material, we have searched for words like police, police reports, violence, noise, bullying, victims, vulnerability and perpetrators. The material has been analysed thematically, based on the study’s research questions. We also tried to identify dominant discourses that emanated from the empirical material, especially in relation to professional cultures and different ways of thinking about how to address and view violence in schools.

Boundaries and Discourses

The results are organized in accordance with the themes, emerging from the analysis. We will focus on how the school staff draw boundaries between behaviour that requires filing a police report, and behaviour that can be dealt with by the school. Furthermore, we will investigate and explore how the staff reason in relation to and discuss how different forms of violence should be dealt with.

Reporting to the Police – When Things Have Gone Too Far

In several municipalities in Sweden, the local authorities and police have worked out joint action plans to deal with situations in schools where there is reason to believe a crime has been committed. Part of this cooperation has resulted in pre-printed forms that school officials are expected to use when filing a police report. Such forms constitute one example of how a legal discourse has become involved in how problems at school are addressed. This is also reflected in the interviews where professionals describe how they have dealt with school violence. In the following example, one of the professionals at the Dandelion School tells us about events that have been reported to the police.

School counsellor, Dandelion School: It’s when it’s become physical ..., then we report to the police. Then we do it. When it’s physical violence at school. Then we report to the police.

The prevalence of physical violence is described as the most common reason for the school professionals to report an incident to the police. As previously explained, the National Agency of Education recommends that principals assume responsibility for filing police reports. However, because it is often teachers who witnessed the event, or who first know what has happened, several persons are often involved in the decision. This means that in practice the decision to report to the police is a collective one, as the principal is relying on information from other staff members. In the following interview, the school counsellor at Cow Parsnip School describes the process underlying the decision to file a police report.

School counsellor, Cow Parsnip School: The last report to the police was on a serious assault. One of the older students assaulted a younger student. The decision was obviously immediate, because it was serious violence. This also made it easy for us to paint a common picture of the situation.... Both for us as professionals, and for the parents, and for the students. We all agreed that a crime had been committed.

According to the school professionals, it is easier to decide whether a crime has been committed when something concrete and visible has occurred, which can legitimize the decision to file a police report. This can be interpreted as the professionals striving for clarity and transparency in their decision to report. In the next example, the school counsellor at Thistle School describes a situation when she decided that a police report was the best way to handle the situation.

Interviewer: So, what has happened in cases when you discuss if a crime has been committed?

School counsellor, Thistle School: Then it's usually, or almost always, in situations of physical violence. Most common is that we summon in the social services. The reason is often that we judge that parental support is not as necessary there. We want the social services to help us with the family's commitment. When it's a matter for the police, it's always physical violence, there's usually someone who has been physically harmed. That there's an adult who witnessed and was afraid of the consequences, of what could occur..... where it with some bad luck could have gone really bad. Then we contact the police ...

It is clear that knowledge from different professional fields influences how school professionals handle situations in which students are at risk of being harmed. Filing a police report is viewed as a way to handle situations when students act with the purpose of violating another student, while collaboration with the social services is perceived as an alternative when contact with the parents fails. In the example that follows, the principal at the Tulip School is reasoning about the dilemma to decide what should or should not be reported to the police.

Principal, Tulip School: When it comes to reporting to the police, and fortunately it doesn't happen that often, but it is something we've done when there have been some incidents. In reports to the police, there has almost always been violence involved.

Interviewer: Physical violence?

Principal, Tulip School: Physical violence, yes.

Interviewer: So, not emotional or psychological violence?

Principal, Tulip School: Such situations are often more diffuse. They're hard to get a grip on. It could be a gaze, turning your back to someone, not responding to a greeting. Much subtler. There is not really anything concrete to report to the police, but a very disruptive way of behaving.

In the data, there is a clear correlation between situations reported to the police and situations when violence has occurred. It is also clear that situations where students harm another student without using physical violence are rarely reported to the police.

The relation between physical violence and police reports is also obvious in the narrative about another incident at Cow Parsnip School. Two boys repeatedly violated another student. It was not the constant situations of harassments that led to the decision to file a police report, however. 'This is one of our strongest case of bullying.' What proceeded the police report was a situation in which the two boys were throwing snowballs at another student. 'It was a snowball war that got out of hand; one boy lost consciousness when he was hit in the head several times' (School counsellor, Cow Parsnip School). The episode with the serious harassments and the snowball war shows how reporting to the police is not necessarily connected to how seriously a student is harmed, but rather to acts of physical violence. The school professionals describe this as a dilemma, as a police report requires a concrete event that can be retold in a report. The consequence of this is that violence that is diffuse in nature and more difficult to discover is seldom reported to the police. The school professionals also talked about what to take into consideration when reporting to the police, such as who the victim is and who the perpetrator is.

Physical and explicit forms of violence were often coded as masculine. On close examination, the interviews revealed a strong tendency to differentiate between boys' more abusive and physical violence, and girls' use of relational violence. As the principal of Violet School put it, '[physical violence] is common among the boys at the school'. The principal of Daisy School expressed this perspective as follows:

Principal, Daisy School: When it comes to the girls, there are often more subtle incidents. For example, they ignore and freeze out other girls. In a group of girls, it often happens that two girls unite against a third girl and they are playing her. It is often this type of subtle harassment. Whereas when it comes to the boys, there is more straightforward behaviour.

The gender coding of school violence means that girls and boys are positioned in different ways. Harassment and psychological violence are talked about and defined as 'girlish', whereas boys' more physically aggressive behaviour is referred to as being more simple and straightforward. This classification is coloured by how gender identities are perceived and constructed in society. Boys are expected to be able to stand up for themselves in order to gain respect, and to use violence if required. In the following example from Thistle School, girls' abusive behaviour is described as girlish:

School Host, Thistle School: The girls are very good at calling each other whores. But I really do not know if girls are more offended when another girl calls them a whore or when a man does the same thing. There is a difference...// This happens a lot now. The girls also use the Internet quite a lot and write stuff such as 'you are stupid and ugly'. They write stuff like that to each other and it's hurtful.

When the school officials talk about verbal and relational violence, they define such behaviour as feminine. Thus, when boys use verbal or relational violence,

these acts and performances are recognized as being typically feminine. This example illustrates how girls' status and identity are closely linked to their sexual behaviour. It is interesting to compare what is said about girls with what is said about boys. Compared with boys, it is not primarily through physical violence that girls' dignity is threatened. On the contrary, their dignity is threatened by questioning each other's sexual behaviour and remarking on each other's appearance. In the next section, we will further elaborate on the relation between the victim and the offender.

Victims, Perpetrators and Students with a Diagnosis

The juridification of conflicts in schools means that the categories victim and perpetrator become part of how conflicts between students are handled. The presence of a legal discourse entails a shift from an ethical assessment of right and wrong to a question of whether or not a crime has been committed. That means that in situations that are reported to police someone is categorized as the victim of a crime and someone as the perpetrator. A minor disagreement between two students can, thus, be transformed into a situation where one of the students is defined as the perpetrator and the other as the victim. In the following interview, the principal at Tulip School talks about a situation in which a minor conflict ultimately led to a police report.

Principal, Tulip School: There was this incident in the classroom. There were two students who had a disagreement. I believe it was about someone's belongings. Then one of them lost his temper and got really angry. It ended up in a fight, where one of them tried to back off. However, not the student that lost his temper. They were exchanging punches, and throwing chairs at each other.

The situation provides an example of when professionals report an incident to the police, when a student exceeds the normative standards for accepted aggression. The event is described as something that started with a minor conflict between two students. Initially, neither of the students is an offender or victim. In this narrative, however, one student, the one described as losing his temper, gradually emerges as an aggressive offender. In the example below, the principal at Daisy School tells about an event that developed into a violent situation between two students on their way home from school. The background was that one of the students had repeatedly received negative remarks about his clothes from other students.

Principal, Daisy School: There was this boy. Finally, he felt he'd had enough. He felt, now I've heard those comments about my clothes so many times, now it's enough, and then when he was waiting for the school bus, and he heard remarks about his pants. ... Then there was no stopping him. He went for this guy. There was a reason for his behaviour, and I can understand that he got angry and reacted. We don't think about him as a violent and dangerous student. There was a reason and he felt he had been violated. However, he used violence and started the fight. So we filed a police report, where he is the offender. Of course, there is background to the incident, and that's part of the report. However, in my report, I didn't report how he'd been harassed, I reported his use of violence.

The principal points at a crucial dilemma, regarding judging who the perpetrator is and who the victim is. The professionals decided, in this case, to report the student who lost his temper and used physical violence, even if the student had repeatedly been exposed to degrading comments. The principal expresses sympathy for the student and claims to understand his situation. However, the harassment the student was exposed to was not sufficient to report the harassers. A police report can, thereby, result in the victim (from the perspective of what professionals consider reportable) becoming the perpetrator.

School counsellor, Lilac School: It can be both and, and always when there is a student who feels victimized, the same student may also be an offender, and vice versa. Sometimes it's hard for us to know who did what... and the best solution can be to not try to solve that question. We leave that question, of who did what, ... because later the police will do their investigation. / ... /One thing that I've often noticed, is that a student who is exposed, a while later that student may cross the line, and become the perpetrator.

Victim and perpetrator can be problematic categories to use at school. This is perceived as a dilemma when school professionals handle students' unwanted behaviour. Conduct that, from a legal perspective, may be a reason to file a police report may, from a social pedagogical perspective, be considered a student's way of handling the experience of being exposed. When school professionals decide to report an incident to the police physical violence is usually involved. However, violent incidents may also be part of bigger, more complex social relations, and situations have existed over a longer time period. According to the school professionals, this makes it difficult to decide who is the perpetrator and who is the victim. Previous research has shown that the student who is exposed may also be involved in exposing other students (Thornberg 2015). For school professionals, this means that the student asking for support and protection may also be an offender. This can make the relations and trust between school professionals and students complicated.

Principal, Honeysuckle School: Often a police report makes the work at school more difficult, because it ruins students' trust in the professionals. So regardless of whether you are the victim or the perpetrator... Victims can feel very exposed and vulnerable because their situation becomes public. They wonder what's happening, because it's often a long process. The students you report to the police may lose confidence in you, and they feel like we're betraying them.

School professionals are obligated to support students even if their behaviour is not tolerated. Clearly, a juridical discourse actualizes the dilemma of at which point, if ever, this responsibility ends. However, a police report has consequences: The reported individual is made responsible for his/her conduct and can be sentenced to punishment. Previous research shows that several dimensions affect how the categories of perpetrator and victim are used. Reporting to the police can be viewed as an elevation and recognition of those who have been exposed to violence (Na and Gottfredson 2013). However, research has also shown that young people are not always willing to be positioned as victims and sometimes even resist being placed in this position. This is particularly true for boys, for whom being victimized can also be seen as being demasculinized (Wästerfors 2016).

Reasons to Report to the Police

The following section focuses on how the school professionals discuss the reasons why they file police reports. Since the mid-1990s, the number of police reports in schools has increased (Ring 2013). This development has been described as a response to increased demands for the criminal justice system to take a clearer stand against juvenile delinquency (Vainik 2017). The symbolic value of reporting an incident to the police, as a clear way of marking the student's unwanted behaviour, was also repeated in the interviews with the school professionals. In the following example, the principal at Water Lily School discusses the reasons for filing a police report.

Principal, Water Lily School: It is a balancing act, and there are hard decisions to take. What we try to communicate to the students is that a crime outside school is also a crime inside school. We have no special laws on school-related crime. If you hit someone in the school, it's as bad as hitting someone outside school. Then we have this policy the municipality has worked out about reporting to the police. We are instructed to use a form. However, you still have to make certain distinctions. The students aren't just here to learn subjects, they're also here so we can bring them up to be decent people.

The school professionals describe how filing police reports is a way of communicating that the same laws apply inside the school as outside the school. In the interview, the principal describes the forms distributed by the municipality as a marker that school professionals should report incidents occurring at school. This can be seen as the principal's perception that there is a certain expectation regarding reporting to the police (Larsson et al. 2010). In the interview, the principal also makes a distinction between police reports and the school's learning and fostering mission. This can be interpreted as reflecting the professionals' ability to distinguish between police reports and what is considered to be the school's value-based work. In the following example, the principal at Daisy School discusses, in a similar vein, the social dilemma of deciding what to report to the police, while still maintaining the initiative to do the school's value-based work.

Principal, Daisy School: There is always a line you can't cross, you need to draw the line somewhere. We can't report every incident to the police. We don't want the police to do our work on norms and values. However, it's really difficult to know where to draw the line. I can't see that ... Reporting to the police doesn't help us. It helps us in that it clearly shows that the same laws exist in school as in society. You're not allowed to use violence. We don't do that in other places either, and we don't do that at school, so it shows how we want things to be. However, when it comes to our work with values, our mission to foster the students. Then we don't want to involve the police.

The relation to reporting to the police is expressed as ambivalent. One part of this dilemma concerns the difficulties associated with judging when to report to the police. Previous research has also shown that a juridification of schools has led to a greater focus on more severe forms of harassments (Bergh and Arneback 2016). This may also explain why the professionals mostly report physical violence. During the interview, the principal describes that reporting to the police does not help school professionals in their work with norms and values. This distinction is

further underlined when talking about reporting to the police and preventive work. The police report is mainly described as a way to mark that the same rules apply both inside and outside school. The symbolic value of reporting to the police was something the principal at Dandelion School emphasized:

Principal, Dandelion School: Reporting to the police sends a message. The other students find out about it. We had one incident here at school. One student hit another student, really hard, and a large group of students witnessed it. The news of it spread here at school. Reporting to the police in this case was a way of communicating that we take this incident seriously.

Reporting to the police is assumed to have the pedagogical effect of teaching the students the consequences of violating school rules. Another aspect emphasized during the interviews was that the report also served as a kind of rehabilitation for the victimized students.

School counsellor, Cow Parsnip School: It's important to show that we take this seriously. That we act in the same way as when an adult is exposed to violence in this situation. However, I can also feel that the school really should be able to manage conflicts at school without involving the police. It's a little bit like giving up on these children, when we report them to the police.

It is clear that the issue of police reporting can be understood as a social dilemma, where the arguments related to the different approaches are considered sensible, but also somewhat contradictory. The police report is regarded as a way to show that the school supports students who are exposed to violence. This line of reasoning can be seen as a variation on earlier arguments stating that what is a crime outside school should not be handled differently at school (Vainik 2017; Larsson et al. 2010). The argument is that school professionals should be able to help the students to cope with difficult situations, without involving the police. The school professionals highlight how a report to the police can have an adverse effect on the trust between school staff and students. Basically, this social dilemma is not just about where the boundaries of the school's fostering mission lie, but also about whether such boundaries exist, and what the differences are between rules and laws at school and those in society as a whole (Hammarén et al. 2015).

Conclusion

School and safety laws have traditionally regulated schools, and teachers have been obliged to notify the principal if students are in any kind of danger. What we observe today is, however, a perspective divide in how violence and unruly behaviour in school should be handled. The obligation to report certain behaviour is based on children's right to social support in certain precarious situations. A police report, however, focuses on the student's deed, which should be reported and if necessary punished. Apparently, what we have here are two different sets of logics concerning how to investigate and treat violence in schools. The results reveal that conflicting

discourses both structure the actions of and are used as resources by school professionals. In the analysed narratives about various violent situations in school, different discourses were used to categorize, define and make sense of the described situations. Depending on how a situation or action was defined and categorized, different measures and perspectives were seen as more or less reasonable. In the narratives of the school professionals, we see clearly that there are at least two different types of arguments represented. The juridification of the school does not imply that a social pedagogical discourse is being replaced by a legal discourse, rather that we can see the co-existence of these two discourses.

The results show that physical violence is more often reported to the police. In situations where the violent acts are subtler or more emotionally coloured, the interviewees find it more difficult to identify a basis for filing a police report. Situations in which there is no explicit physical violence are not reported to the police, even though these situations and the 'violence' can be just as bad as more overt physical violence. A police report contributes to re-defining the entire situation, and actions are now defined as crimes. In the school professionals' narratives, these situations often come forward as social dilemmas. They talk about the difficulties inherent in defining and deciding who the victim is and who the perpetrator is. These roles are often interchangeable, and can quickly become reversed. In addition, this way of defining violence often leads to a gendered perception of violence. Boys' more explicit violence is often treated as a potential crime, and thus becomes a legal question, whereas girls' more subtle behaviour and low-profile violence is often handled within the school.

The act of filing a police report raises concerns about a social dilemma – where should we draw the line between social pedagogical work and police work, between education and crime. On the one hand, a police report addresses serious problems and becomes an important marker and form of support for victim. On the other hand, a police report can lead to a breakdown in the pedagogical work with the child and his/her parents. There is a risk that school professionals will stand out as failures and as unable to handle situations at school. The continuous work with harassment, bullying and violence in school becomes, somehow, separated from what happens when an action or an individual is defined as criminal.

To sum up, what we have discerned by studying the school professionals' narratives is a highly ambivalent approach to school violence. Trust in dialogue and pedagogical work co-exists with demands for law and order in schools and in society. What we see is a simultaneous development towards attempts to create sustainable methods and organizational approaches to violence, on the one hand, and processes of individualization and juridification, on the other. In the next chapter, we will examine these developments further. By adding the voices and perspectives of police officers, we hope to obtain a more nuanced and complex image of the ongoing juridification of Swedish schools.

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Chapter 6

Policing the School: Dialogues and Crime Reports



Thomas Johansson and Johannes Lunneblad

Introduction: Youth at Risk and Youth as Risk

Police officer: There were some schools that didn't report to the police, even when it got quite serious. Then we were told that we were required to report. Schools don't stand beside the legal system. The same rules that are applied in society should be applied in schools. It was a good thought. Nevertheless, it created quite a lot of confusion at school.

In the famous British study, *Policing the Crisis. Mugging, the State and Law & Order* (1978/2013), Stuart Hall and his colleagues investigated the moral panic surrounding the phenomenon of mugging in British society during the 1970s. A central thesis in their study was that the institutions of social control – e.g., the police, the school and the media – played an active role not only in controlling anti-social behaviour, but also in how this behaviour was labelled, classified and publicly understood. When a society feels threatened by the pace and direction of social and cultural changes there are often tendencies towards the development of more traditionalist views on law and order. Although it is probably difficult to follow Hall and his colleagues' model of investigating crime and order, we have been inspired by their description of how *signification spirals* are developed, where certain issues of concern are identified, certain groups of people are targeted, and the issues are gradually multiplied and linked together, leading to an escalation of the threat and calls for firm measures.

As regards criminality and subversive behaviour, young people are seen both as a *risk group* – there are data showing, e.g., that young people show high levels of anxiety, stress and psychological ill health – and as a *security risk* (Kelly 2003; Follesø 2015). Kelly (2003) frames this as an *institutionalized mistrust of youth*.

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Following Foucault's theory of governmentality, Kelly discusses different forms of regulation as well as subjection of youth. Many interventions and institutional practices aim at controlling and managing young people "for their own good". Kelly argues that there is a need to investigate and problematize different attempts to predict normal behaviour among youth. In discussions on young people's transition into adulthood, risk has become a self-evident term. Follesø (2015) argues that there is a need to develop new terms and approaches to youth and social work. There is always a risk that the categorization of youth at risk tends to lead to exclusion. Consequently, there is a need to investigate categorizations and definitions of young people 'at risk'.

The chapter is based on a study designed as two interlinked case studies. The purpose of this design is to allow us to discuss and analyse how different professional views and attitudes regarding school violence are expressed and manifested in the narratives (Becker 1970). The cases in this respect consist of, on the one hand, principals and school health teams working closely with young students in the school. On the other hand, we have the local police, working to prevent violence in different neighbourhoods, both inside and outside the schools. We have had no ambition to match schools or representatives of the local police force, but instead primarily focused on the professional attitudes and views. When possible, however, we will also try to bring the local urban contexts into our analysis of the material.

The student welfare team can be described as an expert system, in that it contains competences relevant to assisting children and young people in need of support. This expert system is also tied into other expert and knowledge systems, such as child psychiatry, social work and the police. The knowledge and expert systems permeating schools today lead to categorization processes. For example, when approaching unruly behaviour and violence in schools, it is now common to see this as a police matter. Incidents and situations are thus framed and categorized through juridical and social discourses. These processes can be framed in terms of discipline and control systems (Foucault 1979). On the one hand, categorizations can be helpful when deciding what measures should be taken at schools. On the other, using them moves the focus from the social context to the categorized and stigmatized individual. Central to the present analysis is also trying to understand how different forms of power are connected to the processes of categorization of conduct. In his work, Foucault (1990) has shown how repressive power works through the law by defining what is forbidden and what is not. Schools, on the other hand, have been used as an example of productive power, for the way in which they teach students self-discipline by teaching them to want to follow norms (Foucault 1979). Focusing on the key statements and attitudes of the professionals, where talk about police reports is present, our ambition is to get closer to the different ways in which schools approach violence and what forms of power are used. We will focus in particular on how different professional groups categorize and talk about school violence.

This chapter is structured into three sections. First, we will provide an overview of relevant studies in this area of research. Second, we will analyse how different professional groups tend to categorize and approach violence among young people. Finally, we will sum up and draw some preliminary conclusions.

School Violence, School Professionals and the Police

School professionals and the police often have different perspectives on how to handle student misconduct. This has been described in terms of the existence of a number of obstacles to cooperation, including distrust between the police and school personnel. Whereas the police act based on a 'fear of crime', the school personnel act based on a 'fear of labelling' students as criminals (Coon and Travis 2012). Research has also shown a lack of agreement between the police and educators regarding the role and function of the police in schools. There are both educators who want to receive assistance from the police with disciplinary issues, and educators who believe that policing schools will 'criminalize' students and their behaviour (Theriot 2009). However, research has also shown that police officers refuse to file reports on students for minor misbehaviour in the classroom (Coon and Travis 2012). Police involvement in schools may be counterproductive. Police involvement may give the impression that educators have lost the initiative to promote a positive school culture (Tillyer et al. 2011). There is also a concern expressed by police officers that their involvement in enforcing school rules concerning minor infractions may provoke students and cause them to become aggressive (Coon and Travis 2012; Morris 2005). The presence of police in schools also contributes to a heightened awareness of potential threats, which may have a negative effect on students' feelings of safety at school (Tillyer et al. 2011).

Schools with a higher police presence also have higher recorded crime rates than do schools without a police presence. The pattern seems to be that when the police are involved in schools, acts of simple violence and disturbing behaviour are reported more frequently. One interpretation of this is that the presence of police serves to re-define behaviour problems as criminal justice problems, rather than as educational, psychological or social issues. Their presence also tends to undermine educators' competence in handling behavioural problems and bring confusion to schools' disciplinary procedures (Na and Gottfredson 2013). Educators are sometimes unwilling to use law enforcement in schools, because they do not want to feel they are relinquishing their own control (Coon and Travis 2012). Police presence in a school may also be taken as evidence that the school is unsafe. Previous research has revealed that there are fears that police involvement will cause both the school and the neighbourhood to get a bad reputation (Theriot 2009). Other scholars have argued that views on police officers' presence in schools need to be nuanced. The presence of police has in fact led to higher rates of detection of weapons and serious violence. Involvement of police officers is, however, more common in schools situated in disadvantaged urban areas where crime is more likely to occur. It is also not clear whether police presence prevents crime or is mainly reactive (Swartz et al. 2016).

Research from schools in US has shown that black, minority and poor students are more likely to be subjected to punishment than white middle-class students (Gregory et al. 2010; Skiba et al. 2011). However, different opinions have been expressed as to how this should be interpreted. One explanation is that because police involvement and security measures are common in a large number of schools, this has contributed to a general criminalization of disciplinary problems in schools.

Thus, youth growing up in socially disadvantaged and violent neighbourhoods are overrepresented in the statistics of arrested and suspended students (Kupchik et al. 2015). The presence of armed police in cafeterias and hallways leads to a climate of violence and fear, which in turn can lead to less academic motivation and increased misbehaviour (Watts and Erevelles 2004; Morris 2005). The perspective that the best way to handle behaviour problems is through legal action has been labelled the “school-to-prison pipeline”. The overrepresentation of black, minority and poor students in prison stands as proof of the on-going reproduction of inequality (Casella 2001; Wacquant 2008; Irwin et al. 2013). In Sweden, residential segregation has contributed to increasing differences between schools (Beach and Sernhede 2011). This has led to a situation in which disadvantaged and immigrant groups are concentrated in the same schools, which are often seen as “immigrant schools”. According to Milani and Jonsson (2012), the immigrant student has become, in the media and the public mind, synonymous with a violent and rowdy young man. In Sweden, there has been a debate about the impact this is having on how educators and other professionals exercise their authority (Estrada et al. 2012).

To sum up, research has shown that there is a complex relation between police interventions, schools’ preventive work and the construction of safe school environments. Some studies point towards the negative effects of police interventions, in the form of criminalization and stigmatization of pupils and schools. Studies have also revealed that there is sometimes a strained and complex relation between the police, on the one hand, and the teachers and school health teams, on the other, not least as regards methods of handling school violence. Furthermore, we have discussed the relation between neo-liberal policy and juridification as part of more general changes in Sweden and other post-industrial societies. It is our hope that the present study will generate knowledge about how such changes may influence professionals’ understandings of school violence.

Constructing the “Perpetrator” and the “Victim”

We will start with a case study of the school professionals who work more closely with questions of school violence, and then move on to the local police forces and how they approach the same questions. This section will be concluded with a comparative analysis of the two cases.

Case Study I: The School Health Team

The results show that different perspectives on reporting to the police are found among the school officials. In an interview with the principal at Water Lily School, the routines that have been established through collaboration between the municipality and the police are described.

Principal, Water Lily School: In my view, this is a difficult balancing act. We are trying to communicate to the students that the same law operates on the sidewalk as at the school. We have no specific criminal law for the school. If you hit someone, the same law applies, whether at school or outside school, it's as bad as it is. Then there are a number of decrees the municipality has developed together with the local police, to be used when reporting a crime in school. We are supposed to use these forms when we report violence in the school. However, we still have to make certain distinctions. The students are not just in school to learn, but also to be good people. We have a dual mission.

This policy can be interpreted to mean that violence in school should be handled in the same way violence outside school is. This strategy would seem to result in heightened expectations to report students engaged in violent acts to the police. The principal also addresses how they communicate this to the students at school. Filing a police report is, in those situations, viewed as taking a stand, showing that the same laws are applied inside and outside school. In this way, a police report can be interpreted as having symbolic value – sending a message to students and parents about what behaviours are not tolerated in society. However, there is also a duality inherent in this policy. Reporting a student is not always thought to be in line with the best method of fostering good citizens. The difficulty of deciding what constitutes a crime is a repeated concern mentioned in our material. This is exemplified in the following interview:

Principal, Daisy School: This is always an issue; you have to find somewhere to draw the line. We cannot report everything that happens to the police. We don't want the police to do our work. But it's really hard to know where to draw the line.

The professionals often used the distinction between serious physical violence and pushing and insults, as examples of what kinds of situations are reported to the police, on the one hand, and considered conflicts that can be handled by educators, on the other: "It is mostly, or almost always, when there has been physical violence. Then we report to the police" (school counsellor, Thistle School). Smaller conflicts and occasional fights are described as an almost inevitable part of everyday life at school. These are considered difficult to avoid, especially when a great number of young people are compelled to spend most the day together in a delimited space.

The educators also emphasized that protecting and fostering students was the school's not the police's responsibility. The professionals emphasized the importance of telling the students that they were there for them and that they could be trusted. In the following interview, one of the school counsellors elaborates on this:

School counsellor, Cow Parsnip School: It may be an important way to show respect for those who have been subjected to a crime. You are a victim, just as if an adult had been in the same situation. However, I can also feel that it is a weak society that leaves everything to the police. It's a signal to the children, saying that we adults cannot solve this; that we were forced to leave it to the police.

One argument, often used, is that filing a police report shows that the professionals are concerned and considering the victim's perspective. However, as expressed by the school counsellor, there is also a downside to this, in that the professionals may lose their initiative in deciding how to handle the situation. Reporting to the

police could also damage the relation to the students. In the following example, the principal at Honeysuckle School discusses this:

Principal, Honeysuckle School: A police report usually makes the work more difficult. This is because we lose the students' and parents' trust in the school. This occurs regardless of whether you are the victim or the perpetrator ... The victims can feel very vulnerable, because we made a report. They feel like everybody knows they have been victimized, which makes them feel more vulnerable. The student you label as a perpetrator often feels betrayed by us, that we are letting them down.

Previous research has shown that there are several obstacles to using categories such as perpetrator and victim in schools. The school professionals mentioned that the student categorized as an offender might feel betrayed. Another aspect of this, articulated in the interviews, was that the educators were afraid of placing the victim in a vulnerable position. In the educators' experience, students sometimes had doubts about being categorized as a victim. This was also something school officials discussed during the interviews. The following example is from a focus group interview at Thistle School:

School counsellor, Thistle School: There are some students who define themselves as victims, and of course this makes it easier. When the students tell us that I'm a victim of this... Then we can act in line with our policies. This is, however, not always the case... There are students; we know that they are exposed. ... But they don't view themselves as victims. They don't want that, it would be admitting defeat.

School officials, Thistle School: There is also a gender difference.

School counsellor, Thistle School: Yes, what I was talking about is this group of boys, who don't want to see themselves as victims. With girls it's often different ...

The officials highlight how the category of victim could also be viewed as something problematic for the students. They describe how students exposed to bullying or violence are in a difficult situation in many respects. One aspect is admitting this situation to themselves and to others, which can itself be a painful process. The students' resistance to viewing themselves as victims also makes it difficult for professionals to provide students with the support they need.

Filing a police report is framed in different ways depending on where the schools are situated. The school professionals in the middle-class-area schools described the importance of being vigorous and re-establishing parents' trust in the school. At the Daisy School, most of the parents were well educated, had high expectations and placed great demands on the school. For example, parents used their social network and knowledge to get their way. One such example was of a family that was not satisfied with work of the school psychologist and came to school with two independent assessments from two other psychologists. Findings from conversations with school officials, or observations of dialogues among them, reveal the importance of documentation that allows school officials to show how they have handled various issues.

Principal, Daisy School: It is important that we document the measures we take, so we can account for this later, if the parents go further to other agencies.

School counsellor, Daisy School: It is very important to arrange a meeting immediately with the parents! They are of course worried about their children – the parents are also aware of their rights, and are quick to make complaints to other authorities.

In the narratives of school officials at schools situated in middle-class areas, there is also a duality as regards reporting to the police, as this may cause parents to lose their confidence in the school. In the long term, this may result in the school becoming less attractive to future students. At schools situated in socially disadvantaged areas, the discussion was framed differently. The school professionals described filing police reports as an important way to show students, parents and other inhabitants that the neighbourhood was part of the Swedish legal system. The principal at Cow Parsnip School said: “We have to show that we trust in the police and this society. Therefore, we call the police when something serious happens”. In the narratives, concern was expressed about the development of parallel societies that apply their own laws and rules. However, at Cow Parsnip School there was also some ambivalence, in that the high police presence in the neighbourhood and the school could easily result in students being labelled as criminals: “Crime is handled much more harshly here” (*Principal, Cow Parsnip School*).

As we can see there is considerable ambivalence among the school professionals regarding how to respond to and deal with school violence. Some of the interviewees stress the importance of creating dialogues and of being able to create social bonds to the young students. Reporting incidents to the police could potentially threaten the bond between students and school professionals.

Case Study II: The Local Police

Now we will turn to the interviews with the police officers. This part will be structured in accordance with our three research questions, starting with the question of how the police frame and talk about police reports in schools.

The police officers are well aware that they frame and define violence and different problems in schools somewhat differently than the principals and school health team do. In their view, teachers and other school professionals tend to focus on and protect the long-term relation to the pupil, whereas the police tend to focus on questions of violence, guilt, crime and responsibility. These differences are also reflected in the following quotation from a police officer.

They sometimes have problems seeing a police report as a way of helping the individual to accept that they did something bad. I get the feeling that they just don't trust our methods. No one younger than 18 years is put in jail, of course. Instead they get care. They are afraid of letting them face the consequences. They also feel that there is a risk that they will lose the young people's trust, if they talk with us. That could be true in the short run, but in the long run they will know what we stand for. There are many ways of showing that you care. But it is also important to draw a clear line: I will not accept this! It is crucial that you learn to face this, but some of the teachers aren't prepared to do this (Police officer, who has worked in different urban areas).

Comparing briefly with the school officials' narratives, it seems that two different *institutional discourses* meet in the school. Naturally, it is often difficult to distinguish between a well-defined “crime” and different kinds of everyday conflicts

and trouble between pupils. Moreover, different knowledge regimes meet here, defining, understanding and framing school violence in conflicting ways. There are, however, also examples of police believing that school professionals tend to exaggerate and over-report incidents as “crimes”. Overall, the police identify a considerable ambivalence among teachers and principals.

Sometimes schools want to file reports on everything, for example, trivial brawls between youngsters. However, sometimes we also have to push them to report things. We have to tell them that reporting a 13-year-old kid for a crime is not such a big deal. The principals often have a watchful eye on these things, but sometimes we have to tell them that this IS a crime. We know there will be no legal consequences for a 13-year-old, but the social services will talk with them, and the more information the social services get, the better they are prepared to develop their action plan. This is not our business. The more adequate information the social services get, the more resources they can mobilize to help the young person. A police report can make a difference and also lead to a good treatment plan. So, it's important not to hide crimes, because this can really destroy the young person's chances for a better life (Police officer in a segregated suburb).

Whereas the police have clear definitions of how to frame and define a crime, the school professionals have more diffuse ways of approaching school violence. According to our interviews with school professionals, the police's method of defining crimes can lead to a collapse of the relationship between the professionals and the youngster. This analysis, however, is not shared by the police officers. Instead, they frame their position in these questions in terms of guilt, boundaries and adults' responsibility to uphold laws and regulations.

Interviewer: For the young person, a police report can serve as a reminder that his behaviour is not acceptable. Do you ever discuss these things?

Police officer: Yes, filing a police report is definitively a signal from society. However, we often tend to end up focusing mostly on the perpetrators, and not that much on the victims. But the perpetrators often turn into victims, later on (Police officer in a segregated suburb).

Looking more closely at the construction of the relation between perpetrator and victim, there are certain similarities between how the school professionals and the police define this relation. Both agree that it is a highly unstable relation, and that the roles can also change over time. According to the police, victims many times become offenders, and vice versa. This makes it even more import to put an end to school violence. However, compared to the schools, the police seem to have a clear picture of what needs to be done. The only way to stop school violence is to report all violent acts that can be legally defined as crimes.

In my view, the schools should file more police reports. I often meet kids who are being harassed and exposed to violence, and when the schools refrain from reacting, they have hell to deal with. I've met so many youngsters who feel the adult world is looking away. I find this deeply disturbing. Who can you trust, then? There is no one, and you just have to stay in school (Police officer working in the centre of the city).

The police officers interviewed are well aware that there are significant differences between how they interact with young people and how they frame the schools in different urban areas. According to our interviewees, there is a greater police presence in segregated and “poor” urban areas than in more affluent areas in the city.

A common opinion among the police officers interviewed is that certain schools tend to avoid reporting serious incidents and violence. This was pointed out clearly in the following interview:

At some schools, for example in segregated areas, it is, of course, impossible to report all incidents. There are a lot of incidents at such schools. The teachers somehow learn where to draw the line, and when the school has to report or not. They also learn when pupils have crossed the boundaries, and when it's important to show the offenders, the parents and the victims that "crimes" are taken seriously. Certain actions have consequences. However, we also have principals in other segregated urban areas that refuse to report crimes, even though some of the pupils tend to rule the school. This has been a huge problem for us. We have tried to talk with the schools. Through pupils we became aware that other pupils had been seriously abused, and the school had not reported this. This would never happen in the more affluent areas of the city. In these areas news about incidents at school is immediately spread among the parents. They form Facebook groups. But these kinds of actions are non-existent in the segregated areas. They don't have that kind of social cohesion (Police officer, who has worked in different urban areas).

Taking a closer look at this narrative, one thing is clear: At the same time as the police officer talks about different urban areas, he is also contributing to an ongoing process of social construction and categorization of these areas. There is always a risk that these kinds of polarized descriptions and constructions of urban areas will become truths and guidelines for police work. One police officer, working in a segregated urban area, also expressed certain concerns about the consequences of stigmatizing certain urban areas:

Young people in this area have to face regular contacts with the police. This situation stands out and differs a lot compared to other more affluent urban areas. If young people gather here, well, then we automatically suspect they are up to something. We often have to perform a visitation, a protective visitation. This occurs more frequently in this area, compared to other areas that is, and sometimes we pick the wrong people. They are not always up to something, but if you hang out here during certain late hours, and in a gang constellation, then... Sometimes we are right on the mark, other times we fail. I understand how innocent youth can see this as harassment, and they also often confirm this (Police, segregated urban area).

In this narrative, we can trace ambivalence and an awareness of the consequences of policing and, in the long run, also stigmatizing the young innocent people living in these areas. Segregated areas are pointed out as more 'problematic' and in greater need of police presence, whereas other areas are described as unproblematic. At the same time, the police officers are very clear concerning the need to always report crimes. In this sense, they differ from the school professionals, who take a more ambivalent approach to the same questions.

Dialogues and Police Reports

The school professionals have a dual mission: not only teaching, but also contributing to value and identity formation. Comparing the two professional cultures – that of the police and that of the professional school staff – there are both differences and

similarities in how school violence is approached and handled. Whereas the school professionals have a more ambivalent and complex way of approaching these issues, the police officers are clearer about their role and action plans. There is a high degree of institutional reflexivity in schools regarding what to report and when to file police reports. There is a fear that police reports may lead to labelling young persons as criminal, which may in turn lead to negative self-images and, in the long run, a negative spiral of Othering and construction of “deviance”. The school professionals also care about protecting their relation to the pupils and their parents. Previous research has shown that school officials are afraid that police involvement will give the impression that the school is unsafe. Reporting incidents to the police may also make school professionals feel they are relinquishing control over the situation. According to the school personnel, police involvement may undermine students’ and parents’ trust in educators’ ability to manage violence and behaviour problems. The police officers regard a police report as something positive and constructive, in that it mobilizes resources to help the young person assume responsibility for his/her actions. There are no reflections or thoughts expressed concerning how being defined as a criminal may affect the young person’s self-image and identity.

The professional cultures of both groups have problems in clearly defining the perpetrator and the victim. Many times, the categories overlap: the victim may sometimes become a perpetrator, and vice versa. However, we can still identify a difference in how school professionals and police officers approach this diffuseness. Whereas the school professionals tend to work relationally and try to solve conflicts and violence through dialogue and interaction, the police officers primarily see their role as identifying offenders and crimes. Although police officers show a certain degree of institutional reflexivity, reflecting on the changing relation between offender and victim, they ultimately tend to freeze the situation and focus on the perpetrator and the crime.

Looking more closely at how these professional cultures approach questions of segregation, school violence and professionalism, we can identify reflexive ways of talking about the relation between crimes, social unrest, segregation and working with young people. Both professional groups seem to provide a similar analysis of the ‘problem’, and they also suggest similar strategies for handling violence and urban segregation. Both professional groups put more focus on policing segregated areas. The police put segregated areas under surveillance, targeting young people who gather in public spaces and defining them as potential suspects. The teachers in segregated areas also tend to use a more juridical approach to school violence, especially compared to teachers in more affluent middle-class areas.

Finally, the tendency of schools to treat unruly behaviour, bullying and violence as crimes can be viewed as part of a general political change in the welfare state in post-industrial societies, with greater emphasis on law and order as well as individual responsibility. These policy changes have contributed to a focus on legal measures. Such measures can essentially be understood as part of a repressive exercise of power. The criminalization of certain forms of behaviour is contributing to

an increased focus on aspects of schools' legal responsibility. However, more resources for surveillance and discipline do not necessarily facilitate mutual respect, dialogue and an inclusive school.

The present chapter generates new knowledge on how different professional groups relate to and understand the various measures taken to deal with school violence. In particular, the focus has been on the increasing tendency to report crimes in schools, and the consequences of this trend. The results provide knowledge about the juridification of the Swedish schools in relation to policy changes and socio-economic conditions. However, the study also has its limitations, especially the relatively small amount of data. This makes it difficult to draw general conclusions and make policy recommendations. Clearly, in Sweden as well as internationally, more research is needed on violence in schools as well as on preventive measures implemented to create better psychosocial school environments.

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Chapter 7

Segregation, Class, “Race” and School Violence



Kristina Hunehall Berndtsson

Contextual Perspectives on School Violence

The aim of the study is to provide a contextual perspective on school violence by exploring how school violence is understood and handled by principals and student health teams. The location is two demographically diverse secondary schools. Sweden has long been well known for its prosperity, as a wealthy and well-educated society with ambitious welfare programmes and low poverty rates (Gustafsson and Österberg 2018). However, political changes have contributed to radical transformations in Swedish society. Residential segregation – both ethnic and social – has increased considerably. In recent years, Sweden has experienced a large inflow of migrants. Poverty rates among immigrant children are much higher than among children of native-born parents, and child poverty in Sweden is largely a problem linked to immigrant children. As a result of social and ethnic residential segregation, a substantial number of immigrant children grow up in poverty in neighbourhoods that are seen as less attractive (Galloway et al. 2015; Gustafsson et al. 2017; Gustafsson and Österberg 2018). Both rich and poor areas in Sweden have become more ethnically and socio-economically homogeneous. It is therefore possible to talk about social class in relation to an area’s social status.

The Swedish education system is usually described as a cornerstone of Swedish society. The media’s description of Swedish schools, however, is characterized by repeated reports of unruly behaviour and school violence. These media depictions are mostly taken from segregated suburban, low-income areas. Schools in ethnic white middle-class areas rarely end up in these “journalistic dramas”, regardless of the fact that school violence is not merely a suburban phenomenon. According to

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Jonsson (2015), these journalistic stories about the suburb have resulted in social problems, violence and unruly behaviour becoming an obvious part of how people imagine students in suburban immigrant schools in Sweden, especially boys with immigrant backgrounds. The term “immigrant boy” has become synonymous with “unruly student” and this perception has become an established part of Swedish culture.

Segregation combined with urban marginality has become an ever-increasing problem in Swedish cities. As Wacquant (2008) points out, urban marginality is not the same everywhere, state structures and policies affect how a nation articulates class, place and “race”. In Sweden, disadvantaged and immigrant groups are concentrated in the same schools, in areas described by the media in terms of immigration, poverty, social insecurity, criminality, drugs, and citizens in need of police supervision. Using Wacquant’s terminology, these places can be seen as *territorially stigmatized*. The status of an area is determined by its position on a status hierarchy. The areas associated with the lowest status are often urban segregated areas, described as problem areas, that attract a disproportionate amount of attention from the media, politicians, various social institutions and in the public debate (Wacquant 2008). According to Skeggs (1997), the working classes are often portrayed and classified by the middle classes as revolutionary and dangerous, threatening and without respect – as groups thought to be in need of surveillance and control, with little legitimacy or social value. Skeggs underlines that it is the middle classes’ high social status and moral authority that gives them the power to cast judgments of class, “race” and gender. Nevertheless, as Wacquant (2008) stresses, the result of a territorial stigma is that the residents are made responsible for the area’s reputation and that the area is perceived as a problem per se, not as a problem caused by society.

On the other hand, the Swedish school curriculum states that the school is a social and cultural meeting place. This means no one should be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of ethnic affiliation, gender, religion or other belief system, and that all such tendencies should be actively combated by staff. School staff should uphold the fundamental values that are set out in the Education Act and in the curriculum, and clearly dissociate themselves from anything that conflicts with these values. Education should impart and establish respect for the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based. All parents should be able to send their children to school, fully confident that their children will not be prejudiced in favour of any particular view (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2018).

In Sweden, the age of criminal responsibility is 15 years. Children under 15 years are diverted from the justice system to social services. In recent years, students’ violent actions in Swedish schools have been reported more frequently to the police as criminal offences, even though there is no consensus regarding what incidents should be reported to the police as criminal offences (Vainik and Kassman 2018).

This chapter discusses how principals and student health teams from two Swedish secondary schools describe school violence and strategies for violent and unruly behaviour. Schools’ handling of unruly behaviour, bullying and violence is based on *disciplinary systems* of surveillance, control and punishment, which are used to regulate students’ moral behaviour and teach them self-discipline (Foucault 1991).

Disciplinary power, viewed from a Foucauldian perspective, considers that power within institutional systems, the state apparatus and the law should be understood as a network of *power relations*, and that power and resistance are part of all human relationships (Foucault 1990). Thus it is important that, when conducting a study, the researcher have no preconceived opinions about which power relations are significant.

The present study is based on a qualitative design, consisting of two case studies in the form of two schools. The empirical material consists of interviews and observations, methods well suited to providing a case study with a wide range of data (Becker 1970; Merriam 1988; Yin 2014). In total, 15 school professionals have been interviewed, mainly principals and members of each school’s student health team. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 min. In addition, four student health team meetings have been observed. At one of the schools, the social services were present at these meetings.

A carefully considered choice of cases is important when a case study design is applied (David 2006). In the present study, strategic choices of secondary schools were made to highlight the importance of class, ‘race’ and place in relation to school violence. The selected schools are located in two very different areas, characterized by various socio-economic conditions. Class, place and “race” are crucial differences that distinguish the two schools. The two schools are part of a research study in which several case studies are included (Becker 1970; Merriam 1988; Yin 2014). The cases illustrate significant differences between how principals and student health teams categorize and explain degrading treatment and violence and the strategies chosen to address school problems. These differences can be linked to the schools’ respective locations in areas with different socio-economic conditions as well as to ethnic segregation.

Provided below is an analysis of the two cases: *Daisy School* and *Dandelion School*. The chapter concludes with a comparison of the cases and discussion of significant differences. A case study research design has dual purpose. On the one hand, the purpose is to achieve a detailed understanding of each case. On the other, it is to try to develop more general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process (Becker 1970). The focus of this chapter is to take a *class, place* and *power-based perspective*. The theoretical framework of *disciplinary power* and *territorial stigmatization* (Foucault 1990; Foucault 1991; Wacquant 2008) enables the addition of a valuable educational sociological point of view to the discussion on school violence, the goal being to shed some light on school violence from a contextual perspective.

Two Schools – Two Cases

The schools are presented as two separate cases, based on interviews and observations with each principals and student health team. The first case to be introduced is Daisy School, followed by Dandelion School.

Daisy School

Daisy School has 460 students (grade 7–9) and a total of about 60 school staff. The vast majority of students are reported to complete their schooling. The school is located in an upper-middle-class area consisting of ethnic white inhabitants, living in a rural setting where the coast is the predominant geographical feature. The school's catchment area is known for its high social status. The area can therefore be described as a *territorial high-status area*, in relation to Wacquant's (2008) theory of territorial stigmatization. According to the principal, the school recently received a few immigrant students, which caused racist reactions from residents in the area, but not from the students.

Professionals' Narratives of Violations and Violence at Daisy School

The students are described as very well-behaved in all interviews and are said to not openly display any unruly or violent behaviour.

Interviewer: Every time I've been here, it has been very quiet at school. Do you see or hear any violations in the corridors or elsewhere?

School psychologist, Daisy School: No, no, no!

Interviewer: You do not?

School psychologist, Daisy School: No, not me, I do not!

The social educator says that students do not display unruly behaviour and comments: "No, of course they don't! Then they would be stupid!" This shows that good behaviour is something the social educator expect of the students and take for granted regarding students' social performance. The students are generally described as respectable and well mannered, always polite and as having good social skills. The principals and the student health team never observe violence or violations between students, which they suggest is created from the social pressure to act according to social class standards:

Principal, Daisy School: I think that, and it may have to do with socio-economic background, that I think the violations may be more *subtle* here. Even what may seem like a game, you know. But there are in fact *dark undertones* in many of their activities.

"Dark undertones" are said to hide under the calm surface of students' social interaction, and the school counsellor say that only "a fraction" of all violations between students reach them. Bullying and violations are hidden by the strong social demands for respectable conduct, and the school staff also expect students to hide any violations. The principals and the student health team report that their poor insight into the student group causes a situation where they do not know who the "victims" are, and where anyone could be an offender. Students' behaviour can be said to be in accordance with the social norms that characterize the upper-middle class in the area, which stipulates self-control and self-discipline among the students. But that does not mean

that the principals and the student health team believe students never act violently towards each other. The students just do it in places where adults do not see or have no access, mostly on Internet-based social media. Cyber bullying is described as the biggest problem at Daisy School, a problem so serious that even death threats have occurred. The only way for school staff to find out about cases of bullying, violations and violence is if the students themselves tell them about such instances. Among the students who come forward and tell, a clear gender pattern can be distinguished:

School counsellor, Daisy School: It is more often that girls seek me, the school nurse or her mentor. No, boys are perhaps a bit more invisible and do not come and tell themselves, anyway. It may well be that they don't come to school, because they have a stomach ache or something.

According to the school counsellor, girls seek help more often. The boys are described as an almost invisible group at school, because they do not themselves seek out the school staff and tell them about bullying or violations, at least not to the same extent as girls do. The boys are thus a vulnerable group at school. Another category of students who are vulnerable to violations are those belonging to the lower-middle class. Students from wealthy families are described as intolerant of students with poorer economical circumstances. The reason for degrading treatment and bullying is related to class markers like clothes and other belongings, although this description alone simplifies the problems between students. Physical violence almost never occurs at Daisy School. The school counsellor says with emphasis:

School counsellor, Daisy School: Well, violence, I would say, it almost doesn't happen! Physical violence: No, it's *very* unusual of course! Or, of course, it's clear that it may occur, but *very rarely!*

Physical violence at school is described as unusual, and it is “never a question of gross abuse”, according to the school psychologist. There may be acts of violence like being “drawn in the hair” or “pressed against the wall”, but they usually do not end in fights according to a principal. At Daisy School, the power of social class standards appears to be stronger than the acts of violence, at least according to the professionals' narratives.

Handling School Violence at Daisy School

Daisy School has its' own model for dealing with offensive treatment and violence. The principals and the student health team describe this model as “a staircase”. The measures taken are based on a scale; they are constantly stepped up to mark the degree of seriousness for the students. The model will thus be referred to here as *the staircase model*.

When school staff detect degrading treatment or violence, they notify the school principal in writing. The principals then decide what measures are to be taken. In the staircase model, the first step in dealing with violations is usually individual support in the form of conversations with both victims and offenders. It is mainly the student

health team that deals with all students involved, as well as contacts with their parents. The student health team then proceeds with conversations in smaller groups or in the whole class, depending on the specific situation. When the professionals speak with the student(s) who have violated the rules, discreet locations are chosen. The school nurse gives the following picture:

School nurse, Daisy School: We have many doors here, so nobody knows who is coming and going. We try to be discreet. Sometimes we use a room in an entirely different place when we talk to students who have done something wrong.

Discretion is considered important in not pointing out students as offenders. An additional way of not pointing out individual students is by integrating discussions about maintaining good morale in the classroom. No matter what action is taken in the staircase model, the school nurse points out that: “We will not end until the person who has been violated is feeling everything is alright, and that is important!” When the students who violated others improve their behaviour, they get praise. Their parents are also informed of this progress because: “The parents must be kept up to date”, according to the school nurse. Measures are taken until the problem is under control. Further sanctions in the staircase model are, for example, a written warning, suspension, and as the ultimate form of sanction – a police report.

Principal, Daisy School: So we have this staircase, and I think it’s important to follow that model. Otherwise, inflation may occur if the principal or the student health team has to handle the case immediately. Because you know, then you have nothing ... It has an effect!

The staircase model is simply described as an effective method of addressing degrading treatment because the disciplinary sanctions do work to scare the students. The parents are described as having high expectations that the school will handle unruly behaviour, violations and degrading treatment. On the other hand, parents have very hard time accepting that their own children could be the offenders. A common response from parents, according to one of the principals, is: “My child does not do those kinds of things!” According to the school staff, they must be able to provide proof if they accuse a student of any form of violation or violence. Because most of the violations occur online, this evidence is usually found when parents refuse to believe that the allegations are true. As the social educator presents the situation as follows:

Social educator, Daisy School: It’s hard today not to believe what we say, what’s on the Internet; you can see and you can read. We show them (the parents) when needed. When we are not believed, so to speak. Then they have to read what has been written.

Presenting evidence when parents show their mistrust of the school staff is a way for the school to claim its authority in relation to the parents. The parents often tell school staff how to do their job “at all levels” within the institution, according to the school psychologist, who adds:

Interviewer: Are parents telling you how to do your job?

School psychologist, Daisy School: Yes, and at *all levels* at school! Yes, and teachers and mentors need to put a lot of effort into long email conversations, incredibly long email conversations! And there are also many notifications to the Schools Inspectorate.

Interviewer: From the parents?

School psychologist, Daisy School: Yes exactly! I think the vast majority of staff experience that the parents are really looking for something...

Interviewer: To complain about?

School psychologist, Daisy School: Yes, Yes. There are parents who take a lot of energy from the staff, especially from mentors and principals.

The school psychologist, as well as school staff in the other interviews, express a sense of being supervised by the parents continuously. The parents' high demands on the school are related to the parents' and children's social class, according to one of the principals: "They are wealthy people, aware of demands and able to make demands". The parents' class affiliation entails the attitude that the school staff are hierarchically subordinate to themselves, and therefore in need of their guidance. The principals and the student health team document all actions taken to address violations, as a safeguard in case the parents report them to the Schools Inspectorate: And the parents at Daisy School are said to file many reports to show their dissatisfaction if they feel the school has not taken adequate measures. The principals also get help from a lawyer in responding to these notifications. One of the school's principals says that it is the notifications that have taught them how "important it is to have a clear structure, in the form of "action – follow-up", when dealing with violations and violence. Parents appear to use notifications as a means of power. At Daisy School, it is clear that it is the parents' power over the school that has contributed to the model they use to address unruly behaviour, violations and violence, and that the parents' power is based on their social class.

Daisy School does not avoid making police reports if they consider it necessary. It is considered a legitimate action strategy in more serious cases. Police notifications are, however, not often made by the school; this only happens a few times a year. The social educator points out that:

Social educator, Daisy School: It looks very nice if we do not have any police notifications and the newspapers do not write about it. Because the newspapers write when there are police reports, we know that. And it looks good if there aren't any. But to me it's not true if schools don't have anything. No, I don't believe that. Then they don't have teenagers in them.

A school without police notifications is, according to the social educator, the same as a school without teenagers. At the same time, there are no clear directives concerning what should be reported to the police. For example, physical violence does not necessarily mean a police report at Daisy School, while bullying or death threats on the Internet definitely do. The purpose of a police report is, according to one of the principals: "That we show very clearly that society's rules and norms apply here at school"; the other principal emphasizes: "But I think it's sad when I have to make a police report". The parents are said not to mind when their children are reported to the police by the school. On the contrary, parents consider it a good way to teach children to take responsibility for their own actions.

Principal, Daisy School: 19 out of 20 (parents) gave the same message: "Great that you handled this! We have tried to talk to our child at home about the serious consequences it may have, but our child doesn't listen to us. So great that you reported it to the police!" They even swore and said: "What a stupid way for my son to act!" And so on.

For students, a police report usually does not end up as a police matter, but typically with the social services handling the case, depending on the child's age. Or at least the matter should be handled by the social services. But according to the principals and the student health team at Daisy School, they never have any contact with the social services. The explanation they give is that social services do not handle issues if the students have wealthy parents. Thus, at Daisy School, a police report is only a way to scare the students into obedience; it does not have any further consequences for the students. This may be one reason why parents do not worry about police notifications: There is no concern that the children will be treated as criminals, or that the family will be subjected to a social services investigation.

Dandelion School

Dandelion School is located in a segregated urban lower-working-class area, in which unemployment is considered to be very high and the level of education is low. The school has 210 students (grade 6–9), all of whom have immigrant backgrounds and a mother tongue other than Swedish. The school staff are about 40 in number. Of the students, approximately 75 per cent are reported to achieve the goals of their schooling. The area is described by the principals and the student health team as “a classical suburban school”, an “immigrant school” and a “non-Swedish school”. The students come from different parts of the world, but are nonetheless described as a homogeneous group of foreign children by school staff. Owing to repeated negative media attention, the school's catchment area is well known to be socially troubled. The principals and the student health team also use words such as “poverty”, “honour violence” and “young guys selling drugs” in their descriptions of the area. In view of this, Dandelion School can be said to be located in a territorially stigmatized area (Wacquant 2008).

Professionals' Narratives of Violations and Violence at Dandelion School

The principals and the student health team claim that they see students misbehave and act violently towards each other on a daily basis, at least verbally. The assistant principal compares the immigrant students with ethnic white students at “Swedish schools” by saying: “They are not meaner, but they are a bit wilder”. The assistant principal assumes that this phenomenon derives from parenting, and the idea that immigrant children should be allowed to be “wilder” than Swedish children, which is thought to result from different views on childrearing, especially in the Middle East, despite the fact the immigrant families come from all over the world. Regarding the offensive language students are said to use in school, the school nurse gives an

interesting insight by saying that students do not want to repeat these words in their own mother tongue, and adds:

School nurse, Dandelion School: It is more acceptable to say it in Swedish because it’s not for real! They would *never* say such things in their own language! When you call and talk to their parents, and some parents do not speak Swedish very well, and you say: “Do you know what this means?” And once they have understood what the words mean, they become really angry with their children. Of course. Because they react, just as we Swedes do.

Disrespectful behaviour occurs only in “Swedish” according to the school nurse because Swedish is not seen as a ‘real language’, and thus it has no power to violate anyone. Swedish is the language spoken by school staff, the social services and the police, who are the only Swedes people they meet, according to the principals and the student health team. Swedish is the language of the authorities.

At the same time as school staff argue that students are constantly using offensive language, they also say that systematic bullying or cyber bullying is “extremely rare”. The principal actually says the following: “The ethnic Swedish students, or whatever one should define them as, they are silent about it. Our students are not silent about it (refers to systematic bullying)”. Bullying is not seen as a problem. Whether that is correct, however, is doubtful. According to the student health team, it is common for violations to occur between girls in grade six:

School counsellor, Daisy School: Almost every year there are conflicts among the girls in grade six. It *never* fails! They run us down! (Refers to the student health team). And it’s this and that. ... There have been all kinds of problems! They do not understand the limits, and do stupid things. And then there are conflicts between them. They are friends, they are not friends, and they freeze someone out. They can run down here ten times in a day!

The girls are described as violating each other and violating others. Their constant conflicts are both subtle and verbal. Yet these conflicts are considered merely “annoying”, a “classic” problem among girls, and a perpetual problem the school counsellor simply does not seem to take seriously. The student health team do not describe any strategies they use to handle the help-seeking girls. On the contrary, they claim that the problem disappears when the girls grow older. An alternative explanation, however, might be that the girls simply stop seeking help because no help is available. Within the category “all kinds of problems” from the interview above, “honour violence” is also included. It is described as a major problem in the area, as well as among the students. For example, girls are exposed to violations if they fail to exhibit what the student health team describe as a normatively acceptable Muslim clothing code or if they hang out with boys. According to the school nurse, violations that question a girl’s honour are used as a means of power to destroy an individual’s respectability and good reputation:

School nurse, Dandelion School: And that’s why rumours are fatal! And I think they sometimes use this. It might be fun if your brother finds out that you meet Ahmed a little. It is enough to say so, then you have the power!

Physical violence occurs approximately “once a month”, according to the principal, and involves both boys and girls. During the past 3 years, there have only been

fights between students in grades six and seven. The special educator provides an explanation of why violence happens:

Special educator, Dandelion School: They have difficulty resolving conflicts! And then they get angry and cannot speak properly and put it into words. It is part of the development, they leave and are the oldest and so they come here and become the youngest, and then some still have that behaviour. Because teens do not usually fight! They know you shouldn't, and they often solve it before it goes so far.

Only the youngest students end up in fights, usually when their play gets out of hand. The special educator regards the majority of violence as a matter of maturity, suggesting that students are unable to control their feelings when they express themselves. There are also a few criminal students at school, but according to a student safety officer, they do not engage in criminal activities openly at school, nor do they fight, mainly because: "They simply don't dare to do anything when many people can see. They say hello and they are very nice, but ... the police can describe them differently". In other words, there are some criminal students at Dandelion School, but they are not representative of the violence that occurs at school.

Handling School Violence at Dandelion School

At Dandelion School, the student health team is not involved in the school's work with violence and offensive treatment, even though they have adequate education and they themselves say they would like to be part of this work. The principal has decided that only teachers should deal with violence and violations, primarily through talks with both victims, offenders and, if required, the parents of the students involved. According to the principal, the teacher must handle violations directly in the classroom. The principal himself does not want to deal with students in these cases:

Principal, Dandelion School: Should I sit there when I didn't even attend the lesson?! What should I say? I don't know what happened at all! It would be tricky.

The principal does not want to be involved. Teachers, on the other hand, do not always have the time required to handle the students, so they let a student safety officer handle the situation. Unruly behaviour and situations perceived as "may be violations" by the school counsellor happen daily in the school corridors.

School counsellor, Dandelion School: It's enough to walk in the corridor. Things *always* happen in the corridor! There is *a lot* that can be borderline cases! I tell them to quit. It should be obvious, but it's not. Not everyone says something. There are some teachers who... choose to not deal with that conflict. Because it can become a conflict if you speak up.

The special educator describes the school environment in the corridors by saying: "Students use *very bad* language!" The special educator also says that the students "call each other bad things", are "very loud and yell at each other" and sometimes yell even to the staff:

Special educator, Dandelion School: We (staff) hear it *quite often*, it has happened very many times! When a student has been angry with me, I have been told that I am a racist. It has happened *so many* times! “Is it because I am brown?! Is it because...” which I *take* as a violation! I find it terrible to hear such things!

The student health team do not describe any measures to prevent violations, other than reminding students that the behaviour is not acceptable. According to the school counsellor, there are teachers who choose to not even do that, which shows that school staff have no obvious authoritarian role in the school. The power over the school corridors belongs to the students. The lack of strategies to handle students can explain the dynamics between students and school staff. Students do not respect school staff, and professionals seem to make no effort to challenge students’ power. Instead the task is handed to other authorities, such as social services and the police.

In addition to the teachers’ efforts, the school has extensive collaboration with the social services and the police. Social services representatives participate in all student health meetings and describes themselves as “unofficial staff in the student health team”. The school leaves much of the work with offensive treatment and violence to the social services to take care of. The social services are available daily at school and are considered to be a support function by the principals and the student health team, both for students and for staff.

However, it is not just social services staff who are constantly present at Dandelion School, the police are too. The police often visit the school and patrol through the corridors and across the schoolyard. “Nothing has to happen” for the police to take the time to supervise the students, and “no one finds it strange that the police are here”, according to the special educator. The students must be used to the fact that their school day includes police supervision, which is a drastic form of surveillance of these children. It shows societal distrust of the students’ morality and the staff’s professionalism. Even so, the collaboration with the police is described as “very good” by all school staff. The police even attend meetings the school has with parents, together with the social services.

School counsellor, Dandelion School: It’s a preventative conversation with the parents, so the parents become aware that the school is worried!

Interviewer: And what is the role and purpose of the police in this?

School counsellor, Dandelion School: Well, both from the social service and the police, it may be that: “We have seen your child outdoors” (in the area), or that we describe the problems in the area, what the problems are and what can happen. Stuff like that.

The school counsellor insists that the professionals only want to make the parents aware that they are “worried” about the students and that it is a “preventive” meeting. Nothing specific needs to have happened. The school simply wants to educate parents about the risks of living with children in the area, and to do so, they use the social services and the police. It seems that the school staff do not consider themselves to be in a position of authority, as professionals with expert knowledge of children. Instead, they want the social services and the police to help them with their concerns. The purpose of the meeting is to raise concerns, but it also raises fear. The principals and the student health team are well aware that the parents are

afraid of both the social services and the police. Both the principals and the student health team report in the interviews that the parents never want them to contact the police or the social services under any circumstances. School staff nonetheless use the parents' fear of these authorities to educate parents about what they consider to be an acceptable level of parenting.

Dandelion School also files a large number of police reports on students, in accordance with an agreement with the police in the area, regardless of the parents' opposition. Parents' fear of the police and the social services appears clearly in their reactions to the school's attitude towards police notifications of students. According to the principal: "There are no parents who think it's fun to get a police report!" When the parents appeal to the principal not to report their children to the police, the principal reports responding: "It doesn't matter what you think! It will happen!" The assistant principal confirms this:

Assistant principal, Dandelion School: It's often parents do not want it, they don't want a police report. We had two guys who'd been fighting. And the mothers sat here and we said that: "We will report this to the police." But they just said: "No, no, don't do it!"

Interviewer: And then it doesn't matter if you are the parent of the victim or the offender?

Assistant principal, Dandelion school: No, it doesn't matter, they don't want us to do it anyway! "We can handle this ourselves", they say. "It's no problem, we're neighbours". They *do not* want a police report! They *do not* want a notification to the social services! Because we do that too.

The parents appeal to the school not to contact the police or the social services, but this is neglected. Parents have no influence at all over the strategies taken by Dandelion School to address violence and violations. Based on the interviews with the principals and the student health team, it is clear that parents have no power to influence the school's institutional work. There is a widespread belief that the students and their families are in need of care and supervision from authorities, such as the social services and the police. The school considers itself to be an important part of this collaboration. It appears that government agencies believe the lower-working-class children are in need of control and regulation by society. This prevention work is entirely based on the demographic location of the school; everything is about place and social class. It is also a matter of "race". The school counsellor states that the school staff at Dandelion School think the children are "lazy" and that they "expect to be served", compared with ethnic white students at other schools. The school counsellor explains this by saying that it is "something cultural" and "something they bring with them". According to the school counsellor, this is characteristic of immigrant students, regardless of where they are from or whether they were born in Sweden – a view that does not seem likely. The students rather seem to have been institutionalized by all the government oversight that the school exposes them to. The students' offensive language use in Swedish can thus be perceived as a form of resistance against the power that constantly controls them within the institution.

Conclusion

Daisy School and Dandelion School represent two schools whose catchment areas are inhabited by different social classes: Daisy School being located in a territorially high-status area with students from the ethnic white upper-middle class, and Dandelion school in a territorially stigmatized (Wacquant 2008) segregated urban lower-working-class area, with immigrant students only. At both schools, the staff are of the opinion that they take school violence very seriously. However, a comparison shows that the strategies staff use and how staff speak about the students differ significantly.

At Daisy School there is a constant power struggle between school staff and parents. The parents think they have full right to dictate to school staff how they should do their job. When dissatisfied with the school, the parents send notifications to the Schools Inspectorate, and are said to do this often, despite the fact that the school applies comprehensive strategies to deal with offensive treatment. All cases the school handles are followed up and documented, in the event of a notification. As further support, the principals also have a lawyer who helps them respond to these notifications.

The principals and the student health team at Daisy School use a well-developed model for dealing with violence and violations, referred to as *the staircase model*. The different steps in the staircase model range from conversations, written warnings and suspensions, to police reports. The measures taken are constantly stepped up to mark the degree of seriousness for the students. Steps taken in the staircase model are unpleasant for the offenders, but always taken with discretion. Police reports occur, though not very often. Even if a police report has a deterrent effect on the students, their future lives will not be profoundly affected by it. Not even the social services performs its expected follow-up of cases when students are of upper-middle-class background.

At Dandelion School, the student health team does not work with school violence at all. The school does not use any specific model to regulate student behaviour and deal with offensive treatment and violence. School staff still consider that students are in need of behavioural regulation, a task they largely assign to other authorities. The school has very well-established cooperation with the social services and the police, just like other schools in the area.

Students at Dandelion School are often reported to both the social services and the police by the school. School staff seem to take for granted that the students’ belonging to a lower social class means they are in need of guidance from the social services and the police. The school applies low tolerance when it comes to violence, following an agreement with the police in the area. On most occasions, it is the school’s youngest students the school reports to the police. This occurs, for example, when students start fighting when they are unable to control their feelings or when games get out of control. The school files police reports despite the fact that

the students' parents are against such actions. Moreover, parents do not want any contact with the social services. There are no obvious reasons why school professionals should hand over the task of disciplining students to the social services or the police as a general strategy for addressing behavioural problems. In the case of Dandelion School, there is a clear connection between the school's location in a territorially stigmatized area (Wacquant 2008) with high police presence and the school's strategy of using this authority to scare the students into good behaviour.

In summary, it can be said that, at Daisy School, the professionals are themselves willing to foster and discipline the students. At Dandelion School, on the other hand, the fostering and the disciplinary roles are considered best dealt with by the social services and the police. Viewed from a Foucauldian perspective, the disciplinary punishment systems look completely differently at these two schools. Also different are the power relations that govern the schools' respective strategy choices (Foucault 1990; Foucault 1991). At Daisy School, the professionals adapt to the power of the upper-middle-class parents. At Dandelion School, they adapt to the power of other authorities, regardless of the lower-working-class and migrant parents' opinions.

The purpose of the staircase model, used at Daisy School, is to correct the behaviour of students through different degrees of punishment and reward. The model can thus be described as a disciplinary system with a well-developed power technology, the purpose of which is to regulate students so they behave appropriately and to incorporate the class standards the parents value. This fear of parents is most likely behind use of the staircase model by the school, as the dual purpose of this model is to handle students' behaviour while keeping in good with the parents and avoiding notifications to the Schools Inspectorate. At Dandelion School, the power relations are the reverse. In the disciplinary punishment system used there, students are handed over to the social services and the police, and these authorities are expected to foster and discipline both students and their parents. The parents have no power to oppose these actions, despite the fact that school staff are aware that the parents are strongly critical of how the school handles the children. The parents never make any notifications to the School Inspectorate.

The schools' choice of strategies for dealing with students is likely to affect how the students are categorized. At Daisy School, the staff describe the students as well-behaved, in accordance with upper-middle-class social codes of conduct, even though the professionals are well aware that bullying, violations and violence occur to a greater extent than they are aware of. At Dandelion School, the staff describe the students as being "wild" and "lazy" owing to their immigrant background. The students are also described as verbally offensive. Nevertheless, the staff claim that bullying and cyber bullying are very rare.

In Sweden, secondary school students are in legal terms children. Children are always the responsibility of adults. School professionals play a key role in the daily life of students as well as in their future life chances (James and James 2004). These two cases indicate that the Swedish education system adapts to students' social class

and “race”, as shown by how principals and student health teams describe violence and violations as well as regarding the strategies taken to address such problems. However, anyone who works at school should uphold the fundamental values that are set out in the Education Act and in the curriculum and clearly dissociate themselves from anything that conflicts with these values (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2018). Consequently, segregation, class, place and “race” play a decisive role in schools’ institutional practice.

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Chapter 8

The Juridification of School Bullying in Sweden: The Emerging Struggle Between the Scientific-Based Pedagogical Discourse and the Legal Discourse



Robert Thornberg

Introduction

Bullying is a pervasive problem in schools throughout the world, including Sweden, although its prevalence varies between countries (Chester et al. 2015; Craig et al. 2009; Due et al. 2005; Molcho et al. 2009). In addition to the direct suffering of the victims, a large and growing body of studies has shown that bullying victims are at a heightened risk of developing psychological health problems such as depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, suicidal ideation and behaviour, and psychosomatic symptoms and problems (Gini and Pozzoli 2013; Holt et al. 2015; Silberg et al. 2016; Tsaousis 2016). Furthermore, a growing body of research has revealed that victims of school bullying are also at a greater risk of suffering from both psychological health problems, such as depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation and behaviour, and physical health problems in adulthood (Copeland et al. 2013; Copeland et al. 2014; Evans-Lacko et al. 2017; Farrington et al. 2012; Klomek et al. 2015; Lereya et al. 2015; Meltzer et al. 2011; Silberg et al. 2016). In this chapter, I will discuss the juridification of school bullying and the emerging struggle between a scientific discourse and a legal discourse as the guiding national discourse for schools' anti-bullying practises in Sweden by giving a very brief review of how the definition and understanding of bullying have been disputed, including in Sweden, and the historical changes in the Swedish school policy from a scientific-based pedagogical discourse to a de-professionalizing legal discourse in relation to how schools should understand and counteract bullying.

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113

The Struggle Over the Definition and Understanding of Bullying

As early as 1969, the Swedish physician Peter-Paul Heinemann introduced the term “mobbing” in Sweden through a debate article (Heinemann 1969) and then later, and in greater depth, the term “mobbnig” in a book (1972; the Swedish term “mobb(n)ing” has then been translated to bullying in English). His ideas were, however, not based on empirical research on bullying among children, adolescents or adults but more speculative and with reference to the ethologist Konrad Lorenz (1968), from whom he also borrowed the term “mobb(n)ing”. Heinemann argued that bullying was a form of group violence toward deviant members, rooted in our human biology and a result of crowding and lack of stimulation. The term “bullying” and his ideas became widespread in Sweden in 1969 through a series of articles in one of Sweden’s most influential daily newspapers, *Dagens Nyheter* (Larsson 2008; Nordgren 2009).

In the early 1970s, the Scandinavian psychologist Dan Olweus (1973) conducted the first series of scientific studies on bullying among schoolboys in Stockholm. Olweus (1973) criticized Heinemann’s main focus on the group and argued that the connotation of the social psychological term “mob” and the idea about collective violence toward a deviant member could easily lead to inappropriate expectations and significant individual aspects being overlooked (also see Olweus 1978). As Olweus (2010) later put it, “The notion that school mobbing is a matter of collective aggression by a relatively homogeneous group did in my view obscure the relative contributions made by individual members. More specifically, the role of particularly active perpetrators or bullies could easily be lost sight of within this group framework” (pp. 9–10). Based on his empirical findings, Olweus (1973, 1978) concluded that the psychological characteristics of the bullies and victims were far more important in order to explain bullying. Olweus (1993) defines *bullying* as repeated aggression directed at individuals who are less powerful. Thus, according to Olweus, the definition of bullying includes three criteria: intention of harm (as in aggression), repetitiveness, and power imbalance. This is the most widely spread and used definition of bullying in the international school bullying research field. At the same time, there has been and still is an ongoing debate and critique regarding the definition among international scholars (e.g., Canty et al. 2016; Carrera et al. 2011; Ringrose and Renold 2010; Volk et al. 2014), including Nordic scholars (e.g. Bliding 2002, 2004; Frånberg and Wrethander 2011; Horton 2011; Kofoed and Søndergaard 2009; Kousholt and Fisker 2015; Schott and Søndergaard 2014; Wrethander 2007).

In a Swedish context, Bliding (2002, 2004, also see Wrethander 2007, which is her current surname), claims that the traditional definition of bullying is too limited and simplified in relation to the complexity of events in which students are excluding and offending each other. She also stated that there is a risk that situations in which students are excluded from the peer group or are targets of degrading treatment will not be recognized as problems, but could be ignored or explained away if they cannot be defined as bullying (also see Frånberg and Wrethander 2011).

Moreover, because the international research field of school bullying has its origin in developmental psychology and was initiated by the work of Olweus (1973, 1978), the traditional definition of bullying has been criticized for reducing our understanding of bullying to individual psychological characteristics of the bullies and the victims. The critique reflects competing discourses (cf., Foucault 1978) within social science described as the “paradigm war” between epistemological and methodological traditions (Guba 1990). In this context, Olweus’ position has been associated as a positivistic and quantitative approach, whereas the opponents have positioned themselves within social-constructionist, poststructuralist, and sociocultural approaches associated with qualitative research methodology (e.g., Carrera et al. 2011; Ringrose and Renold 2010; Schott 2014). This critique has been brought up in Sweden as well (Bliding 2002; Frånberg and Wrethander 2011; Horton 2011; Wrethander 2007). Nevertheless, it is possible to counterargue that the definition is actually simply a description – not an explanation – of a specific social phenomenon, which in turn may be examined and explained in individual as well as in contextual terms (cf. Espelage and Swearer 2004, 2011; Thornberg 2015), and from a wide range of different theories and methods. The critique of the term bullying and its traditional definition and individual-psychological understanding has, nevertheless, played a critical role in the shift from a scientific-based discourse to a legal discourse in the national policy-making in Sweden.

From Bullying as a Psychological and Pedagogical Issue to Its Juridification

During the 1980s, demands on schools to counteract bullying were raised in Sweden and a market for various anti-bullying programmes emerged (Nordgren 2009). A new national curriculum was adopted in 1980 (Lgr 80), and the concept of bullying was now mentioned for the first time in the Swedish national curriculum (Nordgren 2009), which at the same time reflected progressive and social psychological ideas. “The students shall actively participate in designing the work environment of the school. Collective assignments to different student groups are applied to break alienation, to counteract tendencies of bullying and vandalism, and to give students increased self-confidence. Activities that demand cooperation and accountability contribute in a decisive way to illustrating the significance of democratically decided agreements and rules” (Lgr 80, p. 47, author’s translation). The concept of bullying became established in schools, and efforts to develop approaches to prevent and counteract bullying took shape in Sweden during the 1980s. Programmes to counteract bullying were developed and disseminated (Nordgren 2009). Olweus developed and empirically evaluated his so-called Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in Norway (see Olweus and Limber 2007, 2010), which was also adopted by some schools in Sweden. Other well-known programmes in Sweden at this time were Anatol Pikas’ Method of Shared Concern and the teacher Karl Ljungström’s Farsta

method (Nordgren 2009). Many other programmes have been developed and used in Swedish schools to counteract bullying since then (Swedish National Agency for Education 2009), but the majority of the programmes adopted by schools were not scientifically evaluated (Agency for School Improvement 2007).

The term “bullying” was also included in the national curriculum (Lpo 94) that replaced Lgr 80 during the 1990s. The new national curriculum emphasized that “no one at school shall be targets of bullying. Tendencies of harassment shall be actively counteracted” (Lpo 94, p. 3, author’s translation). Furthermore, Lpo 94 also stated that the principal has a special responsibility to “establish, implement, follow up, and evaluate the school’s action programme in order to prevent and counteract all forms of degrading treatment, such as bullying and racist behaviour among students and employees” (p. 17, author’s translation). At the end of the 1990s, the term “bullying” was also included in the Swedish Education Act (1985:1100) with the additional complement 1999:886, and as an example of degrading treatment in chap. 1, paragraph 2:

School activities shall be designed in accordance with basic democratic values. Everyone who works within the school shall promote respect for each human’s intrinsic value and respect for our shared environment. Those who work within schools shall in particular 1. promote equality between the sexes, and 2. actively counteract all forms of degrading treatment such as bullying and racist behaviour. (Author’s translation)

A new Swedish term, *värdegrunden* (“value foundation”), which refers to the democratic, basic values of Swedish society, together with *values education*, was emphasized in Swedish school policy documents, reports and recommendations from the Swedish National Agency for Education in the 1990s and the early 2000s (e.g., Lpo 94; Swedish National Agency for Education 1998, 1999, 2001). At school policy level, bullying seemed to be understood as a symptom of flaws in the democratic school climate and a lack of equality among the students. Instead of considering bullying as a result of the antisocial personality traits of bullies or an instance of group violence towards a deviant member, bullying was seen as a moral transgression that violated the “value foundation”, and thus a failure of values education, as well as a legal violation of the law (Nordgren 2009). During the 1980s and 1990s, the main focus was on how the professionals in school could and should work to prevent and counteract bullying. It was a pedagogical and psychological matter. As we can see in the national curriculum (Lpo 94) and the Swedish Education Act (1985:1100), as these were developed during the 1990s, the term “bullying” was closely linked to the term “degrading treatment” by being mentioned as a form or example of this.

Nevertheless, whereas the term “degrading treatment” is a legal concept (Nordgren 2009), the term “bullying” belongs to the discourse of social science (e.g., Jimerson et al. 2010). Instead of being treated as a psychological and pedagogical matter (and as an internal concern for the school), from the second half of the 1990s until today, there has been a strong tendency to treat bullying and other forms of degrading treatment as a legal issue (Hammarén et al. 2015; Nordgren 2009). According to the law, every school in Sweden is obliged to formulate and

document its work against bullying and all other forms of degrading treatment and harassment, and to a certain degree, this work has also been transferred beyond the school setting to criminal courts (Nordgren 2009). In other words, there has been a movement away from a scientific-based pedagogical discourse to a de-professionalizing legal discourse on how to counteract school bullying in Sweden. As stated by Hammarén et al. (2015), “Actions previously described as teasing and fighting have gradually come to be positioned within the legal discourse, making them a police matter rather than a pedagogical matter” (p. 273). This change in perspective in the school policy is termed *juridification*.

From Bullying to Degrading Treatment and Harassment

During the 2000s, there has been a shift from the concept of bullying to the more inclusive term “degrading treatment” (“kränkande behandling”) and, later on, together with the term “harassment” (“trakasserier”). Some Swedish educational researchers started to criticize the concept of bullying. They argued that it would obscure the sight of other forms of degrading treatment (Bliding 2002, 2004; Frånberg and Gill 2009; Frånberg and Wrethander 2011). Instead of focusing on bullying, every single instance of degrading treatment or harassment should be addressed and counteracted. Hence, repetitiveness and also the intention of harm in the definition of bullying were problematized. Nordgren (2009) also pointed out that similar arguments were used in a national official report regarding the Swedish Education Act (SOU 2002:121). In this report, the terms “bullying” and “racism” were proposed to be deleted from the Swedish Education Act as examples of degrading treatment. “According to the committee, a procedure in which certain behaviours are especially mentioned would involve a risk that other forms of degrading treatment might be perceived as less serious and thereby less illicit” (SOU 2002:121, p. 386, author’s translation) Thus, whereas bullying was mentioned explicitly in the former Swedish Education Act (1985:1100), the word was actually deleted from the new Swedish Education Act (2010:801), which has applied since 2011. The only terms used are “degrading treatment”, “harassment” and “sexual harassment”. Whereas *degrading treatment* means that a student’s dignity has been violated, if such offences also express discrimination, they are called *harassment* (Swedish National Agency for Education 2014). According the new Swedish Education Act, the term “harassment” was used with reference to the Swedish Discrimination Act (2008:567), meaning that harassment means discriminating offences that are exclusively based on sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

Nevertheless, if there was a risk that other forms of harassment or degrading treatment might not be recognized as problems in schools if the school staff were too occupied with addressing bullying, as Bliding (2002, 2004) claims, there might now be a risk in Sweden that school bullying might not be recognized or be trivialized if the term were to fade away from school practice. The good news is that the word

“bullying” is widely used by students and teachers at Swedish schools, as noted by the Swedish National Agency for Education (2016). In relation to the Swedish Education Act (2010:801), I would argue that bullying could be understood as *repeated* degrading treatment and/or harassment directed at targeted individuals, who are *disadvantaged* or *less powerful* than those who repeatedly offend or harass them. Considering the concept of harassment in the Swedish Education Act, an international body of research has revealed that members of certain social categories are overrepresented as victims of school bullying. For instance, students with disabilities and special education needs (for reviews, see Rose 2011; Rose et al. 2011; Sentenac et al. 2012; Thornberg 2015), students who transgress established socio-cultural gender norms (Aspenlieder et al. 2009; Friedman et al. 2006; Young and Sweeting 2004), and students who identify themselves with a sexual orientation other than hegemonic heterosexuality (for a review, see Hong and Garbarino 2012) are at a higher risk of being bullied. In addition, according to the report from the Swedish National Agency for Education (2016), students with an immigrant background reported that they were bullied more than students with a Swedish ethnic background. In the bullying literature, bullying based on discrimination is called *bias-based bullying* or *discriminatory bullying*, meaning that someone is bullied because they belong to a particular group, for instance someone defined by ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability (e.g., Elamé 2013; Palmer and Abbott 2018).

In fact, the Swedish National Agency for Education (2014) explicitly recognized bullying as repeated degrading treatment or harassment intended to inflict harm. However, in omitting the term “bullying” from the Swedish Education Act (2010:801) and the Swedish official curriculum document (Lgr 11; Lgr 11 [rev. 2016]), the aspects of repetitiveness and power imbalance have also been omitted. The Swedish National Agency for Education (2014) states that one of the reasons why the term “bullying” is no longer used in its official curriculum document is that the Swedish Education Act demands that every single instance of degrading treatment has to be counteracted. Thus, the Swedish Education Act has a problem with the repetitiveness included in the traditional definition of bullying, which is a serious mistake considering the research showing that there is a so-called “dose effect” in bullying, meaning that children who are frequently involved in bullying during childhood, in other words, chronic victims and chronic bullies, are at a greater risk of adverse outcomes compared to occasional victims and occasional bullies (for a review, see Klomek et al. 2015). Both the intensity and the frequency of harm need to be recognized, as recent studies indicate that severity, repetition and the presence of power imbalance amplify the perceived harm of an action (for a review, see Volk et al. 2017). Thus, we need to recognize the importance of addressing degrading treatment and harassment as well as the more systematic case of bullying with its power imbalance and repetitiveness, both in policy and in practice. Another problem with replacing a scientific-based pedagogical discourse with a legal discourse is the tendency to focus on legal interventions in terms of documenting and reporting bullying as legal offenses instead of focusing on both prevention and interventions based on research on bullying among children and adolescents, and scientific evaluations of anti-bullying methods, practices, and programmes.

The Struggle of Anti-bullying Policy, Programmes and Practice in Sweden

Even though there has been a market for various anti-bullying programmes in Sweden since the 1980s (Nordgren 2009), the Swedish National Agency for Education does not recommend any anti-bullying programmes for schools. In a report by the Swedish National Agency for Education from 2009, Frånberg and Wrethander (2009) concluded that in the law and policy documents regarding Swedish schools (the Swedish Education Act, the national curriculum, national syllabuses, ordinances and general recommendations), there were demands for counteracting bullying but no demands for using a particular method or programme. A couple of years later, the Swedish National Agency for Education (2011) published an evaluation report on anti-bullying methods used in a sample of 39 Swedish schools. The original aim was to evaluate eight programmes that had previously been found to be widespread and used in Swedish schools in order to counteract bullying (Frånberg and Wrethander 2009). Some of them were designed to counteract bullying (e.g., Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and the Farsta method), whereas other programmes were not developed anti-bullying programmes but had other aims (e.g., SET [Socio-Emotional Training] and School Comet [a CBT-based programme to manage student behaviour in general]). However, the evaluators observed that none of the included schools adopted one singular programme but instead had some contact with or used parts of many programmes. Therefore, the evaluation shifted focus from evaluating programmes to evaluating separate anti-bullying efforts or components.

Among the anti-bullying components that were found to be associated with a low or reduced prevalence of bullying were multi-professional cooperative teams (e.g. anti-bullying teams or school safety teams including both teachers and specialized professionals such as school nurses, school counsellors and special educators); clear routines for intervening, following up on and supporting identified bullies and victims; regular surveys/evaluations of students' situations concerning bullying and degrading treatment to be used as a basis for designing the ongoing anti-bullying work; efforts to increase the quality of student relationships; staff training; disciplinary strategies; a well-developed system of staff being on duty during scheduled breaks; regular general meetings at which information about bullying and degrading treatment is given to students; and school rules developed in collaboration between school staff and students. These components can be found in evidence-based programs such as Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and the KiVa programme. However, among the anti-bullying components that were found to be associated with a greater or increased prevalence of bullying was the component "special lessons that are scheduled for all school classes", which also can be found in the two above mentioned programmes. As a result of the national evaluation report, the Swedish National Agency for Education (2011) declared that it could not recommend any anti-bullying programmes.

It is, however, important to note some limitations of this evaluation study. The component of special lessons was measured and analysed as a general category (a

global construct). In other words, differences in classroom activities, lesson contents, teaching methods, educational materials, and instruction quality were not taken into account in the statistical analysis. Another limitation is that the evaluation did not adopt a randomized control trial design to evaluate the effects of *implementing* the programmes on bullying prevalence, but relied on identified correlations in natural school settings. In other words, we do not know the prevalence of bullying in these schools before they implemented the various anti-bullying components, and thus, we do not know in what degree the components might have changed the prevalence as a result of being implemented. Another limitation is that the treatment fidelity, which refers to in what degree to which intervention is implemented as intended, seemed to be so low in the schools that the evaluators were forced to abandon their original intention to evaluate programmes to evaluate components instead. Although the evaluation study demonstrated valuable knowledge in terms of how different anti-bullying components were associated with bullying prevalence in a Swedish context, it did not evaluate specific anti-bullying programmes.

In contrast to the Swedish National Agency for Education, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention published a report in 2009 on the effects of anti-bullying programmes (Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention 2009). This report was based on a meta-analysis of international research. This meta-analysis was conducted by Ttofi, Farrington and Baldry and presented in an earlier report from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (2008). Their meta-analysis showed that, overall, school-based anti-bullying programmes were effective in reducing bullying and victimization, although the effect size was rather small. In particular, they found that programmes inspired by Olweus worked best. In addition to scientific evaluations demonstrating the positive effects of the Olweus Prevention Bullying Program (Limber 2011; Olweus and Limber 2002, 2010; for more recent meta-analyses, see Gaffney et al. 2019; Ttofi and Farrington 2011), the Finnish KiVa programme has also been found to decrease bullying (Gaffney et al. 2019; Herkama and Salmivalli 2016; Salmivalli et al. 2011; Salmivalli and Poskiparta 2012; Yang and Salmivalli 2015).

Despite the reports from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (2008, 2009) and international and peer-reviewed published scientific evaluations (including randomized controlled trials) demonstrating the effects of the Olweus Prevention Bullying Program (a programme rooted in Norway) and the KiVa programme (a programme rooted in Finland), the Swedish National Agency for Education cannot recommend any anti-bullying programmes. In addition to its evaluation report (Swedish National Agency for Education 2011), its stance can be understood in light of the juridification and movement away from the term “bullying”, but also in light of the general debate on evidence-based programmes in which opponents argue that universalist programmes are not sensitive to cultural and contextual variations. A general criticism among opponents of evidence-based programmes within the educational research field is that such programmes rely on the assumption that causation is based on “fixed, universal relationships, rather than local, context-sensitive patterns in which interpretation and decision on the part of teachers and students play an important role” (Hammersley 2007, p. 23). This kind of criticism is also made by the

Swedish National Agency for Education (2011). Hammarén et al. (2015) conclude, in relation to the situation in Sweden today, that “criticism of bullying prevention programmes has an almost hegemonic position in the documents that schools have to comply with” (p. 281). As a result of the juridification and the replacement of a scientific-based pedagogical discourse with a legal discourse, the current challenge in Sweden concerning bullying prevention and interventions in schools can be addressed with the following question: Is it possible to establish bullying prevention and interventions as well as prevention and interventions regarding the more general phenomena of harassment and degrading treatment, based on science and research in Swedish school policy and practice? The question is also crucial with regard to juridification and the legal discourse since, according to the Swedish Education Act (2010:801), schooling shall be grounded in science and well-trying experience.

Conclusion

Bullying does not vanish in Swedish schools just because it has vanished as a term in the current Swedish Education Act and the national curriculum document. On the contrary, school bullying has increased over the past decade in Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten 2018). Recognizing degrading treatment and harassment is crucial, but there is no necessity for this to be done at the expense of bullying. Considering the repetitiveness, power imbalance and “dose effect” of bullying and how this is associated with a greater risk of adverse outcomes, it would be irresponsible to neglect or trivialize this problem in school policy and practice. Furthermore, claiming that the scientific-based pedagogical discourse of bullying represents, and thus, reduces bullying to individual psychological explanations is no longer a valid argument. Within the international school bullying research field, there is a large and growing body of research examining contextual factors and how individual and contextual factors interact in order to better understand how bullying arises, continues, increases, decreases and ends.

An obvious problem with juridification is the tendency to focus on legal interventions instead of focusing on both prevention and interventions based on international, Nordic and Swedish research on school bullying. Bullying and other forms of degrading treatment and harassment in school need to be a pedagogical and a student health matter with a strong emphasis on research-based preventions and interventions that are data-driven (i.e. regular survey and evaluation) and context-sensitive to the local school and particular peer groups, individuals and situations. In contrast to the assumption that knowledge is exclusively local, schools should consider “the advantages of ‘external to school’ knowledge in improving schools” (Reynolds 2005, p. 248) and avoid spending a lot of time and effort on “re-inventing the wheel”. However, when research-based knowledge and scientifically evaluated programmes are imported by schools and their school staff to their own local practice, it is important that this transfer is done in terms of treatment fidelity as well as with a sensitivity to contexts and situations, and not applied in an uncritical,

mechanical and soulless way. It should always be combined with careful evaluation and collection of data. In line with the Swedish Education Act, bullying prevention and interventions in school must be grounded in science and well-trying experience.

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Chapter 9

Juridification and the Ungendering of School Bullying



Paul Horton and Camilla Forsberg

Introduction

Incidents of school bullying (*skolmobbing*) are often in the news, with stories highlighting the tragic consequences of these negative interactions (e.g. Axelsson 2018). Likewise, numerous news reports address the ways in which schools and municipalities have (or have not) dealt with incidents of harassment (*trakasserier*) or degrading treatment (*kränkande behandling*) (e.g. Brischetto 2018; Dickson 2017; Ekström 2018; Larsson Franzén 2018; Stahre 2018). What is less than clear is how school bullying is distinguished from the related juridical concepts of harassment and degrading treatment, or indeed where the boundaries between the concepts can be drawn. This has important implications for the ways in which cases of bullying are dealt with in schools, not only in terms of what are perceived to be the underlying causes but also in terms of which governmental agency is tasked with overseeing the associated juridical processes.

In this chapter, we address the juridification of school violence in the Swedish context by focusing in particular on the issue of school bullying and gendered perceptions of difference. We do so by first of all considering the origins and definitions of the Swedish term for bullying (*mobbing*), and the ways in which the responsibility for bullying behaviour has been laid at the feet of the individuals directly involved. Drawing on the work of gender researchers, we problematize dominant conceptualizations of sex/gender 'roles' through a discussion of power relations.

We then consider how bullying has been reduced to a form of degrading treatment through its removal from juridical terminology. Drawing on relevant legal and educational documents, we thus investigate the ways in which school bullying has been ungendered, not only through the focus on the aggressive behaviour of

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127

individuals, but also through its legal separation from discrimination (*diskriminering*) and harassment, and its reduction to a form of degrading treatment. In doing so, we argue that the reduction of school bullying to the negative behaviour of individuals, and thus its juridical reduction to a form of degrading treatment, serves to apportion blame to the individual school children involved, without adequately accounting for the importance of dominant gendered societal norms and the extent to which school bullying may often be a form of ‘normative cruelty’ that is socially learned and underpinned by dominant gendered discourses (Ringrose and Renold 2010). Furthermore, we argue that such an account is necessary for understanding bystander behaviour and the ‘social exclusion anxiety’ that fuels and perpetuates negative behaviour in schools (Søndergaard 2012).

School Bullying and the Problem of Gender

The Swedish term for bullying, *mobbning*, was introduced in 1972 by the Swedish physician Peter-Paul Heinemann (Heinemann 1972). Heinemann (1972) defined *mobbning* as ‘the group’s collective aggressiveness towards another or others who provoke or attract this anger’ (p. 2, our translation). Before Heinemann launched the term *mobbning*, the term most commonly used to refer to those children who bullied was *översittare*, while those subjected to bullying were referred to as *hackkycklingar* (or ‘whipping boys’). This terminology was central to the early work of the Swedish psychologist, Dan Olweus, who conducted questionnaire-based research of 1000 boys aged 12–16 in the areas of Stockholm and Solna in Sweden during the period 1970–1972 (Olweus 1973). In explaining the term *översittare*, Olweus (1973) stated, ‘we mean a boy, who quite often represses or torments one or more boys or girls, physically or psychologically’ (p. 54, our translation). Likewise, in explaining what he meant with the term *hackkycklingar*, Olweus (1973) stated, ‘we mean a boy, who for quite a long time has been or maybe still is subjected to others’ aggression, that is, that boys or even girls from the same class or perhaps from other classes often bother and fight or tease and mock him’ (p. 53, our translation). Despite also mentioning the potential role of girls, Olweus focused on boys as the key individuals involved in bullying situations. This reflects a perception that boys were more engaged in bullying behaviour because of their innate aggressive tendencies.

Olweus drew on Heinemann’s conceptualization of *mobbning* but questioned the way in which Heinemann restricted his focus to the group (or ‘mob’). Olweus (1978) instead sought to highlight those individuals within the group ‘who take the initiative and who, in a sense, are largely responsible for the situation’s arising at all’ (p. 4). As his oft-cited definition of bullying also highlights, Olweus saw *mobbning* as something that could be done by one or more individuals, and thus more in line with the English term ‘bullying’ than ‘mobbing’:

A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students (Olweus 1993, p. 9).

Olweus (1993) added the caveat that bullying involves an imbalance of power and explained negative actions in relation to an underlying intention to do harm: 'It is a *negative* action when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another' (p. 9). In many definitions of bullying, there are three key aspects to bullying: the intention to do harm, the repetitiveness and duration of the negative actions, and the presence of an unequal power relationship (Eriksson et al. 2002; see also Thornberg's chapter in this volume).

As Olweus' early work suggests, much of the early focus of school bullying research was on the bullying behaviour of boys, as aggression was seen to be most common among boys (Carrera et al. 2011; Carrera-Fernández et al. 2018; Eriksen and Lyng 2018; Ringrose and Renold 2010). The idea that boys are simply more aggressive than girls stems from research that focused on those aspects of bullying that were most overt, rather than the subtler forms of 'relational bullying' (Crick and Grotpeter 1995, p. 710). For example, in a questionnaire administered by the Municipality of Lund in 1986, bullying was explained in terms of direct actions such as saying mean things, making threats, hitting, kicking, spitting, and teasing (Beselin 1986). Later research considering the differences between the aggression of boys and girls found that boys tend to be directly aggressive and girls indirectly so (Björkqvist et al. 1992; Crick and Grotpeter 1995; Lagerspetz et al. 1988; Olweus 1993; Underwood et al. 2001). However, a number of other studies have suggested that such generalizations are somewhat simplistic, as some girls also engage in direct physical bullying (e.g. Davies 1984; Duncan 1999; Horton 2012) and some boys engage in indirect relational bullying (e.g. Eriksen and Lyng 2018; Swearer Napolitano 2008). Indeed, as Rigby (2008) has noted, 'These generalizations should not blind us to the fact that girls sometimes engage in physical bullying and boys are quite often the victims of indirect bullying' (p. 36).

Sex, Gender, and Power Relations

While discussions of sex differences in bullying behaviour are a significant improvement on the earlier studies focusing solely on the bullying behaviour of boys, they run the risk of gender essentialism, whereby the different bullying behaviour of boys and girls is explained by their biological difference (Carrera et al. 2011; Carrera-Fernández et al. 2018; Ringrose 2008; Ringrose and Renold 2010). In this sense, then, the gendered acts of physical, verbal or relational bullying become categorically tied to sex differences, with boys and girls thus perceived as essentially different in their behaviour. Drawing on findings about the distinctions in the ways in which boys and girls bully, some researchers have focused more specifically on the relational bullying of girls (e.g. Besag 2006; Crothers et al. 2005; Currie et al. 2007; Owens et al. 2000; Simmons 2002). This research has highlighted distinctions between the bullying behaviour of boys and girls and has suggested that this behaviour is linked to broader societal gender roles regarding what is appropriate for males and females (Felix and Greif Green 2010; Gini and Pozzoli 2006; Young and Sweeting 2004).

One of the problems with sex/gender role theory is that it is based on a dichotomy between males and females and fails to adequately account for the underlying gendered social order that maintains and enforces that dichotomy (Carrigan et al. 1985). As Connell (1995) has argued:

In sex role theory, action (the role enactment) is linked to a structure defined by biological difference, the dichotomy of male and female – not to a structure defined by social relations. This leads to categoricism, the reduction of gender to two homogenous categories, betrayed by the persistent blurring of sex differences with sex roles (p. 26).

The ways in which gender has tended to be discussed in relation to school bullying has led to a form of categoricism that re-invokes ‘existing gender stereotypes or essentialized norms of masculine or feminine difference’ (Ringrose and Renold 2010, p. 577). This categoricism serves to not only exaggerate the differences between boys and girls but also serves to obscure the intersectional power structures related to gender, age, class, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, and so on (Connell 1995).

Rather than considering how boys and girls enact their respective sex roles, it is more pertinent to investigate how boys and girls position themselves and others in relation to the gendered discourses available. As Whitehead (2002) has noted, gendered discourses are ‘heavily localized and thus constrained by numerous variables such as age, cultural capital, body, health, ethnicity, geography, nationality and, not least, the unique history of that subject as individual’ (p. 110). In this sense, then, gender intersects with other power structures (Crenshaw 1991; McCall 2005).

Rather than reducing power relations to the size, strength, or sheer number of the individuals involved in bullying interactions (as has often tended to be the case), power relations can instead be understood as strategic and situationally located within a system of differentiations that is prevalent in that particular society (Foucault 1998; Heller 1996; Whitehead 2002). The power imbalance involved in bullying is thus not fixed but is rather exercised from various strategic points related to social and societal norms about gender, age, ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality, ability, and so on. Understanding the power relations involved in bullying this way has important implications, not only for the individualization of bullying but also its distinction from other forms of negative behaviour, such as sexual harassment.

Numerous scholars have justifiably argued that sexual harassment should be distinguished from school bullying, as otherwise the sociocultural constructions of gender and sexuality that underlie such behaviour will be left untreated (e.g. Gillander Gådin and Stein 2017; Meyer 2008a, b; Stein 2003). Indeed, as Meyer (2008a) has argued, ‘By using vague terms such as bullying and name calling, scholars and educators avoid examining the underlying power dynamics that such behaviours build and reinforce’ (p. 44). Indeed, the over-usage of the term bullying, with its connotations of aggressive intentions and the negative actions of individuals, allows for the deflecting of responsibility onto the individuals involved (Stein 2003). However, this says more about the ways in which bullying has been defined and reduced to the aggressive conduct of individuals, without adequately accounting for the power relations involved (Ringrose and Renold 2010; Williams 2013).

Harassment, Degrading Treatment, and Bullying as Juridical Problems

The term bullying (*mobbning*) first appeared in an official school document, as part of the 1980 School Curriculum (Lgr 80), wherein the problem of bullying was used to illustrate the importance of group activities (Flygare et al. 2011; Skolöverstyrelsen 1980; Wrethander 2015). The 1994 School Curriculum stated that no one at school should be subjected to bullying and placed specific expectations on teachers and rectors to report and address the issue through the implementation, following up, and evaluation of school-wide action programs (Utbildningsdepartementet 1994). However, while bullying was included into the wording of the 1994 School Curriculum, and the responsibilities of teachers and rectors pointed out, it was not until 1999 that bullying was officially legislated against (Flygare et al. 2011).

In 1993, in response to concern for what was obviously a widespread problem affecting large numbers of school children, degrading treatment (*kränkande behandling*) was included into the 1985 Education Act for the first time, whereby it was stated: ‘In particular, those working within schools must try to prevent any attempts by students to expose others to degrading treatment’ (cited in Flygare et al. 2011, p. 32, our translation). In 1999, this formulation was adjusted, in line with the School Curriculum, to explicitly include bullying as a form of degrading treatment: ‘In particular, those working within schools must actively counteract all forms of degrading treatment such as bullying and racist behaviour’ (cited in Flygare et al. 2011, p. 32, our translation).

In 2006, a new law (SFS 2006:67) was passed that forbid discrimination, harassment and other forms of degrading treatment of children and pupils (Flygare et al. 2011; Utbildningsdepartementet 2006). In this Child and Student Protection Act, the term bullying was not used, with the focus instead on the prohibition of discrimination (*diskriminering*), harassment (*trakasserier*), and other degrading treatment (*annan kränkande behandling*). As already suggested in the 1985 Education Act, bullying was henceforth considered a form of degrading treatment. According to the 2006 Act, school representatives were legally obligated to prepare action plans to combat discrimination, harassment and degrading treatment, with school representatives liable for damages if they were deemed not to have taken the necessary steps to counteract discrimination, harassment and degrading treatment (Flygare et al. 2011).

While discrimination, harassment, and degrading treatment (and therein bullying) were all legislated against in the 2006 Act, the Act was replaced 3 years later by the 2008 Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567), which came into effect on the first of January, 2009. This law prohibited discrimination and harassment based on the seven discriminatory grounds of sex, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual preference, or age (Kulturdepartementet 2008). The law was placed under the jurisdiction of the Discrimination Ombudsman (*Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, DO*), whose responsibility it is to investigate any reports of harassment, including sexual harassment (Dyrefors Grufman 2017;

Flygare et al. 2011). Degrading treatment was not included in the Discrimination Act but was instead included in the 2010 Education Act (SFS 2010:800) (Flygare et al. 2011; Wrethander 2015).

In the 2010 Education Act, degrading treatment was distinguished from discrimination and defined as ‘a conduct that without being discrimination according to the Discrimination Act (2008, 567) degrades the dignity of a child or student’ (Utbildningsdepartementet 2010, our translation). In contrast to the Discrimination Act, the Education Act is under the jurisdiction of the Child and Student Ombudsman (*Barn- och elevombudet, BEO*), which is an independent part of the Schools Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*) and is tasked with the responsibility for investigating reports of degrading treatment, to represent students in court, and to provide information about the 2010 Education Act’s zero-tolerance for degrading treatment (Barn- och elevombudet 2016; Flygare et al. 2011). Thus, while the Discrimination Ombudsman is responsible for incidences of discrimination and harassment (including sexual harassment), the Schools Inspectorate is responsible for degrading treatment, and therein bullying.

While the 2011 Curriculum for Comprehensive Schools, Preschool Class and Leisure-time Centres clearly states that no one at school should be subjected to discrimination or other degrading treatment (Skolverket 2016), what is unclear is where exactly bullying fits into the legislative landscape. The word bullying is not used in the Curriculum (Skolverket 2016). In 2012, the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) provided general guidelines for combatting discrimination and degrading treatment in schools (Skolverket 2012). In this document, discrimination, harassment, degrading treatment, and bullying are all defined. Discrimination is used to refer to the discrimination done by the leadership or personnel of schools. Harassment, in contrast, is the term used for ‘conduct that degrades someone’s dignity and is connected with one of the seven grounds for discrimination: sex, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other faith, disability, sexual preference or age’ (Skolverket 2012, p. 9, our translation). Degrading treatment is defined as conduct which is not discrimination but still degrades the dignity of a child or student. Bullying is defined in the following way:

Bullying is a form of degrading treatment or harassment that involves a repeated negative action where one or more people knowingly and with intention causes or attempts to cause another injury or discomfort (Skolverket 2012, p. 9, our translation).

In contrast to the formulation put forward in the 1985 Education Act, bullying is here included as a form of *either* degrading treatment *or* harassment. The key distinguishing feature of bullying thus being the repetitiveness of the actions (Wrethander 2015). In the footnote to this definition, the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) explained that the term bullying is included because it is used in their evaluation of anti-bullying methods (see Flygare et al. 2011). In contrast, in a summary of the Child and Student Ombudsman’s first 10 years, bullying is distinguished from harassment and defined as ‘a form of degrading treatment that involves a repeated negative action where someone is hurt or experiences discomfort’ (Barn- och elevombudet 2016, p. 2, our translation). Regardless of whether

bullying is perceived as a form of degrading treatment, or as a form of degrading treatment *or* harassment, it is defined as the repeated negative actions of individuals. If, as the Child and Student Ombudsman suggests, bullying is distinguished from discrimination and harassment, then it is also distinguished from the foundational grounds of discrimination, including sex, sexual preference, and gender identity or expression. It is thus necessary to revisit understandings of school bullying through a consideration of how it can be understood in relation to sex, gender, and the power relations that are said to be at the centre of school bullying interactions.

Juridification and the Ungendering of School Bullying

While initial formulations of *mobbing* emphasized the importance of the group (e.g. Heinemann 1972), the later shift in understandings of bullying towards the aggressive behaviour of particular individuals has meant that the focus of definitions and related anti-bullying work has been more on the particular physical, verbal or relational negative actions of individuals. This is highlighted in legal definitions of degrading treatment as conduct that otherwise ‘degrades the dignity of a child or student’ (Utbildningsdepartementet 2006, p. 9, our translation; see also Utbildningsdepartementet 2010) and definitions of bullying as involving ‘a repeated negative action’ (Barn och Elevombudet 2016, p. 2, our translation; see also Skolverket 2012).

However, numerous researchers have highlighted the importance of group processes and the influence played by those not directly involved in bullying situations (e.g. Forsberg et al. 2014; Salmivalli et al. 1996; Thornberg 2015). As Wrethander Bliding (2007) has pointed out, inclusion and exclusion processes are a central part of children’s everyday life, through which they connect with their peers through the building of group ties, while at the same time excluding those perceived not to fit within the social contours of the group. Group processes are tied up with the need for social belonging and thus anxiety about the possibility that one may not be accepted as part of a particular group. Søndergaard (2012) refers to this anxiety as ‘social exclusion anxiety’, which, as she eloquently suggests, ‘smoulders under the surface when people interact’ (p. 360). Bullying can be understood in this way as a process that occurs when such anxiety reaches the level of ‘social panic’ and an individual is targeted and expelled from the group as that which is ‘abject’ or ‘other’ (Søndergaard 2012, pp. 361–368). The individual is thus stigmatized and dehumanized, with his/her expulsion explained through reference to his/her perceived difference (Goffman 1986).

In understanding harassment and degrading treatment, and therein bullying, it is thus necessary to consider the importance of social difference. As Walton (2011, 2015) and Pascoe (2013) have pointed out, the social interactions of bullying often reflect dominant societal understandings of social difference that extend far beyond the schoolyard. Rather than understanding bullying as conduct that goes *against* societal norms, bullying conduct can instead be conceptualized as means through

which such norms are upheld, reinforced, and reconstituted (Horton 2011). The cruelties involved can thus be understood as ‘normative cruelties’ (Ringrose and Renold 2010), whereby societal norms related to sex, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, age, class, ability, and so on, find outlets in the situated social interactions of daily school life (Thornberg 2018). The reason ‘the one who is targeted cannot easily defend themselves’ (Beselin 1986, our translation) is not simply an issue of size, strength, or lack of numbers, but is also an issue of their perceived difference vis-à-vis the societal norms being enacted; or, in other words, their ‘misfitting’ (Thornberg 2018, p. 148).

The early shift from a focus on group interactions to the intentionally aggressive actions of individuals has had long-lasting implications, as it is this understanding of school bullying as the negative conduct of individuals that has laid the foundations for the policy solutions formulated for dealing with the problem. As Walton (2011) has argued, the juridification of school bullying as conduct that needs to be regulated and punished is problematic in at least two ways. Firstly, it places the responsibility for bullying at the feet of those children directly involved. Secondly, such juridification only deals with those explicit incidents that can be seen or heard, and thus reported. However, bullying cannot ethically be reduced to the conduct of children or those explicitly reported incidents.

By focusing on the negative conduct of particular children, politicians, officials, schools, and school staff are able to show, through the reporting of incidents, that they take the issue of school bullying seriously and that they are doing everything in their power to deal with the problem (Walton 2011). Thus, they can point to their zero-tolerance for conduct that degrades the dignity of children in schools, or to the empathy or assertiveness training provided for those directly involved. However, as Walton (2011) has argued, the theoretical foundations of the dominant understanding of bullying are ‘fundamentally flawed’ (p. 134), as they fail to address the underlying power relations related to distinctions based on sex, gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, class, and so on. This is highlighted starkly in the juridical distinctions made between discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

The distinctions between what constitutes harassment or degrading treatment in bullying situations have significant implications for the ways in which such situations are dealt. As Frånberg and Wrethander (2011) have noted, the current separation of powers between the Discrimination Ombudsman and the Schools Inspectorate means that a specific case can be dealt with in different ways, depending on the law brought into play (see also Wrethander 2015). This has recently been addressed by a Swedish Government Official Report, released in 2016, which recommended that cases of discrimination within schools should also be the jurisdiction of the Schools Inspectorate from July 2018, so as to safeguard ‘the best interests of the child’ (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2016, p. 36). Dyrefors Grufman, the Child and Student Ombudsman, has depicted the problem in the following way:

Imagine that you are walking across the schoolyard on your way to your next lesson in another building. When you are just over halfway, someone shouts ‘whore’ behind your back. You turn around and see a group of boys laughing at you. You turn around again and keep walking when someone in the group shouts ‘damn you are fat’. The comments are

obviously not isolated from each other. Both of the comments cause a lot of pain. But if you were to report them, two different governmental agencies would investigate the events. The Discrimination Ombudsman would report the one that represents sexual harassment, and we at the Schools Inspectorate would investigate the other degrading treatment (Dyrefors Grufman 2017, our translation).

As Dyrefors Grufman illustrates with the above example, the same incident would currently be investigated by two separate agencies depending on the particular rhetoric used. This suggests that it is the words used that determine the type of action involved, rather than the power relations that underpin those actions. Both of the comments used in the above example (i.e. 'whore' and 'fat') are highly gendered and sexualized, in terms of the behaviour of the boys, the sexualization of the girl's body, and the closely related use of body shaming. Distinguishing between the two comments to the extent that two separate legal bodies should be tasked with investigating them makes little sense. However, merely shifting investigative responsibility for one of the incidents from the Discrimination Ombudsman to the Schools Inspectorate makes little sense either, as it does little to address the ways in which both incidents are individualized through juridification.

In the Swedish context, definitions of sexual harassment also focus on the conduct of individuals rather than the underlying gendered power structures. Just as it does with bullying, then, the juridification of sexual harassment shifts the focus from dominant gendered discourses, and related processes of gender socialization, onto the 'unacceptable' and supposedly non-normative sexual behaviour of individuals. This can be illustrated by returning to the example provided by Dyrefors Grufman (2017) above. In the 2008 Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567), sexual harassment is defined as 'a conduct of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity' (Kulturdepartementet 2008, our translation). Thus, the boys' conduct of shouting 'whore' as the girl walks across the playground is juridically deemed to constitute an act of sexual harassment. If this incident was reported, the school in question would have the responsibility 'to investigate the circumstances surrounding the reported harassment and, where appropriate, take the measures that may be reasonably required to prevent harassment in the future' (Kulturdepartementet 2008, our translation).

The definition of sexual harassment as 'a conduct' places focus on the behaviour of the boys involved, while, as Gillander Gådin and Stein (2017) have argued, the focus on 'a person's dignity' serves to ungender the conduct as something that may be done by anyone. Taken together, these definitional aspects make it likely that the case will be interpreted in terms of the actions of the individual boys rather than the underlying gendered power relations. If the girl in the example was routinely subjected to the verbal abuse of the boys, she might logically be considered a victim of bullying. This would not mean that the incidents were suddenly any less gendered. Rather, it is through the definitional framing of discrimination, harassment, degrading treatment and bullying, and their associated juridification, that such incidents become ungendered, decontextualized, and perversely unhinged from their societal foundations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have addressed the juridification of school bullying in the Swedish educational context through a consideration of the positioning of gender in school bullying research and the associated framing of power relations. Drawing on Swedish legal and educational documents, we have argued that juridification serves to ungender the problem of school bullying in a number of ways. Firstly, by drawing on research focusing on the problematic behaviour of individuals, juridification draws focus away from underlying group processes of inclusion and exclusion, and from the importance of social difference. Power relations are simplistically conceptualized in terms of individual size or strength, for example, rather than in relation to intersectional power structures related to gender, age, class, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, and so on.

Secondly, by removing the term ‘bullying’ (*mobbning*) from key legal documents, juridification has led to confusion as to where exactly bullying fits into the legislative landscape. Bullying has been positioned as a particular form of degrading treatment, distinguishable by its removal from the seven discriminatory criteria that underpin harassment. As we have shown, this means that two actions within the same social interaction may be interpreted differently and thus be dealt with in different ways by different legal bodies.

Thirdly, despite calls for harassment and degrading treatment to be dealt with by the same legal body, the problem remains that the juridification of bullying, degrading treatment, and harassment seeks to address the conduct of individuals and to provide redress for those who have been subjected to the negative actions. By focusing on the negative actions of individuals, juridification draws the spotlight away from understandings of social difference, and therein the gendered power structures that underpin social processes of inclusion and exclusion. It is these processes which fuel the smouldering social exclusion anxiety, which in turn contributes to those negative actions being enacted in the first place. If we sincerely want to combat school bullying, we need to reconnect bullying to these social processes and their societal foundations.

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Chapter 10

Cyberbullying in Childhood and Adolescence: Assessment, Negative Consequences and Prevention Strategies



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Introduction

In December 2012 an event took place in Gothenburg, Sweden, which attracted great media attention. It was called the “Instagram riot”, and started with two girls encouraging other youths to post pictures and text on the Instagram account “gbg-orroz” (“gbg” stands for Gothenburg and the word “orroz” is another word for whore). In addition to common aspects of cyberbullying such as pictures of young people being posted on the Internet, with the purpose of degrading them, this particular case took an unexpected turn of events. Some other young people strongly reacted against the girls behind the Instagram account. A riot broke out with ensuing damage and unrest. The two girls in the “Instagram-case” were sentenced to community homes (special residential homes for young people) and community service for aggravated defamation. They were furthermore ordered to pay damages to the victims. It is noteworthy that, because of the girls’ young age, their parents were held responsible for the payment of the damages. The Instagram riot shows that cyberbullying can have serious effects: harm to the victims, serious retaliation processes, and legal consequences for the cyberbullies.

In this chapter, we are going to discuss what “cyberbullying” is. Despite the fact that cyberbullying, over the last few years, has been the object of various scientific studies, it is not always altogether clear what is meant by the concept cyberbullying, how commonly occurring it is or how it differs from bullying in school settings. This chapter also includes a section on student’s experiences of and negative consequences to cyberbullying. A question that is posed in the chapter is: What can be done to counteract cyberbullying? In order to answer this question suggestions given by Swedish youths are presented. Throughout the chapter we have, as much

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as possible, used Swedish examples. The motive for this choice is that since most of the research about cyberbullying is carried out in the Anglosphere it is important to bear in mind the difference between schools in for example US and UK and schools in the Nordic countries.

What Is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is often described as bullying that takes place on the Internet, and through a variety of modern electronic devices/media (Smith 2009). In Sweden, the term bullying came into use in the late 1960s, and the introduction of the term is usually attributed to Dr. Peter-Paul Heinemann. After the introduction of the term, it began to be filled with content by researchers in medicine as well as in the social sciences. Much of the work on offline bullying has adopted the definition by Dan Olweus, a Swedish psychologist (1999), who categorizes bullying as a subset of aggressive behavior defined by three criteria:

1. Aggressive behavior or intentional infliction of harm,
2. carried out repeatedly and over time,
3. in an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power.

In short, the three criteria are intentionality, repetition and imbalance of power. The term bullying and this definition have been widely accepted among international researchers, and are often used to investigate how common bullying is among students (Smith et al. 2002). However, the term cyberbullying and its definition have not been employed as consistently or universally as the more general term of bullying. In the critical review of research on cyberbullying, Tokunaga (2010) portrayed it as an umbrella term encompassing different adjacent constructs, for example internet harassment and electronic bullying. Various definitions of cyberbullying have been presented in publications and instruments, several of them using some or all of the criteria from Olweus's definition (Berne et al. 2013). Although the three criteria from Olweus's definition is a good starting point, they do need to be discussed and elaborated, in regard to bullying in general and even more so in regard to cyberbullying. The three criteria intentionality, repetition and imbalance of power are discussed below:

The first criterion, intentionality, implies that the perpetrator has the intention to harm (Olweus 1999). Thus, the behavior does not count as bullying when a person teases someone with the intention to joke. On the subject of intentionality in cyberbullying, Menesini and Nocentini (2009) have suggested that when you cannot observe the person behind the screen, it might be difficult to understand his/her intention. This suggestion has been confirmed in a cross-cultural focus group study (Menesini et al. 2013) in which Estonian, German, Italian, Spanish and Swedish students emphasized that it can be difficult to understand whether or not an act is meant maliciously if the person responsible cannot be observed. However, does it matter whether it is done with the intention to be vicious or for fun, if the

cyberbullying act itself is perceived by the victim as hurtful? Some qualitative research has found that students consider that the perpetrator must have the intention to harm in order for the behavior to be defined as cyberbullying; otherwise, it is not perceived as cyberbullying (Vandebosch and Cleemput 2008). Focus groups that have been conducted in Sweden have however found that the effect on the victim and his/her perception of the act can be more relevant than the intention of the aggressor (Menesini et al. 2013). An explanation that students in Sweden think differently about the criterion intentionality may be that according to the Swedish law it is always the perception of the victim that is most relevant (SFS 2008:567, 2010:800). It is possible that this contributes to a general view in the Swedish culture that it is the victim's perception that is significant. This also means that according to the Swedish law the victim's perception of whether the act is hurtful or not is significant.

A characteristic of the second criterion, repetition, is that the act is carried out repeatedly and over time (Olweus 1999). To highlight the importance of this criterion, researchers have argued that the impact on the victim is often worse when he/she is bullied several times (Solberg and Olweus 2003). Nevertheless, the cross-cultural study investigating student's views on the importance of different criteria in defining cyberbullying found that they perceived repetition as less relevant in cyberbullying than other criteria (Menesini et al. 2012b). However, one must use caution in interpreting this as a sign that the repetition criterion is not valid in research on cyberbullying; instead, some researchers have argued that this criterion works differently in cyberbullying. The difference between cyberbullying and offline bullying can be illustrated with a particular type of cyberbullying: photo/video-clip harassment (Vandebosch and Cleemput 2008). For instance, an embarrassing photo/video clip could be uploaded to a webpage by the cyberbully, and each new visit to the webpage will be experienced by the cybervictim as a repetition of the attack. To conclude, repetition is different in cyberbullying as the repetitive act can be conducted by an infinite number of others besides the original cyberbully.

The third criterion, imbalance of power, entails victims' experiences of having a position of inferiority or of having difficulties defending themselves (Olweus 2013). According to a study with Swedish students, the imbalance of power can take other forms in cyberbullying than in offline bullying (Menesini et al. 2013). As far as bullying in school settings is concerned, the imbalance of power is often founded on physical strength, higher status in the peer group and/or support from the other members of the group. This does not entirely apply to cyberbullying since, for example, physical strength does not make a difference on the Internet (Menesini et al. 2013).

A unique factor influencing the imbalance of power on the Internet is anonymity (Menesini et al. 2013). It is impossible to defend oneself when the perpetrator is anonymous, which creates experiences of exposure and powerlessness for the victim, i.e. an imbalance of power. In a Swedish study (Frisén and Berne 2016), a young person expressed it like this: "It is distressing not knowing who it is. You get scared."

Another central factor in regard to imbalance of power online is dissemination. For instance, when someone writes something hurtful or uploads an unfavorable picture, it can be disseminated as quickly as a flash. Not knowing how many people have seen the picture or the text can affect the victim of cyberbullying very negatively. Is it a handful of persons, several hundred or maybe thousands? Have your friends seen it? Your classmates? Your parents and relatives? What is written or uploaded may also be difficult to delete.

In sum, imbalance of power is an important criterion for defining cyberbullying. However, it may differ from the situation in offline bullying. Not knowing whom the cyberbully is and how many people have seen the picture or text can increase the feeling of inferiority and defenselessness.

Different Forms of Cyberbullying

The ways that cyberbullying is performed can vary and there has been suggested to be different forms (Willard 2007). Firstly, cyberthreats are threatening comments on the Internet, either to a known person or to unknown persons. An example is when a student writes to another student “Today is the day you are going to die”. Secondly, harassment is when someone repeatedly writing malicious comments by way of a mobile telephone or over the Internet. Thirdly, denigration is sending denigrating and malicious slander, spreading of rumors on the Internet. An example of denigration is when someone in writing depicts someone else as being a whore. Fourthly, impersonation is to pass oneself off as being someone else on the Internet and to do something while posing as this person. An example of impersonation is someone creating an account on a dating site, looking for dates, in someone else’s name. Finally, exclusion is to exclude and deliberately prevent others from taking part in activities on the Internet. An example is when a student is not allowed to join an e-game on the ground that he/she damages for the group playing by not being available at nighttime.

Prevalence of Cyberbullying in Sweden

The prevalence rates of cyberbullying in Sweden vary greatly (Berne 2014). More specifically, prevalence rates for cybervictims varies between 1% and 10.6% when assessed through self-report questionnaires. This fluctuation might be due to researchers using different terms and definitions when measuring the prevalence of cyberbullying. An additional possible explanation could be that researchers use different cut-off points and reference periods (Frisén et al. 2013b).

In much of the work on offline bullying, researchers dichotomize variables with specific cut-off points to establish groups (bullies, victims, bully/victims and different types of witnesses) for statistical purposes (Solberg and Olweus 2003). For example, one question often used to measure experiences of bullying has been

obtained from Olweus (1999), namely: “How often have you been bullied in school in the past couple of months?”. This is a multiple choice question, with the following response alternatives: “I have not been bullied in school in the past couple of months”, “It has only happened once or twice”, “Two or three times per month”, “About once per week”, “Several times per week”. The cut-off point of “two or three times per month” is often used to determine the presence of victims or bullies when this question is used (Solberg and Olweus 2003).

However, some researchers have chosen to use a lower cut-off point in research on cyberbullying than what is commonly used in research on offline bullying (Frisén et al. 2013a). More specifically, they have chosen to use “It has happened once or more” as a cut-off point.

Thus, it appears that some researchers in the cyberbullying field use a more lenient cut-off point, and do not put much emphasis on the criterion of repetition in comparison to offline bullying.

The reference period of “the past couple of months” have been widely used in measuring offline bullying (Solberg and Olweus 2003). Solberg and Olweus (2003) further argue that this time period constitutes a memory unit that is likely to enable students to remember offline bullying situations. However, it is rare that this reference period is used when measuring cyberbullying (Frisén et al. 2013b). Instead, it is more common to use “last year” and “ever”. One possible explanation for this could be that nasty or offensive text messages or unfriendly information (photos, videos, text) that have been uploaded might remain on the Internet for a long time. This might lead the researcher to regard the reference period “the past couple of months” as too short a period of time.

To conclude, it is important to pay attention to which terms, definitions, cut-offs and reference periods are used in studies measuring the prevalence rates of cyberbullying. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand why some researchers report that cyberbullying is a common problem while others tend to report that it is a rare occurrence.

Consequences of Cyberbullying

What sort of consequences can cyberbullying have for the victims? Research shows that being a victim of cyberbullying often leads to negative emotions, the most frequent being: to become angry, anxious, afraid and to feel shame (Ortega, et al. 2012). A smaller group of cybervictims nevertheless state that, “they do not care” (Ortega, et al. 2012). It has furthermore been found in a Swedish study that the victims of cyberbullying have more somatic, i.e. physical/bodily, symptoms, such as head- and stomachaches, than other students (Beckman et al. 2012). These symptoms are, of course, signs that these students are not feeling well and are to be taken seriously. It can for that reason be good to know that students who say they have head- or stomachaches may have been victims of cyberbullying, although the symptoms of course could have other causes as well. Moreover, two studies in Sweden

has found that victims of cyberbullying have poorer body esteem and body image than non-cybervictims (Frisén et al. 2013a; Landstedt and Persson 2014). Frisé et al. (2013a) found that Swedish cybervictims reported a poorer view of their general appearance and of their weight than non-cybervictims, and that girls who were victims of cyberbullying reported a poorer view of their general appearance compared to boys who were victims of cyberbullying. Landstedt and Persson (2014) found that Swedish cybervictims reported poorer body image compared to non-cybervictims. They also found that girls who were cybervictims reported poorer body image compared to boys who were cybervictims.

One explanation for why girls who were victims of cyberbullying experienced poorer body-esteem and body image than boys could be that the pressure to conform to a culturally defined ideal body size and ideal appearance, such as having a body that is thin but shapely (Grogan 2007), is stronger for girls. These findings may thus reflect a socialization into traditional gender roles, in which girls are taught from a young age that they are judged by how they appear to others (Grogan 2007). Nevertheless, evidence increasingly indicates that physical appearance has also become a growing concern among young men (Ricciardelli and Williams 2012).

Having poor body esteem and body image is in itself problematic but has also been found to have adverse consequences, for example eating disorder symptomatology (Shroff and Thompson 2006). As such, parents, school personnel and anti-bullying teams need to pay attention to the likelihood that victims of cyberbullying might suffer from poor body esteem and body image.

How are the cyberbullies affected? A study in Sweden investigated whether cyberbullies and bullies in school felt remorse over their actions (Slonje et al. 2012). A majority (70%) of the perpetrators of bullying in school settings felt remorse over their actions, but the pattern was reversed for cyberbullies: a slight majority (58%) did not feel remorse. A possible explanation for this difference is that the cyberbullies do not see the victims' reactions and therefore do not understand how the bullying affects them. It was furthermore shown by a meta-analysis that cyberbullies exhibit more difficulties in school, show less empathy and have a higher degree of moral disengagement than other students (Kowalski et al. 2014). Moral disengagement signifies someone behaving hurtful towards someone else without feeling guilt, remorse or self-condemnation, online and offline.

Given the severe effect of cyberbullying, the issue is of great concern. One important question is what can be done to prevent this problem and how cyberbullying can be stopped. There are, of course, no definite answer to this question, nor a cure-all against cyberbullying. We do however now that we adults have a responsibility to work to prevent cyberbullying and intervene when it occurs (Berne et al. 2016). Sweden is an interesting country with regards to this, because in Sweden there is legislation against bullying and there is a widespread use of the internet among students. To be more specific, there is a zero tolerance policy against bullying in Swedish schools, and staff is obliged by law to actively prevent discrimination, harassment and abusive treatment (SFS 2008:567; 2010:800). Additionally, among 25 European countries, Sweden is the country with the most frequent everyday internet usage among 9–16 year-olds (Von Feilitzen et al. 2011).

Interventions to Prevent Cyberbullying

There are currently some Nordic anti-bullying programs, such as the KiVa-program and the Olweus-program, whose representatives suggest that cyberbullying is mainly a problem in relation to bullying in school settings (Olweus 2013; Salmivalli and Poyhonen 2012). They have found that the programs decrease bullying both online and offline, and are therefore of the opinion that schools ought to continue to use programs aimed at bullying in school settings and by doing this will also counteract cyberbullying. There are, furthermore, some international research groups who develop and assess preventive measures focused on cyberbullying in particular (Menesini et al. 2012a; Wölfer et al. 2014). In the following part, two of the interventions proven to be effective in the preventive work against cyberbullying will be described; *Awareness about cyberbullying* and *Teaching students about what is illegal on the Internet*. Also, Swedish youths own suggestions on how to put a stop to cyberbullying if victimized are presented.

Awareness About Cyberbullying

A central part of the preventive work against cyberbullying is that students really do understand what cyberbullying is. It can furthermore be beneficial to raise student's awareness of the negative impact of cyberbullying, for cybervictims as well as for cyberbullies. Studies have found that information about the negative impact of cyberbullying is associated with less cyberbullying behavior (Menesini et al. 2012a; Wölfer et al. 2014). However, these studies have also shown that increasing students' knowledge about cyberbullying is not enough – the students themselves need to be involved in developing anti-cyberbullying material – such as a poster, website or video clip (Menesini et al. 2012a; Wölfer et al. 2014). One possible explanation for these findings could be that engaging with cyberbullying material can generate critical thinking and discussion among students, which might affect their attitudes and behaviors more than simply passively listening to a lecture.

Teaching Students About What Is Illegal on the Internet

It is beneficial to give students knowledge about how the law applies to the Internet, especially which cyberbullying behaviors that are criminal and what punishments they incur (Wölfer et al. 2014). As a practical exercise, schools can have the students undertake a role-play in which they carry out legal proceedings concerning cyberbullying. This would both provide knowledge about the law and improve the students' moral reasoning.

Suggested Coping Strategies

It is also an important part of the preventive work against cyberbullying to give students strategies concerning how to avoid problematic situations on the Internet, as well as strategies concerning how to cope with cyberbullying if victimized. In order to do so knowledge about the coping strategies that student's use is essential. A Swedish study investigated which strategies students stated that they would use in order to put a stop to cyberbullying if victimized (Frisén et al. 2014). We are now, in the coming paragraphs, going to present some of the results.

Swedish student's most commonly suggested coping strategy was telling someone (70.5%), especially parents (39.5%) and teachers (20.2%) (Frisén et al. 2014). This is a somewhat surprising finding, given that previous international studies have found that children and adolescents often do not tell adults about cyberbullying, because, among other things, they fear that their access to the technology will be restricted if they do (Sevcikova et al. 2015). Social representations theory offers an explanation for this difference in pattern; namely, the content of social representations in peer cultures might vary due to differences in contextual variables, such as culture (Augoustinos et al. 2012). Certain features in the Swedish sociocultural context can be assumed to have an impact on whom Swedish students suggest they would turn to if they were cyberbullied. Part of the preventive work against cyberbullying in Sweden is a matter of encouraging students to turn to adults, since it is the responsibility of adults to put an end to cyberbullying (Swedish National Agency for School Education 2011). Furthermore, the interaction between students and adults are less formal in Sweden compared to many other western societies (Sweden. se). As an example of this Swedish students call their teachers by first name. These aspects of the Swedish society will probably exert an influence on how comfortable Swedish students are in turning to adults about their worries.

Additional Swedish research nevertheless shows that there are a number of students who choose not to tell an adult that they have been bullied, one reason being that they have relations of poorer quality to the adults in their surroundings (Bjereld et al. 2017). It is thus an important part of the preventive work against cyberbullying to provide the means for open communication between students and adults. Both student's inclination to tell adults if something happens and to heed their advice are in that way increased.

According to Friends (2013), a Swedish anti-bullying organization, about 42% of Swedish 12- to 16-year-olds wished their parents had more knowledge about how to support them if they were victimized online. Additionally, they wished their parents would talk more with them about how to behave in the digital world, and also believed that parents should be good role models. Swedish students want their parents to be more involved regarding issues related to cyberbullying and cyber-safety. In research for preventing cyberbullying, it has been emphasized that parents should be invited to meetings at school with the purpose of increasing their knowledge about cyberbullying and how they can prevent it (Välimäki et al. 2012). These meetings are intended to encourage and support parents in communicating with

their children about these issues. It is especially important that parents clarify that they will not deny their children phone or online access if they are targeted online, as children might otherwise be reluctant to report to their parents that they are being cyberbullied.

The study by Frisé et al. (2014) shows that a very small amount of Swedish students would tell a friend if they were cyberbullied. A possible explanation is that they do not think they can get any help from their friends, another that they do not have all that many friends to tell. Additional research in five Nordic countries; Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, also shows that the number of friends that victims of bullying have, is of great importance to their mental health (Bjereld et al. 2014). It is therefore important to teach students' different strategies concerning how to speak out or in other ways help a victim. Friends or other persons close to the victim could, for example, remove or block the cyber-bully's account. In another study Swedish students suggested that if they read a negative comment directed at a student, they could write a comment to the bully and question his/her action (Frisé et al. 2018). However, it is important to point out that this activity may have the opposite effect than what was intended. We found in another focus group study with students that sometimes confronting the bully can get out of hand, especially online, so that the parties involved retaliate against each other, neither wanting to give in, creating an escalating circle of aggression (Frisé and Berne 2016). Future research could therefore benefit from focusing on how peers can defend a targeted friend online without it backfiring at them. Peers could furthermore show concern and tell the victim that cyberbullying is not acceptable. It is, in other words, a matter of working against cyberbullying on a broad front, making it a concern for everyone, not only for cyberbullies and victims.

Interestingly enough, the Swedish study by Frisé et al. (2014) found that few students would protect themselves using technical means, for example by removing the cyberbully from their friend list, blocking a cyberbully or using a "report-function". Previous research has shown that it is helpful for students to use technical solutions to deal with cyberbullying (Raskauskas and Huynh 2015). As an adult, it is therefore important to know of the most common technical means of protection, in order to be able to offer assistance in bullying situations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we propose that features of offline bullying take new forms in the context of cyberbullying. Anonymity and publicity are probably essential prerequisites for creating and fortifying the imbalance of power and repetition of acts of bullying in the cyber context, which indicates that researchers should try to adapt and use Olweus's definition of offline bullying for cyberbullying.

Research presented in this chapter furthermore shows that being involved in cyberbullying incidents have harmful consequences, for example, being the victim of cyberbullying is associated with physical/bodily symptoms, poor body esteem

and poor body image. Moreover, perpetrators of cyberbullying exhibit more difficulties in school, show less empathy and have a higher degree of moral disengagement.

Considering the severe and negative consequences of cyberbullying, it is an issue exceedingly important for professionals to work with. We have given a few examples of how to do so, such as raising students' awareness about cyberbullying and seeking out technical solutions. Moreover, this part of the chapter highlighted that many Swedish students rely on adults (teachers and parents) for help and support if they were cyberbullied, which is a valuable sign of trust that needs to be maintained. We also presented that a small minority of students suggest telling a friend when asked which strategies they would use in order to put a stop to cyberbullying if victimized. This shows that Swedish schools need to help students develop skills they can use to assist friends in difficult situations. We hope that this chapter, apart from contributing to an increase in knowledge of cyberbullying generally, will help preventing more students from becoming victims of it.

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Chapter 11

The Rules of Violence: Young People's Moral Work around Violence and Fighting



Sara Uhnöo

Introduction

Violence among the young is not 'mindless' or 'senseless', but on the contrary highly socialised, operating within strict rules and moral codes (Barter et al. 2003, p. 213).

The majority of violent crime is committed by young men, with also their victims very often being adolescents (Brå 2014). To regulate their behaviour and interactions vis-à-vis one another, young people employ sets of subtle and informal rules regarding conflicts, violence, and fighting. To be able to understand the actions and behaviour of the young in our society, these underlying, often tacit, rules and meaning contents need to be examined and clarified (Jackson-Jacobs 2013; Stanko 2003). In their nature, they are socially constructed, intersubjectively shared, and individually internalized. They can be likened to instructions defining which actions are legitimate and which illegitimate in specific relationships and situations. Their social implications arise from their ability to motivate action, create behavioural expectations, and function as informal mechanisms of social control. In their broader context, they are more or less generally accepted as norms in society, and are to various degrees variable and malleable by nature. Some of them are more formal, having perhaps become institutionalized as laws, which makes them more fixed. Other rules of violence are more informal and more easily changeable. The mere existence of such rules and their endorsement by the people does not, however, mean that violence would always be resorted to and acts of violence carried out in accordance with them: our social interactions with others do not nearly always unfold according to the rules.

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153

In this chapter, I investigate the informal moral rules of violence that in many ways resemble moral norms. Although, formally speaking, the state, in modern society, has the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical violence, there are also numerous other rules for how and when to use violence in it. Violence and the underlying norms governing its use must therefore always be studied in context, situationally and with a view to their local character (Stanko 2003). Since the moral fabric of society is constantly re-created, norms of violence keep changing. These norms can, moreover, be mutually incompatible, unclear, and ambiguous, making it necessary for them to first be interpreted before they can be applied to particular cases. Even when people may, in principle, be in agreement as to their applicability, rules thus tend to vary and become re-negotiated when actualized in specific and concrete everyday situations (Burman et al. 2003; Hanmer and Saunders 1984; Uhnöo 2011). Deliberations and negotiations about the scope and application of rules are, accordingly, an essential part of any social life.

More specifically, the focus in my investigation is on the rules of violence of young people. Young people quite often have conflicts with one another, and where they tend to most frequently experience different degrees of physical abuse and threats thereof is at school (Brå 2016). In this chapter, I look at how Swedish young people approach and deal with violent conflicts arising not only in school settings, but also outside of them. Fights and violence among the young are, namely, not restricted to certain arenas only, but erupt in various contexts, such as, besides the school, at home, at parties, and out on the streets. As a consequence, young persons must learn early on how to manage conflicts and what the relevant rules governing fights and violence are for different situations. Studying the norms of violence of specific groups helps one to develop a picture of how such rules may vary across groups and situations, contributing also to our understanding of the way they, and the norms governing their application, are negotiated. In addition, we will learn about how those researched – in this particular case, young Swedish men and women – legitimize their uses of violence and how they perceive or experience the social functions and appeal of different forms of violence.

The chapter is based on my doctoral dissertation on rules of violence, a work that examines young people's oral moral work, or the way they construct, re-construct, and negotiate rules for various types of fighting and violence during spoken interviews about the subject (Uhnöo 2011). The term 'moral work' in it is defined as the collaborative effort of individuals talking about and negotiating the legitimacy or illegitimacy of various actions, events, and behaviours, thereby producing and re-producing morality (cf. Drew 1998, p. 295). In addition to this productive dimension of rule creation, moral work, however, also has a performative aspect to it, one that involves an attempt to present oneself and one's actions in a morally acceptable light. The morality here then emerges as a result of continuous (re-)negotiations among young people in the midst of their everyday reality, at a micro level. Moral work is, typically, deeply embedded in people's talk (Drew 1998, p. 296). There are, however, some interactive speech situations as well as discussion topics in which the moral dimension is more prominent than in others, such as when talking about

violence. The latter situations thus offer themselves as particularly promising contexts for the study of how moral work is done in practice.

The empirical material used for my dissertation research consisted of 15 audio recorded and verbatim-transcribed interviews with 41 young persons aged 15–21 from Gothenburg, Sweden's second-largest city.¹ For the interviews, no single or clear-cut definition of violence was put forth; instead, the participants were allowed to themselves develop a way to approach the phenomenon and describe what they regarded as violence and what in their view was legitimate or illegitimate to do in different situations involving fighting and violence. A whole variety of everyday life settings were brought up as arenas where the interviewees had witnessed violence and fighting, with incidents read about in newspapers or to have happened to themselves, their siblings, friends, acquaintances, classmates, girlfriends or boyfriends, neighbours, parents, and other relatives narrated. The youths also spoke more hypothetically about what they thought was typical of such incidents as a youth phenomenon or specific to young people. The increasing public and research focus on 'youth violence' and 'street violence' has brought with it a relative marginalization of less spectacular, milder, and more everyday forms of conflicts among young people (cf. Jackson-Jacobs 2013). By examining young people's associations and definitions as well as the way they discuss the subject when asked to speak about 'violence' in a setting combining the use of an open-ended concept, semi-structured focus group interviews, and an inductive analytical strategy, our picture of youth violence can be broadened and nuanced.

The analytical focus in this examination is on young people's everyday and locally anchored language use – their local discourse production – when drawing upon cultural resources available to them in the form of widely shared assumptions, or 'truths', about reality and norms about how people are to think, feel, and act. The young people's moral work here is viewed as micropolitical boundary work (cf. Åkerström 2002; Emerson and Messinger 1977; Jackson-Jacobs 2014), with the object of the investigation being how morality is (re-)produced 'here and now', in the specific social and cultural context that the interview situation entails.

The chapter begins by presenting a typology of young people's violence and fighting. After that, the phenomenon of the normalization of sibling fights and play fights is discussed, with the two cases briefly compared. Thereafter, the rules governing fights and fighting among young people are subjected to examination and analysis, in particular as regards the way fights are started and how those standing by in the audience when a fight breaks out are to act and behave.

¹The interviews consisted of a total of three individual interviews, four conjoint interviews, and eight focus group interviews. The selection of individuals for them aimed at a maximum heterogeneity of participants in terms of gender, ethnicity, social background, and experience of violence. Some of the interviewed young persons reported having been involved in fights frequently, others stated themselves to have mostly only witnessed others engage in fights and violence. Most of them had personal experiences of play fights and sibling fights. The interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analysed by this author. For a more detailed description of the methods, materials, and analytical approaches drawn upon for this study, see Uhnöo (2011).

A Typology of Young People's Violence and Fighting

The analysis of young people's oral moral work described above showed it to be complex and characterized by ambivalence and ambiguity: the rules of violence they identified remained open to negotiation and varied according to the situation and the type of the relationship between the parties in each case. The complex and context-dependent nature of the concept 'violence' was regularly highlighted. A physical fight, for instance, could be interpreted in a number of different ways, depending on a great variety of circumstances. According to Stanko (2003, p. 11), four key factors influence the way a specific act of violence is interpreted and meaning and legitimacy are ascribed to its components: the act itself, the relationship of the participants to one another, the location of the act, and the outcome or the resultant damage. In my study on the moral work of young people, it was the second aspect that stood out as especially important in the material – the relationship between the participants. Even when interviewees invoked universal, virtually timeless notions of what the rules of violence consist of,² they at the same time specified particular rules for fighting and violence among the young based on the kind of relationship the young persons had with one another – whether these were or were not known to each other from before, whether they were friends/buddies, siblings, couples, and so on.

The oral moral work done in the interviews is presented below in a summary form, constituting a typology of ideal-typical forms of fighting and violence among young people. In the typology, two specific characteristics of the relationship between the involved parties can be seen as decisive for which rules were seen to apply and how these were defined: the relative *power relationship* and the degree of *social distance* between those in the conflict (Table 11.1).

The second of these aspects, the degree of social distance between the parties to the conflict, was in this study influenced by how well and how in general the persons in question knew each other from before. That mattered for the way an act or action or an event was interpreted, and thus whether it were ascribed legitimacy or not (cf. Black 1993, p. 740; Stanko 2003, p. 11). In general, the lesser the social dis-

Table 11.1 Social relationship-based typology of young people's fighting and violence

Social distance Power relationship	Unknown or vaguely known	Known –positive	Known –negative
Symmetric (equal)	Youth fights	Play fights	Peer violence (derailed play fights)
		Sibling fights	Sibling fights
Asymmetric (unequal)	Physical assault	Sibling disciplining	Sibling violence
	Rape		Partner abuse

² Such as that violence in principle is wrong, that one is not to punch or strike someone weaker than oneself, that many against one is not fair, that weapons should not be used, that it is bad to kick someone in the head or someone who is already down – that, in other words, it is not right to fight someone who is at a disadvantage (see also Pearson 1983).

tance between the parties and the milder the violence resorted to, the less often there tends to end up being a police report filed on the incident, and vice versa (Estrada 2007, p. 31). A person receiving a punch in a close relationship, for example, is assumed to understand why that happened – that it was not meant to cause harm (Christie 2000, pp. 21–22) – and interpret the blow as something deserved or thrown in jest, or as a mistake.

Several of the fights normalized by the young people in their interviews were between persons who knew each other from before and who had friendships or sibling or couple relationships characterized by caring, empathy, or love. A close relationship was, however, not always interpreted along these lines, for which reason the typology makes a distinction between positive and negative close relationships. Physical abuse may, in this scheme, be expected to be a feature of close relationships between young people that are characterized by negativity, hostility, adversarialness, or hate. A fight in a relationship without caring and love, whether between friends, siblings, or in heterosexual couples, was, accordingly, often defined as illegitimate: then the aim was presumed to be to hurt or cause harm.

In addition to social distance, also the relative power relationship between the involved parties played a major role in the moral demarcations and assignments of victim status in conflict situations (cf. Honkatukia et al. 2006). The way the parties' mutual power relationship was understood and construed either legitimized or delegitimized the use, or threats of, violence in the situation at hand. Moral judgments concerning it were based on how the opposing parties in conflicts were interpreted in terms of their relative strength and power – whether one side could be construed and presented as the weaker one and thus vulnerable (see Christie 1986). Rather correspondingly, situational analyses of conflicts between persons not known to each other from before suggest them to turn violent more often when the parties in them are defined as equals (e.g., Baron et al. 2001, p. 766). In their oral moral work in the interviews, the young people identified age, physical strength, gender, sibling status, and the number of participants in the conflict as factors influencing a person's relative power position in it. What was common to all normalized forms of violence and fighting among the young in this study (sibling fights, play fights, youth fights) was an implicit premise that they involved opponents of equal power. On the part of youth fights, this led to the further assumption that young people of equal age and equal physical and numerical strength who were not known to, or only vaguely knew, each other from before, could, in a situation of one against one or gang against gang, rightfully fight each other.³ Correspondingly, youth fights and violence were problematized by claiming them to be between parties that were non-equals in these regards, with the forms of violence earning the interviewees' strongest condemnation being, not surprisingly, unexpected, random, and sudden outbursts of physical violence (assaults) and rape. These were presented as ideologically illegitimate or 'cowardly' forms of violence, corresponding also to what

³This resembles what Collins (2008) has termed the myth of the fair fight, about a conflict in which both the parties involved in it and their audience know and follow its rules and regard the fighters as equals and their interaction as legitimate.

Christie (1986) has coined 'ideal' crime, in which there is no ambiguity about culpability and the offender and the victim do not know each other from before and are of unequal strength. Other characteristics and factors brought up to criticize violence use in this connection included potential or actual rule violations in the way it was carried out, malicious intent behind it, and risk or threat of injury.

What the typology shows in the first place is that the different forms of fighting and violence all entail their own sets of rules. In practice, it is then the *definition of the situation* (Ball 1972) in which the young people are fighting, and, within that situation, the relationship between the parties, that becomes decisive for which sets of rules are taken to apply. The nature of social relationships remains, however, always at least to some degree a matter of interpretation and negotiation, as the degree of social distance and the nature of the power relationships in any particular conflict are never a given.⁴ In consequence, concrete conflict situations always trigger a complex work of interpretation and negotiation regarding which rules are to govern actions in them: What is 'the right thing' to do? Where are the boundaries? What is the nature of the relationship between the people involved, really?

Normalization of Sibling and Play Fights

The rules young people have adopted for different types and kinds of violence use, fights, and fighting tell much about the forms of violence and fighting that have become normalized and legitimized for them in different situations and social relationships. By 'normalization' here I refer to processes whereby certain types of youth violence, fights, and fighting, along with certain behaviours, positions, and power relationships, are legitimized, rendered typical, and, at times, given the appearance of something taken for granted. To better help us understand how young people legitimize violence and reflect about the social functions and attractions of violence, the rest of this chapter will concentrate on three types of fight and fighting that tended to become normalized in the oral moral work of the interviewees in this study: sibling fights, play fights, and youth fights. The first two are discussed rather summarily, while more in-depth attention is given to the complex framework of rules governing youth fights.

The dominant construction of sibling fights normalizes them as a form of *everyday family conflict*, of which all siblings, regardless of gender, have experiences at some point of their lives. These conflicts are not aimed at hurting someone or causing harm, and they only seldom lead to severe physical injury. When siblings tease, wrestle, and scuffle, they are taken to express feelings of irritation, frustration, and

⁴In addition, a relationship can also become re-defined during the fighting process itself, depending on what transpires between the parties involved in it: the definition of what they do to each other influences how their mutual relationship is interpreted. A friend who hits too hard in a play fight, causing serious injury to his counterparty, may afterwards become regarded as something other than a friend, leading to a different set of rules to become relevant.

anger or resentment in everyday conflict situations, arising from competition for scarce resources such as a computer, hot chocolate at the breakfast table, or access to the bathroom. The sibling fights that are deemed legitimate take place in good sibling relationships characterized by equality, reciprocity, and 'sibling love'. What such a close family relationship context typically implies is that any physically aggressive action in sibling fights is not to be taken particularly seriously or condemned as illegitimate. The arena where the fights unfold is, namely, the home, a place where there are usually parents present, acting as rule enforcers and those retaining the ultimate responsibility.

In contrast to sibling fights with their specific, even if often trivial, source of 'real' conflict, play fights were in the interviews for this study addressed as mere *stagings of violent conflicts* (cf. Jackson-Jacobs 2014; Wästerfors 2014). Unlike in sibling fights, in them the fighting between friends or acquaintances is no more than pretend-fight, enactment of a play-fight scene. In both cases, however, the fighting is normalized. In the talk about sibling fights in this study, the social function of the violence was located in its role as part of the normal conflict management among children and adolescents in a family context, while the social function of play fights was rather described as having to do with entertainment and comradeship or other association among friends or acquaintances, not uncommonly in school settings. According to the interviewees, the appeal of playfighting lay in its being 'fun'. They constructed play fights as in the first place harmless, unproblematic play between equal parties known to each other. Such fights, according to them, occurred often before an audience that laughed along and cheered on the fighters, and they were regarded as entertaining pastime. One pre-condition for recognizing a fight as either a legitimate play fight or sibling fight, however, it had to be kept within certain limits. A play fight was described as rules-based, predictable in its course, and something relatively simple to interpret as such by both those involved in the fighting as well as the on-lookers. The rules were set by mutual consent by the parties to it, and in some cases also by the audience. The underlying assumption was that the parties to a play fight were friends/acquaintances who were equal participants in it, that they meant no harm to but respected each other, and that they made it known if the other party did something against one's own will. The pre-existing comradeship between the fighters was taken to also imply knowledge of the other party's tolerance level (capacity to endure physical and psychological pain), reaction patterns, and intentions, and that the parties' tolerance level was higher than in the case of fighters not known to each other from before.

One way to normalize fighting and violence among young people was thus to point to their rule-based character. What this means is that there was also an implied assumption of a principle according to which rule transgressions could, and normally would, lead to the invocation of sanctions legitimate for the kind of rule breach in question. The implicit play signals in a play fight, for instance, could also be misinterpreted, or one of the parties could inadvertently break the fighting rules by going too hard on the other party, either physically or verbally. Thereby, a play fight could escalate and become overly rough, turning into a 'real' fight. As a result,

a more far-reaching conflict could ensue, turning the play fighters into enemies who no longer just pretended to fight, merely staging a conflict, but began to do so for real. The rules governing the conflict then also changed, becoming those applicable to youth fights more in general.

Starting a Youth Fight

For the purposes of this chapter, we may define youth fights as incidents of violence or fighting in public between young people only vaguely or not at all known to each other from before. For the young persons interviewed for this study, they were a recurrent feature of their lives. Youth fights appeared to be something they all were personally familiar with, and expected to encounter or become involved in in the future as well, at least in certain social arenas such as their school, nightlife and party settings, or city streets on one's way back home from a night out on the town. They were, however, also depicted by the interviewees as something they could, at least partly, 'deal with' and manage. With knowledge of the 'rules of the game', such as about the likely times and places of youth fights and the appropriate reactions to them, they felt they could gain a certain control over the phenomenon. Certain seductive or appealing aspects of it were, however, also brought up, along with the feeling among several of the interviewees that the fights brought a welcome break from the humdrum of everyday life and were exciting for them to watch. Some young people, especially young men, were even assumed to purposefully seek to become involved in fights, and were said to exaggerate and joke or brag about their role in them. Also risks and intimidating aspects of youth fights were, however, discussed, such as that the fights tended to be unpredictable as to their course, with the attendant risk that they could escalate and go out of control. Indeed, at times the interviewees' talk about youth fights assumed the form of a cautionary tale (cf. Anderson et al. 1994), or concrete descriptions of how it could go when 'things took a bad turn' and people were unwillingly drawn into a youth fight or by mistake violated its rules.

In this section, some of the rules referred to in the interviewed youths' moral work as governing youth fights are taken up, in order to examine how young people create and assign meaning to, or make sense of, their own and other young people's participation in youth fights. The aspects or factors to which the interviewees assigned relevance in the course of their moral work varied between different forms of fighting and violence.⁵ The way youth fights start was considered as highly significant for the development of the situation (cf. Collins 2008, ch. 9). Both verbal

⁵In sibling and play fights, it was the relationship between the fighters and the purpose behind the violence that were decisive in this regard; the nature of the actions, or what the siblings or friends/acquaintances did to each other (whether they resorted to punches, kicks, or just taunts), was ascribed less significance.

Table 11.2 Young people's interpretations of how youth fights start

Causes of fight	Responder's interpretations of the causes of fight, with possible countermoves	Definitions of youth fight
Verbal causes of fight	Insulting as such	Offensive interaction
Ritualized insults	– Prompts a response, a defensive move, and an attempt at retribution.	
Derogatory gossiping or spreading of false rumours		
Non-verbal causes of fight	Fight invitation	Ritualized conflict
Unwanted attention to one's girlfriend/boyfriend	– Responder can choose to accept or reject.	Unprovoked illegitimate attack
Pushing, poking, shoving	Made-up excuse to fight	
“Looked at me funny”	– Responder is positioned as a victim of an unprovoked attack.	
Territorial infringement/violation		

and physical conflicts were described as ritualistic in their nature, and were said to break out frequently and easily, even over seemingly very trivial things. As one interviewed young person put it, ‘It’s often about that sort of small things...first there’s some words thrown around, and suddenly it’s a fistfight.’⁶

In the interviews, there was one main rule all the young people recognized as valid for youth fights: that it was wrong to *start* a fight. A whole range of expressions were put forth to describe all the different ways one could act provocatively or insultingly to accomplish just that.⁷ Those who purposely initiated a youth fight by acting in such ways could then end up being positioned as troublemakers. These were described in the interviews as people who ‘like to pick a fight’, ‘look for trouble’, or ‘just want to fight’. More legitimate than theirs was seen to be the position of those who got involved in, or more or less unwillingly ended up becoming drawn into, a youth fight because they ‘had to’, in order to respond to a perceived insult or come to a friend’s aid.

Table 11.2 gives the interviewed youths’ characterizations of how youth fights, in their view and experience, start, amounting to a description of the initial-phase situational dynamic of such fights. It presents the foreground factors of youth fights (Katz 1988), describing the circumstances, of the situation and in the interaction,

⁶That violence breaks out easily, that there is a low threshold of violence, is a notion that, according to Collins (2008, p. 338), may be categorized as a ‘folk theory’ of violence, one that does not agree with how conflictual interactions usually unfold in reality.

⁷Such inciteful behaviours included, for instance, smuggling around (*kaxa sig*), being jumped-up (*vara stöddig*), acting cheeky (*uppkäftig*), playing about (*leka*), thinking oneself to be special (*tro sig*), ‘flexing’ (*spänna sig*), acting self-importantly (*tyka sig*), not showing respect (*inte visa respekt*), bothering somebody (*tracka*), sniping (*hacka*), getting on somebody (*vara på någon*), being ‘difficult’/pestering somebody (*jobba sig*), psyching out (*psyka*), bullying/harassing (*trakassera*), provoking (*provocera*), riling somebody up (*reta upp*), picking on somebody (*mucka*), dissing (*dissa*), messing with somebody (*jiddra*), mouthing off/arguing with somebody (*käfta emot*), crapping around/making fuss about (*tjafsa*), andbickering/bandyng words about (*munhuggas*).

that the interviewees considered as potentially leading, or having led, to a verbal conflict subsequently turning into a physical fight.

The categorization illuminates the complexity of young people's conflictual interactions. Proceeding from the basic rule that it was wrong to start a fight (but not necessarily to 'hit back'), the interviewees' moral work on the initiation of the fight was centred on assessing the responsibility for it. This was done by establishing not only who 'started it', or, who acted provocatively or insultingly first or the most, earning the position of the troublemaker, the 'bad guy', but also what caused the fight to start. Several *verbal* and *non-verbal* causes that could trigger a youth fight, and which the troublemaker could exploit for his purposes, were identified. Ritualized insults, one of the verbal provocation types, were a feature of face-to-face confrontations in verbal conflicts. The insults in these cases were often aimed towards a person's or his or her companion's looks or style of clothing, or were directed at either one's honor; one could, for instance, be called ugly or a coward. Another typical verbal cause of fight was derogatory gossiping or spreading of false rumours. Here the most common example of the phenomenon was to call a girl, a young woman, or someone's mother a whore. This was not, however, something said to a person face-to-face during a verbal exchange; instead, the question was of name-calling on social networks, 'behind the back' without the affected person's awareness. The non-verbal provocations and insults referred to in the interviews involved unwanted attention or approaches towards one's girlfriend/boyfriend, pushings, pokings, and shovings, looking at one 'funny', as well as territorial infringements or violations.

Besides the above division into types of causes of youth fights, the analysis of the interviews also revealed three distinct interpretations regarding the cause in each case. The question could here be of an *insult as such*, of an *invitation to fight* extended to one, or of a *made-up excuse to fight* by the fight-starter. Each interpretation adopted by the responder in a specific situation was, furthermore, linked to its own particular set of possible countermoves or approaches justified by it. The three different interpretations put forth were in their turn accompanied by three different definitions of the fight: it was seen as an instance of either offensive interaction, a ritualized conflict, or an unprovoked illegitimate attack.

In the first interpretation, the immediate cause for a young person's participation in a youth fight was seen to be an actually *perceived insult that legitimizes*, and in certain cases might also demand, a *counterattack*. The youth fight was in this kind of cases interpreted as offensive interaction, in which one of the social functions of the fighting was to defend something of value to oneself that had been insulted or the inviolability of the sphere of one's bodily integrity. The verbal and non-verbal actions provoking the fight could be further itemized based on the kind of valued person, thing, or quality that was at stake. In the interviews, the following were brought up as possible targets of offensive actions and words leading to a youth fight: a young person's looks, personality traits, bodily integrity, sexual integrity, right of 'ownership' to a girlfriend/boyfriend, personal and sexual honour, right to freedom of movement, and right of 'ownership' to a territory. The question could, however, also be of a perceived insult along these lines that was aimed at one's girlfriend/boyfriend,

friend, or mother (never father), or a group to which one felt one belonged. In this view, a perceived threat against any of the people or aspects above was seen to warrant a counterreaction, such as a violent physical response (fight). Through it, one defended one's own or a one's girlfriend's/boyfriend's/relative's sexual reputation ('not a whore'), one's bodily integrity and freedom of movement ('not to be pushed/brushed up against/bumped into' [on the dance floor, etc.]), or one's 'right of ownership' to one's girlfriend/boyfriend ('not to be made a pass at'), or otherwise defended one's right not to be pushed down, humiliated, smeared, or vilified. In this interpretation, fights between young people were seen as especially morally charged when the insult was directed at a person's looks or sense of pride. That could then explain why seemingly trivial verbal or physical actions or gestures might prompt especially young men to react with great violence while nevertheless considering their response as legitimate. What this implies is an instrumental view of violence, one that presents it as a legitimate, even necessary, means for defending one's own or one's girlfriend's/boyfriend's/friends'/relatives' reputation, status, or sense of pride.

In the second interpretation, young people participate in youth fights based on their choice to respond affirmatively to an *invitation to stage everyday youth fights* (cf. Wästerfors 2009). Here the causes of fight need not be actions, words, or gestures experienced as particularly insulting or provocative for the responder; in fact, they might not be so at all. Instead, they were seen to consist of an invitation to fight, of a start signal or a catalyst that indicated an individual person's willingness or desire to fight. Accordingly, the direct causes of fight can here consist of a whole set of possible opening moves that the troublemaker can make and draw upon when wanting to trigger a youth fight (cf. Wilkinson and Carr 2008, p. 1044). This, the interviewees noted, makes it possible for something very harmless-looking and seemingly minor to become an even highly charged issue for those involved in the situation, interpreted as it may be by them as an indication of the person's intentions (Andersson 1999, p. 34, p. 68). For all these reasons, then, the interviewees concluded, it is imperative for young people to learn how to interpret fight signals, regardless of whether they plan or want to fight or not: such signals alert those keen to fight about possibilities to do so, and act as warning signals to those wishing to stay outside. Overall, this interpretation of the causes of fight presents youth fights as ritual conflicts in which two parties are conjoined in the interaction that ensues. Given this, it will always be complicated to assess the responsibility for starting them.

The third interpretation of the causes of fight centred on the view of the troublemaker as someone using for his purposes either *excuses to fight* to start one or *rationalizations* meant to legitimize or justify, before himself or others, a fight that is already over. A person might, for instance, go to someone and claim, out of nowhere, that the latter 'looked at me funny' when he or she passed by. The causes of fight were in these kinds of cases assumed to be invented on the fly, in order to be able to start a fight, or afterwards, in order to be able to justify one's actions or make them comprehensible. Either way, however, the interviewed youths considered the causes of fight as illegitimate, with the troublemakers presented as individuals attacking others 'really for nothing', entirely unprovoked, without reason – simply because they want to fight. In consequence, the responders could be construed as innocent

victims. While those who intentionally send out fight signals as invitations for others to fight were not categorized as 'totally' innocent, those who are exposed to the troublemaker's unjustified attack were.

All in all, the analysis of young people's moral work on how youth fights start showed there to be a great variety of aspects about the way young persons look, clothe themselves, or behave that can potentially be perceived as insulting or offensive, or interpreted as invitations to fight, thus constituting possible reasons for starting a fight. Indeed, as the interviewees suggested, there appear to be many restrictions affecting young people's lives in this regard. One might, for example, not want to, or even be able to, wear certain types of clothes, have a certain kind of look, act too boldly or confidently, wander into 'wrong' place, not look at another person in a 'wrong' way (not look directly in the eyes or, reversely, not avert one's eyes), not even unintentionally push or bump into another person, not talk to or sit too close to someone's girlfriend/boyfriend, not say 'wrong' things, not talk disparagingly or in a derogatory fashion, not spread false rumours or hang around in a wrong place. All in all, what a young person can thus do without risking getting drawn into a youth fight appears quite limited indeed.

From the troublemaker's perspective, on the other hand, one's ability to freely act, speak, express oneself, and move about appears to be much higher. In the interviews, there was so much that was brought up that could be defined or interpreted as an invitation to fight or as insulting – indeed, almost anything could. Troublemakers, their reflections suggested, also seem perfectly capable of finding excuses to fight, either in the moment or after the fact, when they feel like doing so. According to the interviewees, what all this meant was that there is, in turn, frequently also legitimate reason to defend oneself, strike back, respond in kind, and avenge. There was, in particular, one notion put forth that affirmed the legitimacy of one's response: that it was the other person that started it. At the same time, however, the young people confronted by troublemakers are also presumed to be able to choose not to accept the perceived invitation to fight that is extended to them, or choose not to respond with aggressive actions when insulted, refusing to participate in a ritualized fight.

To be able to understand the social functions of youth fights, it is important to keep in mind that youth fights, just as play fights, are something that are actualized not just together with, but also before other young people. What that means is that the decision about how to react to an offense, an insult, or a fight invitation is taken before one's peers who are present in the situation, peers who may have different ideas and expectation about how one should react to a verbal or physical fight initiation (for more on this, see Uhnnoo 2011, ch. 6). When those present are from one's circle of acquaintances, the expectation may well be that one should stand up for certain values, not tolerate insults or affronts to one's own or one's girlfriend's/boyfriend's/friends'/relatives' dignity ('be sensitive'), not allow oneself to be intimidated by the other person's aggressivity but instead show one's ability to 'man up' and respond to the insult or accept the invitation to fight. On the other hand, there might also be opposite expectations, that one should back out of the situation and leave, not 'go off too easily' ('be overly sensitive') but, instead, respond to provocations with calm and grace, or with words only. The social consequences of responding to a perceived

insult or fight invitation with physical aggression – the reactions of the immediate social environment to a decision to strike back – can thus be expected to vary. The understanding of which particular rules are relevant in a situation, moreover, also depends on how that situation is interpreted as a whole, including the relationship between the parties involved (degree of equality and social distance), the cause of fight (e.g., whether it was an insult, a fight invitation, or a made-up excuse), and the nature of the cause of fight. In this study, for instance, some types of provocations were categorized as more serious than others. Besides all such rules governing the ways to start a youth fight, however, there are also particular rules for how the friends and acquaintances present in the situation are to act. One reason for young people to participate in a youth fight may, for instance, be peer loyalty, for the sake of which they choose to get involved in an already on-going fight. The rules that render it legitimate, reasonable, and understandable to do so are what we will turn next.

Peer Loyalty in Youth Fights

In general, youth fights tend to assume a collective character. When they take place, there is often an audience present, consisting of persons who know the fighters from before. The social environment that this audience represents for the fight and the fighters can define, and react to, the fight situation in a number of different ways (Emerson and Messinger 1977; Jackson-Jacobs 2014), and the way it reacts has great significance for how the situation develops (Collins 2008, Ch. 6). Youth is the period of life when we seek freedom from parental social control and begin to spend more time in the company of our peers, giving other young people an increasingly more important role in our lives as norm-setters and informal social controllers (Giordano 2003, p. 57). The way young persons’ same-age peers around them react and behave in a conflictual situation is thus of major significance to them. What is, then, a peer standing by when a verbal or physical conflict erupts expected to do, and how is she or he expected to act or behave?

In the moral work of the young people interviewed for this study, four different approaches or roles that a peer might adopt could be distinguished: that of a *neutral border guard*, a *loyal supporter*, a *passive individualist*, and a *rescuer in need*. These roles differed from one another in their degree of active involvement in the conflict and their degree of neutrality vis-à-vis those already involved in it. Table 11.3 presents these positions in a summary format.

Table 11.3 The different roles adopted by peers in youth fights

	Active	Passive
Neutral	Neutral boundary guard – rule maintenance	Passive individualist – legitimization
Partisan	Loyal supporter – boosts violence	Rescuer in need – protection

Based on the descriptions presented by the interviewees, each of the four roles had different implications for the situation. They contributed to *rule maintenance* in it, served as *violence boosters*, and either provided *legitimation* to the proceedings or *protection* to one of the fighters. When the first of these was the case, peers, according to the interviewees, were expected to interfere when the fighting risked going beyond the limits set for it based on its characteristics, while passivity in this regard was interpreted as acceptance of such violations that, when evident, legitimated the course of the events along with the actions contributing to it (cf. Luckenbill 1977). The way a specific conflict was defined in terms of its social boundaries (the audience's definition of who were the ones involved in the conflict) or 'ownership' ('whose' conflict it was, i.e., who had the responsibility for solving/responding to it) was what determined the particular rules expected to govern the actions and behaviour of peers. Where the youth conflict was defined as something collectively concerning all the young people present, peers could act as neutral boundary guards not taking a position in favour of any of the sides in it. When, however, the understanding was that the directly involved friend's or acquaintance's conflict situation was also one's own personal matter, a sense of a shared ownership of the conflict and a more partisan role as a loyal supporter was more likely; as a result, one would then ordinarily take a position on it, allying oneself with one of the sides and, thereby, seeing it as one's responsibility to step in and fight alongside this party. Finally, if the individuals directly involved in the conflict were defined as the sole 'owners' of it, buddies could act as passive individualists, staying out of the fray as mere on-lookers who nevertheless, where needed, could also sometimes step in and assist in an acute situation as rescuers in need (cf. Philips and Cooney 2005).

These different peer roles and positions had specific characteristics and expectations attached to them. Peers who assumed the role of the *neutral boundary guard* actively interfered in the conflict, but not by, through their actions, openly allying themselves with one of the parties to it. Instead, they acted to prevent violence, calm down the situation, or bring an end to the fighting. This was done using either verbal or physical means; in the latter case, the fighting parties could be 'pulled apart' or 'grabbed', or one could put oneself in between the two fighters. In the fights, the social environment, or the involved parties' friends and acquaintances present at the scene, was typically ascribed the position and the role of a boundary setter that compensated for the fighting persons' (temporary) lack of self-control, their aggressivity, and their tunnel vision. It was given the task of rule maintenance to oversee the course of the fight, to ensure that it would not go on for too long, and to see to it that things would not get too rough or serious. In so doing, it rendered the fights into a collective concern for all those watching them.

Another peer role the interviewees presented as entailing active involvement in the situation was that of the *loyal supporter*. Those adopting this position, they elaborated, interfered to fight *alongside* and *for* a friend or an acquaintance. From the point of view of loyal supporters, it was in principle not acceptable for one, as a 'buddy' to one of the fighters, to remain a passive on-looker. The express understanding was that one, instead, had to 'be there' for one's friends, 'stand by' them, and 'have (their) back'. Friends who failed to do that risked being considered dis-

loyal and regarded as cowardly traitors betraying their friends. What this suggests is that there may be perceived expectations that a young person be prepared to show readiness, courage, willingness, and ability to enter a fight, so as to take part in it alongside a friend. The consequences of peer interventions along these lines are, as a rule, violence boosting. Peer friends were, however, also said to sometimes trigger, fuel, or prolong conflicts, by spreading false rumours or urging one to answer provocations or, after the conclusion of the fight, 'act cocky' towards the opposing party (cf. Felson et al. 1984).

The third role or position adopted by peers, often termed as the *rescuer in need*, described for the interviewees a behaviour where one, initially and for as long as possible, stayed outside of the conflict as its passive on-looker only. Only when really needed, rescuers would step in to prevent their friend from losing the fight or getting (seriously) injured. The rule here specified that such interference was only allowed if and when one's friend risked being overpowered by the opponent, or if there was a numerical disadvantage the friend faced in the fight. The general rule about having to come to one's buddy's aid was thus counterposed to the principle of equality, of the fair fight, one against one (see Collins 2008). According to the latter, it was immoral and cowardly to join a fight if that meant creating a numerical advantage for the side on which one fought. To get physically involved in a youth fight was regarded as legitimate only in specific circumstances. Compared to loyal supporters fighting alongside their 'buddies', the role of the rescuers in need was described as being more about defensive action, with the implication that it was more protective in nature.

Adopting the fourth role, that of the *passive individualist*, entailed remaining passive in relation to one's friends' conflicts for the entire duration of the fights. This could be achieved, for example, by 'disappearing' (leaving the scene) or by some other means securing for oneself the position of a neutral outsider. In the interviews, not getting involved in a conflict of one's friend was legitimized by appealing to an individualist norm according to which young persons should be able to manage on their own, handle their own fights, and not need any support, help, or protection from their friends. The kind of young person this image presupposed was independent, physically able, and brave enough to embrace and manage the task of defending her- or himself alone. The notion that one could decline to get involved in one's friend's conflicts could, however, also be legitimized by referring to different sorts of risks, such as that the intervention might result in injuries to oneself, too, that the action might afterwards result in assault charges, or that one might against one's will be drawn into severe and long-standing conflicts dragging on even after the actual fight was over. The view on which all this was based, that those involved in the fight were the owners of their own conflicts and that friends and acquaintances not directly involved in them should, consequently, 'stay out of it', meant, in effect, that the phenomenon of youth conflicts was individualized.

In the descriptions given in the interviews, friends or 'buddies' who are present in a youth fight are thus presented with a moral dilemma: they must first define the fight situation and then choose between a variety of situation-specific and not always compatible rules while responding to contradictory behavioural expectations. The

possibility to justify and legitimize several different peer-role behaviours and positions can thus be expected to lead to uncertainty, both for the individuals involved in the fight and those staying outside of it. For those directly involved in the fighting, this uncertainty relates to how one's social environment and specific friends or acquaintances are going to act – whether they are going to interfere, join the conflict to fight alongside oneself, do something to prevent a beating, or choose to look the other way. Given that the interviewees stated themselves not to trust in anonymous social control (intervention of unknown outsiders) enough to be able to rely on it, the actions of one's friends and acquaintances, one's 'buddies', became even more important for them: the active involvement of these peers could be necessary, sometimes even critical, in helping to contain the youth fight and prevent it from escalating and perhaps resulting in serious harm to its participants.

From the point of view of the friends or acquaintances not involved in the fight, the uncertainty relates to the imperative of having to choose one's position and interpret a whole range of aspects that matter for how one, as a friend or an acquaintance, is expected to act, such as, for instance, the situation between the parties fighting (who has the upper hand, who is losing? who needs help or being rescued?). Here, however, just as when reacting to perceived insults or fight invitations, the uncertainty also concerns how other important persons in one's social network are afterwards going to define, judge, and react to the chosen course of action. Given the importance of peers for young people and their subjective dependence on acceptance and recognition from other young people, it then becomes especially important for them to be able to act in a relationship-rational manner – that is, in a way that strengthens one's meaningful social relationships (Flekkøy 2000, p. 47). Accordingly, one of the social functions of youth fights may then be to do just that, cement ties of peer loyalty, by acting in accordance with the expectations of one's social environment. The availability of different interpretations and the possibility to choose different courses of action that characterize the position of friends and acquaintances present in fight situations thus entail the risk that one fails to act in a relationship-rational manner, leading to rejection, teasing, or status loss. Another dilemma arises: should one just mind one's own business, take care of oneself only and not get involved, and thereby risk becoming regarded as disloyal and having to handle a possible future confrontation on one's own, one against many? Or should one rely on others and accept the risk, instead, of having to get involved, even against one's own will, perhaps, in their future conflicts at some later date? (Cf. Irwin 2004) In this situation, legitimating one's position of a passive individualist as something neutral and passive enables one to resist perceived expectations to put peer loyalty in the first place.

Conclusion

For persons or groups to be perceived as moral, the possible uses of violence by them must appear rational and rule-governed. To make this possible, one must be able to account for one's actions (see Orbuch 1997), in order to make them comprehensible to others and legitimize them. This is true even of those who conventionally would earn categorization as criminals, murderers, rapists, and abusers of women (cf. Andersson 2007; Boetius 2015; Presser 2004; Sykes and Matza 1957).

Young people 'construct action according to how they define situations and how they anticipate others will do so' (Jackson-Jacobs 2014, p. 166). Their definitions of concrete fight situations determine which rules become active in those situations and, in consequence, how they choose to act in them. To be able to understand such actions young people take, it is therefore necessary to understand the definitions they adopt of their situations (cf. Ball 1972; Emerson and Messinger 1977) at the outset of a conflict, violence, and fighting, along with the underlying reasoning, the rationality and reflexivity, to which they resort in order to make their own or other young people's uses of violence comprehensible, justified, and thus legitimate in the eyes of others. The analysis of young people's oral moral work in this chapter indicates a high degree of self-reflexivity on their part regarding their use of violence. In their interviews, they expended much energy to appear moral as actors in an effort to together understand and construct rules of violence, including the kind of situations and circumstances where it might be legitimate for them to use violence. As the analysis shows, these young persons engaged in complex interpretation and negotiation work to clarify the rules that governed each concrete conflict situation. Indeed, the whole purpose with the relatively detailed categorizations presented in this chapter of young people's rules of violence has been to illustrate the openness and complexity, the multiplicity of subtle, informal, and frequently contradictory rules, that young people take into consideration when interpreting a specific conflict situation, when deciding how to act in it, and when afterwards discussing and negotiating the moral aspects of some particular incidence of violence. Through that, we can gain an insight into how the definition of the situation, or the interpretations of different aspects of the fighting interaction, determines which rules apply in it. Here it is, in particular, interpretations concerning the nature of the relationship between the parties involved that feature large, but also those of the specific value or values perceived as under threat, of the situation between the parties fighting, and of the social boundaries of the conflict play a part. The last-named can be expected to influence the way friends and acquaintances watching the fight will act. The interviewees' detailed renditions of young people's fighting and violence, and their moral discussions concerning these, thus emerge as a kind of micro-sociology of violence (cf. Collins 2008), and their moral work as a form of micro-politics of the same (Åkerstöröm 2002; Jackson-Jacobs 2014).

Through an examination of young people's oral moral work, however, we can also learn something about what they see as the social function of violence and fighting, what they find appealing in these, and what kind of uses of violence become

normalized and seen as typical, taken for granted, acceptable, or an ordinary feature of everyday life. In this study, play fights, for instance, appeared to act as a 'fun' and popular pastime among young people who know each other (friends, acquaintances, 'buddies'), very often in school settings. Sibling fights, while not appearing to exert much appeal on their participants, were taken for granted and left largely unproblematic as a feature of sibling relationships, even those characterized by strong bonds of 'sibling love'. In comparison, the social functions of youth fights appeared not to be as clear for the interviewees, although one aspect that they raised was that young people can decide to fight to protect important personal values of theirs from insults or the inviolability of their physical body. What all this implies is an instrumental view of violence, presenting it as a legitimate means for defending one's own reputation or pride, or those of another person close to one. A further social function of youth fights that stood out in the interviews had to do with peer loyalty: its bonds could grow stronger when a friend or acquaintance witnessing a fight acted in a relationship-rational manner. This action could be about mediating in a conflict, fighting alongside one's friend/'buddy', or protecting a vulnerable person. The interviewees' discussions about youth fights gave a picture of when, in what kind of situations, young people could feel themselves expected to fight and when they could themselves expect to receive social support for their decision to do so.

As this study demonstrates, violence, just as the underlying norms governing its use, needs to be studied in context, locally, and situationally (Stanko 2003, p. 11). Even if the rules of violence tend to vary and have a local character, they also have some features that are independent of time, place, and generation. The moral work of the young does not take place in a vacuum. When negotiating the rules of violence and their application, people draw upon readily available cultural resources, including widely shared background assumptions about reality as well as norms about how people are to think, feel, and act. This means that the rules, arguments, and rhetorical tools invoked to justify one's use of violence keep being reproduced while being subject to re-interpretation. Accordingly, the rhetorical strategies, in the form of accounts or neutralization techniques, that the young people in this study used in their moral work to legitimize violence are recognizable from previous research on the rules of violence (e.g., Honkatukia et al. 2006; Pearson 1983; Stanko 2003) and from criminological analyses of how people justify norm transgressions of various kinds to others and to themselves (e.g., Sykes and Matza 1957).

This chapter has put forth a specific perspective on young people and violence, one that highlights the way rules of violence and fighting among the young are constructed and re-constructed in their talk. What it analysed is how such rules are spoken about and addressed, not whether the interviewees acted in accordance with them outside of the interview sessions or whether they spoke truthfully (cf. Jimerson and Oware 2006). Even when young people learn or internalize rules that tone down illegitimate aspects of violence, however, it does not necessarily mean that they embrace violent behaviour. Yet, at the same time, it is not possible, looking at things from an interactionist perspective, to downplay the fact that the invoked rules can also have social implications: 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (Ball 1972, p. 62). Engaged in a shared moral work, the young people

in this study negotiated and established what they saw as acceptable and not acceptable for a young person to do, possibly creating expectations for young people to behave in certain specific ways. By learning how violence is legitimized, a violent course of action was also made into a plausible and defensible option available for young people to choose in certain fight situations.

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Chapter 12

Democratic Dilemmas in Education Against Violent Extremism



Jennie Sivenbring

Introduction

In the Nordic region schooling and education have a strong emphasis on developing democratic citizenship and values founded on human rights, tolerance and equality. Education is also constantly regarded as a remedial solution for different societal problems, one of the latest being the preserving of national security and the struggle against extremist violence and terrorism. As in many other places around the world, the Nordic countries are facing the challenges of threats posed by violent extremism from Islamic-, right- and left-wing positions that share the objective to disturb or destroy democracy in its' current form. In recent years frameworks, policies and research in the field of preventing radicalization and violent extremism has undergone a discursive shift in focus; terrorism and violent extremism are no longer a concern restricted to security services and police agencies alone. These instances are still of greatest importance in working against terror and violence, but they need to be complemented with long-term strategic prevention. In line with this, the field of preventing violent extremism (PVE) has become a significant supplement to the countering of violent extremism (CVE) as subfields in the struggle against terrorism (Romaniuk 2015).

Governments of the Nordic countries are, as in other parts of the world, taking actions to counter and prevent the threat of extremism and terrorism to society. However, the demand, that social and governmental institutions participate in the task of safeguarding democracy and the objectives and measures recommended in various action plans can, invoke contestations of democratic values and human rights. This chapter takes its' point of departure from the Nordic actionplans against

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violent radicalization and extremism, and the implications the recommended actions may have for education, teachers and students. I will point out two interconnected challenges for schools and discuss how the actions meant to safeguard democracy can become counterproductive and instead promote antidemocratic practices.

(Violent) Extremism and Radicalization

Violent extremist groups are allegedly a threat against democracy by their ideological motifs and willingness to use violence to disturb or destroy democratic systems and contemporary governance. The definition of extremism is sometimes related to thought or views that go beyond the norms, rules and regulations of mainstream society. In example Neuman (2010) uses the following definition: “Extremism can be used to refer to political ideologies that oppose a society’s core values and principles. In the context of liberal democracies this could be applied to any ideology that advocates racial or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights” (Neuman 2010, p. 12). Following this definition, there are reasons to make distinctions within the concept of extremism as extremist views or radical ideas held by an individual may never lead to violent *actions* (Hafez and Mullens 2015; Herz 2016; Kühler and Lindeskilde 2012). Some might even argue extreme or radical views, are rather strengthening a pluralistic society and enforcing democratic values. Not all extremists proceed from words to deeds, individuals can hold extremist views, but it doesn’t mean that he or she will ever use violence, someone may even be a terrorist without holding radical or extremist views (Borum 2011; O’Donnell 2015). To avoid surveillance and restrictions of thoughts and views and the practice of thought-control, it is important to emphasize that it is the use of violence that is the main problem. To speak about *violent* extremism makes it clear that violence and damage done to people and property, rather than individual extreme or radical thoughts, is the actual threat to society that needs to be addressed. A common definition for *radicalization* is: “a change in beliefs, feelings and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence” (McCauley and Moskalenko 2011). *Radicalization* is likewise a construct that has undergone a lot of academic dispute. A critique that often scrutinizes radicalization as a linear process or a behavioral and cognitive transformation that can be detected and prevented; especially since there is no scientific support for risk profiling or detecting signs of radicalization. Furthermore, there are no research that supports a clear alignment between radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism, neither are there any strong connections between theological persuasion and terrorism. These alignments and connections are seemingly relying on anecdotal evidence (Kundnani 2015; O’Donnell 2015; Spalek 2011).

In the Nordic region, violent extremism is portrayed as primarily stemming from three milieus: the right wing, the left wing and Islamic extremism. In short, what defines the commonality of the three milieus is that they are dissatisfied with contemporary democratic governance and demonstrate a will to challenge, change

or disrupt it. The autonomous left regards the contemporary democracy as vehicle of capitalistic repression and that the representative democracy is not representative, rather it mainly serves to reproduce existing relations of power. On the other hand, the right wing firmly rejects democracy as a mode of governance, and believe that democracy should, to reach an ideal society, be replaced by a strong authoritative ruler. The Islamic extremist milieus demand that society is run based on conservative interpretations of the religious laws of the Quran (Sivenbring 2017). Whereas the political movements and activist violence of the left and the right has a long history in the north, the Islamic extremism is a novelty for the region. Resent changes in the political landscape both in the nordic countries and in the middle east, have given that the number of individuals that have left the Nordic region to join conflicts in the middle east, Syria and Iraq, are by European measures over represented (Hegghammer 2014; Larsson and Björk 2015; Lindekilde and Bertelsen 2015). In the last decade, the emergence of terror organizations (like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS)) along with contemporary rises of right wing, socialconservative political populism and violent ideologies creates new challenges for younger generations, their families and teachers in school as well as for democratic societal rule.

Individuals that participate in violent extremist milieus and engage in violent actions and criminal activity are primarily men in the ages between 15 and 25; in general, it is unusual for individuals to commit crimes as they pass the age of 23. An exception to this estimate are Islamic extremists that are estimated as being around the average age of 27. There are off course Islamic extremists that are a lot younger and a lot older, hence the average age is not statistically reliable (Gustafsson and Ranstorp 2017). Considering the age of these individuals, it might be argued that there is little rhyme and reason for pre- and primary education to prevent and intervene in the societal struggle against radicalization and violent extremism. But radical and undemocratic attitudes do not evolve over night, there is no such thing as quick radicalization, nor are there any quick fixes.

Countering Extremism and Terrorism by Education

Since the beginning of the new millennium, and in the wake of “the war on terror” (Hodges 2011) and following the terrorist attacks in New York in 2001, governments all over Europe has recognized the need for counterterrorism to be handled by all levels of society. In European policy and governmental acts, education is put forward as one of the most efficient ways to foster democratic values and imbue tolerant attitudes amongst its future citizens. In the *Action Plan on the Fight against Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism* (Council of Europe 2015) the measures suggested for educational institutions includes both prevention by building of cohesiveness and by detection and identification of individuals that might be at risk of radicalization. These aspects are reappearing in National policies all over Europe, as policies seem to be inherited, adopted and (re)enacted (Mattson et al. 2016; Ragazzi 2017).

Firstly, the development of tolerance and democratic values are believed to incubate society from antidemocratic values that might lead to individuals using violence to promote ideological and political aims, and in the long run acts of terrorism. In 2016 The Council of Europe developed several competencies that are disseminated in European schools to promote education of democratic citizens (EDC) and education for human rights (EHR). Schools, preschools and other institutions with an educational purpose are in this instance framed as places where most European children and youngsters come in daily contact and interaction with professional adults that may have great importance both when it comes to fostering the next generation and, in their ability, to serve as democratic role models. Schools and preschools are also put forward in international research as significant as unique possibilities to serve as safe environments that can offer routines and structure for children that have experiences from war, violence or terrorism (Gurwitch et al. 2002; Svensson 2017; Williams 2007).

Secondly, beside the aspects of fostering democracy by education, teachers and school staff are sometimes urged or even obliged to observe and detect signs of radicalization among their students and refer suspicious individuals and behavior to security services. The signs and indications of radicalization, which teachers can use as checklists for detection, are often taken from manuals or methods developed by governmental agencies or various NGOs. However, although a lot of research has been conducted on the issue, there is still no established scientific evidence for the indicators of radicalization that are used in the manuals (Ragazzi 2017).

This means that there is a double bind in the directives given to educational institutions. On one hand, they are supposed to build trust and resilience and contribute in the construction of social cohesion and the safeguarding of democracy and fundamental human rights, on the other hand they are meant to surveille their students' behaviors and attitudes acting as observers and informants for the security services.

Educating the Children of the North

The Nordic societies are cooperating in a line of societal issues and the common foundation for the region is a long tradition of democratic governance and societies characterized by high levels of trust in people, public institutions and for advocating peaceful resolutions to social and political conflicts. The states of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden and their autonomous regions are underpinned by democratic governance, egalitarian principles and social cohesion. In these societies education is an important convener in promoting and safeguarding democracy for its citizens. In fact, the curriculums in the Nordic region, emphasize the use of democratic practice as a pedagogic tool in preschool, primary and secondary school education. Thus, democracy is believed to be learned by participation in democratic culture, rather than being lectured and taught as facts. In the Nordic countries, almost all students continue their education in voluntary upper secondary school,

most of them for another 3 years after finishing compulsory school. Students are also shown to have a strong belief in education as an equal and secure pathway to future establishment in the labor market (Grytnes 2011). When young students speak about different aspects of their time in school, they give voice to the importance of education in fostering common values as tolerance, inclusion and collectiveness for all (Sivenbring 2016). Thus, democracy and democratic values are well implemented and regarded as important for the current society as well as for the future. In the 2016 survey *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (ICCS), Nordic students were given among the highest test scores for their knowledge and skill in democracy.

Hence, education and teachers have significant importance for children, both for their present wellbeing and for their upbringing. Education and teachers are also believed to serve as conveners of democracy with, amongst other things, the somewhat new task of preventing radicalization and extremism that might in the end lead to terrorism. However, it might be argued that educational systems cannot profit from being an extension to security services in the struggle against extremism and terrorism. Instead it benefits from fostering democracy and democratic practice as one of the pathways to protect young people from coming to, or doing, harm and in the long run to prevent extremist ideologies and attitudes to develop among youngsters.

Actionplans Against Radicalization and Violent Extremism

The objectives for policy guiding and regulating the preventive work against violent extremism are off course to prevent any harm induced by extremism or terrorism to society and its citizens. The Nordic actionplans against radicalization and violent extremism (DK 2016; FI 2016; NO 2016 SE 2016) contains actions, measures and strategies that are supposed to counter and prevent radicalization and violent extremism on different societal levels. These are formulated as prioritized areas followed by suggested actions (Denmark and Norway); as short- or longtime goals followed by plans for action (Finland) or as actions on a local or national level (Sweden).¹ Due to differences in institutional settings and ministries, there are several internal differences in precision and distribution of responsibilities among the measures, actions and objectives between the national plans and strategies. However, a well-established and often repeated structure for PVE policy is to define actions as: *promotive*, *preventive* and *obstructive*, which is the case for all the Nordic action plans. This three-level structure is often portrayed in the formation of a pyramid where the basic level of promotion involves the task of democratizing measures, aiming at strengthening first line personnel in schools, child and health care, youth centers, social services and so on. This first level is supposed to be strongest and best activated since it includes and promotes the democratic human rights for all citizens

¹Iceland does not have a specified actionplan aimed at preventing radicalization and violent extremism.

and works as a foundation for the other levels. The stronger the base is, the less work needs to be done in the upper levels. The second level is the preventive section that is aiming towards professionals that are working with individuals that are at risk of engaging in extremist activities, the ones that may become radicalized. This level involves Police, security- and social services in general. The top of the pyramid concerns obstructive actions that are aimed towards individuals that are already engaged in extremist groups. Even though the introductory texts and explanatory parts of the actionplans focus on the basic levels and formulate the need for strengthening societal structures and democratic governance, the specified means and actions are primarily aiming at the preventive and obstructive levels (Sivenbring 2017). All the plans formulate the need to gain more knowledge about drivers behind extremism and terrorism, often with the purpose to facilitate identification of individuals and groups that might be at risk of – or vulnerable to radicalization. The security discourse is also most evident as the actionplans request sanctions, legislative strengthening and tougher punishments for individuals committing or planning to commit extremist offences; these forms of sanctions are especially aimed at Muslim groups and Islamic foreign fighters.

In my analyses of the content of the Nordic actionplans against radicalization and violent extremism (Sivenbring 2017), education is – given its alleged importance for fostering and educating future democratic citizens – ascribed a rather marginalized position. The analysis show that the objectives for educational institutions are relatively broadly projected, in general following the European examples. Its main objectives can be identified as: (1) Safeguarding democracy against violent extremism and terrorism and (2) Identification and reporting risk behavior and signs of radicalization. In the following section these preventive directives and their means and measures will be discussed and problematized.

Safeguarding Democracy

The common denominator for the violent extremist groups is the belief that democracy and democratic rule is either; not sufficient, not legitimate or not enough as a mode of governance. Therefore, the most evident logic in the actionplans is to safeguard democracy from harm done by extremism and terrorism. Also, the strengthening of democracy is prescribed as the way forward in preventing future extremism and violence to emerge. In all the Nordic national actionplans against radicalization and violent extremism, fostering of democracy is put forward as a main part of the solution. This is visualized in the introductory texts in all the plans, where the common task for societies is portrayed as first and foremost ensuring democratic values as freedom, tolerance and equality. As agreed upon by the European ministers of education in the Paris declaration of 2015, education is to ensure that “children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship” (European Commission 2016, p. 3). Democracy is then by means and values of democracy, supposed to safeguard itself against threats.

This means that educative institutions need to practice democracy actively and use the transformative process of education in a democratic setting and utilize democracy as a pedagogical tool.

When analyzing the pedagogical recommendations and means to enforce democracy by education, there are no specific directions in the actionplans. Instead democracy is put forward as something the students are supposed to have knowledge about in terms of rights and obligations, rather than something that is to be lived and practiced within the educational institutions (Sivenbring 2017). This is opposed to what is otherwise stated about democracy in programmatic texts of education and in the curricula. Thus, democracy in the actionplans is put forward as a self-evident and indisputable (but unspecified) entity, the good force that is to defeat the evil one. By only giving directions to safeguard and preserve democratic values like human rights, tolerance and equality, it neglects the transformative character of democracy as negotiable and tolerant. Also, the notion of democracy as an entity seems to be constructing moral categories of good and bad, rather than political distinctions (Mouffe 2008). However, democracy is in its purest form, and with its imbued values, a construct that holds the meaning that it can never be regarded as an essential entity; democracy is by definition under constant contestation and (re)development. According to Giert Biesta (2014) democracy is a forever ongoing project of transformation where individual problems are converted into collective issues. When democracy is under threat, it is because certain individual problems are not being handled as collective issues.

Accordingly, we need to scrutinize the exceptional and guarded position that democracy is ascribed in the Nordic societies, or rather in the Nordic actionplans. This means that we need to investigate what consequences this position might have when enacted in practice. When Chantal Mouffe (2008) defines and conceptualizes democratic politics she argues that politics with consensus and reconciliation as its main objective may be misguided and even imbued with antidemocratic dangers. What Mouffe means is that democracy in its current form is much impregnated with positive idealistic motifs that underestimate the ambivalent nature of human beings trying to avoid conflict. For Mouffe (2008) *agonism* is an alternative mode where the conflicting parts are aware of their different views and that there may be no rational solution to a certain problem, however they admit to the legitimacy of their opponents. In a reality where there are few or no arenas or channels for conflicts to be handled, developed and negotiated in *agonistic* manners, there is only space for *antagonism*. Using Mouffe's elaborations, one can draw the conclusion that extremist attitudes are given room to thrive when legitimate political channels to vent dissatisfaction are unavailable. This is also the case described by young people that are active in extremist movements. Grimm and Pilkington (2015) demonstrate how young right-wing extremists in Russia, Germany and UK find that democratic channels are not available to them, how their views and questions are silenced by the adult world and especially by teachers. In turn, this has led to negative attitudes towards politics and democracy as governance and the young individuals have accepted the (more simplistic) solutions offered by the extremist milieu. Thus, one of the main issues for democratic politics is to convert antagonism to agonism, or to use agonism to prevent antagonistic violence.

The importance for educational institutions to be able to handle and take care of controversial issues and topics has recently gained ground in academic discussions. This discussion regards the preventative role of education as placed in the opportunities for responding to extreme opinions and attitudes with open dialogue between opponents and differing attitudes in a safe environment (van San et al. 2013; Sieckelinck et al. 2015; Thomas 2016; Mattsson 2018). In educational settings, students should be afforded opportunities to speak about politics, religion and ideals even if they differ from common beliefs and norms of the educational institution. This notion is connected to the use of pedagogical methods, positions and democratic values which also/even include those who experience that their views are not taken seriously. In the words of Sieckelinck et al. (2015 p. 338) “When student practice hate speech they are better approached, not as villains or victims, but as political agents in spiritual and educational need”. Democratic education for equality and tolerance could have an approach that includes equipping students with knowledge and competence to give voice to their opinions, feelings and attitudes, even if they are extreme or intolerant (Thomas 2016). If opinions and attitudes can be expressed, they can be met and disputed, questioned and considered. This calls for the clarification that it does not mean that extreme or intolerant attitudes are respected or accepted, on the contrary it means that extreme opinions should be seriously addressed and handled by professional teachers. As O’Donnel (2016) puts it “If alienation, disaffection and estrangement are some of the reasons that young people may turn to terrorism and violent extremism, it would seem wiser that schools create the space for sensitive questioning and exploration of issues affecting students’ lives” (O’Donnel 2016 p. 58). This is of great importance since previous research has shown that teachers avoid confrontations with youths that express extreme views, instead they are silenced or neglected without further action (Grimm and Pilkington 2015; van San et al. 2013). This fact is explained as an inability or ignorance from teachers to handle controversial issues, to engage in dialogue or offer alternative narratives, interpretations and perspectives. Zembalayas and Bakerman (2013) illustrate how schools in different parts of the world actively avoid raising questions on topics that involves politics or religion because of the chance that students might have different opinions. This avoidance might reinforce barriers and psychological boundaries between groups. In the long run, disallowance and taboo of controversies can cause individuals to seek acceptance among like-minded in other arenas or alternative mileus.

In addition to handling and sometimes even challenging extreme attitudes by creating turbulence, Davies (2014) advocates the need for horizontal networks where students can use their social engagement as active agents to achieve real changes. The competence and knowledge of how to perform resistance and protest without violence along with the understanding of the importance of having a realizable goal is according to Davies competences that can make young people into the political agents that Sieckelinck et al. (2015) are asking for, making extreme and radical views constructive in the continuing formation of a pluralistic democratic society.

Identify and Report

Teachers' responsibility to identify and report individuals at risk of becoming radicalized are given rather ample space among the specified assignments for educational institutions that are declared in the Nordic actionplans (Sivenbring 2017). Teachers' professional position, their everyday meetings with children and students and their knowledge of how young individuals usually act and behave makes them suitable monitors for detecting individuals at risk. Therefore teachers are positioned as having a certain responsibility to observe, investigate and report suspicious behavior. Lindekilde (2012) writes that teachers are "privileged informants" as they are in daily contact with young people who trust them, which gives them a position that intelligence services can never get access to. Thus, teachers and school staff are presented with a contradictory assignment. On one hand, they are supposed to build trust, strengthen and reinforce democracy and ensure that students gain knowledge of, and practice human rights and democratic citizenship. On the other hand, they are supposed to use their classrooms as observatories to detect future radicals and criminals, and report that a crime has not yet been committed. Supported by sets of unreliable prognostics and predictions teachers are assigned to hypothesize a future crime that may in fact never be committed. The criteria and behavioral indicators of radicalization are after all not even related to risk, but only to potential risk (O'Donnell 2015).

Even if professionals in the Nordic countries are asked to support the security services by "spotting radicals", it is not a statutory obligation (which is the case in the UK). As mentioned before in this essay, the idea that radicalization or future mobilization into terrorist activities or other criminal activities can be foreseen or predicted is afflicted with several problems and inaccuracies. However, signs and behavioral indicators of radicalization can according to the Norwegian action plan (NO 2016) be: the use of extremist groups symbols, changes in appearance (style, clothing etc.), truancy, participation in demonstrations or manifestations, new friends or changes in social belonging. In the Swedish action plan (SE 2016), teachers are, in cases of concern, referred to the additional material for conversational support (*Samtalskompassen*) recommended by the (former) National coordinator against violent extremism and radicalization (2015). The manual lists signs of concern that involves expressions of radical attitudes, giving voice to conspiracy theories or legitimizing violence as means of reaching societal change. The conversational support material also gives some examples of attitudes, opinions and relations that should cause teachers' concern. These are when young individuals: express intolerant views, reject democratic principles, are convinced that their own views are the only real ones and when they try to argue and convince others. Furthermore, they might express conspiracy theories, view others as enemies, and enunciate hatred against certain groups as Jews, Muslims, Swedes, capitalists, immigrants, homosexuals, etc. Teachers are also encouraged to enter into dialogue with the students, with the purpose to investigate rather than to discuss, problematize and challenge their views. The result of the investigation can then be used to decide whether the student should be reported as at risk of radicalization.

Following the task of safeguarding and developing democracy, it is important to reason the consequences of such an approach. As Mattsson et al. (2016) argues, investigations, interrogations and mapping of suspicious individuals in school is counterproductive; it will most certainly create and reinforce young individuals' mistrust against governmental institutions, agencies and democratic governance. This can in turn have negative consequences for the possibilities to collect the requested information and instead generate resentment and discrimination that fuels radical attitudes (Ragazzi 2017). Maltreatment of trust between societal actors and citizens is deleterious for any society and can end up in some drawing away from public life while others are provoked or start to question their own ideas and ideals. O'Donnell (2015) emphasizes the concern for democratic and public life, if students and citizens in general begin to practice self-censorship in institutional settings to avoid being constituted as vulnerable, suspect and at risk.

Another sign of concern mentioned in the Swedish conversation support material is when young people try to legitimize their views by pointing to injustices in society. This also means that something that can be regarded as a democratic right and opportunity, the possibility to use the human right to express opinions and participate in change, is seen as possible signs of radicalization. Thus, dissent and disagreement with the majority society is considered as radical. If resistance and dissidence become criminalized, are we then not practicing in policing of "thought-crime" (O'Donnell 2015), risking that students are silenced and that dialogue and conversations of philosophical and controversial matters are avoided? Also, *The convention on the right of the child* states, among other rights, the freedom of expression: to freely think and express views.

Children and young people, like all other citizens have the right to start and to participate in associations and organizations, as well as the right to enjoy freedom from discrimination, the freedom of religion and the right to practice their religion. The Nordic actionplans are not specifically listing the exercise of religious rituals or religious clothing as signs of concern, as the case is in i.e. France or UK (Ragazzi 2017). However, in a quantitative content analysis of the actionplans, Muslims, immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees and foreigners are given far more space than other categories and collective identities (Sivenbring 2017). In this case, individuals belonging to "the others" (in contrast with the native Nordic citizens) are identified as vulnerable and at risk of radicalization as they are positioned as living under uncertain circumstances. Thus "the others" are mentioned in the plans both as victims of poor integration, intolerance and hate speech; and as villains that can easily be seduced by propaganda and quickly become radicalized. In this case policy is contributing in constructions of us and them (Mouffe 2008), as refugees, asylumseekers and immigrants who are made into "non belongers" that require special treatment some of which include: special surveillance, detection and adjustment to "our values".

There is also every reason to mention the overrepresentation that Islamic extremism is given in the actionplans. Occasionally the terms religious extremism or religious motivated violence is used, but there is little reason to doubt that it is focusing on Muslim religiosity (Sivenbring 2017). There are a vast number of studies and reports that show how European Muslims, in the wake of the war on terror, are being

targeted as a suspicious community, which is being reinforced by policies and actionplans aiming at PVE (I.e. Coppock and McGovern 2014; Guru 2012; Human Rights Watch UK 2016; Kundnani 2015; Kühler and Lindekilde 2012; Ragazzi 2017). This is a serious consequence that borders on structural state supported racism, and in turn has given rise to conspiracy theories and discriminating practises against Muslims all over Europe (Awan 2014; Spalek 2016).

Dilemmas and Conclusions

In this essay, I have by using the Nordic countries as an example, tried to show some of the controversies and contradictions that are imbued in the PVE- work focused on educational institutions in countries all over Europe. First and foremost, we need to recognize that there is a discursive overlap, or struggle, between two dominating points of view on prevention. The democratizing and securitizing approaches try to interconnect but seem to “harmonize in dissonance” as they cause pedagogic dilemmas that affect professionals and students in school. The safeguarding of democracy as an untouchable entity that needs to be kept safe and stable, are instead contradicting the pluralistic, tolerant and transformative core principles of democracy. Likewise, the idea that teachers and educational settings can be used to monitor and identify future delinquents, violates the fundamental democratic rights of students to think and speak freely.

At the same time, we need to recognize that if there is resistance and antidemocratic powers and tendencies that are trying to disturb and destroy societal system and governmental rule, democracy is under contestation and negotiation. However, it should also be recognized that radical thoughts and groundbreaking ways for interpreting society might contribute in the ever-ongoing project of a pluralistic and democratic society. The key issue is to use democratic governance and democratic practice to make individual struggles into collective issues (Biesta 2014).

Neither are there any ways to teach democracy by one-way communication and information or to lecture young people into democratic behaviors. Democracy is learned as it is lived and done, amongst other things it is done as people are participating in democratic processes and negotiations where they are included and given influence as democratic subjects. In line with the view that democracy includes negotiations, we can use the verb democratizing instead of democracy as a noun. A democratizing educational setting should let young people discuss and problematize controversial issues in an agonistic manner in a safe environment without moralistic taboos and restrictions. School has the potential to be a legitimate channel for questions and problems concerned with being a member of society. Democracy needs to leave space for negotiations and development of how to reach aims and objectives by parliamentary means. This is also in line with both democracy and education as transformative processes.

Also, there are few reasons to believe that more security and securitizing measures will promote safety and safe environments for students and teachers; as

Francesco Ragazzi (2017) puts it in a report for the Council of Europe, “Privileging security over liberty is a false solution that results in more insecurity (Ibid, p. 9). The ill fitted orientation of the preventive and countering measures that focuses identification of vulnerable individuals in school, are guiding attention away from societal injustices, politics and violence of the public sphere. It’s stealing focus from systematic failure and places blame on individuals rather than the contemporary context of politics, war and terrorism. Mattsson (2018) highlights how prevention on the policy level has shown little interest in neither relating extremism or radical ideas to the surrounding society in which radicalization emerge nor taking students experiences into account. Surveilling and reporting expressed grievances and attitudes can jeopardize fundamental human rights. The UN convention on rights of the child, ascribes every human being under the age of 18 a special protected position; in the Nordic countries, teachers and first line personnel, as professional actors and state officials, already have the responsibility to report if there is any concern for a child or youths’ wellbeing or health. This obligation puts the best interest of the child in the foreground and ought to be enough when it comes to signs of concern.

It could also be argued that the problems with students that require some extra attention, has usually been dealt with by teachers as experts in education, and is often transformed into security issues by way of PVE programmes. This is not only degrading the teachers’ professionalism and forcing them to function as informants, it also transforms and obstructs the important relations between students and teachers. Instead of being a remedial institution in the struggle against violence and terrorism, education should be regarded as best serving society by and through democratic practice, as concluded by O’Donnell, “society is best served when educational institutions remain autonomous sites of enquiry, critical dissent, exploration, reflection, enquiry and fearless speech, spaces in which students and educators can trust one another” (O’Donnell 2015, p. 63).

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