

Chapter 5

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



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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 preceded 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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