A Study of the Changing Friendship Relations within a Group of Primary Age Girls and Their Use of Insult, Gossip, Rumour and Grassing in This Process.

By Valerie E. Besag

Thesis submitted to the University of Durham

Department of Psychology

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July, 2000

13 JUL 2001

i

A Study of the Changing Friendship Relations within a Group of Primary Age Girls and Their Use of Insult, Gossip, Rumour and Grassing in This Process.

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July, 2000

Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the unstable nature of the friendship groups of girls aged 9 to 11 years old and the fractious character of the interpersonal bonds between them. The study examined the quality and use of specific language structures; insult, gossip, rumour and grassing and, in particular, the part played by these linguistic constructions in the unstable nature of the friendships of the girls. These language structures were considered in the context of the processes of inclusion and exclusion of girls in and out of the friendship groups.

In addition, the framework of insult, gossip, rumour and grassing was examined in the context of the interpersonal relationship between the girls.

The study used a multifaceted ethnographic design incorporating video material, sociometric analysis and individual interviews with the girls and teachers.

A pattern of instability was identified in all the friendship groups. This instability was found to be both the cause and result of the fractious and volatile nature of some of the girls, and the jealous and suspicious attitude of most. The majority were proprietorial in their attitudes to their friendships and monitored all interpersonal interactions between each other closely. The girls valued their friendships, the close emotional bonds they formed being contributory to the jealousy and suspicion leading to disputes. Some of the girls used physical aggression in their confrontations.

The role of insult, gossip, rumour and grassing in contributing to the instability of the friendship relations was identified. The framework for all these linguistic structures was extended.

CONTENTS

INSULTING DIRECTIVES

NAME-CALLING

CHAPTER FOUR-GOSSIP AND RUMOUR

CHAPTER FIVE - GRASSING

CHAPTER THIRTEEN - SUMMARY

List of Tables

Declaration

The research contained in this thesis was carried out by the author between 1993 and 1994 while a postgraduate student in the Department of Psychology at Sheffield University, and from 1993 to 2000 while a postgraduate student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Durham. None of the work contained in this thesis has been submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Statement of Copyright

Acknowledgement

<u>Dedication</u>

I should like to dedicate this study to Eileen Bowman, a gifted teacher who, with quiet charm, guided these boisterous girls towards their potential. Her untimely death at the close of this study brought great sorrow to the community as well as her family and friends.

In particular, I wish to dedicate this work to the girls themselves who face an uncompromising world with little advantage but a great deal of humour and courage.

CHAPTER ONE

GIRLS' FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

1. The Focus of the Study

The focus of this study is to identify whether there is a pattern of instability within the friendship bonds of a group of young girls, aged between 10 and 12 years old, voluntarily participating in a lunchtime activity. Changes in close friendships are tracked over 16 months, within dyads, tetrads or larger groupings. Possible causes for the pattern and frequency of these changes are given in the light of recent work on gender. The role of indirect aggression in this process is considered in the form of specific language structures; insult, gossip, rumour and grassing.

Friendship bonds between girls are considered less stable than those of boys (Alder & Alder, 1995; Harris, 1995; Maccoby, 1999; Savin-Williams, 1980). Indirect, rather than direct, aggression is considered the preferred modus operandi of females (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Cairns et al., 1989; Whitney & Smith, 1993). This is considered in relation to the conflicts arising between the girls in the study. A rationale for this, based in evolutionary psychology, is presented by Campbell (1995) who proposes that adolescent female aggression is rooted in three areas of challenge; sexual reputation, access to desirable partners, jealousy and proprietary of ownership of partners and resources. This hypothesis for the cause of conflict, and the relationship of this to the instability of friendship bonding in the young girls in the study, is considered in relation to the hypotheses offered by Eder (1985, 1991) and her Cycle of Popularity model and Alder and Alder (1995) and their Clique Formation hypothesis. The structure of the friendship groups is considered in the context of conflict, the role of individuals within the groups, the concept of popularity and unpopularity.

1

2. The Context of the Study

It is only in recent years that the extent of the damage caused by negative peer relationships among young people has been recognised. The title of the first book specifically on bullying, "Aggression in Schools; Bullies and Whipping Boys", reflects the lack of attention given to negative peer relationships among girls (Olweus, 1978). The complex nature of girls' relationships has received scant attention from sociologists, psychologists or educational researchers (Eder & Kinney, 1995).

There is still little known about forms of aggression among girls and the damaging effects of these negative peer interactions. This is surprising, as anyone who has had close involvement with young girls, as a parent or professional, will be familiar with the troublesome, paradoxical nature of their friendships. These friendships are characterised by a 'best friend' dyad (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1987; Maccoby, 1999) yet this dyadic relationship is rarely static over time (Harris, 1995). The composition of the dyad changes frequently, seemingly on a whim. This fluctuation of favour appears to be at the root of many of the constant complaints, low-key bickering and calls upon adults to resolve girls' relationships. Recently it has been recognised that verbal, social and psychological forms of bullying can drive the target to suicide, having an equal potency to modes of direct physical aggression (Hawker & Boulton, 1996a).

Friendship offers an arena for both conflict and competition (Gottman, 1986; Hartup, 1992a). A small body of evidence shows that conflict occurs more frequently, and the episodes last longer, between friends than non-friends (Menesini et al., 1997, 1998; Hartup, 1993). It may be that friends feel secure enough in the relationship to voice opinions honestly, or have more emotional investment in tackling difficulties rather than moving away to seek relationships elsewhere. I would suggest that teachers consider the seemingly trivial squabbles and quarrels that constantly break out among

girls far more time consuming, and difficult to address, than the physical fights among boys.

This paucity of interest and research may stem from boys' more visible manner of interaction, being louder, more boisterous and energetic than girls. It is more difficult to ignore the bad behaviour of boys who more usually turn to the more overt modes of direct aggression (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Cairns et al., 1989; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Whitney & Smith, 1993). When girls are troubled, the consequences may be just as dire but the covert procedures they take may be missed. Lack of attention to these negative behaviours among girls may be because many of these interactions such as insult, gossip, rumour and grassing are non-physical in nature and easily overlooked. Only in recent years have the targets, perpetrators and witnesses, plus concerned adults, begun to understand the structure and powerful negative effects of these attacks.

In summary, little is known about the dynamics of girls' friendship bonds, the reasons for instability in the group, the role of individuals, and the precipitating factors relating to the conflict. Insights from several authors have helped illuminate specific aspects of these complex interactions. The aim of this study is to explore aspects of the behaviour of girls in friendship groups in the hope of adding more detail to the sketchy outline of existing knowledge.

3.   <u>The Peer Group</u>

Socialisation is a comprehensive, yet subtle, process encompassing a myriad of sub-skills, which need to be learnt and assimilated rapidly into a highly flexible repertoire of behaviour. We need versatility and an extensive repertoire of skills to be able to move appropriately, and with speed, through the range of group situations that most of us meet in a day. It is claimed that the child has an innate adaptive mechanism that directs him or her to learn from any source, but what is learnt is highly specific to

the context (Harris, 1995; Rowe, 1994). If this is so, the child must learn to function

successfully in the wider world and to form alliances that go beyond the nuclear family.

The skills appropriate to home are not enough (Erickson 1968; Rowe, 1994). The peer

group has a particular role to play in the development of these social skills (Maccoby,

1999; Hutchins, 1991; Tajfel, 1982). Childhood socialisation is defined as 'the

production of, and movement through, a series of peer cultures' (Cosaro, 1993 p. 470:

Eder, 1990). Each child does this by becoming a member of the social peer group and

identifying with its members. Although humans have a strong identity as individuals,

once categorised as a group member, a person takes on the 'rules, standards, beliefs,

attitude and conduct of the group' (Harris, 1995).

As young people look towards their contemporaries for guidance and confirmation

regarding codes of behaviour, it is necessary to consider the processes involved in

belonging to a peer group. Cultural influences are thought to be transmitted by the

effect on peer group norms so that the most powerful agent is peer group influence

(Eckerman, Davis & Didow, 1988; Harris, 1995). The close relationships in peer

groups is illustrated by the finding that the opinions of peers were found to be as good a

predictor of adult psychopathological illness as professional opinion, and psychometric

measurements, carried out in childhood (Cowen et al., 1973).

There would seem to be specific influences and mechanisms within groups that aid

the socialisation of individuals. Of the processes modifying the behaviour of members

in the group, those of assimilation and differentiation are considered most relevant to

this study. Assimilation is said to transmit cultural norms and smooth off the rough

edges of personality, whereas within-group differentiation exaggerates individual

differences and increases variability (Harris, 1995). Either can be dominant at a given

moment as they are not mutually exclusive behaviours. The processes of assimilation

and differentiation, as described by Harris, are particularly pertinent to this study that focuses on the instability in friendship; how girls use the processes of inclusion and exclusion to establish and cancel friendship bonds.

The focal point of this study is an examination of a specific relationship within the peer group, that of friendship. Friendship relations may be uniquely implicated in children's social and emotional growth (Bukowski, 1996). The girls in the study are working in the context of several friendship groups; within their class, other classes in the school, neighbourhood friendship groups and friendships supported by parents who are friends. These overlapping groups are described as nested sets of contexts (Buhrmester, 1996).

This study encompasses the role of specific linguistic processes, insult, gossip, rumour and grassing, used by girls in groups as they generate and resolve conflict episodes, and initiate the inclusion and exclusion processes that contribute to this instability. The hypothesis offered is that girls use these linguistic structures to shape the behaviour of others in the group; that they are among the modes chosen to articulate the norms and expectations of the group. The study examines how the girls use them to regulate, monitor and modify behaviour and attitudes; how they are used to establish group mores, reinforce rules and regulations, and gain compliance.

In summary, the socialisation process whereby the individual is established within the peer group may be troublesome. Learning to live in a group context, and acquiring the socialisation skills necessary to do so, will throw up many opportunities for conflict and subsequent changes in friendships. There could be differing cultures for the child to adjust to, the transmission and assimilation of a variety of mores and norms of behaviour, conflicting expectations and social controls. The core configurations of the wide range of groups in society the child must learn to cope with have been described

by Caporael (1995). The signs and signals indicating change need to be read accurately, and behaviour adjusted at appropriate speed, in order to avoid peer approbation. The peer culture in itself may clash with that of home, school and establishment.

However, the answer to the instability of girls' friendship bonds, compared to those of boys, cannot be found in this arena alone as boys also travel this route. It is necessary to look within the groups, to examine the internal organisation and functioning, with the aim of highlighting a gender difference that may offer an explanation.

4.   Competition and Co-operation as Used by Boys and Girls

Although instability in girls' friendships has been identified (Alder & Alder, 1995; Harris, 1995; Savin-Williams, 1976) and some mention has been made of the cyclical nature of the interactions (Alder & Alder, 1995) there has been no identification of any robust rationale for this instability, nor why it would seem to be more pervasive in girls' groups than in boys'.

Before we can examine the behaviour of girls in friendship groups, it is necessary to compare their behaviour with that of boys. I found a gender difference in the attitude to friendship between the boys and girls in the class studied. As an introduction to the research, I videotaped a half-hour session of informal conversation I held with all the boys in the class. A separate session was carried out with the girls that was also video taped. In discussing what the boys in the class group would choose to do in their free time, I found that what they would do was of prime concern. On the other hand, the girls placed greater importance on whom they chose to play with. I found that what the girls would do was of secondary interest to them; they would choose to play a less preferred activity in order to remain with chosen friends. The boys did not elect to do this. They would canvass for playmates until they found others to play their chosen

activity.

Several studies have found girls to have smaller social networks than boys (Belle, 1989; Benenson, 1993; Lever, 1976). However, Benenson, Apostoleris and Parnass (1997) found that boys and girls spent an equal amount of time in dyadic relationships but that girls stayed longer with the same partner whereas boys moved around to different partners. Research among adults appears to reflect this finding (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). Maccoby (1990,1999) suggests that there is no clear differentiation between the sociability of boys and girls. Maccoby suggests that any gender difference is seen only in the whole group context. In such situations the difference may appear misleading as the overall behaviour of boys and girls, when seen as a group entity, may differ from when they are studied in dyads where individual differences may be discerned (Maccoby, 1999). She suggests we should consider gender on a spectrum of masculinity and femininity rather than concentrating on differences. This reflects the concept of 'borderwork' as proposed by Thorne (1986, 1993) who suggests that the 'contrastive framework' has outlived its usefulness.

A gender difference in play activities, as well as emotional commitment, is suggested by those authors who propose that boys' primary values are focused around objects, whereas those of girls are focused mainly on each other (Flannery & Watson, 1993; Goodwin, 1990; Maccoby, 1999; McLloyd, 1983; Nicolopoulau, 1997). Consideration has been given to a gender difference in choice of friends. Boys are said to choose their friends based on mutual interests and games skills, whereas girls select friends on compatibility of personality (Erwin, 1985). Boys are thought to play more games with a formula and set of traditionally accepted rules, where they pit their physical strength or skill against each other, whereas girls' groups tend to be smaller. Their play activities tend to reflect their daily life and interpersonal relationships

(Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Lever, 1976; Maccoby, 1999; McLloyd, 1983; Nicolopoulou, 1997). Girls appear to be more likely to play games centred on the house, school, shops, social outings, chatting and gossiping. It is of interest that talk features largely in the activities enjoyed by girls. Even a sole occupation such as knitting or sewing is done in the company of close friends and accompanied by chatter. Girls often enjoy telling each other stories (Nicolopoulou, 1997). Throwing and catching ball, skipping or hopscotch are played in a turn-taking style (Crombie & Desjardins, 1993). Although a winner may be celebrated, this is not the main purpose of the activity as playing co-operatively, or bettering one's own achievement, appears to give rise to enjoyment enough.

Studies show that boys games tend to be more competitive that those of girls (Lever, 1976; Whiting & Edwards, 1988). The gender difference in the use of bikes encapsulates this hypothesis. Girls enjoy cycle rides, whereas many boys seem to spend most of the time using the bike as an instrument of challenge, competing to find who can ride fastest, furthest, ride without hands and perform spectacular stunts. Competitive arcade and computer games do not seem to attract as many girls as boys. In the main, the games boys play include some element of competition, challenge and derring-do (Crombie & Desjardins, 1993; Manning & Sucklin, 1984; Whiting & Edwards, 1988).

'Girls co-operate, boys compete' (Ahlgren, 1983, p.318). It is suggested that males have an inherent competitive spirit, the 'young male syndrome' (Daly & Wilson, 1994). This urges them to maintain face in front of their peers and the community (Wilson & Daly, 1985). Adult males have been found to be high in competitiveness, autonomy and dominance; low in warmth, sympathy and compassion (Feingold, 1994; Hoyenga & Hoyenga, 1993; Williams & Best, 1990). When boys were given the same

8

game to play as girls, it was found that the boys were more competitive than the girls who felt that a competitive attitude would disrupt their friendships (Ahlgren, 1983; Hughes, 1988). The largest gender discrepancy in attitudes to competition was found to be among students in the 8 to 10 grades as the competitive attitude among males lessens after this age (Ahlgren, 1983; Strayer & Trudil, 1984). If a competitive attitude is linked to aggression, the finding that there is a lessening of overtly aggressive attitudes with age, may be considered relevant. Research on bullying perpetrated by both boys and girls puts the peak age of physical aggression younger, at grades 6 to 9, than the age of the girls in this study (Olweus, 1978,1991; Smith, Madsen & Moody, 1999; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

As a result of the competitive attitude thought to be shown by boys to their play activities and peer relationships, dominance hierarchies appear to be more characteristic of their friendship groups than is the case of girls. Research indicates that young boys engage in play fights, rough and tumble play and direct physical competition to establish dominance. By the age of seven to eight years old, a dominance hierarchy is more or less established (Omark, Omark & Edelman, 1973; Pelligrini, 1988; Smith & Boulton, 1990; Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). The dominant boys gain practice in leadership skills and establishing and maintaining dominance. Boys' friendship groups are reported to be more hierarchical and dominance-based than those of girls (Archer, 1994; Browne, 1995; Geary, 1996; Eagly and Karau, 1991; Maccoby, 1988; Omark and Endelman, 1975; Savin -Williams, 1977,1980). These dominance hierarchies are said to be more stable and defined in character, than any found in groups of girls (Charlesworth & Dzur, 1987; Omark, Omark & Endelman, 1977; Petit, Bahshi, Dodge & Coie, 1990). Interestingly, the same discrepancy between competition and co-operation between the genders is found in adults. Females are more inclined to take a

group-oriented social leadership style, whereas males tend towards task and self-enhancing leadership (Buss, 1981; Eagly & Karau, 1991).

In some regions, young boys fight for 'cock of the class' position, the winner being referred to as 'cock of the midden.' This refers to the farmyard cockerel crowing on top of the midden heap (rubbish tip or manure heap) in the farmyard to let all know who is boss. I found that the boys in the class studied formed a similar dominance hierarchy based mainly on physical strength and personal confidence. However, a competent player appeared to be welcomed in any group of boys engaged in an agentic activity.

In summary, the structure of boys' groups appears to be hierarchical, based on a ranking achieved through the use and recognition of physical dominance. The use, or threat, of direct aggression whether physical or verbal in nature resolves conflicts. Rank order appears to hold the dual function of giving an active display of power, alongside a passive warning to contenders, in the same vein as the cockerel crows on the midden to attract the hens and warn off challengers. However, I would suggest that boys may be able to draw upon as wide a range of social skills as girls but, in a group situation, they may more readily embark on competitive activities than girls. Reasons for this may be found in ethology, to be discussed later.

Perhaps girls' groups do not have the hierarchical structure found in boys' groups as girls are not as overtly competitive as boys. The norms for girls' friendships actively reward intimate self-disclosure and emotional support, but actively discourage open competition and attempts to display power differences (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Hyde, 1990; Maccoby, 1990; Tannen, 1990). Among adolescent girls unity, empathy, solidarity, and mutual support emerged as the defining characteristics of friendship

(Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Gottman, 1986; Nilan, 1991). The position of power of a girl within a group is thought to be linked to her co-operation, prosocial behaviour, and popularity, whereas that of a boy may reflect the ability to dominate subordinates (Maccoby, 1999). Several research studies found shared norms and cohesion characteristic of girls' friendship groups (Eder, 1990; Eder, Evans & Parker, 1996; Maltz & Borker, 1982). The interpersonal bonding and smaller group size, characteristic of girls' play activities, would appear to go some way to supporting this hypothesis (Benenson, 1993; Benenson, Apostoleris & Parnass, 1997; Maccoby, 1999; Thorne & Luria, 1986).

These gender differences in attitudes to competition and co-operation are reflected in the formation, maintenance and dissolution of friendship groups of boys and girls. Although boys are said to be more competitive and overtly aggressive, friendships between girls are beset by querulousness and unrest and their groups described as characteristically fragmented (Alder & Alder, 1995; Cairns et al., 1989; Harris, 1995; Savin-Williams, 1980). Although boys' friendships appear to be more static and long standing, compared to those of girls, they may not be as emotionally intense (Benenson, 1993, Benenson, Apostoleris & Parnass, 1997; Thorne & Luria, 1986). The gender difference in relationships has been described in the following way; 'girls relationships are equalitarian but emotionally vindictive, whereas boys, in contrast, inhabit conflict filled but emotionally uninvolved worlds' (Alder & Alder, 1995 p.159). The groups formed by girls are likely to be cliquish, exclusive, intimate and intense; they are likely to be small, usually pairs or threesomes (Nicolopoulou, 1997; Savin-Williams, 1979). Although girls commonly refer to having a 'best friend', a term I would suggest rarely used by boys, it is not always apparent that this is a stable relationship (Toth, 1978).

Relationships among girls are more intricate than a simple dyad. In many cases the

11

role of a third party is highly influential (Goodwin, 1990; Toth, 1978). It would appear that girls most often interact in a triad or a slightly larger group (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1987). In informal observations and investigations, I have found that if there are more than two girls, the dyad may fit into the circle of friends but these girls would have a particular relationship not shared by other group members. A larger group characteristically contains more than one dyad or triad each sharing a close relationship. There would be a high likelihood of frequent realignment as to the composition of the closest pairs. Even within a triad, it is likely that there will be one member of the group more peripheral as a constant, or there will be frequent readjustment of favour resulting in changes to the dyad composition (Toth, 1978). Pairs of boys accept a threesome more readily (Feshbach, 1969; Feshbach & Sones, 1971). These unstable dyads and triads are said to be composed of girls who belong to the same category as defined by age, sex and other relevant factors (Hallinan, 1992). This mercurial aspect of the friendship pattern among girls is not exclusive to a dyad/triad format. It would seem that any size group is subject to this alignment and realignment process. Examples of this can be seen in the specific models discussed later of Eder (1985, 1991) and Alder and Alder (1995).

In summary, it would seem that a smaller group formation, with intense emotional investment encouraging disclosure leading to subsequent issues of loyalty, is characteristic of girls' groups but not those of boys. This being so, there may be something about the positive quality of relationships in girls' groups, the quality of emotional investment, which, conversely, gives rise to the negative and destructive interactions. If girls enjoy the close emotional bonds said to be offered in their friendships, the threat of loss would be enough to instil an ethos of uncertainty and tension into the group. It could be that this exclusive and emotionally biased structure

and ethos gives rise to a volatility not evident in the more static, hierarchical boys' groups. Girls' groups may have a less openly competitive and status-driven ethos, so appearing less aggressive and dysfunctional, but the close bonds formed in girls' friendship groups may exacerbate the less obvious querulous nature of the relationships. These close relationships can give rise to jealousy and anger, leading to a covert, but intense form of conflict resulting in instability. Feelings of disappointment and rejection may be felt more keenly than those experienced by boys. Girls' friendship bonds have been described as being similar to those of lovers (Lever, 1976).

5. Gender Differences in Aggression

In considering the instability evident in girls' friendships, it may be pertinent to compare the modes of aggression used by girls with those employed by boys. Any gender difference identified in the use of aggression may offer some insight into the gender difference in stability of relationships. It is only recently that the contributory factors to the troublesome relationships between girls have been the subject of discussion and research (Alder & Alder, 1995; Campbell, 1992; Coie & Whidby, 1986; Eder, 1985; French, 1990).

The possibility of a gender difference in the manifestation and manipulation of power within relationships may be of relevance. By considering gender differences in bullying, which is a display and manifestation of power, we may gain insight into the rationale for gender differences in conflict in general, possibly leading to an understanding of the instability in girls' friendship groups. For some, both boys and girls, there appears to be a need to feel dominant over others. There is no doubt that there is a power differential in social groups, including groups of children. Bullying is the repeated abuse of power. In considering the conflicts arising in the friendship groups of the girls, it is relevant to mention bullying as the interactions between girls in

13

the study illustrate a range of bullying behaviours.

' Bullying is a behaviour which can be defined as the repeated attack-physical,
psychological, social or verbal - by those in a position of power, which is formally or
situationally defined, on those who are powerless to resist, with the intention of causing
distress for their own gain or gratification. ' (Besag, 1989 p.4).

Young people find out who they are by making social comparisons of themselves
with other group members (Festinger, 1954; Harris, 1995). The social comparisons
made in the group are complex in that they encompass physical, social and cognitive
skills and abilities (Hartup, 1983). This is a two-way process in that the young person
makes a judgement regarding his or her own identity, but other members also make
comparisons. These comparisons could be harsh and delivered in ways that could be
termed bullying.

Boys use direct modes of aggression, in addition to some indirect modes, in
conflicts whereas girls would seem to employ mostly indirect means (Bjorkqvist,
Lagerspetz & Kaukiainen, 1992; Cairns et al., 1989; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Frodi,
Macaulay and Thorne, 1977; Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist & Peltonen, 1988; Munthe, 1989;
Olweus, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994; Roland, 1989). Boys bully by using modes of
aggression that are primarily physical and direct such as hitting, kicking and punching.
Verbal aggression, if used, tends to be direct, openly abusive and forceful such as name-
calling and abusive chanting (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Munthe, 1989; Olweus, 1993).
The structure of a dominance hierarchy allows the strong to attack the weak in a
predictable fashion (Olweus, 1978; Savin-Williams, 1979; Schwartz, Dodge & Coie,
1990; Weisfield & Billings, 1988).

The rationale that emerges in the case of boys involved in aggressive episodes is
the need of some to demonstrate or confirm their physical power over others (Bowers,

1973; Wachtel, 1973; Roland & Idsoe, submitted for publication; Smith & Boulton, 1990). It is rare that the bullying occurs without the involvement of bystanders, albeit in the passive role of 'silent observers' (Besag, 1986; Bjorkqvist, Ekman & Lagerspetz, 1982; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Boys use the presence of observers to boost their confidence and display their power (Bowers, 1973; Wachtel, 1973). Like the cockerel on the midden, boys seem to have a need to prove to themselves and to others, that they hold a dominant position in the group.

Girls appear to use techniques of indirect aggression, such as social exclusion and a range of linguistic modes, in preference to direct physical aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist & Peltonen, 1988; Munthe, 1989; Olweus, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994; Roland, 1989). The covert methods preferred by girls makes detection difficult, but there would seem to be more bullying among girls' than was previously thought (Boulton & Hawker, 1997). As with boys, maturity and size do have some part to play in bullying among girls, but other factors appear more relevant as physical combat is a less preferred bullying technique.

As it appears that indirect aggression is the preferred technique of girls to use and display power, and is central to the processes leading to instability in their friendships, it is necessary to clarify the definition. There would appear to be some confusion in the current literature concerning a definition of indirect aggression. It was first identified as a distinct category by Buss (1961). Indirect aggression is described as 'a social manipulation where the aggressor manipulates others to attack the victim, or, by other means, makes use of the social structure in order to harm the target person, without being personally involved in the attack' (Bjorkqvist, Lagespetz & Kaukiainen, 1992). Crick and Grotpeter (1995) call this type of aggression relational, whereas Cowen et al., (1973) calls it social aggression. Social exclusion and social manipulation are

categorised as indirect bullying by Rivers and Smith (1994). The definition given by Olweus (1993) of indirect bullying is limited to social exclusion, whereas Warden, Chrisie & Stevens (1994) list several behaviours that they term as rejection; ostracism, ganging up on someone, stealing friends. The girls in this study use these terms to denote the most distressing aspects of losing friends.

Common to the above definitions is the attempt to harm others by manipulating relationships by use of an indirect mode of operation. These negative behaviours are often difficult to detect and the perpetrators hard to identify. Even the victim may become confused. Targets of such antagonistic behaviour may not admit to the distress caused, believing that these attitudes and actions are part of acceptable social behaviour, and that they should be able to cope. The techniques employed by girls to exclude, ostracise or ridicule their target, may be more sophisticated than is generally acknowledged. For example, the exchange of secrets can be a subtle mode of attack. A common tactic is for a powerful girl to ask her target to exchange secrets. The gullible girl may tell a true secret but the dominant girl makes one up. This puts her in a powerful position from which to make an attack at a future date. I would suggest that there is a difference between indirect aggression and indirect bullying. Indirect aggression differs from bullying in that it does not imply repetition of attack, no matter how severe the aggression.

It has been proposed that there is a spectrum of aggression relating to developmental phases (Bjorkqvist et al, 1992; Rivers & Smith, 1994; Smith, Madsen & Moody, 1999). Investigations into bullying recorded that young children and boys mainly engage in physical aggression, whereas older children and girls used social exclusion and other indirect aggressions (Bjorkqvist et al, 1992). Social intelligence is defined as the ability to make accurate observations of the social world and to achieve

one's own goals in it. Social intelligence is negatively correlated with direct aggression and positively with indirect and peaceful means of sorting out problems' (Largerspetz , Bjorkqvist & Peltonen, 1988). The use of distinct types of aggression has been linked to stages of maturity (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Aggressive behaviour is thought to change from direct and overt presentations to the more indirect and covert modes (Rivers & Smith, 1994). Presumably, this relates to children understanding the concept of intent more clearly as they develop sophisticated cognitive skills (Ferguson and Rule, 1988). Once children have mastered the necessary cognitive skills of premeditation, and can control their behaviour to allow a delayed response, they are then able to use a wider range of indirect aggressions such as social exclusion, abusive telephone calls, or malicious gossip (Perner, Ruttman & Leekam, 1994). Similarly, cognitive development leads to the use of covert indirect aggression so culprits can avoid attention, detection and sanction.

Although there may be a gender difference in rationale, manifestation and focus, both boys and girls appear to use aggression in the context of power. Methods of bullying used by girls appear to relate to their social relationships and unstable friendships, unlike boys, who tend to bully those outside their friendship group. It would appear that bullying among girls tends to be focussed on their friendships as in exclusion, ostracism, taking friends, malicious gossip and grassing (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist & Peltonen, 1988; Munthe, 1989; Olweus, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994; Roland, 1989). Various forms of indirect aggression, such as gossip, rumour and grassing form part of the core enquiry of this study, alongside the more direct method of insult. These strategies are used by girls to ensure conformity of attitude and appearance, to enforce rules and social mores, and to control relationships (Alder & Alder, 1995; Eder, 1985; Fillion, 1997; Lees, 1993).

It may be that boys need to confirm their physical power (Wachtel, 1973) whereas the social needs of girls may be different. Affiliation and power are considered to be basic factors that regulate our social behaviour (Omark and Endelman, 1975). As girls are more likely to bully by social manipulation, it may be that their needs are concerned with affiliation (Roland, in Besag 1989). Roland looked at the behaviour of girls who bully and suggested that they were seeking affiliation with others by alienating the victim in order to prove that they were in the group and the victim was not. Current work by Roland and Idsoe, submitted for publication, found that at grades 5 and 8 boys used more proactive aggression to bully others in their aim to wield and display their power, whereas girls bullied for other reasons. The girls of the same ages bullied, and were bullied, by means of reactive aggression that had a base in affiliation. The girls used the bullying to confirm friendships within their group and, at the same time, to exclude targeted girls. The difference in gender and rationale was more marked in the older age group studied. However, it may be that some girls use indirect aggression, such as gossip, rumour, grassing and insult, to exclude or ostracise a target girl. The aim would be the social exclusion of the girl as a means to end the relationship, rather than the social exclusion being an indirect aggression used to display power. In contrast, boys may use a range of direct aggressions simply to demonstrate their power; using these techniques simply to show that they can use them.

Some girls may equate affiliation with power. I would suggest that in the same way that boys use such actions as hitting and kicking to dominate others physically, some girls manipulate social relationships as a means of aggression; to display their control over others. A girl with many friends may be considered, by herself and others, to be in a powerful position both emotionally and physically. Such a girl is giving tacit messages that she can choose her friends from a circle of attendants. It may be that

these indirect forms of aggression are used in a bullying campaign on a target girl. Gossip is specifically included in the category of indirect aggression given by Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz & Kaukiainen (1992). There may be no need to target a vulnerable girl by indirect means as she could be attacked directly. Gossip, rumour and grassing are more likely to be used as forms of covert aggression in situations where direct confrontation is considered inadvisable, or to support more direct and forceful attacks.

In summary, girls may use a range of indirect aggressions to manipulate social relationships, their own and those of others, solely in the context of making and breaking friends. For these girls the conscious intent is to alter the dynamic of the friendship group, not to demonstrate or abuse power. The fact that social exclusion can be an aggression (and so a power strategy) would appear to be incidental and unacknowledged by these girls. However, for some more aggressive girls, it may be used as a mode of indirect attack in the context of abuse of power.

Few girls admit to bullying others (Eslea & Smith, 1994). Until very recently, it was rare for anyone to consider social exclusion, insult, gossip, rumour and grassing, plus the other indirect aggressions preferred by girls, to be bullying (Besag, 1989). Studies show that girls rarely recognise, or admit, that leaving someone out of the group could be bullying (Hawker & Boulton, 1996a; Munthe, 1989). Culprits rarely admitted to indirect aggression, as in gossiping and spreading false rumours, in the studies of Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen (1988) and Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen (1992). These authors suggest this is because the perpetrators do not always recognise that their behaviour is aggressive in nature. However, it may be because the culprits know that gossiping and spreading rumours would be sanctioned. I would suggest that it could also be because the perpetrators underestimate the effect of the behaviour on the

victim. Only half the junior stage teachers and pupils, and one fifth of the secondary

pupils questioned in one study considered 'deliberate social exclusion' to be bullying

(Boulton & Hawker, 1997). I would suspect that most girls still view the range of social

exclusion behaviours only in the light of making and breaking friendships. However, as

the close friendship bonds forged between girls are so highly valued by those

concerned, these offer a power base for the manipulation of other members of the group.

The process and effect of social exclusion is described by Eder (1991) and Alder &

Alder (1995). These authors do not term it bullying, but mention the link between

gossip and social exclusion. I consider that insult, gossip, rumour and grassing could be

viewed as the linguistic processes frequently chosen as the tools whereby this social

exclusion is expedited

6.   Aggression and Group Stability

It is necessary to analyse why these modes of indirect aggression should lead to a

gender difference in group stability. There appears to be a hidden modus operandi of

aggression in girls' groups with no overt rationale as to who is to be chosen next for the

trauma of rejection. This unpredictability in girls' groups can generate an air of

uncertainty and suspicion within the group. In addition, the covert nature of such modes

as gossip, rumour and grassing, plus the more direct mode of insult prevalent in the

quarrels of girls, could make it difficult to identify the culprit. This being so, an air of

suspicion and threat may encourage a querulous and unstable atmosphere.

Although aggression between girls is less visible, and so more easily missed or

misinterpreted than the aggression employed by boys, it can be equally as destructive

(Boulton & Hawker, 1997). It would appear that boys are chosen as companions

because of their play skills, strength or physical ability, rather than personal qualities.

This could make rejection by peers easier to bear. The roughhousing play of boys starts

from an early age (Omark, Omark & Endelman, 1973; Petit, Bakshi, Dodge & Coie, 1990, Smith & Boulton, 1990). This gives a boy an early indication of where he stands on the dominance hierarchy and a chance to adjust to his position and learn to avoid or deal with bullies. I have found that the attacks of girls often occur unexpectedly, due to jealousy, pique or other emotional reasons, sometimes from those previously considered as friends. This suddenness of attack could make it harder to bear.

A recurrent theme in cases of bullying among girls is that the perpetrators have been close friends of the victim in the past, whereas I have not found this with boys. A girl excluded from the group is left confused as to why she is excluded (Munthe, 1989). It is not uncommon for these friendships to be resumed prior to another girl being targeted for attack. Part of the trauma involved may be that, at the point of conflict, the target will not know whether this is to be a long or short-term exclusion. It would appear that one of two processes could be set in motion. The bullies may move on to target another girl, leaving the first alone, perhaps even including her once more in the friendship group. On the other hand, the bullies may ensure that the whole class excludes the target girl by employing malicious gossip or physical threat. Usually, the target wants to resume the close relationship she once enjoyed with the girls now bullying her. One study found that 78% of older adolescent girls kept links with those involved in accusations and aggressive attacks targeted at them once the conflict was over (Campbell, 1994). As discussed earlier, there would seem to be a need among most girls for affiliation (Roland, 1988). A combination of reluctance to make an emotional break from the group, alongside an eagerness to be accepted back into the friendship set, contribute to the repetitive quarrels, fractious nature and instability in girls' groups.

Once rejected, ridiculed and shunned for personal reasons, it may be hard for a

young girl to believe that she could be accepted in any alternative group. Such a situation could be particularly distressing in a rural environment where there may be no other girls' group available. If girls do not understand or accept that social exclusion and other modes of indirect aggression are bullying behaviours, they will not fully appreciate the distress or danger the victim is experiencing (Munthe, 1989).

It would seem that the severe feelings of rejection experienced by the target girl are often exacerbated by the dual process embedded within girls' friendships; the closeness of the best friend relationship juxtaposed against the fear of rejection. A characteristic of girls' friendships is the sharing and disclosure of emotions, secrets and confidences (Gottman, 1986; Lever, 1976). Once the relationship breaks down, feelings of rejection are compounded with those of betrayal and anxiety as those once close now have the additional power of intimate knowledge of the rejected girl.

This exclusion could leave the girl for months, even years, without friends or access to a supportive peer network. Supportive peer relationships may be more important nowadays than in the past due to the fragmentation of family structures (Asher & Coie, 1990). This loss of friendships may mean that bullying among girls is a more powerful and more damaging process than bullying among boys. If there is a tight, cohesive bond within the girls groups, there may well be no need to use the more overt forms of aggression. The mechanisms of insult, gossip, rumour and ostracism may be powerful and damaging enough, (Ahmad & Smith, 1994; Bjorkqvist, Osterman & Lagerspetz, 1994; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

The importance of peer acceptance must be emphasised. The predicted emotional effects on a victim of bullying causes a downward spiral (Besag, 1989). Once self-confidence is lost, the young person will be even more vulnerable and at greater risk. Female victims have been found to score low on measures of self-perceived social

acceptance compared to those not involved in bullying, presumably because they were the butt of social exclusion (Boulton & Smith, 1994). A positive correlation has been found between low self-esteem and being the victim of bullying (Hawker & Boulton, 1996a; Sharp, 1995a) and external locus of control (Trad, 1987). An external locus of control will result in the victim being less able to use an effective coping strategy (Seligman & Peterson, 1986). Social exclusion is considered a good predictor of problems such as depression, loneliness, anxiety and a reduction in self worth (Boulton & Hawker, 1997; Gilbert, 1992; Hawker & Boulton, 1996a). Rejected girls were found to be more than twice as likely, and neglected girls four times as likely, to report high levels of depression in pre-adolescence than did non-rejected girls in a study carried out by Kupersmidt, Patterson & Eickholt (1989). Extremes of low or high status in the group may leave a permanent mark on the personality (Coie, Dodge & Kupersmidt, 1990). It is not clear whether those girls with low self-esteem are bullied because of their vulnerability, or develop low self-esteem as a result of the bullying.

In summary, the various modes of indirect aggression used by girls are potent and destructive. Underestimation of the damaging effects of these strategies results from their covert nature and the context of emotional intensity that flourishes in an atmosphere of wariness and threat. One factor contributing to the instability in girls groups, which has been underestimated, is that these processes of exclusion and alienation often occur within a friendship group that has a powerful influence on the target girl. Once excluded a girl has little emotional or physical peer support. To encourage the girl to ignore or stay away from the group is often a futile exercise.

7.   Popularity as Power

Aggressive girls may seek power by means of affiliation and the manipulation of friendships. The models of conflict proposed by Eder (1985) and Alder and Alder

(1995) describe a process of conflict where social manipulation (both inclusion and exclusion techniques) is used to distribute and disperse power. In considering the instability in girls' groups, it is necessary to examine these models based on longitudinal studies of young people of school age in informal situations. Eder observed her cohort of students over a period of 14 months; Alder and Alder observed their participants over seven years using an informal observation process they term 'laissez-faire' (Alder & Alder, 1984) supported by in-depth interviews with individual children. Both models focus on the concept of popularity. This would appear to be the currency used by girls to manipulate the status and friendship bonds of individuals within groups. 'One consistent and troublesome finding in research on adolescent females is that they are more concerned with popularity than achievement or success' (Douvan & Adelson, 1966).

This competition regarding popularity appears to reach a peak between late childhood and early adolescence. Girls in late childhood (8 to 11 years), the age of the girls in this study, and early adolescence (12 to 14 years) are very concerned with others' opinions of them. They become increasingly self-conscious (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1975). As popularity is important at this age, they start to become less concerned with achievement as they do not wish to be seen as competing against, and consequently alienating, their friends (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1975). In this way, low achievement is not solely to do with an emerging interest in boys, but their relationships and standing with other girls as well (Eder, 1991).

There is a suggestion that there are different bases for peer status, popularity and power in relation to gender. Boys are said to rank each other by athletic achievement and strength, whereas girls may rank themselves and each other through social success (Eder, 1991). As stated earlier, individuals of this age focus on comparing themselves

to others. These on-going social comparisons are multidimensional in character being physical, social and cognitive (Hartup, 1983). Body image is a prime topic for discussion among adolescent girls. The rank each other's body development and scrutinise each other for minute changes in appearance (Eder, 1991). This process is exacerbated as adults make comparisons so the girls are under a judgmental spotlight. Late childhood to early adolescence equates with the peak time for a loss in self-esteem and confidence (Coleman, 1966; Duncan, 1999; Simmons, Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1973; Schofield 1981). This is the age of onset of eating disorders which may relate to body image being one of few factors within their own control (DSM 1V, 1994).

The comparisons used may be multidimensional, but the major concern of girls is physical attractiveness (Goodwin, 1990; Kennedy, 1990; Maccoby, 1999; Schofield, 1981). Girls rank each other by physical attractiveness, incorporating styles of clothing, as they consider that this is how they are ranked by boys (Eder, 1991). Girls considered to be flaunting their sexuality, by choice of dress and make-up, are particularly stigmatised (Eder, 1985; Lees 1993; Walkerdine, 1990,1992).

The studies of Eder, Alder & Alder and Goodwin were conducted in the USA where the concept of attractiveness may not be comparable to that held by girls in the UK. Girls in the UK may equate attractiveness more to physical maturity, with less emphasis placed on such a visible hierarchy of physical attractiveness and expensive clothing. Early menarche and physical maturity are important as they are attractive to males. These girls date earlier and so get the pick of available males (Symons, 1979; Magnusson, Stattin & Allen 1986).

An explanation for the puzzling, cyclic formation and reformation of friendship cliques is offered by Alder and Alder (1995). They suggest that, as between a quarter and a half of children organise their social worlds in cyclic cliques, these friendship

groups may be considered robust peer structures. 'Cliques are basically friendship

circles, encompassing a high likelihood that members will identify each other

sociometrically as mutually connected' (Alder & Alder, 1995 p.14). Friendship groups

differ from cliques, 'Cliques have a hierarchical structure, being dominated by leaders,

and are exclusive, so that not all individuals who desire membership are accepted.'

(Alder & Alder, 1995 p.14). The inference is that friendship groups have less rigid

boundary maintenance and a more fluid membership. Status is allocated according to

differential power within the clique but the hierarchy is internal to the clique, and not

equivalent to the dominance hierarchy in the whole class group that is characteristic of

boys' groups. These cliques have strong maintenance boundaries and there will be only

one clique 'dominating the upper rung of a grade and identified by members and non-

members alike as the popular clique'. After the start of a new school year, there is less

opportunity for new entrants to infiltrate any clique (Alder & Alder, 1995; Feshbach &

Sones, 1971). During the probationary period, in a flurry of popularity, the initiate may

be separated off from others in the class.

In the clique structure described by Alder and Alder (1995) the leader has the

power to define choice and criteria for membership, maintain clear boundaries and

establish exclusivity. The stratification and differentiation of popularity comes from the

leader. Less powerful members on the periphery of the clique make bids to move

closer to the leader to enhance their position and power. Meanwhile, entry bids from

those outside the clique are in the form of low-risk moves towards those on the

periphery, or imitation of the behaviour of the leader and the most popular members

(Gottman &Mettatal, 1986).

The leader monitors changes in popularity and power within the clique and makes

adjustments to retain power. I would suggest that to do this successfully the leader has

a dual role. Challenges within groups are met by deflating the popularity of others by employing such means as scorn, ridicule or gossip (Parker & Gottman, 1989). Invitations are issued to the non-threatening girls to join the group, at the expense of those who are threatening the power of the leader (Alder & Alder, 1995). Attacks come from the powerful to girls less powerful (Alder & Alder, 1995; Eder, 1991). This behaviour occurs mostly within the clique. The leader continues to maintain a hold by distributing advice and support, a strategy used to demonstrate dominance (Savin-Williams, 1979).

The power of individual members is adjusted by 'repeated travels through a cycle of inclusion and exclusion throughout participation in the clique.' (Alder & Alder, 1995). These periodic cycles of exclusion serve to manipulate other members into submission and dependency. Quarrels may be instigated by the leader solely to shift support and allegiance. Bjorkqvist, Lagespetz and Kaukiainen (1992) describe a process whereby some girls may become friendly with others as a revenge strategy solely to cause distress to former friends. I have found this technique familiar to girls of most ages. These inclusion and exclusion strategies make for uncertain loyalties and unstable groups.

A leader needs to have the ability and energy to monitor closely the attitudes, behaviour and alignments of the other members (Lemert, 1972; Reicher & Potter, 1985). Leaders maintain their position not through the attractive qualities and important contributions they can offer the group. Their power lies in their inherent grasp of the subtleties of group dynamics, and their ability to wield power within the group (Alder & Alder, 1995). There are similarities to the recently identified social profile of bullies (Sutton, Smith & Sweetenham, 1999). Similar leadership skills among girls in school in the UK have been outlined by Duncan (1999). These groups of girls have similar

characteristics to the cliques but Duncan refers to them as gangs.

Eder describes a similar process in her Cycle of Popularity (Eder, 1985, 1991). A process of entry, and subsequent exclusion, is common to both models but there are differences in the details of the processes. Eder focuses on the peer election of cheerleaders chosen for their attractiveness, money and family background. Eder found that non-popular girls associated popularity with high visibility, believing that if a girl's name was familiar, she must be popular. This did not mean that the girl would receive their nominations for best liked in the class group, for popular girls quickly become unpopular. A high profile name is a tenuous link to popularity as names can be well known for negative reasons. The link between having a high profile and being popular may be a construct that applies primarily to the cheerleader culture in the USA.

Eder describes social avenues used by girls to make overtures for inclusion in the popular group. This could be by knowing a popular girl who will promote nomination to the group, or rekindling association with a popular girl to gain kudos in a vicarious manner. The cycle of popularity occurs when there is a fall from favour. The popular girls do not have the time available to cope with all the demands for their friendship. They must also be wary of associating with those less popular, since, in doing so, they would be in jeopardy of losing their own exalted positions (Eder, 1991). Almost inevitably, they fall short of the expectations of those out of the group. Disenchanted, ignored girls start a process of destroying the girl's popularity by gossip and disparaging comment. This is distressing as the girl will have lost her friends and her avenue to popularity will be closed. Jealousy is the core reason given by Eder for the fluctuating dynamics, named the Cycle of Popularity, in the friendship group.

A similar process to that described by Alder and Alder may occur. On entry to the elitist clique, the new member may be encouraged to drop old friends and ignore

overtures from those girls external to the clique. Once the new member is exclusively friendly with those in the clique, the girl is in a vulnerable position and a downward spiral in popularity may set in.

A similar process of systematic separation of a target from relevant others can be identified in other forms of bullying. A series of physical, emotional, social and psychological abuse can follow a fall from favour. In both models described, the manipulation of popularity, in the form of inclusion and exclusion techniques, is the mechanism used to keep down a potential threat, and to stigmatise anyone currently out of favour. The work of Duncan outlines similar strategies used by girls in England (Duncan, 1999). The girls he describes are older and their quarrels focus primarily on competition for boys.

There are comparisons and contrasts between the Cycle of Popularity model of Eder and the Clique model of Alder and Alder. Both models are based on popularity and jealousy. Jealousy of those outside the group causes the instability in the Cycle of Popularity model of Eder, whereas, for Alder and Alder, the jealousy occurs within the clique. Both are defined as a single elitist clique operating within a larger peer group. Individuals are excluded from the clique, or from privileged positions, due to the actions of the leader who uses a range of sophisticated skills to instigate and rally adverse opinion towards any threat. The leader must be sensitive and responsive to changing dynamics in the clique in order to avoid a coup or mutiny.

Alder and Alder concentrate on the machinations and movements within the clique, whereas Eder looks at outsiders trying to break into the clique. Both authors see a pattern of fluctuation within the clique. The cycle of initiation and rejection is recurrent in the model of Alder and Alder, whereas Eder proposes a linear structure where avenues of popularity lead to and from the exalted position of cheerleader. Boys

are included in both studies although there is more detail of the girls' interactions. There is a difference in the age of the participants in these studies which makes comparison difficult as there may be a developmental pattern to group formation (Bjorkqvist et al, 1992).

The two models outlined above illustrate the power and skill of a leader. These sophisticated skills of effective leaders are also noted by those studying groups of girls in the UK (Duncan, 1999; Keise, 1992; Lees, 1993). However, it is not always clear who holds the power in a group, even to the members. The instigator of quarrels may not be in evidence when the upset occurs. A provocateur may remain in low profile, setting up others to be identified as the troublemakers. 'Tertius gaudens' is a phrase used to describe the process where one gains advantage from the quarrels of others (Simmel, 1964). If some girls use these subtle and indirect means to control each other, it may be that most girls are unaware of the manipulation of them by other more powerful members of the group.

The video equipment in this study was used in an attempt to uncover and analyse these hidden social interactions taking place between young girls.

8.   The Evolutionary Model

So far there has been no explanation given for why the concept of popularity, and attendant jealousy, is used by girls to manipulate each other, or why it appears to be at the root of the unstable friendship bonds. It is not clear how the power is gained and used, or to what advantage. In examining gender differences in the modus operandi of aggression, it may be necessary to look to studies embodied in an ethological framework. Gender differences in the expression of aggression are interpreted as interactions between genetic, physiological and socio-cultural co-determinants (Harris, 1995; Rowe, 1994). Both Rowe (1994) and Harris (1995) suggest that cultural and

socialisation factors could be more important than a genetic, constitutional or biological predisposition. Whatever the weighting of these factors, it would appear that this area of study is able to offer useful lines of enquiry.

The hypotheses outlined in the work of Campbell, Muncer & Gorman (1993) and Campbell, (1995) could contribute to an explanation for the instability, the covert competitive ethos and the level of direct and indirect aggression, found in friendship groups of girls. Contrary to Alder and Alder (1995) and Eder (1985) discussed earlier, Campbell considers that female groups have a less hierarchical structure, a lower focus on leadership, and a less competitive ethos than male groups. Females are considered to be more concerned with maintaining relationships and fostering mutuality and reciprocity (Campbell, 1995). As females would have little to gain and more to lose than males, if they engaged in the direct physical combat common among males, their preferred mode of aggression tends to be indirect aggression (Bjorkqvist, Osterman & Lagespetz, 1994; Bjorkqvist, Lagespetz & Kaukiainen, 1992; Charlesworth, 1996; Daly & Wilson, 1994: Olweus, 1993; Symons, 1979). Females more than males resolve their conflicts more readily through strategies such as compromise (Charlesworth, 1996; Charlesworth & Dzur, 1987; Collins & Laursen, 1992).

The rationale for this hypothesis is that the long gestation and subsequent lactation period necessary for good maternal care means that females need to take low risk aggressive action to 'see off' a predator or rival rather than embark on high risk, possible 'fight to the death' attacks. In the evolutionary context, it is not worth the cost to females to become engaged in dangerous physical contests, with no guarantee of success, in order to establish a dominance hierarchy. Unlike males, who fight physically to establish dominance hierarchies, females aim to avoid sustaining injury from any source (Smuts, 1987).

Females may not turn to physical aggression as a first response due to their lesser variance fitness and higher parental investment. However, there are other possible rationales for the hesitancy of females to enter the arena of violence. As attractiveness is considered a significant feature in securing a partner (Kennedy, 1990; Symons, 1979) perhaps fear of disfigurement is pertinent.

Campbell (1995) suggests that females have a different mode, source and reason for their aggression, although scarce resources may be the focus for the aggression of both sexes. She suggests that female aggression is triggered by three principle areas of challenge; attacks on sexual reputation, competition over accession to desirable partners and jealousy with regard to propriety and ownership of partner and resources. Females must compete for resources that can be converted to offspring and so enhance their reproductive success (Bateman, 1948). As males are usually the ones who are able to provide or have access to essential resources, females become involved in competition for those males considered the optimum providers (Campbell, 1995). When desirable males are in short supply, in areas and times of financial and social disadvantage, female competition for them is relatively high (Draper & Harpending ,1988). A positive correlation was found with rates of female unemployment, welfare dependency and aggression over male partners (Campbell, Muncer & Bibel, 1985; Campbell & Muncer, 1987). It is thought that females have a high threshold in the use of physical aggression, and so require a correspondingly high-level trigger. Such studies indicate that, when deemed necessary, females will fight in any way possible for access to essential resources.

In this search for resources, it is thought that females tend to look for sexual potency in the form of a strong male, presenting as sexually mature, athletic and with clear gender differentiation (Weisfeld, 1987). However, it is contested that physical

32

characteristics provide reliable information about male reproductive potency (Buss & Schmitt 1993; Symons 1979). Symons (1979) suggests that it is not just their physical attributes that attract females as they compete for husbands and relationships, not just copulations. It may be that females are drawn to attractive males, but in the long term they seek those who offer resources and protection for themselves and their young (Gangestad & Thornhill, 1997). Males seem to show off the attributes of strength and fitness, and a sound gene heritage as shown by orthodox appearance, in order to attract females (Buss, 1988a). As with girls, those who mature early are likely to be dominant in the group and so have the first choice of sexual partners (Weisfeld & Billings, 1988).

Young people at the age of puberty, approximately 11 years old, appear to reach a peak in display of aggression (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz & Kaukiainen, 1992; Eron et al. 1983; Olweus 1993). This may relate to preparation for the process of mate selection. Girls begin sexual development typically 3 years before they can conceive, so this is a time to experiment emotionally and compete for high status males before gestation. The girls in this study age from 10 to 12 years old over the 15 months of the video sessions. Research would show that this peak in aggression is particularly marked in the case of males (Campbell, 1995) but it must be remembered that female aggression is usually less visible and only recently has been under scrutiny. There may be less gender difference when a fuller picture of aggression is taken into account (Hawker & Boulton, 1996a). Once boys have established a hierarchy, fewer confrontational episodes occur (deWaal, 1982; Ellis 1995; Olweus 1993). The process of challenge and testing out may continue longer in the case of girls, albeit in a lower key, as their dominance is not as structured, nor as visible, as that of boys (Crick & Ladd, 1990; Goodwin, 1990; Miller, Danaher & Forbes, 1986).

Relationships with boys are a major concern to girls as they are linked to status

(Goodwin, 1990; Schofield, 1981). Securing boy friends introduces a new set of norms

to be negotiated. Conflicts between adolescent girls are often based on jealousy

concerning boys who are considered as future, present and past sexual partners. In my

experience, these associations are fantasies on the part of many girls. I have found it

common for a girl to lie about 'boyfriends', stating wrongly to have an in-depth

relationship with a particular boy solely to warn off other girls from making an

attachment with him. Anyone encroaching on the imagined relationship could be the

target of a violent attack.

Even if a girl is no longer in a relationship with a boy, her proprietorial attitude

may continue and cause mayhem. Newcomers to the class or community are viewed

with a suspicion that may be justified, as males are said to prefer novelty (Campbell,

1995; Reicher & Potter, 1985). Most often, in disputes caused by these possessive

attitudes, the rival girl, rather than the boy, is blamed for any transgression (Campbell,

1995; Duncan, 1999; Keise, 1992). A contributory factor to the instability of girls'

friendships may be the pressure of conflicting messages, about appearance and

behaviour, targeted at young girls of this age, which they need to sort, assimilate and

process at speed. The general values and concerns of girls in the 6th to 8th grade have

been identified as social status, appearance and interpersonal relationships with both

boys and other girls (Coleman 1966; Eder 1985; Goodwin 1990; Maccoby, 1999;

Schofield, 1981). 'Human females compete with one another in the currency of

physical attractiveness because that is primarily what males value.' (Symonds, 1979

p.103). Attractiveness appears to be linked to peer status in the cliques studied by Eder

and Alder and Alder. Eder considers that there is essentially an on-going, re-negotiation

for norms concerning appearance, such as the use of more make-up or a more daring -

dress code, as the girls develop rapidly and so change their norms and values. Girls

need to straddle an imaginary boundary where they must appear sexually attractive to appeal to males, yet keep up a front of non-threatening decorum to maintain their friendships with other females.

As stated earlier, it is at this age when competitiveness is at a peak, and girls are particularly conscious of their own physical appearance, that they are reported as being at the lowest ebb in regard to self-confidence and self-esteem (Coleman, 1966; Simmons, Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1973; Schofield, 1981). Currently, the media promotes an anorexic look, yet many males would prefer a shapely girl. Physical maturity is considered to increase status (Harris, 1995; Savin-Williams 1979; Weisfeld and Billings, 1988). However, early curvaceousness is a threat to the other girls less physically mature (Eder, Evans & Parker, 1996). It may be that young girls rank themselves, and others, on a shifting scale of indeterminate structure that contributes to their intense monitoring of each other and the adherence to a supposedly egalitarian ethos in the group.

Many of the quarrels between girls focus on competition for males. In my own work on bullying, I have found that the majority of quarrels and insults issued between young adolescent girls involve accusations about a girl's sexual reputation, provocative clothing and appearance. If the quarrel is over a boy, it is likely to focus on the provocative behaviour of the accused girl in leading the 'innocent' boy astray (Eder, Evans & Parker, 1996). Gossip has been found to focus on sexual reputation (Marsh & Paton, 1986). Attacks on the sexual reputation of a girl are particularly common among young adolescent girls and can give rise to violent reactions.

In an evolutionary context, the power of these attacks would stem from a reputation for fidelity being essential if the female is to be chosen by a male as a long - term partner (Draper & Harpending, 1988). Sexual accusations are distressing as they

35

are not easy to defeat. The best course of action is to fend them off (Campbell, 1995; Sanford & Eder, 1984, Eder, 1991). Eder describes the process whereby girls considered to be violating acceptable norms are not challenged directly but by gossiping behind the target's back. This is done in the expectation that the culprit will hear indirectly, or others will heed the warning. Gossip becomes increasingly important at this stage (Fine, 1977a). It has an influential part to play in this process of clarifying group values and norms, as well as being the tool used to exclude and shun targeted girls.

A somewhat more direct method of ensuring conformity could be by the use of humour to point out to the transgressor the discrepancy between the presented behaviour and acceptability. As with gossip, confrontation is avoided. The ambiguous nature of humour and teasing allows the critics to state opinions without being directly responsible for them (Sanford & Eder, 1984). At this age young people are moving from the use of direct criticism to gossip, talking behind the back of others and using less overt ridicule (Gottman, 1986). As girls spend lot of time conversing, they may develop more subtle norms and interpersonal skills than boys (Dweck, 1981; Fine, 1977a). They can then use these skills to manipulate and control each other. This could be one reason why boys continue to use direct aggression to resolve conflicts.

9. Summary

Various lines of enquiry have been followed in looking for a rationale for the instability thought to be characteristic of girls' friendship groups. The effect of the peer group, now thought to be more influential than was previously the case (Harris, 1995) has been considered in the context of the complex socialisation processes that are part of the interactions in the group. Although an area offering opportunity for conflict, this process alone could not offer the whole solution as boys also form peer groups but

appear to have a more stable group structure.

Consideration was given to specific processes within the peer group that are considered to have a gender differentiation. Analysis of negative behaviours, such as bullying, indicates that girls not only co-operate, but also compete, possibly with as much force and gusto as boys, but use a different mode to do so. The question as to whether boys compete and girls co-operate may perhaps be reframed as the statement that both boys and girls compete, but girls appear to co-operate more frequently, and in a wider variety of situations than boys.

We may have underestimated the quantity of female aggression in the past as research has been dominated by enquiry into male aggression. This lack of attention may stem from an ignorance of both the methods of indirect aggression used by girls, and the severity of damage that can result from these attacks. The late recognition of the quantity and quality of aggression among girls may be to do with the wide differences in the design of the studies as findings are sparse and rooted in a variety of disciplines and approaches. The recent recognition of the quality and quantity of female aggression appears to emerge most clearly from studies focusing on females alone (Campbell, 1992, 1995). Girls have been exposed to generations of social cues and pressures not to be seen as aggressive, although some covert forms of aggression would appear to be considered more acceptable such as gossip, rumour and grassing. If girls are reluctant to admit to employing physical means, due to social stigma, this would contaminate studies based on questionnaires and so throw into doubt some of the findings relating to gender differences. Bullying research indicates that girls have a baseline capacity to be aggressive that is more nearly equivalent to boys than previously realised (Ahmad & Smith, 1994).

It would seem that the gender differences in the expression of aggression could

contribute to the fractious nature of the relationships between girls. The covert nature of some types of aggression used as a preferred method by girls, such as gossip, rumour and grassing, plus sophisticated methods of social manipulation, may leave targets bewildered, suspicious and insecure. This could encourage disputes, conflict and instability within the group

Comparison of the structure of girls' groups to that of boys may identify relevant differences that could account for the transitory nature of girls' friendships. It is not usual for girls to fight physically to establish a dominance hierarchy in the same way as boys (Archer, 1994; Ellis, 1995; Smuts, 1987) but some girls do use and display power in groups, and establish some form of hierarchy (Alder & Alder, 1995; Eder, Evans & Parker, 1996). Girls may form a hierarchy of popularity and attractiveness, but they do so within small friendship cliques and not as the dominance hierarchy males have in the full class group. This ranking could be a tacit and passive process, without any aggressive bids made to demonstrate power or superiority. American authors, such as Eder and Alder and Alder in particular, equate popularity with attractiveness, stating that attractive girls are the most popular. This may not be so elsewhere as the American culture appears to emphasise physical attractiveness from a very early age.

Girls seem to use popularity as both a weapon and currency, in the form of friendship, by which other girls are included or excluded from the group. This too would appear to contribute to the instability of girls' friendships. Sophisticated skills are involved in this manipulation of others such as the use of covert modes such as gossip, rumour and grassing and the more obvious strategy of insult. Popularity may also have the dual purpose of publicising to those outside the group (including boys) who holds power, in addition to keeping challenges at bay. There is a need to advertise attractiveness and sexual maturity to attract the best mate (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Faust,

1960) while not seeming to be promoting oneself at the expense of one's friends. It is important to be seen to be adhering to the 'egalitarian rule' (Goodwin, 1990). Along with the need to show males that one is capable of being loyal, faithful and capable, there is the need to present oneself as the most attractive and sexually alluring female available to the high status males (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Without a doubt, this would be a trigger for jealousy from other girls and, subsequently, be a root cause of dispute and quarrels that would be magnified by gossip and rumour. Sexual jealousy has been identified as a potent trigger for aggression in older females (Burbank, 1987).

There would appear to be covert jealousy underlying the interactions in girls' groups manifest in comparing oneself to others, even if there are no males present. Jealousy would seem to lead girls to the role of monitoring the competition. Here we may only extrapolate from work carried out with older females (Burbank, 1987; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Campbell 1994) as there are few relevant studies on younger girls. In addition, girls may take the active role of keeping rivals down by attacking their attractive attributes and those attributes where comparison is in their own favour. This would appear to be a complex process but it does not seem to be beyond the ability of young adolescent girls. This is occurring at the time they are thought to be developmentally at a low ebb regarding self-esteem and confidence (Simmons, Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 1973; Schofield, 1981). This could lead to tension and volatility within the group. This process of monitoring and comparison is fraught with difficulty and open to dispute and conflict. A favourite channel for this chatter, possibly vindictive and malicious, would be gossip and rumour. Any opportunities to grass on a target, with the aim of bringing trouble, would not be lost. These processes too must contribute to the instability in girls' groups.

Lastly, and perhaps most relevant, is that girls' disputes occur primarily within

friendship groupings. There is competition for popularity, manifest as physical attractiveness and other male-preferred qualities. The competition process takes the form of covert aggression such as the exclusion and inclusion processes as already described by Eder and Alder and Alder, and the verbal strategies of insult, gossip, rumour and grassing. There would seem to be a process of manipulation within some girls' friendship groups that lends itself to the instability already acknowledged. It may be that some quarrels are engineered in order to offer an excuse for the exclusion of a target girl, the covert process orchestrated by a leader who is mistress of a range of sophisticated skills.

Covert forms are more acceptable as they are not so easily identified, the damaging effects less recognised, and it is difficult to prove any motive. Direct, physical aggression is avoided for several reasons, some of which may be based in evolutionary terms. The process gives rise to group instability due to suspicion, jealousy and unpredictability. The emotional enmeshment, with the uncertainties, jealousies, rejections and reconciliations must contribute to the instability of these so-called friendship groups

If girls' friendships are as unstable and conflict-ridden as it would seem, the question arises as to why they bother with them at all. Part of the answer may be that, at the time of the friendship, members of the group are seduced into a false sense of trust and bonding. The answer to why girls continue to seek out friendship with other girls after a quarrel may lie in the gender difference in the nature of friendship. If girls need, and so seek out, affiliation, emotional bonds and supportive relationships, ostracism would be painful on several levels. Girls who manipulate the friendships often try to destroy the reputation of the victim; widespread insult, gossip, ridicule and slander may prevent the target girl from forging new friendships. Others may be wary of befriending

a girl who has fallen foul of an aggressive group. Consequently, the target is left without companions and without access to the close, supportive exchange the friendship offered. The exclusion would be indefinite so that the girl may expect to be invited back into the group. As in many abusive adult relationships, the abused considers the benefits of the relationship to outweigh the abuse. In the same way, it appears to take excluded girls a considerable time to understand that they have been victim of abuse and to turn their back on the group. It would appear that most humans have a basic need to belong to the group, a need for affirmation and acceptance by a relevant and unique group (Nevo et al., 1994). In summary, it would seem that no matter how conflict ridden and fractious the relationship, girls find the friendships so rewarding that they wait on the sidelines in the hope of being reintegrated into the group.

If folklore is correct, males go to regular locales, pubs, bars, sport or social clubs, with the expectation of meeting up with friends and acquaintances. Once there, their conversation centres mainly on sport, politics, work and entertainment. In contrast, women arrange to meet with specific friends, and then decide on a venue where they will talk of personal matters. However, this may be only a superficial difference. Men may talk of less personal matters, to a wider circle of friends, while the women talk to fewer and closer friends about personal and emotional concerns, but this does not mean that the women have the more loyal and trusting relationships. Without doubt, many men enjoy a better quality of friendship than some women. Beryl Reid created a comic schoolgirl, named Monica, whose catch phrase referred to her friend, 'She's my best friend and I hate her' which perhaps encapsulates more about female relationships than is currently recognised.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LANGUAGE OF CONFLICT

1. Overview

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the instability that is characteristic of girls' friendship groups, and to identify the role and effect of specific language structures in this process. The previous chapter identified the inclusion and exclusion processes that take place within girls' groups, and some of the rationales that may underpin these processes were outlined. In this section consideration is given to the role of specific structures of negative language as strategies of direct and indirect aggression, in particular in the processes of inclusion and exclusion in girls' groups. Insult, gossip, rumour and grassing are discussed in the context of the use and abuse of power, so classifying them as strategies of direct and indirect aggression as used by the girls in processes of social manipulation. Conflict may have a positive or negative outcome, but only the negative aspects are discussed here as the study considers the influence of these processes on the fractious and disputatious nature of girls' friendships.

This section begins with an examination of the role of insult. Included in the category of insult are demeaning and derogatory remarks, abusive directives and name-calling. Gossip and rumour are then considered. Gossip and rumour each have a clear identity and definition although they are often confused and subsumed into one, even in some academic texts. Gossip is to do with the personal affairs of someone absent, whereas rumour is concerned with impersonal matters. As they are so similar in definition, the functions of gossip and rumour coincide in many respects, especially in those aspects relating to the wielding of power over others. The impact of grassing and the threat to grass are discussed in the following chapter.

Bickering and minor disagreements are said to characterise the conversations of young girls (Maynard, 1985). There is a process of repetition and escalation in their

conversations with a situation of polarity set up and an opposition model quickly in place. It is often difficult to spot the start of such rows but the signals will have been registered by the warring parties (Maynard, 1985). These low key aggressions, although a major part of the talk of young girls, are not examined in this study unless forming part of the processes of insult, gossip, rumour and grassing. The ethnographic style of study chosen offers the opportunity to cull illuminating insights into the rationales, subtleties and impact of these aspects of the language of conflict. There are subtle differences in the forms of verbal abuse not easily apparent to one external to the exchange. For example, the abuse may be implied, or couched in terms of current jargon. The wording of a benign joke could match that of verbal abuse. The ethnographic style of the study allows the intentions of the girls using this language form to be elicited from the full transcripts and, more readily, from the video material.

Language is an active process. It does not only reflect the status quo but shapes beliefs and challenges existing attitudes. Even after the most brief of conversations, there is often change, an amendment or firmer conviction regarding attitudes, beliefs, moods or thought processes on the part of at least one participant. Language is the mechanism by which we understand the world and the social world understands us. If, as young children, we are taught to believe the facts that we are told, facts required for examination success, job demands, social responsibilities, then it follows that we must also be susceptible to believing what we are told by others about ourselves. Language shapes our own belief in what we are. Our self-image and confidence in ourselves is slowly accrued, from an early age, by our own perceptions matched with those voiced by others. Herein lies the pervasive and destructive power of abusive language.

For young people negative language addressed to them about personal matters may have a greater impact than in later life as the young have fewer sophisticated language processes to access in order to mute abrasive comment. Their shorter concentration

span may result in them opting for an immediate response in conflict, rather than choosing the deliberated route of mediation resolutions. They are less patient and so respond quickly and, in addition, they may have little perception of the hurt and long term damage repeated verbal abuse may cause.

In recent years, the negative, long-term emotional effects of verbal abuse have been identified (Hawker & Boulton, 1966a). Rumour mongering was found to be more distressing than most other types of bullying (Sharp, 1995a). In a study carried out in Australia, Owens (2000) found that girls often spread rumours, betrayed secrets and criticised others' clothing, appearance or personality. The emotional damage caused by these attacks was so severe that several victims sought a new school. Several teachers reported some to have contemplated suicide. As the target succumbs to the repeated onslaught, the attacks escalate and become more ferocious. Even would-be aides step back from such a concerted attack (Pepler, 1996; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Singsong, rhythmic chants encourage wider audience participation so that the victim may become the scapegoat for an increasingly larger group of peers.

The language of conflict is highly effective in changing not only the attitudes of others to the target, but also in destroying a person's positive self-image. A young person develops a sense of identity from the evaluation given them by their peers equally, if not more so, than that allocated by adults or academic success. Typically, girls come to understand themselves through their friendship values and ideologies rather than academic evaluations (Harris, 1995; Hey 1997).

2. The Rationale for Abusive Language

If abusive language can have such pervasive, long-term and destructive effect, as current research would suggest, the question arises as to why it is commonly used. It would appear that the use of abusive language as a tool, with which to wield power and

influence over others, is common to both genders, and all ages. However, it would seem that there is a gender difference in the manifestation of power.

A common adage states that boys fight with their fists, girls with their tongues. When boys engage in disputes, winning and losing affects their relative rank in the group (Goodwin, 1990). In the case of girls, Goodwin found disputes arose because someone had said something behind the back of another girl that violated the egalitarian ethos of the group. Goodwin found that young boys playing in the streets interacted within openly hierarchical groups where orders and insults flew freely. Challenges and criticisms formed a regular part of their play. This gave their play an openly hostile presentation but grievances rarely lasted for longer than few minutes. Play among the girls presented differently in character. Although not as obviously conflict ridden, there were frequent disputes and conflicts. Girls are not always supportive, cooperative or polite (Maltz and Borker, 1982; Gilligan, 1982; Gleason and Greif, 1983). The gossip, ridicule, accusations and insults allotted to non-present girls led to some being ostracised for long periods (Goodwin, 1990). A bickering pair of girls can set up a tirade of insults and do battle over days, weeks or months (Eder, 1990; Duncan, 1999).

A recent study of adolescent girls found many of the more influential used the sophisticated technique of combining raw coercion with friendliness, the powerful carrot and stick strategy, to keep others subservient and under their sovereignty (Duncan, 1999). These girls could turn on those under their liege with vicious intent; their skills honed by frequent practice. Several authors have substantiated the finding of girls having to move school due to unresolved and terrifying verbal onslaughts by other girls (Hey, 1997; Nilan, 1999; Keise, 1992). The work of these authors, along with that of the detailed recordings of Eder (1985; 1990; Eder and Kinney, 1995) and Goodwin (1990) illustrate the power of the abusive language used by girls. The confrontations, insults and name calling makes their personal attacks as damaging as any physical

attack made by boys. In a study of single sex schools, Keise (1992) found the degree and extent of bullying as widespread among girls as boys. The nature of the attacks varied in that among the girls the attacks were primarily 'bitchy' verbal attacks but also physical attacks did occur as in the boys' school. Studies conducted in Australia show the impact of the verbal abuse used among girls (Owens, 2000; Nilan, 1992). Keise (1992) offers explanations for these violent verbal attacks. She suggests it is a way that girls can use to resist accepted notions of femininity, resisting identification via the traditional routes of boyfriends and make-up. However, in many cases, the perpetrators thought of the attacks in terms of simply having a bit of fun.

The findings of Eder (1990) and Goodwin (1990) plus current work on mediation among young people (Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Pepler, 1996) would indicate that many conflict exchanges are not resolved by young people themselves without some form of adult intervention. Resolution may not be the primary goal of many conflict incidents. Other, less obvious goals, such as displaying verbal skill and maintaining status hierarchies may be present (Eder, 1990; Goodwin, 1982b; Kochman, 1983; Labov, 1972b; Maynard, 1985). A study of young adult females found that few remembered the outcome, the winners and losers, of their disputes Campbell and Muncer (1987).

Eder and Kinney (1995) describe the constant ranking and re-ranking of positions within the groups of girls that they studied. The girls monitored each other rigorously for anyone trying to be different. Anyone falling foul of this judgement was victim to severe admonishment. They suggest that vicious insult can be the most effective way of keeping everyone in line and achieving an egalitarian state. In summary, it would appear that there are girls who use abusive language in an attempt to promote themselves, whereas the same linguistic forms are used by others to keep them in their place (Eder, 1995; Goodwin, 1990; Duncan, 1999; Keise, 1992; Owens, 2000).

3. Content of the Language of Conflict

Few studies have examined the content and focus of the abusive language used by young girls. Middle class girls were found to remark on the comparative cost and style of 'designer' and 'non-designer' clothing worn by their peers, whereas working class girls speak of the clothing being ugly in design, the wrong colour and out of date (Eder, Evans & Parker, 1996). Both sets of girls made adverse remarks about the make up and 'sexy' clothing of others. These authors highlight the dilemma facing young girls today as a vast media industry promotes a current style in clothing. These detailed studies found that the body image of each other is a prime topic for discussion among girls, even as young as the girls in this study. They rank each other's body development, scrutinising each other for minute changes in appearance. This obsession with their looks can result in anorexia and bulimia in vulnerable girls. This is a period of time when many young people experience uncertainties about their own body image as there are wide discrepancies in stature and shape between individuals of the same chronological age. Clustered together, one among hundreds in the larger schools, there are often emotional and psychological pressures relating to self-image that are compounded by other pressures common at this age. Adolescence is a time of change and instability (Duncan, 1999). At this age, comparisons and criticisms made by others are particularly hurtful.

Adolescence is a time when the young form a clearer sexual identity so creating a new dimension to their social relations. They become more aware of the sociocultural values placed on sexual reputation. This may result in exalted status for some boys but abusive labeling for some girls. Two hundred forms of verbal abuse, specifically aimed at girls and women by males, were identified by Mahoney (1983). However, much of such sexual comment is transmitted female to female. Davies (1984) found that the main reason for fights between girls was rooted in sexual jealousy. This process is

called 'othering' by Hey (1997 p.75). Hey suggests that by use of this process an understanding of sexual and social boundaries, as embedded in their own culture, is compiled by young girls. Other girls are given the unacceptable aspects of femininity, such as active heterosexual desire, so that they are not attributed to those girls employing the insults.

A similar argument is proposed by Goodwin (1990). She considers that insult banter, being a two-way process, tells us as much about the speaker as the target. She gives the example of the comment, 'You ain't no good' giving an insight into the person using the insult. A similar proposal is made by Lees (1993). Lees writes that bitchiness is a way of devaluing aspects of other girls that you wish to signal as 'not you', the most vicious attacks being made on the sexual reputation of the target girl. In girls' groups the sexual behaviour of each other is monitored with intense interest and it is common for girls to police each other rigorously (Lees, 1993). Lees found that talking behind the back of individuals to classify each other, for example as swot, geek, tart, slut or snob is a common activity among girls. A girl is judged by the opinions of others, not by any objective standard or her own behaviour, but by the view of those likely to be influenced by mischief and jealousy (Lees, 1993; Duncan, 1999). This intense and unremitting policing can be unnerving, especially as such accusations offer little possibility of producing an effective defense.

It may be that the converse is true for boys. Implications of sexual exploits may enhance the status of a boy within the peer group. However, any show of sexual activity makes a target of the girl concerned (Eder, 1991). Those girls who talk to boys more than others are accused of loose morals. The pressure may be so great for some that they see having a steady boy friend as being the only way out from such teasing and taunting. Clearly, the range of verbal aggressions used by girls in their relationships are effective. The structures of insult, gossip, rumour and grassing are discussed later.

<center>**CHAPTER THREE**</center>

<center>**INSULT**</center>

1. Definition of Insult

For the purposes of this study insult will include; individual remarks, provoked or unprovoked, deliberately made to give offence; directives given in a manner intended to demean or control; and names used with the intention of denigrating another. Goodwin (1990) writes that to insult is to 'out talk, out look, out style'. This definition would appear to relate to competitive ritual insult, rather than the type of insulting comment used more commonly among young people in the UK that is considered in this study.

Insults may be employed in a display of power or as a means of achieving power over another (Eder, 1991). Insults and labels, such as name-calling, constrain and limit the behaviour of others. In the case of insults, directives and name calling, as with other terms of overt abuse and aggression, it is most often a higher status person who uses these terms against a lower status individual (Eder, Evans & Parker, 1996). This is clearly so if, for example, there is a differential in physique, or in status as in workplace bullying. This is not necessarily the case with the other forms of verbal abuse discussed in this work such as gossip, rumour and grassing where the target may be absent.

One aspect of insult, relevant to any definition, is that allocating a definition of insult to an utterance rarely depends on the verbal content alone. Any utterance holds a multiplicity of meanings (Malone, 1997). Interpretation depends on the selection made from the multiple meanings offered. Communication necessarily involves a two way process composed of both expression and reception so offering opportunity for misinterpretation.

2. The Skill of Insulting

Human behaviour is fundamentally symbolic so that any form of discourse is more than the sum of its parts (Antarki, 1994; Goffman, 1959; Malone, 1997). Other non-

verbal modes are embedded within the verbal channel of communication such as pauses and silences, head movements, gestures, voice inflections, eye movements, facial expressions and body posture. All convey information that accompanies speech, sometimes supporting or undercutting an utterance. Particularly in the case of abusive language, a fast and accurate reading and interpretation of these non-verbal movements is required to define whether or not an insult was intended so that an effective response may be prepared. The tone of voice and the accompanying actions can add potency to any remark. They can diffuse the situation, make a joke of a comment or add venom and escalate the remarks into a quarrel. A pelvic thrust can be interpreted as a sexual act or a skiing action (Eder, 1991). For this reason, among others, the use of a video camera was essential to this study.

Insults are often fired by emotion, not knowledge. The knowledge base from which insults are drawn is often weak but this is no hindrance to the strength and ingenuity of the invective. Insults may be spontaneous, but many episodes refer back to past grievances and unfinished business. They may be given by proxy. A girl may get a friend to intimate to another that adverse comments have been uttered about her by non-present others, or get her friend to make the abusive remarks directly on her behalf.

Like other linguistic forms, proficient use of abusive language is a skill. Eder (1988) found a practice effect in that those girls who regularly used abusive language became more proficient. The participants considered these skills indicative of intellectual ability and cleverness. By 14 years the girls had reached the pinnacle of success in developing these skills. There was some generalisation of the skill base in that the more skilled girls used the skills to communicate normative information as well as in conflict debate. In the studies of Eder, the girls involved were not just in pairs engaged in a verbal duel, but others joined in and the participants would even switch sides.

INSULTING REMARKS

1. Definition of Insulting Remarks

An insulting remark is defined in this study as a comment made about a person, or something directly related to that person, with the sole intention of causing negative emotional response. As with the other language structures considered in this study, insult can be used to manipulate power. It is in this context that each is considered.

2. A Framework for Insulting Remarks

There is a structure to the insult sequence and, from quite early on, young people learn to identify the key elements in the routines. Goodwin (1990) noted that the next speaker in a dispute must attend to the structure of the previous utterance in order to tie in with the previous speaker. The move from utterance to utterance is accomplished through a process of very intricate, coordinated moves (Goodwin, 1990). The meaning of each utterance stems from its position within the entire structure of the sentence.

These comments of Goodwin relate to insult sequences but not all insults occur in sequence form. Those studied here are mainly single insulting remarks evoking no verbal response. As stated, an insult is not necessarily tied to a previous comment. For example, it can be made deliberately to set up confrontation as in the classic opener to a bar room brawl, 'What are you looking at?' (Blackburn, 1993). Although the words themselves are innocuous, all know that this is a direct challenge. Girls too use this strategy to start an unprovoked fight (Duncan, 1999).

Turns

The structure of an insult sequence is based on the cooperative, adjacency principle (Grice, 1975). The expectations built into pairs of statements determine the meaning. There is some flexibility but a framework is present in most sequences (Schegloff, 1988). The turns may involve several persons but most common is a verbal battle between a dyad. The two way pattern most prevalent is that of an initiating turn from

speaker to hearer which is then followed by a response from defendant to accuser (Goodwin, 1982b, p.10). The sequence is based on repeated, reversed turns, the most expected response to an insult being a return insult (Labov, 1972; Kochman, 1983; Goodwin, 1982b; Eder and Enke, 1991). The return may be used as a form of denial or as a return challenge. This is a justifications model in that the frame is switched to invalidate the comments of the partner (Eder & Enke, 1991). The reversed turns typically get more and more heated so that, in the excitement of the rapid escalation, little attention is paid to accuracy, grammatical structures or the sensitivity of others. In such verbal skirmishes the sense of competition and excitement escalates and overcomes common sense (Duncan, 1999).

Insults are characteristically placed at the end of turns. The words used by each opponent being turned on their head. It is the inflexion, or tone of voice, that indicates the insult, not the specific words used. Their own words are used against the protagonists, introducing a mocking element, so that irritation may quickly escalate into anger. For example, if the attacker has said 'You're fat', the expected response would be for the defender to reply 'You're fat.' Frequently the return insult is embedded in the repeated phrase as when the protagonist challenges 'Well, why don't you make me?' and the expected response is given, 'Well, why don't you make me?'

Topping

Often an escalation takes the form of exaggeration as in the reply to being called a liar bringing forth the response 'Well, you're a liar too' which, in turn, begs the next response, 'Well, you're a bigger one.' Traditionally, challenges are countered by nonsense phrases, points being scored by use of the vernacular most in vogue at the time. 'With knobs on' and 'With bells on' are two common nonsense rejoinders that have stood the test of time. Similar constructs occur in most cultures. The efficacy of such nonsense replies lies in the fact that are they are difficult to countermand. The

only return can be to repeat the same phrase, perhaps louder. In the heat of the argument, there is often overlap and loose ties (Goodwin, 1990). Girls make more and better returns than boys, measured by the number and the sophistication of the turns (Eder, Evans & Parker, 1996).

3. Mimicry and Ridicule in Insult.

A potent factor encouraging escalation in insult exchanges is that of mockery, often taking the form of mimicry and rhythmic sound patterns. The insult tirade is often based on sound patterns rather than intellectual content or substance. 'Ya, ya, di, ya, ya' would seem to be almost universal (Goodwin, 1990). Creative use of language, by including sound patterns, adds colour to a verbal skirmish. The rhythm entices all to join in and so the insult attack is amplified by wider group participation. These ritual sound patterns enable anyone to join in regardless of differential in size or status. A young boy can hide behind a wall and shout out insults to a teacher without having resource to an extensive vocabulary or fear of reprisals. This could account for their popularity and explain why they have stood the test of time.

With all insult patterns, success is recognised when the opponent is out-talked whether by words or nonsense phrases. To be the last to speak signifies a dignified win. In any verbal confrontation, it would seem that intervention by adults appears to prolong the episode. The usual ending occurs when one, or both, opponents run out of steam or vocabulary. It ends with a change of topic, an interruption, or perhaps with no clear winner or loser (Eder, Evans & Parker, 1996; Maynard, 1985).

4. Taunting or Teasing

As the identification of insult does not depend solely on the specific words used, it is not always easy to challenge. This is particularly so in the case of 'jokes'. An interpretation of insult can be denied and the rejoinder of not being able to 'take a joke' makes it difficult to counter.

5.   Ritual Insults

One type of insult more commonly found in some cultures than others, is that of the ritual insult. Both Goodwin (1990) and Bavelas, Rogers & Millar (1995) divide insult into the two categories of personal and ritual insult. The key difference between a ritual and a personal insult is that the ritual insult must be so outlandish as to be clearly untrue (Bavelas, Rogers & Millar, 1995). For example, insulting a boy by calling him lazy could cause irrevocable offence, whereas to call him 'a snail on crutches' is clearly untrue and intended as a joke. However, the delineation between hurtful and humourous insult is tenuous as playful and hurtful insults can occur in the same exchange with a cross over mid-stream (Eder 1991).

With age, the insults became more serious and complex in form (Eder, 1991). The ability to think fast and to enunciate the taunts clearly and lucidly, in tandem with the ability to compose rejoinders to those received, is a sophisticated process. This is particularly so if humour and rhythm are incorporated. It is a prized skill among the young, particularly the black youth culture of America. Goodwin (1980 a) found that young black girls used little direct insult to each other, but did use ritual insult exchanges with boys, whereas older black girls did insult each other. Goodwin suggests that there is a lower frequency of insults between girls than boys because girls are less concerned with status hierarchies. However, both Eder (1985) and Goodwin (1990) stress the concern of girls to keep the 'egalitarian rule' that suggests that girls are aware and avoidant of hierarchical structures.

Even more than other insults, ritual insults do not often achieve resolution (Goodwin, 1982b; Labov, 1972b). This is a form of competitive word play, often accompanied by laughter, and so there may be an amicably appointed winner. However, as in any competition, there could be a slick transfer to heated exchange at any point. Goodwin (1990) found that these insults came mainly from girls from lower

working class backgrounds who valued 'toughness' and being able to defend themselves. Eder, Evans and Parker, (1996) found that middle and low status girls were louder and more exuberant than others. Ritual insult may be a similar process to rough and tumble play, where young boys take the opportunity to test out their physical strength and combative skill against others within the safe arena of play. It is one way of identifying the vulnerable.

6. Current Language

To insult effectively one needs to be in tune with current jargon and 'argot'. To insult properly shows an understanding and internalisation of cultural values because the addressee is violating this in some way (Maynard, 1985). It is necessary to be in the 'in-crowd' to know the current terms in order to read the message inherent in the insult appropriately. This is an additional factor contributing to the vulnerability of those outside friendship groups as misuse, by outsiders, provokes ridicule. In addition, local and regional phrases exclude outsiders from accurate interpretation of the insult exchange. Young people use a language which is perhaps the most fluid and transient of all. Even in orthodox speech, words change their meaning as the connotation of 'gay' has altered in recent years.

7. Content of the Insults

The content of insults between girls is similar to other forms of conflict language. Girls at the age of those in this study monitor each other for quality and style of clothing, body shape and behaviour (Eder, 1985;Goodwin, 1990; Alder and Alder, 1984). An awareness of the importance of sexual reputation begins at this age, although a more diffuse understanding of appropriate social mores and behaviour relating to sexual matters may have been emerging earlier.

INSULTING DIRECTIVES

1. Definition of Insulting Directives

Directives may be defined as instructions or requests couched in terms of commands. They are issued with the intent of getting another to do something by omitting the request stage. In this way, directives can be framed as insults (Eder, 1991). As with all forms of insult, it is not the only the words that makes these comments commands. 'Get this for me' may be spoken in a wheedling, persuasive tone of voice that could make the utterance a playful request rather than a directive. Even spoken in a neutral tone the phrase could be misinterpreted as an insulting command used provocatively to display power over others. Non-compliance could result in conflict.

The directive may be a direct command or indirectly embedded in a communication. The statement 'It is insufferably hot in here' would make it difficult for a listener not to offer to open a window (Brenneis & Lein1977). Further examples and categories are given later

2. Gender Differences

In whatever form, as all insults, directives reflect a power imbalance. The social use of directives lies in their use to gain the goals of goods and services, but also to define, reaffirm, challenge, manipulate and redefine status and rank (Ervin-Tripp 1979). Directives appear to feature strongly in the repertoire of language used by the bully of both genders. Directives may be issued with an expectation of non-compliance, delivered solely to test out status (Ervin-Tripp 1979). As with the other forms of negative language structures noted above, they are issued from higher to lower rank, highlighting the asymmetrical power structure. Language forms and confirms attitudes so that, in this way, a bully is confirming his power by using specific language structures to subjugate the victim.

Gender differences have been found in the use of such language structures as

directives. Several studies have shown that the language of girls tends to reflect the features of cooperation, reciprocity and collaboration more than that of boys (Goodwin, 1990; Leaper, 1991; Maltz & Borker, 1982). It is suggested that boys are more likely than girls to use directives such as 'Go!' and 'Right now!' They are said to use 'grandstanding' where they talk without reference to the listener, relying on domineering exchanges rather than empathy and turn taking (Goodwin, 1990: Leaper, 1991; Maccoby, 1999). This is shown most clearly in conflict exchanges (Crick & Ladd, 1990: Hartup 1993; Miller, Danaher & Forbes, 1986; Sachs, 1987; Sheldon, 1992b).

Girls will be more likely to use structures reflecting joint decisions and partner utterances such as, 'Let's all' 'We've go to ' Maybe' and tend to use the request form such as, 'Why don't we?' or 'Shall we?' Their utterances offer the opportunity for joint decision taking. They use extended statements comparing and contrasting their experiences with those of the listener, and relevant turn taking is prevalent in their conversations (Goodwin, 1990; Leaper, 1991; Maccoby, 1999). Girls stress the benefits to all members when they are persuading others to comply with their will, and they tend to give a clear rationale for compliance. They give descriptions of their own preferred courses of action and then wait for a response (Goodwin, 1990). They are reported as not being as likely as boys to argue over power but to prefer to emphasise care and responsibility as the rationale for their way being the more preferable (Goodwin, 1990). The issues of reciprocity and retribution are brought in to their arguments although not necessarily in a direct manner (Goodwin, 1990). Girls prefer collaboration rather than conflict in an argument and have access to excellent collaborative skills (Goodwin, 1990; Malone, 1997). If in danger of not arriving at the desired decision, they adjust the scenario to keep the peace. Girls' social groups are thought to stress egalitarianism, possibly due to being small and exclusive, but they are characterised by fragility, with frequent break up and reformations (Eder, 1985; Goodwin, 1990; Malone, 1997;

Thorne, 1993; Toth, 1978).

This finding is challenged by Thorne (1993) who claims that insults, threats and physical fights are not exclusively male behaviours. However, if there is a gender difference in the use of directives, it is necessary to consider why this should be so. Lever (1976) concludes that girls develop empathy while boys develop a sense of their place in a more complex social structure. A review of the relevant literature by Malone (1997) leads him to consider that young girls are urged to be nurturing, collaborative, empathic and non-directive. However, Malone agrees with other authors in declaring that this does not necessarily lead them to behave in this way (Gilligan, 1982; Gleason & Greif, 1983; Maltz and Borker, 1982). The culture of males in America is one where they are allowed, if not actively encouraged, to be competitive, aggressive, independent and emotionally insensitive (Malone, 1997). This would sanction, or even encourage, the use of directives.

It may be that from the early years there is a gender difference in communication between children and adults leading to a differentiated approach to communication. From an early age girls are said to spend more time talking and interacting informally with adult caretakers and teachers, whereas boys separate from parents faster and become involved in risk-taking and limit testing (Fagot, 1994). A meta-analysis by Leaper, Anderson & Sanders (cited in Maccoby, 1999 p. 123) focused specifically on talk between parents and their children. The mothers talked more to their daughters than to their sons (Goodnow, 1988;Maccoby, 1999).

If this is so, it would seem to follow that boys would be less willing to turn to others for support, as in using techniques such as mediation and arbitration (Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Cowie, 1998; Olweus & Endresen, 1998). Perhaps this is why boys are less willing to use grassing to adults as a resolution strategy. Tittle-tattling to adults, which could include gossip, rumour and grassing, is accepted among girls, but

associated strongly with peer rejection by boys (Chung & Asher, 1996). Such results would support the suggestion that, from an early age, boys are encouraged to ' fight their own battles' and move both emotionally and physically away from adult caretakers faster than girls.

Girls have been found to seem more supportive of victims than boys (Cowie, 1998). This is in line with previous research on attitudes to victims (Rigby, 1997; Menesini et al, 1997) and on the difficulty of recruiting male students in peer support schemes (Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Cowie, 1998). Many boys at this age readily adopt a more contemptuous attitude to victims as part of their strategy to enhance their own status in a competitive peer group environment (Olweus & Endresen, 1998). It may be that boys and girls are equally aggressive, but social influences encourage boys to use aggression instrumentally to achieve goals, whereas girls are taught to suppress and control their aggressive tendencies (Campbell, Muncer & Gorman, 1993). Girls would appear to be more likely to use indirect and covert aggression to manage their relationships.

Maynard (1985) writes of the bickering and minor disagreements that characterise the conversations and games of young girls. There is a process of repetition and escalation. A situation of polarity is set up with an opposition model quickly in place. It is often difficult to spot the start of such rows but the signals will have been registered by the warring parties (Maynard, 1985).

3. Classification of Directives

Directives have been classified by Brennais and Lein (1977) and grouped according to function and status of speaker. Various forms of directives may be employed in order to gain from a subordinate. Threats such as, 'I'll kill you' may be used, bribes ('I'll give you this if ') or commands ('Give me') could be employed.

Moral persuasion may be used. For example, ' I had that first'. This may be in the form of a single assertion ('That's my shirt you're wearing') or include a supportive

assertion ('It's mine because I bought it'). Those in a subordinate position may use

such statements incorporating need to persuade others to comply, whereas imperatives

would be used by persons of higher or equal status to those who would not take offence.

Covert directives are used if the status differential is not clear, to another who is

unfamiliar, or to those of different rank. However, the use of a directive would signal

that there was an expectation of compliance. If on unsure ground, where non-

compliance is a possibility, hints or a question format may be favoured as in 'You'll get

that in the post, won't you?' Permission directives are given to subordinates or those

who are unfamiliar, for example, 'You can open the window now it's got warm'.

NAME CALLING

1. Definition of Name-Calling

Name-calling is defined in this study as the allocation of an abusive name to

another with the intention of causing distress. The abuse may be in the form of a new

name substituted or added to the name of a person, a change made to a name, or the

manner in which a name is spoken. There is a difference between name-calling as

opposed to a label. An abusive name may be used only once, in fun, or by mistake, but

labeling implies permanency. Once labeled, the target may find it impossible to shake

of the abusive name, even if it has out-lived the purpose intended.

2. Historical Perspective

To understand the potency of name-calling, it is helpful to recall that it has roots in

anthropology, in the historical and prehistorical tradition of word magic (Malinowski,

1923). The power inherent in the abuse of a person's name has been identified by

Frazer (1923) and Goffman (1963). Perhaps the power of name-calling is intensified

by nicknames being associated with Old Nick, the devil.

3.   Function of Name-Calling

Name-calling often draws upon non-human names such as 'wimp', 'louse', 'pig', plus colourful local variations. This is an effective way of dehumanizing the victim, thus assuaging guilt and giving permission for the process to continue once it is outside the human context (Besag, 1989). The American soldiers named the Vietcong 'Gooks' rendering them impersonal and so easier to kill without moral anxiety (Lees, 1993). In addition, the allocation of a non-human label demeans victims and renders them even more helpless. This may be a contributory factor in the escalation of some incidents of bullying.

Names and labels are the most economical way of recognising and defining. Naming is the demarcation process set down by society. Without labels we would be swamped by a myriad of anomalous characteristics to remember. Names define our inclusion in, or exclusion from, families, localities and nationalities, among other things. As well as being used to group and classify for positive reasons, labeling can be used adversely, to differentiate and exclude. Maladaptive labeling, as in the name-calling, excludes an individual from the group. Children are attracted to name-calling as a provocative tool available to them in their attempts to order and simplify their social world (Davey & Mullin, 1983).

One sociological perspective would suggest that it is necessary for society to scapegoat some members in order to better define the boundaries of normality. The sane are divided from the mentally ill, the criminal from the law abiding, the able from the disabled. It has been proposed that we use labels in an insidious way, to enable us to cope with issues we find difficult (Szasz, 1961). A psychoanalytical explanation of labeling, as in name-calling, is that it is a projective process. There is a transfer of the unacceptable, repressed aspects of our own personality on to those more vulnerable who

display more overtly those very same characteristics (Klein, 1946). The word 'stigma' is derived from the tattoo worn by those who were either devoted followers of the gods or, conversely, by those who were slaves and known criminals. For those stigmatized by name-calling, the verbal label would appear to be no less durable. The potency of name-calling would seem to stem from the cognitive change that occurs within victims who eventually see themselves as the degraded objects defined by the persecutors.

Name-calling may be difficult to identify as it includes the assignment of nicknames, many of which may be affectionate. The allocation of a diminutive form of a surname is common in male groups, as in the use of Smithy to Smith. There are the traditionally allocated names such as Dusty to Miller and Dickie to Bird. Names based on birthplace or accent may be proudly adopted or disowned as in Paddy, Taffy, Scouse. These may have the effect of individualising the owner in a positive or negative manner depending on the manner of delivery, and the heritage and attitude of the recipient.

In a recent transnational study, name-calling emerged as the most frequent type of bullying reported (Smith, Morita, Junger-Tas, Olweus, Catalano & Slee, 1999). This reflected earlier work by carried out in the UK where it was found to be the most frequent form endorsed by 50% primary age students and 62% secondary (Whitney & Smith, 1993). A study of undergraduates found that 27% of all unpleasant teasing involved name-calling (Alberts, 1996). A retrospective study of undergraduates found similar results (Cash, 1995).

Name-calling is reported to be one of the most distressing and aggravating attacks suffered by those bullied by others. Children dislike approximately one half of the nicknames they are called (Crozier & Dimmock, 1999). These authors found that some children stayed away from school because of the distress the name-calling caused. On the other hand, some children viewed some modifications to their names as a term of endearment (Klerk & Bosch, 1996). These authors found that the South African girls in

their study were significantly more likely to dislike the names they were called than boys, but a study carried out in the UK found the reverse to be true (Crozier and Dimmock, 1999). It would appear that name-calling has such subtle connotations that studies may be difficult to replicate out of the cultural context.

As with other forms of insult, humour plays a central role in name-calling. The potency of the name will depend on an accumulation of non-verbal signals, the ability to read social signs quickly and accurately on the part of the giver and recipient, and the past-history of both parties

Young people gain enjoyment from playing with words and coining nicknames is a form of such entertainment. The encyclopedic work of Opie & Opie (1959) contains information from around the UK about this aspect of childhood language.
As with all forms of insult, there is a particular difficulty in making an effective interpretation and response to name-calling couched in humour that the culprit claims was made in fun. This is noted in the work on teasing by Alberts et al., (1996) and in the work of Boxer & Cortes-Conde (1997).

Warm (1997) studied young people in America and found the peak of name-calling at 12 years, teasing about appearance being the most frequent focus. Warm assigned the names to two categories. One category was mean teasing that included what are described as profane words, such as bitch and whore, and non-profane words with a specific meaning such as nerd, geek, wimp, sissy, fag. Warm named a further category symbolic teasing that related to appearance, sexual relationships and rejection. It is difficult to make such a categorical distinction as a name such as 'tart' could relate equally to behaviour, character and appearance. Thorne (1993) found that even girls in exclusive, elitist groups, where little diversification of type was apparent, classified and commented on each other as in identifying snobs pseuds, boffins and goody-goodies. Young Australian girls in one study categorised each other by locality of their homes in

addition to ethnicity (Nilan, 1991).

In the pre and early adolescent years, young people experience rapid bodily changes that form a common topic of conversation. The vast number of young people in any secondary school gives the opportunity for a wide range of bodily shapes being evident and the focus of comment. Many girls of this age have anxieties about their body image (Hey, 1997; Thorne, 1993). The emotionally turbulent world of the adolescent may encourage young people to believe what is said about them.

4. Sexual Name-Calling

Young people asked about the content of rumours and nasty remarks, stated that sexual comment was the single largest category (Crozier and Dimmock, 1999). With increasing age, young people become aware that childish names such as 'big nose' and 'spotty' are viewed as different from those with sexual connotations (Duncan, 1999). Among older children there is an increase in sexualised verbal abuse with a peak at 13 to 14 years (Duncan, 1999). However, the acquisition of a sexual identity, the sense of oneself as a sexual being fitting into a culturally prescribed category, did not become an issue until challenged by peers (Savin-Williams and Rodriguez, 1983). Labels allocated to those considered deviant, because they violated symbolic gender boundaries, remained sturdy over time (Thorne, 1993).

A study of adolescent girls found that they had a distinct vocabulary for allocating moral slights (Hey, 1997). Eder (1991) found younger girls used the terms 'slut' and 'bitch' but that the insults became more complex with age. A study of Australian adolescent girls found that the same names were prevalent; dyke, slut, tart (Owens, 1996). All authors agree that these sexual names usually bear no resemblance to practice. Often the name is chosen at random, the attack being rooted in jealousy and not based on information. It would seem that exact definition of even the most commonly used words is unclear. Exactly what is meant by 'dog'? This could refer to

a girl's dress, speech, or behaviour as in flirting or flaunting her sexuality. As with 'tart' the name carries a variety of meanings. In addition, there are local, regional and cultural connotations to names. Perhaps such terms of abuse are deliberately vague to prevent effective contest.

Lees (1993) found girls did not mind the name of cow and bitch but strongly objected to slag. This is one of the most common words used in abuse. When the coal had been taken away for distribution, the slag was left in heaps. Adults warned children not to play near the slag heaps, partly due to the danger, but also because the dirt would be transferred to their hands and clothes. The connotation of slag presumably includes the inference that a 'slag' is dirty, contaminating rubbish.

Late adolescent working class girls ascribed the labels of 'slag', 'slut' or 'common' resisted these names and the implication of sexual easiness contained in them Campbell and Muncer (1987). Fights often arose from slurs on each others' reputation by the use of labels such as slag, tart, scrubber. Such name-calling was seen as an attack on a girl's morality and integrity Campbell and Muncer (1987). Such accusations are ambiguous and difficult to disprove or resolve. Fights between boys over reputation and sexual integrity do not appear as prevalent. One of the most distressing and commonly used insults among young people is the use of such names directed to the target's mother. The potency of this ensures its survival and popularity, presumably because the mother is typically absent and no adequate defense can be made. Young people report that calling their mother a slag is more hurtful than any direct attack on them.

5.   Defensive Action

Girls receive contradictory messages from onset of menstruation. They are depicted as sex objects but recognition of this, in the form of sexual desire and awareness, quickly earns them the title of whores, slags, and good-time girls (Lees,

1993; Walkerdine, 1990, 1992). Most relevant literature considers this in the context of cross gender abuse. However, it may be that more abuse comes from other girls rather than males. The target is caught in a trap; to offer a defense may prolong the attack. Because it could result in the victim's sexuality being scrutinised, most consider it better to suffer in silence. The effect of the abuse may be worse if received from other girls as boyfriends change and move on, but the victim will be with the female attackers for rest of her school career (Duncan, 1999). Some girls get boys to do the name-calling for them (Owens, 1996). In some cases, the attacks are so severe as to drive girls to truant from school (Duncan, 1999; Keise, 1992; Owens, 1996). Girl-to-girl names were found to be more overtly sexual, referring to sexual character or appearance, and girls were more damaging in their abusive social harassment than boys (Hey, 1997).

As with other forms of insult, it is imperative that young people are part of the peer culture as sexual reputations evolve from day-to-day discussions. (Duncan, 1999). Mimicry, slang, and slander are utilised in the maneuvering of the group dynamics and selection of a target (Bjorkqvist, Ekman & Lagespetz, 1982). By lacing accusations of untoward behaviour, together with stereotypical names such as 'slag', the aggressors construct a negative identity for the target. As with gossip, a girl may be more likely to become a target in her absence.

6. Summary

It would appear that the various forms of insult used by girls are effective in highlighting, possibly abusing, power and status. The verbal attacks of girls are usually premeditated and executed with a skill comparable to that of an army general on maneuvers. The rationales for the use of insult are varied and complex. Girls appear to target attitudes and behaviour that are of most concern to them such as sexual reputation, self-image and relationships. Part of the potency of these modes may lie in the difficulty of discerning whether or not the intention has been to insult. The words

used only partly carry the insult, other non-verbal behaviours accompanying the verbal content may be more destructive. Much of the semantic content of insult language could be interpreted as benign or humourous. Fast and sophisticated interpretation may be necessary to fully comprehend the utterance.

CHAPTER FOUR

GOSSIP AND RUMOUR

" If being human is all about talking, it's the tittle tattle of life that makes the world go round, not the pearls of wisdom that fall from the lips of the Aristotles and Einsteins." (Dunbar, p.6 1996)

1   Definition of Gossip

Gossip is a particular form of conversation known to all, used by most of us, yet little understood. Gossip is said to have ten characteristics. It is to do with the private and personal details of people, not things, who are absent; it concerns the concrete not the abstract; it concerns how we stand with each other, including some aspect of moral evaluation but with no rigorous standard of evidence offered; the participants and target are known to each other; and it is couched in light, idle tones (Thomas, 1994 p.53). Gossip can be defined by function. This could include, news sharing, critical judgement, or it may be cathartic or it may have a malicious character being used with intent to harm (Ribeiro and Blakeley, 1995). Gossip would appear to possess the Janus quality of both good and bad functions as noted in this definition. It can have a productive purpose, as in promoting a reputation or facilitating bonding, or it can be evil and destructive. It may be 'light and idle' in presentation or intent, but the effects could be of a most serious nature.

In summary, gossip is the transfer of information that may or may not be substantiated; giving or inviting comment that may be interpreted as evaluative; concerning the personal or private affairs about someone absent but of common acquaintance. This will be the definition used in this study.

2.   Definition of Rumour

Few definitions of rumour make a clear distinction between rumour and gossip. A

central feature of the definitions of both is that the information is without official

verification. Allport and Postman, (1947b, p. ix), define rumour as 'a specific

proposition for belief, passed along from person to person, usually by word of mouth,

without secure standards of evidence being present.'

I would consider that a better distinction is made by considering the subject matter

of rumour in comparison to gossip. Rumour can have great impact and magnitude,

possibly affecting whole communities, whereas gossip deals with the individual and

personal (Rosnow and Fine, 1996). Bergmann (1993 p.70) writes that 'rumour does

not refer to individual persons, nor does it refer to any construction of specific networks

in the way that gossip does, but that it contains unorthodox messages that are of

universal interest rather than personal concerns'.

In summary, I would suggest that rumour is the transference of information of an

impersonal nature that may, or may not, be substantiated. There need be no evaluative

comment given or elicited, nor is there is any necessity for speaker and listener to be

personally involved in the topic under discussion. This is the definition used in this

work. It is important to note that in some studies the terms gossip and rumour are used

interchangeably without any definition being offered, as in Eder (1985).

3. Context of the Study

Gossip and rumour have rarely been considered in research (Bergmann, 1993;

Fine & Rosnow, 1978; Levin & Arlukle, 1985; Rosnow & Fine, 1996). Until recently,

the little research that has been carried out had been done by anthropologists, referred to

by others as professional gossipmongers (Schoeman, 1994 p.72). The Greek lexicon for

anthropologist is scandalmonger. Gossip has been described as a 'common speech

activity in informal groups' (Eder & Enke, 1991 p. 494) but 'what is common is not

necessarily well understood' (Bergmann, 1993 p. 82). The same would apply to

rumour.

It is not easy to design and set up an experiment with the aim of facilitating gossip

or rumour. Laboratory conditions may not be conducive, nor offer the same process, as

spontaneous gossip or rumour. Eder, Evans & Parker (1996) state that laboratory

settings provide misleading data due to the difficulty of tracking more than two people

in such an artificial setting, whereas gossip and rumour often occur in small group

settings. Even outside the laboratory, it is difficult to set up a natural conversation in

the context of rigorous research. The analogy of the elusive butterfly has been used; the

more you chase it, the more it will fly away from you, whereas, if you sit, it will land on

your shoulder (Almirol, 1981). Many writers have noted that anthropologists may not

have had first hand access to the gossip they have studied. Those relaying the

information to the researcher may have been gossiping about others, their additions and

omissions contaminating the original information. A great deal may be misrepresented

in the interpretations of those not party to the original conversations (Gluckman, 1963;

Haviland, 1977; Gilmore, 1978; Almirol, 1981). This difficulty in designing relevant

research has resulted in a paucity of attempts to analyse the nature and structure of

naturally occurring gossip and rumour (Thomas, 1994; Eder & Enke, 1991).

4.   Gossip as a Common Activity

There are few books written on gossip and less on rumour. The paucity of

research has led to the author devising several hypothetical constructs to add to those

extrapolated from existing material. The lack of academic attention to gossip, rumour

and grassing is surprising as gossip and rumour form a significant part of daily

conversations.

It would appear to be inherent in humans to take a lively interest in what each other

is doing. The books at the top of the best-selling list always include those with a

human-interest angle. Newspapers concentrate on human-interest stories, and currently the most popular television and radio programmes are those, whether humorous or informative, dealing with the way people are coping with the demands of day-to-day living. In addition, there are publications and media programmes that are gossip-centred such as interviews with famous or extraordinary individuals, gossip columns and gossip magazines. "What's the gossip?" is a common greeting in many cultures. Rumours abound in times of uncertainty. So, frowned upon or not, gossip and rumour are undoubtedly honoured in daily practice (Bergmann, 1993).

5. The Historical Context

More has been written about gossip than rumour as rumour appears to have been subsumed under the term gossip. Documentation shows gossips existing since the 14th century. The term witch has been confused with gossip and the terms gossip and witch interchanged throughout historical documentation. This may have contributed to the negative connotation the term gossip has acquired. The ducking stool was used to chastise gossips (Goodman, 1994) and over a million witches were burnt in Europe in the 17th century (Goodman, 1994). Loose talk was associated with loose living, and condemned to the extent of those suspected of gossiping or rumour mongering being burnt or flogged.

It is easy to see how, when information was carried by word of mouth, at extremely infrequent intervals with no corroboration feasible, gossip and rumour could influence life and death decisions for those in all strata of society. Certainly since medieval times, gossip and rumour have been associated with power and danger. Even today we use the phrase 'to pedal gossip'. The peddler carrying his news was an early equivalent of the modern newspaper, no doubt with the same penchant for gossip and rumour. The shared connotation of gossip and rumour with distress or danger perhaps

contributes to the interchangeable use of these terms.

6. Gossip in Literature

It is clear that, as in other aspects of psychology and sociology, insights, information, comment and understanding about the role and effects of gossip, can be found in the great works of literature. When people talk about the details of daily lives it is known as gossip, but when they write about them, it is called literature (Tannen, 1990). There would seem to be a gossip relationship between any author of a novel and the reader (Meyer Spack, 1985). Meyer Spack shows that 18th century Restoration Comedy is packed with references to portrayals of gossips and gossiping. Mindless, malicious gossiping provides much of the humour in these works but, conversely, in other works it leads to tragedy as in the Shakespearean plays Romeo and Juliet and Othello.

The major work of George Elliot, Middlemarch, and Cranford as depicted by Mrs. Gaskell, illustrate how people will create excitement by the use of gossip if, for whatever reason, they have no access to action. Gossip is used by characters in the work of Jane Austen to alleviate or forestall boredom. Miss Pole 'spends the morning rambling from shop to shop, not to purchase anything, except an occasional reel of cotton, or a piece of tape, but to see the new articles and report upon them, and to collect all the stray pieces of intelligence in the town' (Meyer Spack, 1985 p.153). Meyer Spack writes that Austen articulates a grammar of gossip showing that gossip is about 'making the minute momentous'. Garrison Keiller writes of Lake Woebegone in America and Guereschi of the machinations of the priest Don Camillo in an Italian village, and Chevallier of the inhabitants of the small French town of Clochemerle, illustrating that gossip is used for a common purpose across international boundaries.

References to gossip are found in classical literature. Chaucer writes of The Wife

of Bath that she 'likes to wander from house to house for a chat and village malice' (Coghill, 1973, p.291). The potency of the gossip rested on the oral, face-to-face mode of communication in medieval society. 'People who attack the good name of others are more cruel than hell. Backbiters do kill, more men with a word, than souldiers in field, destroyes with their sword ' (Meyer Spack, 1985, p.170). The phrase 'kill with the tongue' is, tragically, still relevant in relation to schoolgirl bullying.

'Gossip is good for you' claims Meyer Spack (1985 p.258) and Ben Ze'ev, (1994). Shakespeare writes, in A Comedy of Errors; 'Go to a gossip, Go and feast with me, After so long grief, Such festivity'.

Rumour in literature, as in real life, occurs at times of heightened emotions such as excitement, stress or anxiety, and can be triggered by basic emotions such as fear, greed, and jealousy. Stories based on true adventures illustrate the influence of rumours as in the search for the Lost Continent, Eldorado, Atlantis, and The Gold Rush. A favourite theme of novels is this search for rumoured accumulations of wealth; Egyptian tombs, shipwrecks or buried gold.

Tales abound where fear is fired by rumour as in The Hound of the Baskervilles by Conan Doyle. The Bermuda Triangle is still a favourite of the media, as is anything to do with rumours of extra-terrestrial sightings. These rumours seem to touch a need in humans to prove that there is more around us than we can understand. Often, tales of oppression and terror are based on rumour and suspicion. There are numerous instances where a harsh political regime has provided fertile ground for literary works based on rumour and gossip, as shown in the novel 1984 by Orwell.

In summary, gossip may help us make sense of the present in light of the past, whereas rumour may help us to make sense of the future. Gossip enables us to tap into a collective memory, an oral tradition, in the same way we would look to relevant

literature to access any bank of information (Meyer Spack, 1985). The proliferation of gossip and rumour in the most popular literary works, in all genres, indicates that they are relevant speech forms common to all.

7. The Gossips

Women have long been associated with gossip, rightly or wrongly accused of being the gossips in any society. The onomatopoeic 'washerwomen whispering secrets' is noted as a common association with gossips (Bergmann, 1993 p.62). This stemmed from the common grouping of washerwomen, who would be privy to the household secrets, talking together regularly as shown in the phrase, 'to wash one's dirty linen in public.' Women, along with barbers and hairdressers, were described as being ' just like birds carrying seeds from trees to church towers' (Bergmann, 1993 p.65). 'In every known culture, men have accused women of being garrulous.... the chattering gossiping female, the tattler, the scold...the stereotype is older than fairy tales' (Geertz, 1983). A different perspective on this is the case of the Washington politician who, in all seriousness, stated that he never gossiped as his wife did, and regularly told him all he needed to know (Meyer Spack, 1985). It has been suggested that women have been allocated a submissive role in society and so have resorted to gossiping as a means of counteracting a sense of powerlessness (Hanawalt, 1988; Ross, 1990).

It may be that rumour, popularly seen as a more serious and dangerous than gossip, has been regarded as more of a masculine activity. Rumour is associated with financial affairs, politics and war mongering, whereas gossip is associated with personal scandal and mischief making. In the past rumour would have been in the province of men who alone had employment and connections outside the home. If they did not have direct contact with these worlds, they would have an interest in them and so could legitimately spread and listen to rumours without any social stigma. Women talking about the

people in their own smaller, and more humdrum, world of the village, would be under the cloud of being called gossips.

The stigma that is still associated with gossiping gives rise to a custom occurring in a certain area of the French Alps (Bailey, 1971). Housewives shop wearing an apron to signify that they must hurry home to tackle unfinished chores. To give this as a reason for hurrying home would cause offence to friends and neighbours, but to go out without the apron would cause delay which would be interpreted as looking for, or offering, 'mauvaise langue' or gossip. Similarly, in the Caribbean island of Desirade children are sent to the village shops instead of adults for the same reason (Emler, 1994).

Jaeger et al., (1994) state that a necessary interest in other people and their doings means that those who gossip are likely to be socially active. Gossips must be realistic, sensitive, curious, socially minded and involved (Meyer Spack, 1985). This makes it understandable that moderate gossips were found to have more friends than frequent gossips, but those who never gossiped had fewest friends (Jaeger, 1994). Non-gossips may have had no friends because they showed no interest in others, or perhaps they did not gossip because they had no friends with whom to gossip. It is said that those who gossip do so out of jealousy; that a reason for the gossip is to enhance one's own status among one's peers by the route of attacking others (Festinger, 1957). However, it has been found that, although the gossips are not among the more popular, they do have close friends and do not necessarily have low self esteem (Eder & Enke, 1991; Levin & Arlukle, 1985). I would suggest that popular girls could be just as jealous as non-popular ones.

8. The Functions of Gossip in Society

The widespread use of gossip suggests that it has a function of some importance

(Medini and Rosenberg, 1976). These authors say gossip spreads widely and quickly in non-literate communities, but that it is no less important in our current societies where it may provide the therapeutic role of offering assurance and encouragement. Others suggest that there is a tribal drive for such a mode of communication in that gossip feeds on the basic need for affirmation and acceptance by a relevant and unique group (Nevo et al., 1994). The group will be characterised by intimate and affective ties built up and maintained by gossip. Rumour, dealing with the less personal, may not have the same role to play.

In contrast to those who see little value in gossip and rumour, Gluckman (1963) considers that gossip is a most important societal and cultural phenomenon. He writes that gossip does not have an isolated role in the community but forms a great part of the waking day. 'The community takes shape by the influence of the power of collective standards and assumptions and these are collected and collated by route of gossip' (Meyer Spack, 1985 p.250). The role of gossip in forming group bonds in communities has been well documented (Almirol, 1981; Colson, 1953; Gilmore, 1978; Gluckman, 1963; Hannerz, 1967). It is in this role of making and breaking friendship bonds, and as an agent whereby the mores and norms can be transmitted and evaluated, that gossip and, perhaps to a lesser extent rumour, are most relevant to this study.

Gossip may be used as the conduit of the oppressed in a bid for autonomy or freedom (Ross & den Bak-Lammers, 1990). Subversive power is no less potent because it is hidden (Meyer Leventhal & Gutmann, 1985). There are numerous instances where a harsh political regime has provided the fertile ground for rumour and gossip. Gossip, like rumour, plays a part in any coup or war being a most powerful weapon against tyranny and injustice (Bailey, 1971; Emler, 1994).

Rumour is one way of controlling and influencing individuals and groups. As

rumour often arises in times of uncertainty and confusion, rumour, more than gossip, must have credibility. Should the rumour prove to be false, the recipients may harbour resentment, even hostility, towards the rumourmonger (Rosnow, 1976a). They may feel that they have been caused anxiety and distress for no valid reason, or perhaps their hopes have been raised in a false and cruel manner. Rosnow (1976a) suggests that there is no valid reason for passing on a rumour knowing it is untrue. However, in the world of finance and commerce, I should think there is ample scope for 'making a kill' with a false rumour, knowing that the damage will be done before the lie is exposed. Rosnow and Fine (1976b) mention that information is power. Planted rumours could cause havoc in a wide range of circumstances, a damaging press release, take-overs, rumour of next year's fashion designs. The new term 'pumping and dumping' refers to unscrupulous people working on the Internet who artificially raise the price of targeted shares with the intention of enticing novices to buy. Once the price rises, those engineering the false price sell immediately at a profit. In times of economic crisis, or secret meetings of warring nations, rumours could be significant and powerful. The American Stock Exchange Rule (435 and 3c p.13 and p. 29) states that the floors of the exchange must be rumour free. The speed of dissemination can be remarkably fast but the dispersion of news is more easily started than stopped.

Anthropologists have noted the role of gossip in the management of reputation. It is mainly through gossip that prestige and status are evaluated and allocated, and leaders installed or weeded out (Almirol 1981). Gossip tells us how reliable, or unreliable, acquaintances are, for example, in respect to borrowing and lending (Emler 1994). Professional reputations may rest solely on gossip (Suls & Goodkin, 1994). The aggregation of information, as in the village gossip challenging the doctor's professional practice, is used to divide truth from fiction, lies, deception and inconsistencies (Bailey,

1971). Professional and social success may depend entirely on the local gossip in small communities. The manner in which such information is spread around a community is described as a multiplex model of knowledge that relies on gossip to spread information across acquaintance networks (Bailey, 1971). Bailey sees this as a positive function that goes some way to ensuring that those who are not worthy are, by word of mouth, recognised as such and treated accordingly. The reputation of many, he proposes, rests on opinion rather than firm fact. Good practice is also disseminated via gossip and rumour as well as deviations from community mores being sanctioned.

However, there is an obvious danger of misplaced or malicious gossip. The relationship of gossip to reputation is relevant today as can clearly be seen in the proliferation of spin-doctors and those involved in impression management. As reputation is a personal matter, gossip would be more relevant than rumour in these situations, but rumour could be used to destroy a reputation indirectly by association. A rumour about drug use being prevalent in a named youth club could cast doubt on the reputation of the girl known to attend regularly. Rumour mongering could be a more insidious method of attack because the girl spreading the rumour could deny targeting that particular girl. There are several ways in which someone spreading a rumour can escape the blame. The culprit could claim that it was not known that the girl attended that club or that erroneous information had been given in the first place. Gossip could be more easily challenged as it concerns the personal.

Gossip controls communities as well as individuals (Emler, 1994). It helps to sustain and reinforce norms and transmit group values, emphasising what individuals in the group have in common (Almirol, 1981; Ben Ze've, 1994; Bergmann, 1993; Goodman, 1994). Gossip is an indirect mode of setting out an acceptable code of conduct, making it clear that anyone flaunting it will be open to criticism and censure.

Gossip reveals the norms and mores by which choices are made by making explicit the

occasions when they are flaunted (Bailey, 1971; Meyer Spack, 1985).

There is a community surveillance, carried out through gossip, in most cultures and

social groups, to maintain the prevailing accepted standards. Gossip is familiar to all

who have lived in a village or any small community (Post, 1994). Rarely are the battles

and differences of opinion fought in the open through formal channels such as

committees and polls but in kitchens, shops and pubs, behind the back of committees

and a democratic vote. Overt harmony may overlay covert enmity; innuendo, gossip

and rumour may be the most effective weapons used to sway opinion. It may be that the

threat of gossip 'What will the neighbours say?' is the main controlling factor so that

there is little need for a display or the manifestation of other, more forceful, sanctions.

9. The Functions of Gossip and Rumour in Relationships

The widespread use of gossip, over centuries and transnationaly, may relate to the

proposal that gossip replaces the grooming function of some animals (Dunbar, 1997).

Dunbar describes language as a vocal bonding tool and specifically notes the use of

gossip in this context. Gossip serves the same function for humans as grooming does

for apes. It allows the bonding process to be carried out with several individuals

simultaneously within a group, so making it a fast and economical method of grooming

(Dunbar, 1997).

Gossip, as used by young people as a social mechanism, has not received the

attention that the power and effectiveness of the process deserves. The role of gossip as

a bonding function in friendship has been noted (Berndt, 1979; Tannen, 1990). Even if

there is little to report, the exchange and the telling of secrets, all help to bond the

friendship. There is a tacit expectation of reciprocal exchange; that those who offer

gossip will receive the favour in return (Bailey, 1971; Bergmann, 1993). Tannen

proposes that gossip not only gives evidence of friendship, but helps to create it. Even if the gossip contains little valued information, it still fulfils the function of passing privileged information to a chosen friend. Trust, and an intimate relationship, would appear to be the goals; the sharing of gossip about a third party creating a sense of collusion and cohesion. Unacquainted girls between the ages of 11-17 years who hit it off have a shared sensitivity and empathy that is discovered by the use of gossip in the initial stages (Gottman, 1986). If the gossip is successful, they may become friends; if not, friendship is unlikely (Gottman, 1986).

Little is written about rumour in the context of friendship unless subsumed in the phrase 'gossip and rumour'. As the functions and definitions of gossip and rumour are so similar, they could be expected to have an equivalent role to play in friendship relations. Similarly, the characteristics of those spreading either gossip or rumours could be the same. It could be anticipated that there would be a bonding function in that friends would be expected to disclose a rumour to each other as a priority, and there would be a sense of trust about sensitive issues. Gossip, like rumour, can be a bonding mechanism forged between friends. Rumour as a bonding agent is seen in the effects on those in any struggle where there is an ethos of uncertainty and tension such as on the picket line, or militant protesters. In such situations rumours abound, spread in a supportive fashion between those of like mind, with the aim of preparing a pre-emptive strike, or in an aim to make sense of a difficult situation.

A positive aspect of gossip is that self-understanding could undoubtedly increase by hearing of the behaviour and attitude of others. Puzzling emotions and reactions may be understood by hearing of the experiences of others and we may be persuaded to alter a moral viewpoint on hearing of the perspective of others. By offering comparisons through gossip, we learn how people are judged by their peers, and so gain

insight as well as clear guidelines as to acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The role of gossip in avoiding conflict has been overlooked. Petty disputes can be avoided, as well as more serious conflicts, by the release of tension, the giving and receiving of different opinions in the comparatively safe area of confidential gossip.

Gossiping among friends has a further positive role to play in expediting the social development of young people. Gossip has a function as a rehearsal process, as a channel in which to explore that with which we are unfamiliar (Gottman & Mettatal, 1986). These authors suggest that those who gossip may make fewer mistakes, having absorbed widespread and relevant information. For example, hearing of the experiences of others buying a house, investing in shares, experimenting with alternative medicine or purchasing merchandise from the Internet could prevent expensive mistakes. It is evident that rumour could be used for the same purpose. It is known that ambiguous or anxiety-laden situations can be tackled with more confidence if we have had the opportunity of learning how others have dealt with them (Levin & Arluke, 1985). It is feasible that those who gossip and listen selectively to rumours, learn more about human behaviour and relationships than those who scorn these processes.

A function of gossip with particular relevance to this study is that of encouraging group cohesiveness and shared identity (Mettatal, 1982; Meyer Spack, 1985; Ribeiro & Blakeley, 1995; Rysman, 1977). Gossip is used to define group membership and boundaries. One of the functions of gossip is to preserve the status quo and close ranks to outsiders in order to preserve exclusiveness (Rosnow & Fine, 1996). This boundary maintenance may be seen as a positive function to those within the group, but a negative one to those outside (Gottman & Mettatal, 1986). If the target is absent, and unable to offer defence or correction, gossip may promote comparisons based on superficial knowledge, jealousy and unfair criticism. We are reminded that gossip can be

instrumental in influencing opinions for personal gain, and be a mechanism for managing any competition for status and prestige (Haviland, 1977; Ribeiro & Blakeley, 1995).

In the early adolescent years, there is less overt ridicule used than with younger children as gossip, along with other techniques, is considered a more effective mode of social stigma. The use of overt ridicule is sanctioned, although it continues behind the back of the target (Eder & Sanford, 1986). The group is used to give a consensus opinion at this stage and, with reference to this, gossip is used as a most powerful mechanism to exclude particular girls from valued positions (Goodwin, 1980). Although gossip has new functions in the adolescent years, as described above, it retains those of the earlier years such as the goals of solidarity and the examination and maintenance of group norms (Eder & Enke, 1991). Those who will not, or cannot, conform may be the butt of more direct tactics such as physical bullying or the target of indirect manipulation as in social exclusion.

One of the ways in which young people manipulate each other by gossip and rumour is by attacking reputation. Particularly relevant to this study is the work of Campbell (1995) that emphasises the importance of reputation to adolescent girls. Our name is a label of primary potency (Allport, 1954). Anyone destroying it by slander, name-calling, whisper campaigns or any other means, is causing significant damage. .

10. <u>Comparison of Gossip and Rumour</u>

To clarify the definitions offered earlier, gossip and rumour are compared by using the constructs given by Thomas (1994) in his definition of gossip. The definition of gossip given by Thomas (1994) begins with the requirement that it concerns the personal matters of another. Gossip centres around 'personal, localite matters rather than impersonal, cosmopolite affairs' (Emler, 1994 p.131). I would propose that this is

the sole feature that distinguishes gossip from rumour. The terms are often used interchangeably in conversation. It is commonly said, 'They're spreading rumours about me.' I consider that this should be termed gossip, not rumour, as most definitions of rumour state that it is information presented without personal involvement. An example of rumour would be if the personal information was incidental to the news as in, 'The new factory isn't going to open. The Japanese firm has gone bankrupt.' The underlying information could be that a person known to the speaker and listener has just bought a new house on the strength of a promised job. On the other hand, it would be gossip if the news was presented as, 'Jim's going to be in a mess. The new factory isn't going to open now that the Japanese firm has gone bankrupt.' Whether it would be classed as gossip or rumour would depend on the focus of the same information.

A further defining condition of gossip is that it is concerned with the transference of information a person would prefer to keep private (Ben- Ze'ev, 1994; Thomas, 1994). Thomas writes of gossip as an unwanted invasion of privacy. As the leaking of information is also implicit in rumour, this is not a defining construct. Rumour that a business is about to close will only have come about by there being an absence of formally disclosed information, presumably as it would be disadvantageous for those with information to disclose it publicly.

In the case of gossip, the withholding of information would stem from personal reasons. We are said to have two faces, a public one for front stage, and a private one for back stage. The latter deals with the intimate and private aspects of a person's life, thought to reveal more than a person's public behaviour (Goffman, 1959). Goffman states that what is most interesting is the gap between a carefully designed reputation and the behaviour which occurs in reality; the discrepancy between behaviours that occur front and back stage. It would appear to satisfy basic human nature to acquire

information about the personal and intimate aspects of the lives of others (Ben -Ze'ev, 1994; Goffman, 1959). This was noted by Simmel (1964). He proposed that we like to know of the fortunes and misfortunes of the rich and famous. This is not only so we can learn from them, in order to imitate them if that is our desire, but to see that others are as fallible as ourselves. The media feeds on our insatiable appetite for what Post (1994) terms 'backyard chatter' which shows that others deemed successful are as likely as ourselves to experience a downfall; the Schadenfreude factor.

Not all gossip is, by definition, negative. It may be welcomed by the famous who employ publicity agents. Ironically, the most successful of these now feature in gossip columns. In this same way, rumours may be spread intentionally. For example, a rumour of rising house prices may be started by owners hoping for a quick sale.

One criterion listed in the definition offered by Thomas, undoubtedly integral to a definition of gossip, is that the target of the gossip must be absent. One way in which gossip differs from insult, teasing and ridicule is that there is no opportunity for the absent target to offer a defence (Goodwin, 1990). However, as this is something integral to both gossip and rumour, for different reasons, it cannot be accepted as a defining construct. Both gossip and rumour can be exaggerated, untruthful, colourful or slanted as the target is necessarily absent. The gossip or rumour will go undefended, leaving this seemingly idle, relaxing activity open to malicious interpretation.

This behind-the-back element integral to gossip and rumour, is a double-edged sword. The person privy to the gossip or rumour has the power of knowledge, but only as long as the secret is kept (Bergmann, 1993). Once the secret is disclosed, the potency and power is lost. On the other hand, the secret is of little use if held by the one person alone. It must be dispersed to have value but, in consequence, the currency then becomes devalued. It would seem to be extraordinarily difficult for most of us to keep a

secret, with the consequence that the spreading of gossip and rumour is widespread throughout most cultures (Bergmann, 1993).

A further distinction made is that gossip is defined by being evaluative but rumour, concerning the impersonal, does not necessarily encompass judgmental concepts. I would argue that both gossip and rumour may, or may not, include evaluative comment. Implicit in most definitions of gossip is reference to moral judgement. Eder says that gossip is 'evaluative talk about a person who is not present.' I would propose that the talk does not need to be overtly evaluative. For example, the gossip may be that the target person is seeking a work transfer and no evaluation appears intended. However, this bland comment may carry an implicit evaluation that is not lost on some in the audience. It may carry the implication that, yet again, there has been a hasty decision, of doubtful merit.

Gossip often carries a tone of moral indignation. (Bergmann, 1993). From the early narrative there is often a rapid transition made to a negative evaluation of the person and actions taken. Bergmann explains how the audience and gossip place themselves in centre role and delineate how they, with a superior moral stance, would have acted differently. 'Well, I would have....' is a statement made frequently at this point. This contrasts the behaviour and moral stance of the gossip and audience favourably with that of the target. There are familiar set phrases used as disclaimers which pre-empt criticism of the gossip, 'I'm not one to gossip but .....' 'Don't get me wrong, I like Mary but.....'. .

As rumour concerns the impersonal, it would be difficult to offer any personal evaluation but this does not prevent a judgement about an official body, business or political junta. Rumour could drift into evaluative gossip as in the case of land sold for house building to the disadvantage of a small rural community. Discussion about the

sale would fall into the category of the impersonal and categorised as rumour. If the discussion drifted into a negative evaluation of the farmer selling the land, I would class these personal remarks as gossip.

It is suggested that, in the absence of the target, there is no corroboration of the information, no rigorous standard of evidence offered (Thomas, 1994). I would disagree with Thomas on this point as gossip may be factual. For example, 'Linda has just bought a six bedroom house in an exclusive locality'. All listeners know that Linda had no means of doing this previously. The information itself is factual. The allocation of the label gossip, I would suggest, lies in the open bid for guesswork and supposition as to how Linda got the finance, especially if a moral judgement is incorporated in the suggestions. It may be the responses of the listeners to a bland statement, not the words of the gossip, that introduces the negative evaluation. A simple statement such as 'Mary's bought a new car' could receive no further comment. If a listener follows it with 'Never! They're supposed to be bankrupt!' this would develop into a gossip episode. Was it the first or the second speaker who initiated the negative evaluation, the element of gossip?

I would disagree that gossip necessarily holds any negative connotation. A comment such as 'Mike's going to do voluntary work overseas' would be a bland comment. A long and detailed gossip conversation, incorporating exclusively positive comments, could ensue. For example, the listeners could surmise that he took the job to help him get over the death of his wife and child in a car accident. However, I would also suggest that gossip is classed as such if it incorporates the passing on of gratuitous information about the private affairs of another. In summary, as both gossip and rumour may hold implicit evaluative comment this cannot be a defining condition of either.

Gossip is defined in entymological terms as 'god' related, and 'god parent' was

implicit in the original use of the word. Incorporated in the definition of Thomas is the claim that gossips are known to the target and each other. Gossip can be a dangerous activity and a degree of trust is required between gossip and listeners. Gossip can be used to proffer friendship bids by testing out common attitudes, and establishing and confirming group norms (Gottman, 1986). These functions assume mutual acquaintance, as there would be no point in exchanging information about the personal affairs of strangers.

This commonality is also relevant in the case of rumour although not in a personal sense. There would be no point in the transfer of information that held no interest for the listener. The interest may be fleeting, as in a visitor being told that there is a rumour that a local boatyard is to close. Rumour, not being about personal matters, may not hold danger on an immediately personal level, but no matter how innocuous, information is always power, although the power may be latent. In the case of the boatyard, the rumour could spread casually and affect significant decisions about job seeking and house moves.

It is suggested that gossip will be 'couched in light, idle terms' (Thomas, 1994). This could be where a difference lies between gossip and rumour in common usage, although I do not agree that it is an integral part of a definition of either. In general parlance, gossip has the connotation of an activity to indulge in during idle moments when no pressing business requires our attention. In 1811 the Oxford English Dictionary defined it as 'idle talk, trifling or groundless humour: tittle tattle' (Nevo et al., 1994). It has been suggested that if talk is practical and serious, then it is not gossip (Jaeger et al., 1994). This reflects the comments of Heidigger (1962) who claimed that gossip is too trivial to aid a genuine understanding of the more profound aspects of human life.

It is difficult to accept such a dismissive comment as that made by Heidigger when gossip can have severely damaging effects. Gossip has been blamed in earlier times for the murder of women suspected to be witches; it can destroy a reputation and subsequently end a life; it can destroy marriages; bring down large financial establishments, governments and kingdoms. Gossip can be used to spread positive information; to broadcast attributes and skills, to enhance personal or professional status. I would suggest that only something of potency, fulfilling a valid social function, would be so widespread across cultures and have stood so well the test of time.

Rumour can have a light-hearted function as is illustrated by the teams of adventurers who have set off in the pursuit of the Yeti or the Loch Ness Monster. Neither has been found but the chase has given a great deal of entertainment.

Gossip may be light and idle, but it may also be malicious and dangerous. Conversely, rumour could have humorous connotations. In this way, I do not hold this concept of gossip being idle and trifling as a significant difference between gossip and rumour.

Times of excitement, anxiety or uncertainty may give rise to rumours (Adams & Bristow, 1979; Allport & Postman, 1947b; Knopf, 1975; Rosnow & Fine, 1976a; Shibutani, 1966). Rumour is functional and purposeful in that it is trying to make sense of reality (Rosnow, Eposito & Gibney, 1988). Rumour has been described as 'the bullet awaiting to be fired into an atmosphere of anxiety, uncertainty and incredulity' (Rosnow, Eposito & Gibney, 1988 p. 39). A clear example of rumours emerging in times of uncertainty and upheaval is seen in the early work of Allport and Postman. There had been no definition prior to that of Allport and Postman (1942, 1947b) who drew up the Law of Rumour. They did this due to the false and demoralising rumours

widespread during World War Two. The Law of Rumour proposed that the amount of rumour in circulation, will vary with 'the importance of the subject to the individuals involved, multiplied by the ambiguity of the evidence pertaining to the topic at issue' (Allport & Postman, 1947a p. 502). Others think that subjects are more inclined to spread rumours that they do not consider important to them (Jaeger et al, 1980; Scanlon, 1977). This would seem to go counter to common sense. The process of dispersion has a character of its own. Rumours are said to spread to those for whom they are most relevant first, unlike gossip where the target is usually the last to know (Allport & Postman, 1947).

It would seem that gossip, like rumour, emerges in times of heightened emotions but there is a difference in how they occur. Anxieties regarding gossip will be to do with personal matters, such as the loss of family members in times of war. Rumours will be widespread during periods of societal anxiety such as wars, economic crises or epidemics. The rumours will concern the effects these disasters could have on economic, demographic and territorial factors. Gossip would be used to manoeuvre the group to exclude a girl, whereas a meningitis scare would give rise to rumour. The girls described by Eder (1985) and Alder & Alder (1995) and the older adolescents in the studies of Campbell (1995) use gossip when they are jealous or under threat of loosing a partner or friend. Gossip may be used to destroy a relationship or reputation, but the underlying trigger would seem to be an anxiety about suspected or actual loss.

In summary, I would suggest that there is a great deal of overlap between gossip and rumour, in definition and function but gossip, unlike rumour, concerns the personal matters of another. By analysing the use of gossip and rumour, our understanding of human behaviour can be furthered in a unique way. Gossip and rumour have a variety of functions, ranging from the light and entertaining to the malicious and destructive.

89

11. The Framework of a Gossip Episode

The framework outlined below follows the structure offered by Bergmann (1993). That offered by Eder & Enke (1991) is also given. It is proposed that gossip is more than casual storytelling; that gossips 'create a context of interpretation for their information that is specific to gossip' (Bergmann, 1993, p. 98). The gossip produces in metanarrative a context for the interpretation for this information. A gossip episode is a dynamic process wherein both gossip and listeners contribute and co-operate to create an interesting and lively tale around the core information. Bergmann describes this as 'a communicative presentation'.

The following qualities are necessary for successful gossip (Bergmann, 1993). There must be authenticity. The gossip must give sufficient detail, possibly in the mode of direct quotes, to lend an authentic air to the communication. These quotes may contain course terms and phrases not usually acceptable but allowed as quotes in the gossip episode. These are delivered with the intent of offering verisimilitude and to enliven the story. Although the quotes should be accurate, Bergmann points out that there is the opportunity here for caricature and humour.

This detailed account must be balanced by the gossip staying clear of giving too much detail as this would suggest that the gossip had been active in seeking out the information. The gossip needs to preserve the identity of one who has come across the information accidentally, possibly unwillingly, not as one who has intentionally probed into the personal affairs of another.

Evaluative comment must be included or inferred. Usually, this is followed by comparisons being made as to how the listeners would have behaved, usually in a more appropriate manner, given the same circumstances. Lastly, there is generalisation of the behaviour or attitudes of the subject classified as a social type and acting true to form.

Bergmann (1993) notes that the audience too has a creative role to play. The gossip must at all times avoid being cast in a negative light as there would appear to be a stigma against those who gossip and tell of the private affairs of others. Mechanisms are built into the interactive sequence to accommodate this. Presequences ensure the listeners are going to be favourably inclined to receive the communication. The gossip shows a feigned reluctance so that the audience must entice the gossip to reveal the information. This hesitancy also heightens the dramatic element. Gaps and inferences allow the audience to contribute to the story. This absolves the presenter of the full responsibility for the gossip. Gossip is far more complex than the routine narration of an event concerning the private matters of a mutual acquaintance.

Although there is a well defined structure available that may be in operation, not every stage will be common to each gossip episode, nor will be used routinely (Eder & Enke, 1991). There appears to be no comparable analysis of structure for insult, rumour or grassing. Bergmann outlines the interactive process between the gossip and the audience.

1. <u>Presequences</u> (Bergmann) The gossip sets the scene in such a way as to anticipate and avoid unwanted challenges and other developments.

2. <u>Proposal</u> (Bergmann) This is made by the gossip. It is established how the target is mutually known.

3. <u>Withholding information</u> (Bergmann) The gossip waits for encouragement and/or pauses to evaluate the effect and reaction to the gossip. There is a tacit recognition that gossip is socially unacceptable so the gossip tests out the reaction of others before disclosing the information. This is to ensure that the gossip is not the only one gossiping, but that all share the responsibility.

4. <u>Requests for details are made by the listeners</u> (Bergmann). Information is elicited

by the listeners in an indirect manner to avoid seeming too eager to participate in the gossip described as 'fishing' by Bergmann (1993). Clarification is sought by the listeners. There is a testing out by the listeners as to whether or not the gossip information is newsworthy.

5.   The gossip shows a reluctance to gossip (Bergmann) An ambiguous statement offers the opportunity to elaborate and develop the statement into a gossip story. Alternatively it provides an escape route for the gossip if faced with challenges.

6.   Inquiry (Bergmann) The listeners may seek further information and expansion.

7.   Feigned rejection (Bergmann) The gossip elicits encouragement to continue. This ensures that the group shares responsibility for the gossip.

8.   Renewed inquiry (Bergmann) Further information is sought by the audience.

9.   Story (Bergmann) The full story is related by the gossip, with evaluative comment added.

10. Challenges Any challenges must be made here. Once the gossip story is told, a consensus of opinion by the group would deter an individual from making a challenge.

11. Negative Evaluation (Bergmann) A 'spectrum of disapproval' may be drawn upon here by the gossip. There is a focused condemnation of the morals of the target in relation to how the gossip would have behaved in the circumstances.

12. Listeners support the negative evaluation. (Bergmann) If there is no challenge, or if it is discounted, the listeners will support the negative evaluation of the target. The audience may well join in, even if the target is unfamiliar to them.

13. Details repeated (Bergmann) Once the gossip story has been told, details are revised and recounted by the gossip or others in the party.

14. Exit or repair programme (Bergmann) The original gossip is usually followed by further episodes presented by the listeners (serialisation of stories). There is an

assumption that gossip is a reciprocal process, as an exchange of secrets, so that there is an expectation that the listeners too will offer gossip. The listeners may not offer a contribution immediately. If the gossip is accepted, the gossip and listeners may make an exit but, if the gossip is rejected by the listeners, a repair programme may be initiated by the gossip. Bergmann states that there appears to be no clarified terminating mechanism in the gossip genre so that an episode most often ends due to an interruption, exhaustion, loss of momentum or interest.

The structure offered by Eder and Enke is similar to that of Bergmann. It is best viewed as an overlay, giving emphasis in different places but fitting within the same framework, rather than a separate structure that can be compared in isolation.

<u>Extended Structure of Gossip (Eder & Enke, 1991).</u>

1. <u>Identification of the target</u>.

2. <u>Expansion</u> on the identification, <u>evaluation</u> of the target, <u>requests for clarification</u> made by the listeners.

3. <u>Expansion</u> of the evaluation. <u>Requests for clarification</u> of the evaluation. <u>Explanation</u>. <u>Supportive comments</u>. <u>Exaggeration</u>. <u>Challenge</u>

4. <u>Summary and/or Expansion of evaluation</u>.

The advantage of Bergmann's model is that he presents more separate interactions in his gossip structure, and more detail in his framework than Eder and Enke. The advantage of the model offered by Eder and Enke, who cluster the interactions between the gossip and listener, is that it shows that there is a range of interactions offered at any one time.

12. The Skills Involved

All participants, speakers and listeners, need to be familiar with the skeletal format

for the episode to succeed. Surprisingly, children seem to grasp this procedure with apparent ease. Awareness of the procedure is particularly apparent in the event of a challenge being contemplated as there appears to be a clearly defined time in the procedure when challenges may be made (Alder & Alder, 1984). Any successful challenge must be made immediately after the first negative statement made by the gossip (Eder & Enke, 1991; Goodwin, 1990). If the challenge to the speaker is not made at this juncture, the gossip or rumour statement will be followed by support from the other members of the audience. Once supported by the consensus of the group, it is difficult for any one person to take up the challenge and the opportunity will have been lost (Eder & Enke, 1991). Even if this is only a silent response, it may be read as tacit support. A high status contributor, having more confidence, is more likely to make a challenge than one of low status (Goodwin, 1990). Although there is a clear format for the stages in the procedure, the contributors to the conversation have no given priority or order of sequence. It is not known who, from those listening, will speak next throughout the episode.

The responses made in the sequence deserve in-depth analysis as few studies focus on their format and significance (Eder & Enke, 1991). I would support this proposal. As already discussed, I consider that it is often the responses that determine the positive, neutral or negative nature of the gossip or rumour episode, rather than the initial comment. After the first, crucial statement has been made by the speaker, sides are taken and assumptions are made (Eder & Enke, 1991). For example, if there is no challenge, the speaker moves on to expansion, explanation and possibly exaggeration. The fact that there is tacit but common knowledge of the structure of the gossip or rumour sequence, ensures that it all goes smoothly and provides sound entertainment for all, in addition to any other function.

There appear to be no models of rumour available. As the definitions and functions of gossip and rumour overlap so closely, it would seem feasible to predict that many aspects of the structure of rumour would be the same as those of a gossip episode. Any differences would relate to the defining construct that gossip, unlike rumour, concerns the personal matters of another. An example of the difference would be that a gossip challenge would contest information of a personal nature. For example, 'Clare's seeing Diane's boy.' 'No she isn't. He's her brother.' A challenge in a rumour statement could be, 'They're closing the supermarket and there'll job losses.' 'No, that's not right. The proposal has been defeated.'

A gossip must be a good listener as well as a good conversationalist (Nevo et al., 1994). Gossips must be able to listen strategically, as close monitoring is necessary of the progress of the conversation, and the behaviour of the participants. These skills are evident in those who spread rumours. As rumour mongering is less to do with personal matters, there may be less to discuss in a hypothetical fashion. Rumour may be quashed immediately by fact, or it may have little relevance to the audience. As gossip is personal comment spread among common acquaintances, so giving much to ponder over and discuss, conversation skills may be exercised to the full.

Those who gossip and spread rumours need to absorb and register small signals of approval and disapproval, yet this is only one small part of the complex interaction. Finely tuned listening skills are required to pick up relevant hesitations and to register small shifts in tone of voice. The skills required in comparing, evaluating, judging truth from fiction means that this is no easy procedure. Using carefully selected contributions, they must maintain the discourse and skilfully steer the conversation in the desired direction (Goodman, 1994). They must spot the perfect moment to switch from speaker to passive hearer, to stop, and to register the reactions of the listener in

order to be able to switch roles again at the appropriate moment (Goodman, 1994). In addition, they need to be aware of the range of non-verbal behaviours accompanying the overt speech. Gossip, more than rumour, has the connotation of being careless, loose talk, offered with little regard for accuracy or truth. However, those who spread gossip or rumour must have a reputation for reliability otherwise their comments will be rejected as worthless (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Bergmann, 1993).

Without doubt, both gossiping and rumour mongering are sophisticated processes. There would seem to be little doubt that gossip and rumour offer a rich area for the development of language proficiency and social organisation (Goodwin, 1990). There is a narrative structure to gossip, and often to rumour, a tale with a beginning, middle and end. In order to hold the attention of the audience, the story should have dramatic tension (Bergmann, 1993). Common responses of the listeners include surprise exclamations as in, 'Oh my God.' Inflection, intonation and, possibly humour at the expense of the target, all combine to make for successful gossip and rumour. From indirect and covert inferences, the negative evaluation is built in a collective and collaborative fashion. The significant silences, encouragement to continue from the listeners, feigned reluctance of the informant, novel ideas and a build-up to climax all ensure that an excellent story is told with the highest entertainment value possible. However, the story must be believable, hanging on the edge of incredulity as to whether the target could have done such a thing (Bergmann, 1993).

In summary, gossiping, and possibly to a lesser extent spreading rumours, draws on sophisticated skills. Both incorporate a flow of decision making; what to say to whom, how to say it, what to withhold, how to get others to disclose information. However, in gossip and rumour, the speaker often slips into the role of passive listener, so relinquishing responsibility or blame. Someone spreading a rumour may tap into

equivalent skills as those delineated above, but this may not be necessary. A rumour, being about impersonal matters may leave little for discussion or elaboration. A rumoured increase in petrol prices leaves little for discussion, whereas a rumour of threatened job losses could create a wealth of speculation and discussion fuelled by anxiety.

As illustrated earlier, gossiping in particular is a skill, where a lively, relevant story must be told to best advantage. The old adage warns that 'the truth does not necessarily need to get in the way of a good story' but both gossip and rumour can be enlivened with a touch of embroidery and exaggeration. Several popular comedians excel in the skilful qualities of a gossip: Norman Evans, Les Dawson and currently, Lily Savage.

13. Developmental Stages

In considering how the girls in this study use gossip, it is perhaps relevant to look at the use of gossip in the context of developmental stages. As there is no body of relevant work on the developmental stages of rumour, ideas are developed which are extrapolated from the work on gossip. The girls in this study were in middle childhood, aged 10 to 12 years. As several girls were moving quickly towards adolescence, both emotionally and physically, the research for this later age group is also relevant.

The Early Stage

In the early years gossip is considered to be the medium through which solidarity is built up and the sense of 'us' against 'them' is discerned (Gottman & Mettatal, 1986; Gottman, 1986). The feeling of developing a common ground, of standing together separately from others, emerges at this stage (Mueller & Brenner, 1980). Although little is written about the role of gossip in early childhood, it would seem that gossip, along with other forms of informal chatter, has the function of easing peer interaction and co-ordinated play. As the role of rumour would seem to be connected to assuaging

anxieties and boosting confidence, it could be assumed that children in the early years would focus rumour on the demands of encountering schools, dentists, hospitals, and other such crises that loom for the first time in young lives. Rumours could also have happy connotations such as The Tooth Fairy and Easter Bunny and Father Christmas. In summary, it could be predicted that times of high levels of anxiety or excitement would elicit rumour.

The Middle Stage

Detailed studies have been made of gossip occurring at this middle stage of development although little is available on rumour. The work of Gottman would suggest that gossip becomes an important mode of communication between peers in the process of establishing the individual within the group. The main functions are; inclusion, amity and support, definition of common ground and self-exploration (Gottman, 1986). Much of the interaction is related to clarifying group norms and mores with regard to acceptance within the group and, in this process, gossip plays a major role (Gottman, 1986; Gottman & Mettatal, 1986). This function is the most relevant to this study. Gottman and Mettatal suggest that gossip provides an avenue to explore a 'shared deviance', such as talking in a critical manner about parents, and self-disclosure which supports group solidarity. This is often linked with fantasy that may offer a safe arena in which to explore difficult feelings and to project unacceptable emotions. The mechanism for this is a shared vision of the absurd, weird stories and extraordinary claims (Gottman, 1986). Discussions on shared evaluations of stereotypes are common, such as those commonly held about teachers. Strangers test each other out by negotiating shared comments, and views, in the process of deciding whether or not they are going to hit it off as friends. The use of gossip in this process eases the transition to adolescence (Gottman, 1986).

Rumour, by definition being concerned with impersonal matters, would not have such a direct role to play as gossip in the social dynamics of the peer group. However, rumour could be used as a tool in an indirect way to incite feelings of anger, jealousy or distress. Rumours about forthcoming events in the life of another, perhaps concerning home or school, could be used deliberately to trigger a range of unpleasant emotions. An example could be that only a named type of expensive trainer shoe or sports kit is to be worn in school. This could cause great distress to a member of an impoverished family. As with the younger children, times of anxiety relating to impending or proposed changes could be predicted to elicit rumours.

The Adolescent Stage

Most research on gossip has addressed the adolescent years but, as for previous stages, there is little information on rumour. Gossip is regarded as a common activity, 'it occurs on a regular basis during informal interactions and most adolescents appear to be familiar with it '(Eder & Enke, 1991). The main goal at this stage continues to be the discovery of self in relation to others (Eder, 1991; Gottman, 1986). At this age, the relationship of self in relation to the world becomes a concern. An intense scrutiny and application of logic is applied to the turbulent world of emotions and unstable personal relationships. As in the earlier stages, gossip relates to self-exploration and disclosure, problem solving, teasing out similarities and differences between self and others (Gottman & Mettatal, 1986). Over acting of surprise, amazement, incredulity add the dramatic element that enhances the story (Gottman, 1986).

At the younger age there was negative evaluation of the target, whereas this new stage of cognitive development allows for both positive and negative evaluations about the same person to be held simultaneously (Eder & Enke, 1991). This leads to a better understanding of diversity and an acceptance of difference in respect to others (Gottman

& Mettatal, 1986). More positive evaluation is found in the gossip at this stage than in the earlier years, and even negative evaluations can have a positive ending (Gottman, 1986).

As with the earlier stages of development, episodes of anxiety and trauma could result in the emergence of rumour. At this age, young people are able to look beyond themselves and consider things and events in the abstract. Rumours at this age could encompass issues such as health and politics on the world stage. Personal concerns could elicit rumours such as sexual matters, exam demands, job prospects and drug issues.

The topics of gossip appear to be differentiated by gender (Goodwin, 1990). It is proposed that girls talk about the physical appearance of one another, whereas boys tend to concentrate on achievements (Eder 1991; Nevo et al., 1994). The opposite sex features largely in the discussions. Gossip is used by adolescent girls to discuss their relationships with boys and to assess, promote, and destroy the sexual reputations of other girls (Lees, 1993; Duncan, 1999). There is competition for eligible boys and girls use gossip to criticise one anothers' boy friends (Goodwin, 1990). The conceited behaviour and physical development of other girls is a common topic (Eder 1991). Trust and loyalty become increasingly important in the relationships between girls as they exchange secrets about various aspects of their lives, not only boyfriends. The betrayal of confidences through the route of gossip is considered a grave crime as the quality universally considered to be most important in friendship is trust and loyalty (Lees, 1993). These issues are discussed in the previous chapter. There is little is documented on the topics chosen for rumours.

14. Summary

Gossip is commonplace, used over time and across nationalities, yet it is not fully

understood. The absence of research would reflect the difficulty in designing methodologies whereby naturally occurring gossip can be studied.

Gossip and rumour have a range of functions ranging from light-hearted amusement to premeditated destruction. Both appear to be potent modes of controlling individuals and small groups as well as communities. Gossip and rumour are powerful modes of indirect aggression. They are mechanisms used in the initiation, maintenance and disruption of peer and friendship bonds. The work of Eder and Alder and Alder describe ways in which girls control and manipulate each other by use of gossip.

The girls in this study are at the age when the covert mode of gossip and rumour are preferred to direct avenues of criticism and peer control. This circuitous method of using gossip to check those who have transgressed offers opportunity for change without the disruption of insult or hurt feelings. This may account for why it has retained popularity as a mode of control.

The role of gossip and rumour in friendship exemplifies the Janus quality of positive and negative functions occurring simultaneously. The friendship bonds forged by use of these mechanisms are often done so at the expense, and often subsequent exclusion, of other girls. Gossip can raise self-esteem and status, but it may contribute to the self esteem of one through the process of destroying that of another (Goodman, 1994).

Most writers have focused on gossip without mention of rumour. It is used erroneously, interchangeably with gossip. I would contest this and suggest that given the definition used in this study, it is likely that rumour would have a distinct part to play in social situations. Although I consider that rumour could have similar bonding and destructive influences as gossip, I would suggest that the manner of bringing these influences about would be different. The significant difference in usage of gossip and
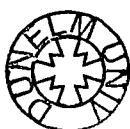
rumour would lie within the definition, that gossip concerns the personal matters of another, whereas rumour does not. Rumour is fuelled by desire for meaning, clarification and closure, whereas gossip focuses on matters of ego and status needs (Rosnow & Fine, 1996). Rumour would be high in incidence at times of heightened emotion; excitement, anxiety, or uncertainty with the rumour focusing on the issue at the root of the emotion. From this difference in focus, it could be assumed that the girls in this study would use gossip, more than rumour, in the processes of bonding, manipulation and disruption within their friendship groups.

In the gossip and rumour episodes, there could be an identifiable structure with challenges coming from those of high status in the group. It would seem that gossip and rumour are used for multifarious reasons, but it is easy to forget that gossip, in particular, may be initiated simply for fun.

CHAPTER FIVE

GRASSING

I. Definition of Grassing

Grassing was included in this study as it would appear to be a language of conflict. There are few definitions of grassing. Greer (1995) suggests that grassing is the relaying of information to those empowered to bring about change by an individual, or group informally or formally constituted, without or against the consent of those concerned. As with the other language structures discussed in this study, insult, gossip and rumour, grassing centres on the opportunity for the abuse of power. Grassing may or may not be carried out in the presence of the target. A threat to grass may be issued to the target, or it may be carried out without the knowledge of the target. The target of grassing may learn of it later, or remain in ignorance.

Grassing is an interesting and complex concept but, although in common usage across many nations, it has not been the focus of much formal research. This is particularly so in the case of children. There are very few books on grassing, in whatever form, and very little written about this activity common to all children. The work available on children telling tales focuses primarily on the context of siblings in the home (Dunn, 1986). This paucity of work is surprising as the activity of grassing is used at all ages and in most cultures.

Most children and adults see grassing on another as a personal offence, yet nearly all children tell parents and teachers of the misdeeds of siblings and friends at some time. Those who grass professionally, such as private detectives, spies, undercover agents and 'plain clothes' police, have an accepted, and often respected, role to play. Possibly the difference in attitude, between praise and condemnation, lies in the topic and purpose of the grassing. It may be acceptable for an adult to grass on a foreign

undercover agent in wartime, but not on a neighbour who has a part time job as a cleaner in order to eke out a meagre benefit payment.

The term grassing, commonly understood as informing, is thought to derive from Cockney slang: grass- grasshopper - copper - policeman (Greer, 1995). Greer suggests that the term may have been derived from the phrase 'snake in the grass', or 'Whispering Grass', once a popular song. Several words are used for this process; telling tales, tittle-tattling, splitting, dobbing, plus regional and dialect variations. Documentation shows that there were informers as long ago as in the time of the Hungarian Empire. Napoleon the Third used them and the Russian Revolution had undercover agents. The Mafia, KBG and FBI have spawned a wealth of literature, including fictional escapades as well as documentary material, concerning the life of informers, and those they inform on. Perhaps the most famous of all informers was Judas Iscariot.

Grassing differs from gossip and rumour in that there is access to those in power to sanction the offender and change the situation or event. The girls in this study used grassing, both as threats to grass and as telling tales, while the target was present. The threat to grass was used to warn the target directly that a change in behaviour was required. Having access to someone in a position to sanction the offender, puts the person grassing, or issuing a threat to grass, in a position of power. This makes grassing, as gossip and rumour, open to abuse. It was anticipated that the girls in the study would use grassing, and threats to grass, as a means of manipulating the dynamics of their friendship groups.

A further difference between grassing and gossip is that gossip holds interest for those known personally to the recipients and the speaker. There is a common interest

104

and a mutual bond. The gossip needs to be able to trust those listening to be circumspect, as the tentative moves made by the gossip through the gossip structure would indicate. In the case of grassing, it is not necessary to have any personal interest or involvement between speaker, listeners and target. A person may grass on a neighbour who has not paid a television licence in the ethos of community responsibility. However, there may be the more personal motive of spite or revenge.

2.   Types of Informer

Greer (1995) is one of the few who have written at any length on grassing. He divides informers into two groups. There is the 'single event' informer, for example the prisoner who confesses in order to expedite a release, knowingly implicating others. In the classroom this would be the child who, being found out, then tells on others who were also involved.

The second category is that of the multiple event informer who repeatedly passes information to interested parties; the tout, rat, singer, finger, mule, mouth, squealer, fink, snout snitch, stool pigeon, nark (narquois meaning mocking or derisive in French). Greer suggests that this long list of nicknames indicates that the latter type of informer is by far the most prevalent. In the school situation, this would be the child who would become known as 'a grass' due to repeatedly telling tales about others, even though he or she may not have been involved in any of the misdemeanours.

In the 17th to 18th centuries, informers were despised as they betrayed others for money. Nowadays the grass usually has the motive of promised leniency of sentence. Greer suggests that the attitude currently held by society towards these informers tends to be based on the betrayal of trust, no longer on the possible financial transaction alone. This is especially so where the situation is an emotive one, as is currently the case in

105

Ireland, and in cases of betrayal during war. The nearest equivalent of such an informer in a school would be the prefect who watches all, supposedly to maintain discipline and control, but in fact relays all information gleaned to a higher authority.

3.   Motives for Informing Given by Greer

Greer (1995) classifies the motives for informing into categories. The pure informer offers information to relevant others due to a matter of conscience. Perhaps observing untoward events, this person takes on the role of informer due to civic duty. An example of this would be the case of someone noticing that embezzlement is taking place. The press and public may call it whistle blowing. An example relevant to school would be the student telling those in authority that charity funds were being appropriated by another. The traditional role of school prefect or monitor encompassed this role, among other duties. Appointment to these posts implied that they would notify staff of any wrongdoing. As with all grassing, the motives could be ambiguous. The prefect may be alerting staff to an untoward situation, but whether from conscience, revenge, malicious fun at another's expense, or for reward, it would not always be easy to tell.

The genuine observer could be a witness to a crime or event such as a traffic accident. A student could witnesses and report a bullying incident occurring in school. An interesting phenomenon is that people genuinely witnessing a crime do not always wish to come forward to tell the authorities even when their evidence could be crucial to the judicial process. This may be because of fear of reprisals, but this is not always the case. The stigma attached to interfering in the affairs of another, especially if there is a negative connotation, remains strong. Despite widespread publicity and awareness raising about the importance of 'telling' about bullying in schools, there remains a

surprisingly high level of reluctance to tell about incidents among older students. The code against grassing means that boys, especially, are reluctant to tell staff directly about bullying in schools. Girls are more ready to tell of incidents, and to become involved in reparative strategies.

An <u>agent provocateur</u> is one who encourages the group to continue an illicit activity while under covert observation. These are the undercover agents immortalised in literature, whether fact or fiction. This remains a role played by many in the political scene of today. It encompasses countries in open or covert war, many aspects of political life, locally and nationally as well as internationally. Industrial sabotage by undercover spies is becoming an increasing financial risk to industries from the high street supermarket to the science laboratories of pharmaceutical concerns. The police use of officers taking on an undercover role that could encouraging another to commit a crime, so leading to an arrest, has been somewhat curtailed since being designated 'entrapment' and, as such, been heavily morally and judiciously sanctioned. An example of this among young people is the boy who listens to the exploits of his friends who are car thieves. He may encourage the group to be more daring, pushing them to implicate themselves even more, and then inform the police of their activities.

Lastly, Greer mentions the <u>supergrass.</u> This is someone paid by contract to give information to authorities such the police, so attaining a quasi-professional status. The stakes are high in such cases in terms of the risks taken to gain the information, and the price paid by the recipient. This distinguishes the supergrass from the casual grass as the latter may or may not have information at any one time. The supergrass is more likely to work to demand on a specific assignment, or already have in-depth information ready to be exchanged through some form of costly bartering process. Greer states that the term supergrass was coined by journalists in the 1970's, and thought to be in relation

107

to the informers connected with the 'troubles ' in Ireland.

4. A Framework of Grassing - Greer (1995)

Greer offers a four way model based on frequency of informing correlated with whether or not the informer is inside or outside the situation.

<u>Inside and Single event</u> (the confessor, the accomplished witness). This would be the prisoner who, having been found guilty, subsequently implicates others, or the student called before the head teacher who tells on others involved in the escapade.

<u>Inside and Multiple event informant</u> (the informer, the agent provocateur, the supergrass). These people are the heroes or villains of literature, history and myth, viewed as hero or villain, depending on the perspective taken. This could be the prefect seen as conscientious or a grass depending on his, or her, own attitude and that of others.

<u>Outside and Single event</u> (casual observer). This would be a passer-by witnessing a crime, or a shopkeeper letting a school know that a pupil has stolen from the shop.

<u>Outside and Multiple event</u> (the snoop). Currently there are schemes employed whereby a professional witness is used in sensitive situations. They are used by police, housing bodies, or local authorities, to collect evidence of severe and repeated anti-social behaviour. These people work where the complainants are too afraid to provide their own evidence in public. A shopkeeper reporting repeated theft to the school would fall into this category. The reliability of the information given, the accuracy and detail, will depend on whether the informant is inside or outside the organisation.

5. The Functions of Grassing

The functions of grassing can be classified in alternative ways to that of Greer. Greer classes grassing by the type of person grassing but it may be classified by function. Grassing has the main function of bringing about change; in behaviour, attitudes or even the possession or redistribution of goods. Grassing is a strategy enmeshed in power. The person targeted must have power as it may be presumed that persuasion or a request to change the identified behaviour has been deemed ineffectual. On the other hand, the person grassing also has power in the form of a threat to turn to an ultimate power to enforce change. One person may grass on another simply to display or wield power. This may be the sole motive for the grassing.

Grassing may be used in an attempt to gain justice by appealing to a higher power. A perceived imbalance of power could be corrected by the intervention of another invested with the power to bring about change. This may be done so that all have equal opportunity, as in one neighbour grassing on another who is 'moonlighting' while collecting social security payments. The neighbour may grass on this person for many reasons, perhaps because of a commitment to seeing government funding allocated justly. One student may tell a colleague that another has copied his work. This may be done out of a sense of personal justice, or friendship for the victim of the offence, rather than a sense of communal justice as in the previous example.

Professional grassing is used in some situations as a further example of current methods of policing. Professional witnesses are employed to observe violent neighbours who are terrifying others. These professionals are later called upon to give evidence in court. The recent and widespread use of closed circuit television in banks and shops could be the technological equivalent of grassing on offenders.

109

Grassing may be done for emotional reasons; revenge, reprisals, jealousy or a need for attention. A 'whistle-blower' may be passing information to interested parties for altruistic reasons, or the motive may be to get his or her name in the newspapers. It may be that the grassing is carried out with the purpose of ingratiating the person grassing with an identified other, this could be an employer or a prospective friend who benefited from the exposure of the target. The grassing on others may be done to highlight the culprit's own exemplary behaviour for comparison. A threat to grass could be a reminder of the acceptable social code of behaviour, perhaps one held in common by members of a discrete group. Not paying gambling debts could be a behaviour that would allow one member of a club to grass to another as a warning.

In summary, there appears to be a dual attitude to grassing in that it can be a respected and highly paid profession, perhaps carried out for the highest of moral reasons, or it can be an action that is denigrated and the culprit despised.

6. <u>Grassing and Gender Differences</u>

There would seem to be a gender difference in the use of grassing by children in school. Grassing would appear to be a method of seeking arbitration used frequently by girls but rarely by boys. The question arises as to why this should be so. Grassing by boys is condemned. A boy who turns to an adult, seeking arbitration or retribution, is harshly rebuked by his peers (Chung & Asher, 1996; Lancelotta and Vaughn, 1989). The same sanction does not appear to be in place for girls. I have found that the constant telling tales about each other to the teacher is one of the most highly rated irritants in the school day for both male and female teachers. This is a strategy widely used by girls, but rarely by boys. There is repetition and circularity about these complaints. It would appear that the same girls repeatedly return to the teachers with

similar upsets to relate. A search for a just ruling, careful mediation or arbitration by the adult, is not the only rationale and motive for the heavy usage of this channel of communication (Maynard, 1985).

One possible explanation for this gender difference may lie in the early parenting of girls compared to boys and in the differing characteristics of the interactions between parent and child (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1983; Malone, 1997). There would seem to be several contributory factors. It would appear that mothers spend more time talking to their daughters than their sons. By school age, girls spend more time talking and communicating with adults than peers, perhaps because of the time the mothers spent interacting with their daughters. Boys spend more time with their peers than in communicating with adults (Malone, 1997).

Some studies show that mothers and daughters spend much of this communication time on 'emotional talk'. This is reciprocal discourse with an emotional content. This would appear to encourage girls to talk about problems and emotional subjects (Leaper, Anderson, and Sanders, in press). Their early practice may encourage this. Boys will not have had the encouragement to talk about emotional issues, and they will not have acquired proficient skills. The skills the girls acquire may make it easier for them to turn to others such as adults, as well as each other for emotional support. In addition, their facility with this mode of interaction may make them highly skilled in the use of a range off manipulation techniques. They may seek out an adult under the guise of seeking arbitration, only to employ the techniques of wheedling, cajoling and persuasion once they have gained the attention of the adult (Maynard, 1985).

Other authors dispute the finding that parents treat sons and daughters differently in most respects (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974b; Lytton & Romney, 1991). However, if

111

there is enmeshment of girls and their mothers, even if appropriate, this would encourage and sanction an interdependent view of seeking help. It does appear that fathers encourage sons to be independent, to seek out their own resolutions to problems. Boys are trained to 'toughen up', to 'stand on their own two feet' (Malone, 1997). Running to the teacher or mother with tales in order to get help is not considered manly behaviour, even for the toddler.

Examination of boys play strategies show that from the early years they play on the edge of aggression. They are involved in competing, winning, testing out their strength pitting their wits against each other (Pelligrini, 1988; Smith & Boulton, 1990, Smith, 1998). Aggressive interactions occur more frequently in boys than girls from an early age. Girls continue to be taught to be compliant and submissive, although perhaps not so now as in previous years, their role models are 'saintly', compassionate and caring (Malone, 1997). Boys heroes are daredevils, loners or in charge, making their own decisions, warriors, commanders, telling 'other ranks' what to do, not moving through any discussion process. In their groups and games, boys have dominance hierarchies and are status-aware. They must prove they can cope, showing displays of power and independence. Girls' groups are more egalitarian and their games are less combative and more focused on caring and sharing activities such as mothers, nurses and shops. It may be in this arena that the difference in attitudes to grassing may be found.

These gender differentiated rearing patterns may explain why boys are less willing to turn to others for support by using techniques such as mediation, arbitration and counselling (Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Cowie, 1998; Olweus & Endresen, 1998). This may be why boys are reluctant to resort to adults for resolution as in grassing. Applying to adults for aid is acceptable among girls, but strongly associated with peer rejection in boys (Chung & Asher, 1996; Lancelotta and Vaughn, 1989). Boys seem to be

encouraged to move away from parents, physically and emotionally, faster than girls.

7. Summary

As with gossip and rumour, there is a long documented history of the use of grassing. Informers have been in existence since there has been information to sell or exchange. Only sparse research is available on all these structures, grassing the least of the three. Unlike gossip and rumour, grassing may occur in front of the target so that it is open to challenge. As this is not so for gossip and rumour, grassing could be expected to have a different structure.

Although grassing does not have the same similarity of linguistic structure as gossip and rumour, it was included in this study as it appears to have the similar function of social control. It is primarily in the role of a controlling mechanism that it will be considered in this study. Grassing may be threatened or carried out among young people in schools for a number of reasons; as a revenge strategy; as a channel to demote status; to ridicule and shame; to expose fraudulent claims or cheating. It may be employed for emotive reasons; jealousy, anger, disappointment or irritation. It may be threatened or carried out with the aim of correcting what is judged to be unfair, perhaps an unequal distribution of materials or teacher support. Those grassing have a range of people with the power to sanction to receive their information; teachers, parents and powerful peers. In addition, there are more extreme sources of sanction or retribution such as the police or other professional or charitable bodies.

There would appear to be a gender difference in peer attitudes to grassing. Boys would seem to sort out their own differences, whereas it would appear that seeking adult mediation and support is more acceptable among girls. Tattling to teacher was found to have a strong correlation with rejection for boys but not for girls (Chung & Asher,

1996). Findings from previous studies would lead to an expectation that there would be evidence of grassing by the girls in the study, direct tale telling done in a bid for arbitration, and threats to grass made in the expectation that the threat alone will result in the desired change. Unjustified threats to grass could be expected, made in a bid to manipulate others into following a course of action. These may relate to manipulating social status, or to including or excluding a particular girl from the group.

These reasons are considered in the analysis of the use of grassing in this study but, primarily, the emphasis will be on whether or not it is used as a controlling mechanism in the manipulation of relationships.

CHAPTER SIX

METHODOLOGY

1. Overview of the Multidimensional Design of the Study

The study was designed around an activity club run for all the girls in a class, a group of 20 girls 10 to 12 years of age, over their lunchtime in school. The groups of girls were video taped in turn while involved in a range of tabletop activities. The expectation was that this would provide material on the fluctuation of friendships in the groups and would show episodes of insult, gossip, rumour and grassing being instrumental in the making and breaking of the friendships. In addition, sociometric measures were taken at the start of the first three of the four school terms that the study encompassed with the aim of plotting the changes in friendship choice. A semi-structured interview was carried out with each girl, the class teacher and other relevant teachers in the school. The aim of the sociograms, and the semi-structured interviews, was to investigate the concept of popularity and power in relation to the making and breaking of friendship bonds among the girls. The information was analysed to examine the expected high level of instability within the groups, and offer insights and rationales for the changing relationships between the girls. .

During the time of the study, the girls spent a week on a field trip at a residential location. The teachers who accompanied the girls were interviewed. Additional material was gained when twelve of the girls, who had expressed interest, were taken to a handicraft exhibition by the researcher. The insights gained from these interviews and observations, drawn from the out-of-school activities, was used to complement the other

information.

2. Rationale for the Study

The final design for this study was decided upon after several false starts that would seem to reflect the complexity of this topic. Few studies have addressed the pattern of rejection in girls' friendships (Coie & Whidby, 1986; French, 1990). The subtle interactions involved in girls' friendships, and the forms of aggression used in their querulous relationships, need to be matched with innovative methods of study. 'The paucity of research on girls' aggression may exist partly because of the complexity and subtlety of the behaviour involved, characteristics that make girls more difficult to study than boys who use more direct or overt aggression.' (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Various forms of aggression require differing forms of investigation. As discussed earlier, aggression among girls has been underestimated due to the subtleties of many of the interactions. It may be that girls have had the benefit of a gender 'halo' effect. Fillion (1997) identifies a need for a method of research that can tap into the subtle interactions between women that is different from the traditional methods used to survey aggression in men. If the aggression used between women is more indirect, diffuse and covert, then the design of the research must be tailored accordingly. In addition, those carrying out the analysis of relationships need to collate detailed information about friendships so that, for example, the researcher can distinguish an excluded friend from a peer who never plays with a particular child.

Conversations must not only be recorded in context, but also from beginning to end, in order to elicit valid and comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions and developments (Boden & Zimmerman, 1991). Bavelas, Rogers & Millar (1995) urge that conflict is studied by using the actual discourse, then recording it, and

116

lastly analysing what has taken place. He notes that there are only a handful of studies that offer conversations in full, and that meet these three criteria. This study was designed to follow these three processes. It would seem essential, in such a complex and subtle field as girls' friendships, to follow the development of the interactions from beginning to end. The 16 month period of this study enabled the changes in the relationships between the girls to be identified, logged and analysed.

In summary, the 'snapshot ' method of observation and analysis would not offer a valid record of the subtle and shifting interactions involved in girls' changing relationships. A long term, in-depth study was needed to amass detail and to observe changes over time.

3. The Ethnographic Design

For the reasons outlined above, the design chosen for the major section of the study lies within an ethnographic framework. A definition of ethnography is given by Eder (1985, p.155) 'Ethnography is the study of what is ordinarily taken for granted. It is a systematic method of study whereby the depths, patterns and connections hidden within everyday happenings are identified and analysed.' Ethnography falls into the category of a qualitative, rather than a quantitative, methodology. It is based on direct experience. This being so, it is versatile and flexible and may be more sensitive to human contexts than more rigorous techniques. Quantitative research is based on a set method of techniques and principles and relies on the standardisation of research procedures, whereas ethnography is said to define meaning through an interpretative paradigm (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). An effort is made to see the world from the point of view of the participants. Ethnographic research focuses on how people create, construct and establish order in their lives. Constructs are formed from direct

117

conversation and observation. The core aim of this study was to observe the processes involved in the instability of the groups by recording the girls on video. Further understanding was sought by tapping into the perception of the process held by the girls themselves, as well as tracking the progress of the procedures, by a administering a sociometric analysis.

It is proposed that an ethnological design is required in order to elicit and examine the subtle and covert manipulation and dominance strategies that girls employ in their friendships. Eder (1985 p.155) stresses that 'there is an increasing awareness that children's' friendships are influenced by the context in which they occur. In order to understand the traditional concept of dyadic friendships among girls, these must be seen in their relationship to the whole group, the status of other cliques, the range of school activities and the whole school environment.' All these factors have direct influence on their relationships. Eder continues by proposing that only by collecting data on all these aspects simultaneously can we piece together the full picture. The rationale for the multifaceted format of this study was to supplement the ethnographic section.

It is essential that any investigation of girls' relationships is carried out in an everyday context. This is especially so when insult, gossip, rumour and grassing are under the spotlight as these language structures can only be investigated in a valid manner when arising in natural conversation. 'The most fruitful research on gender and speech has conceptualised language, not in terms of isolated variables, nor as an abstracted code, but within contexts of actual use' (Thorne, 1993 p.104). However, there are difficulties inherent in setting up situations that are conducive to naturally occurring language. Those encountered in this study are discussed later. The paucity of relevant research offers an argument for the building of extensive and accurate descriptions of the specific friendship patterns among girls, before implementation of

118

the more rigorous research designs built on firm hypotheses and theory. Not to do so would be comparable to setting out to measure an elephant without knowing what an elephant looked like. Ethnography offers descriptive elements that may then generate theory and hypotheses.

The type and quality of research promoted by Eder (1985), noted above, is encompassed by the Grounded Theory described by Strauss & Corbin (1994, p.273). These authors write that Grounded Theory is a general methodology for developing theory grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed. Theory evolves during actual research through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Unlike some other types of qualitative research, grounded theory emphasises theory development. Altrichter and Posch (1989) claim that the researcher comes with an unprejudiced mind and accepts responsibility for developing a theory using 'conceptual density'. By the use of repeated observations, and the collection and collation of results from a variety of studies and sources, offering a variety of perspectives, a substantial body of knowledge accrues. Throughout there is a process of making comparisons, the collecting of multiple perspectives, patterns and processes linked to specified conditions and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Anthropological studies are often based on answers elicited by the researchers from the participants in the study (Goodwin, 1990). The researcher has entered into the work with prior hypotheses already in place. In such a case, unavoidable contamination is likely to be present due to the effect of researcher bias and enthusiasm resulting in skewed findings. This point is covered by the principles incorporated in Grounded Theory as the researcher does not know what the focus of the study is until it emerges as the work is in progress (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

It was only at the end of the sessions with the girls that the type of analysis was selected. Only after the start of the analysis was the decision taken to focus on insult, gossip, rumour and grassing as it appeared that these language structures had an important part to play in the fractious nature of the friendships. Only after years of transcription work, carried out after the completion of the sessions with the girls, did the main hypotheses and findings emerge from the plethora of material. I would propose that the more covert and subtle the interactions, the more necessary it is to have open hypotheses and a broad base of descriptive information before embarking on specific measurements. To approach the study with a fixed frame of mind could preclude the identification and examination of the novel and surprising that could open unexpected pathways to future, more rigorous, research.

Ethnographic research is embedded in a specific context; historical, social or cultural. This is both the strength and weakness of the design. It may offer a deeper understanding and broader based insights than a more rigorous design, but may travel less well to other contexts and populations. It is situation specific and attention needs to be addressed to detail before any generation of generalised hypotheses (Silverman, 1983). However, given the same conditions and constraints, the findings should be replicable.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods have weaknesses. Quantitative research contains standardised research procedures. It is precise, with uniform, replicable data and predetermined questions with restricted responses (Silverman, 1983). The acclaimed strength of quantitative research is an accuracy and rigour of findings. Clearly, it is possible to count accurately, but is what is being counted relevant? Will the results tell us what we want to know?

Contaminating influences may be in play in quantitative research as in other designs. For example, there is an assumption that participants will tell the truth. The population of today is more sophisticated than when questionnaires were designed at the turn of the century. For example, there is increasing familiarity with the concept of lie scales in a world where market research is of such commercial importance. Only a dustbin search will reveal that mince, and not rump steak as claimed, was eaten at Sunday lunch. Many girls do not admit to bullying as they do not understand that their covert actions may be extremely distressing. On the other hand, others realise that these actions, such as excluding or ridiculing a girl, are socially unacceptable and so refuse to admit to being the culprits. Such evidence throws serious doubt on the validity of questionnaires used with girls. In addition, questionnaires could have both negative and positive qualities. An example of this is the limited choice design where respondents tick a box. This design could miss peripheral, but important information as refined responses, that could answer the question 'why' and not solely the answer to 'what' are not permitted. Unstructured interviewing has the desire to understand rather than to explain. Mathematics and apparent logic could overlook common sense (Cicourel, 1964).

One of the pivotal arguments between the adherents of quantitative and qualitative methods has been that of interference. Quantitative methodology claims to be less open to external influence and interference as the researcher has an impersonal role that is separate from the body of the research. However, the researcher necessarily brings experience, attitudes and beliefs to the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Richardson, 1994). For example, the researcher retains some influence in selection of data, even in quantitative studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Plummer, 1983). The researcher influences the drawing up of the original hypothesis, which in turn, could influence the

121

design, or the slant given the information culled from the rigorous application of the quantifiable approach.

In response to criticism pertaining to a lack of rigour, qualitative researchers cull information from the direct experience of the participant. However, as in quantitative methods, constructs are formed not only from the data, but also from the context of the researcher. The choice of video taping the sessions answers this challenge as this enabled the researcher to have access to the minutiae of the interactions occurring between the girls, yet remain outside the situation. This avoided contamination from the presence of a participant observer, but the presence of any researcher, no matter how indirect or distanced, may influence participants in some way.

Fine (1993) notes that an important part of ethnographic work may be hidden from readers, 'Analysis is private, field notes are rarely available for secondary analysis, and most ethnographic writing is accepted on faith. Opportunities for deception are great.' The present study has been video recorded and it is from this work, open to public examination, that the analysis is drawn. To supplement this work, other findings are presented culled from conversations with the girls and teachers. These formed the sociometric section of the study.

One advantage of video recording is that it is open to review, re-interpretation and challenge by others. In viewing the video material the number of times necessary to get accurate translations, I became aware of another of the issues raised by Fine (1993). He challenges participant observers to collect all relevant data accurately. The years spent on the transcription work for this study facilitated in-depth familiarity with the nuances contained in the material. Fine suggests that 'hours and hours of observation are followed by hours and hours of composing and analysing one's field notes'. Tiredness

could lead to errors, not only in the short term, but faced with years of transcription work, it becomes a long-term bogey. Access to all the material on video means that my own analysis and interpretation is open to discussion as to whether it would match that of another observer. To answer this criticism, built into the research design was the backup of other observers who confirmed my own interpretations and findings.

I knew from many years of working with young people that it would be impossible to talk, work and record while in the presence of young and demanding participants. It was necessary to find a method, such as video recording, that would allow viewing in privacy and at leisure, allowing numerous repetitions and re-checks.

The video taped material answers another challenge. Living data is multi-sensory, whereas transcribed data is solely a written record. The video taped material, offering both sight and sound, makes sense of what could otherwise be an unintelligible or ambiguous remark.

One of the most pressing moral dilemmas of this type of research is deciding how to present the research to the participants. Although I gave an honest rationale for my work, part way through the study a misunderstanding almost brought the work to an abrupt end. On reflection, this was ironic as it was because of gossip being spread about the reason I was working with the girls (to study their own use of gossip) that the study almost ended prematurely. A case of being hoisted by one's own petard. Although it seems proper that participants know why they are being studied, Fine (1993) reminds us that the classic ethnographers did not agree. They considered knowledge of the rationale of the study would contaminate the perceptions and actions of the participants, so giving rise to skewed information and data.

In summary, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have inherent

123

weaknesses. It would seem that no one method meets the demands of the multifarious

types of research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Richardson, 1994). The researcher must

decide on the 'best fit,' ensuring that all loopholes and weaknesses are at least

recognised and accounted for, if not fully corrected. However, I would suggest that an

ethnographic approach is the most suitable base for studying covert and complex

phenomena such as verbal aggression among girls. Fine (1993, p. 290) regards

perfection as professionally unobtainable. 'We ethnographers cannot help but lie, but in

lying, we reveal truths that escape those who are not so bold.

4.   Background to the Study

Pilot Study

A previous attempt to work with adolescent girls had failed. I had designed the

project around a group of 11 to 12 year-old girls in a local comprehensive school. I was

hoping to eavesdrop, converse and join in their lunchtime activities in a similar manner

to that used by Goodwin (1990). From the start, I found the girls highly sensitive to my

presence. They felt intimidated and in the spotlight. Suspicious and rejecting they

refused to speak freely in my presence. They were not abusive or threatening, as were

the girls from the same area towards Coffield (1983), but they were obstructive,

challenging and excluding. In addition, most of the girls of this age who were not on

free school meals, left the school premises for the whole period of the lunchtime. This

gave little time for any in-depth study to take place. It would not have been possible to

establish the depth of trust and quality of relationship necessary in order to work with

these girls in such a short space of time. However, I suspect that no amount of time

would have counteracted their suspicions. After persevering for a few months, I

abandoned the study.

I approached a primary school in the North East of England in the same area as the secondary school and requested permission to carry out the study. Although there had been employment available in the area in the past; coal mining, ship building and a thriving steel industry, currently, there is little employment. Many of the parents of these girls have never found regular work and very few have a job with a career structure. Those that are employed work in cafes, fast food outlets, shops, bars, garages, as evening cleaners in offices or in a range of low paid, temporary service employment. Many of the parents were truants from school, the males having had behaviour problems in school. There is a high rate of illiteracy. Several of the women grew up in care. There are links to the gypsy and travelling families, and one family at least is a first generation settled travelling family. Just before the start of the study, the father of one of the boys in the class, and uncle of one of the most prominent girls in the study, died suddenly. The community held a full traveller's funeral and mourners came from many miles around, with many in lorries lavishly decorated in the traditional manner.

The area has a high incidence of crime and violence. A snapshot illustrating the ethos of aggression in the locality can be found in an entertaining and informative paper by Coffield (1983). This paper recounts the experiences of an ethnographer, highly respected in academic circles, trying to make inroads into understanding and communicating with the young people of this area. He made the mistake of attempting to defend a girl who was being viciously attacked by her 'friends', whereupon the researcher himself was set upon and narrowly escaped a very unpleasant encounter.

It is not only the males in the area have a reputation for violence. I was aware of many incidents of street violence erupting between the mothers of the girls, and the girls

themselves, throughout the duration of the study. These incidents are recorded in the section containing individual profiles of the girls given in the Appendix (Profiles).

Having worked within a multidisciplinary network in this area, I had seen many facets of the families and the neighbourhood. I came across an abundance of stories, some apocryphal, about the exploits of the inhabitants of the locality. There is a high level of community welfare and social services projects plus funded initiatives in the area as, in addition to the level of unemployment, incidence of emotional, physical and sexual abuse is high.

Grassing and telling tales was a common mode of interaction among the girls in the study. It is interesting that a process such as grassing, usually viewed as a law and order mechanism, should be so prevalent in such a deviant society. Contrary to the urban myth that such communities are held together by a combination of economic and social disadvantage, along with distrust of outsiders, the families in this neighbourhood were not necessarily mutually supportive. There was no more trust among these families than elsewhere, possibly less.

Some years earlier I had asked girls from this area, in their final year of secondary education, about their expectations of life after school. They spoke freely and honestly. They all expected to have a baby and boyfriend soon after leaving school. They did not necessarily anticipate marrying as there appeared to be little stigma or concern about being pregnant while still of school age. Once these girls have their babies, it is common for the maternal grandmother to become the surrogate mother and for the girl to resume the life of an ordinary teenager. The mother and grandmother share the parenting. As many of the girls conceive when young, it is common for the great grandmother to be involved as well. It is characteristic of the families in this area to

126

have close contact with a large extended family, many of whom take an interest in the rearing of the baby. If the father of the baby is around, the couple may take up residence in a council flat. Many are available as there is little demand for housing in the area. The male partner is often known as 'Geordie' to preserve anonymity. He may not wish to be identified by the girls' family, a second family elsewhere, social services, debt collectors or the police. Often the relationship is brief, whereupon the girl will go back with her baby to resume residence with her parents.

All the teenage girls I spoke to about their anticipated life after school age, expected to be physically abused by their boyfriend, husband or partner if they 'deserved it'. On asking the women in the locality why they stayed with abusive men. I received the reply that it was better to have any man than none. A woman without a man was considered to be unattractive and without status in the community. I have made further enquiries more recently and found that attitudes are slowly changing..

Preparation

I approached the primary school before the start of the summer term and requested permission to work with the girls for the following 16 months. This covered the four terms before the girls transferred to the secondary sector. The girls were10 years old at the start of the study. It was decided that this age group was ideal for the study. The girls were old and mature enough to work without adult supervision, yet they were young enough to talk in the groups without feeling too constrained by the video camera. At this age, they were happy to fill in the questionnaires for the sociograms and to chat freely in the individual interviews. In addition, the age of these girls, meant that they were less suspicious and antagonistic to observation than the older girls had been. Furthermore, by this age, young people can verbalise their emotions and can link

feelings to actions. Their conversations contained extended and explanatory language structures giving some degree of access to their attitudes, beliefs and prejudices that would be helpful in assessing the characteristics of the friendships and quarrels.

The most obvious feature of the design to be considered was that it should be as natural as possible. A few similar studies are available, but none match this particular group of girls in age, environmental and cultural factors. Few studies have targeted gossip, rumour or grassing. Gottman (1986) offers a wide range of insights and illuminations on childhood friendships and conflicts, but these are mainly in laboratory conditions so may not measure the same processes as those carried out in a natural context. Several researchers have looked at children in natural settings (Alder and Alder, 1995; Eder, 1985,1991; Goodwin, 1990). Although only eavesdropping on the conversations, the visible presence of the research team may have been a contaminating influence. In addition, these studies were undertaken on a population in the USA. Others have included gossip in their studies but from an adult or late adolescent perspective (Campbell, 1994, 1995).

Covert aggression requires particularly sensitive investigative methods. Knowing the girls in this area by reputation, I realised that great caution would be required if any valid investigation were to be embarked upon. The subjects needed to be approached in a sensitive manner as was borne out by my own initial experience with older girls as described above

I was told by the teachers that these girls were renown for their bickering, quarrelling and aggressive behaviour. Unusually, there were 20 girls in the class and only 10 boys. The girls were considered to be more challenging than the boys. Staff who had taught in the locality for many years had noticed a marked increase in the use

of overt aggression, violence and explicit threats by girls in the school.

A disproportionate number of pupils from this area attended specialist schools and units for students with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties, anti-social behaviour and disaffection. My involvement in the neighbourhood, as the educational psychologist with responsibility for this specialist provision, allowed me to put the study in the context of a wealth of knowledge. The school could be seen in the wider context of families within the community.

As there was limited time during the school day when I could rely on regular attendance by the girls, I decided on a lunchtime activity club. This was the turning point in the design stage of preparation. Most girls of this age enjoy this type of activity so I anticipated a group of girls readily volunteering to attend. In the event, all volunteered without hesitation. The advantage of the design was that it allowed me access to their conversations as they chatted freely among themselves. The second significant decision was to video the girls 'fly on the wall' as they were working unsupervised.

Introducing The Club

The proposal was put to the girls at a lunchtime meeting. The girls and the staff welcomed the idea of the club. I met with the girls and gave them my honest rationale for the study and for the use of a video camera. I explained that I wanted to learn more about how girls of their age made friends, how quarrels arose and were settled. I explained that I thought that the club seemed the best way of studying them working together, as naturally as possible, as the camera enabled me to let them get on in a room on their own. I would take the film away with me to study later. I stressed that I would not discuss what I had seen on the film with anyone in school, neither staff nor the girls

themselves without their permission.

The girls were pleased to think that I wanted to know more about their friendships and, at the time, they accepted the rationale without comment. The girls readily accepted the idea of being video taped. The girls' parents were written to, and permission was given for each girl to attend the club, and for me to video tape the sessions. All the girls expressed excitement about the plan. A video recording was made of this meeting.

I also video recorded a similar meeting held with the boys in the class on a separate occasion. I met with the boys over another lunchtime and explained the purpose of the club for the girls. I suggested that they would not be as interested in such a club as they all appeared to enjoy their playground games over lunch times. It was the summer term and particularly fine weather. An additional factor was that there was intense interest and support for the local football team among all the boys. There was great emphasis on practising football skills and discussing team progress and tactics over the lunchtime. Even those boys who were not football players were involved in other activities and showed no signs of feeling left out of the girls' group.

5.   The Components of the Study

The study had three components. The activity club ran for 12 months of the 16 month study, questionnaires were given to the girls at the start of each of the first three terms, and individual semi-structured interviews with the girls and the teachers were conducted in the fourth term.

The Activity Club

The activity club ran for a maximum period of 40 minutes, after the girls had eaten

their lunch and before they began the afternoon session in class. The girls had a slightly

earlier lunch so that the maximum time was available. Everything had to be organised

within my own lunch hour in-between appointments at other schools. The video

equipment had to be brought into the school and set up, the materials for the activity

collected and set out in two rooms, and the girls started on the activity for the day. At

the end of the session, the materials and video equipment were cleared away before the

girls returned to class for afternoon lessons. The design of the study had to take account

of this tight schedule as there was no margin for error.

The girls were divided into groups of six. Each girl is seen on camera interacting

within a group of this number. Six girls were video taped each week doing a chosen

activity, mainly art and craft. The other 12 -14 girls in the class worked with the

researcher and a voluntary assistant in the room next door. There was no sight or sound

contact between the two rooms so that the group being video taped was unsupervised.

The girls arrived in an ad hoc fashion, after finishing their lunch in the dining hall, or

returning to school after lunch at home.

I visited the school weekly over 16 months so the length of the project offered

opportunities for longitudinal analysis. The activity club ran for 12 of these months so

that it was possible to see the girls interacting in a variety of groupings. The

composition in the groups changed over the time of the study.

There were several reasons why static membership of groups proved impracticable.

Individual girls were absent for various reasons; sports practices, preparations for

Christmas festivities, rehearsals for concerts, medical appointments. There were other

absences due to illness, girls forgetting to attend, mislaid work, and quarrels. There

were admissions and exits into the class; two girls returned from living in another area.

Later the same two girls left, one to re-enter yet again. If a girl had been in conflict with another and remained upset, fearful or angry, she was allowed to miss that session and have her turn the following week. This contributed to the ad hoc arrangement of girls in the groups. However, I considered that such flexibility was essential due to the emotional volatility of the group. Some of the quarrels became intense and violent as can be seen from the film and the text.

Validity of the Ethnographic Design

The ethnographic, naturalistic design was necessary to understand how the girls functioned when unsupervised, as they appeared to create a different social culture when away from adults. Conflicts occurred in the presence of teachers but the degree of conflict was less in these situations. It was essential to provide a situation where the views, emotions and actions of the girls occurred naturally without contamination from researcher or teacher influence or bias. There were no preconceived hypotheses.

To avoid external influence, the girls were given no feedback or comment on the sessions throughout the study. When they asked to see themselves on camera, they were shown parts of the introductory session where the concept of the study was introduced to the whole group. As their sole interest was in seeing themselves on camera, they were happy with this compromise.

Assurance was given that others would not see the video recordings without their permission. Suspicion of the conversations being heard by others, teachers or peers, would have contaminated the naturalistic design of the study. In addition, the level of conflict within the group resulted in the girls being extremely wary of their comments reaching the ears of others.

The most obvious query concerning the validity of the study surrounds the decision to use the video camera as a record. The comments and behaviour of the girls during

the video sessions would confirm that a naturalistic design was achieved. The girls

were cognitively aware of the video camera that was always in sight, yet from the first

session, they became oblivious to it as they became absorbed in their own conversations

and behaviour. Eder (1985 p.173) writes, 'Much of the time they continued to interact

as they would normally have done, however. In particular, they were just as likely to

gossip, insult, tease and tell stories when they were being recorded as they were on

other days, since these routines were so much part of their daily interaction'.

Several factors would confirm that the girls' language was natural and

unconstrained by the presence of the camera. They would see the camera on entering

the room, often asking if it was on, or drawing each other's attention to it. Apart from

an occasional reference to it, they would soon forget its existence.

The girls did not censor any untoward comments from their flow of natural chatter.

Often comments were made within the group that the speaker clearly hoped to keep

within that setting. These negative remarks made about other girls, teachers and the

researcher would have embarrassed the girls if delivered face to face. In addition, the

girls behaved in ways that would have given rise to chastisement and sanctions if they

had remembered in time that their actions would be seen later on the recordings.

There was a far higher incidence of conflict among the girls in the sessions than was

in evidence in the presence of adults so confirming that the sessions offered a similar

environment to that where the girls were unsupervised.

The use of the camera as a valid instrument for the study was supported by a further

observation. When conflict did occur, the girls were of an age, and personality, where it

was of the utmost importance to get their point of view across to their opponent as

effectively or vehemently as possible. Getting their point across was more important

than censoring unacceptable words and phrases with the result that the video camera

was forgotten in the heat of the moment. Aware of having said something not meant for a public audience, the girls would look to the room next door, only occasionally looking towards the video camera first. The girls made far more references to the presence of the adults working with the rest of the girls in the room along the corridor than to the camera in front of them. They looked in the direction of the other room whenever a swear word was spoken before acknowledging the presence of the recording apparatus. Frequent comments such as, 'Hey, the Miss is next door. She'll hear you!' were made without apparent awareness that the remark itself would have been captured on camera.

The girls appeared to hold two concepts in mind simultaneously; awareness of the camera as a recording instrument immediately in front of them, and the presence of the adults, out of sight and out of mind. The latter most often superseded awareness of the camera. The girls were at the stage where their cognitive level of awareness of the camera appeared over-ridden by their emotional awareness of a supervisory adult in the room nearby.

In summary, there would seem to be a valid claim that a naturalistic setting for the video recordings was achieved. Perhaps most telling was the fact that the girls attended the sessions voluntarily, suggesting that they were relaxed and comfortable, so lending support to the claim that the study reflected their natural behaviour.

Analysis of the Conversations

Transcription of the Material.

Once the recordings were completed, a detailed transcription process was undertaken. This involved transcribing the comments of each girl in every session in turn. There were six girls in all sessions and so each girl's comments were transcribed, word-by-word, using a video recorder plus additional audio and amplification equipment. This work was time-consuming as the recordings were difficult to

transcribe due to six girls being present at any one session. Frequently, more than one conversation was carried on simultaneously, they often talked over each other, and there were distortions on the sound due to giggling and laughter. There was whispering between couples of girls with their heads turned away from the others in the group and the camera. There were interruptions from others coming into the room and challenges and disputes erupted into conflict episodes. In addition, there were repetitions and revisions of grammatical structures. Above all, the pronounced accent, and use of local dialect and knowledge, made it impossible for anyone unfamiliar with the girls to understand the detail of the conversations.

Being familiar with the girls and the mode of their speech before the start of the study, the researcher arranged to include more sophisticated audio equipment in the design of the study than may otherwise have been the case. As the transcription work was so complex, supplementary audio equipment was essential to clarify many of the utterances of the girls in the detail necessary to the design of the study. It was arranged that audio equipment of professional standard was in place throughout the sessions. This sophisticated equipment supplemented the in-built audio system of the video machine.

This situation specific recording devise was placed centrally on the table where the girls were working on their activities in front of the video camera. The girls were told that it was to amplify their voices for ease of transcription. This small, flat, black square drew some comment from the girls from time to time, but was largely ignored. The only comments they made during the run of sessions concerned the accidental covering up of the recorder, and discussions about whether it was enhancing the visual or audio equipment. This equipment was on loan from the local branch of Canford

Audio, an international firm dedicated to the design and distribution of audio equipment for professional use.

In some instances, supplementary material, such as the desk diary of the class teacher, and conversations with other adults in school, was used to clarify a piece of conversation. Such modes were employed solely in order to gain clues about indistinct utterances; for the translation of a phrase or word of unfamiliar dialect, or to clarify names or dates. Under all circumstances, confidentiality was kept regarding the conversations of the girls as described previously.

Reliability

To ensure reliability of the transcriptions, two psychologists, with specialist knowledge of spoken language, randomly selected small sections of the scripts to transcribe. Extracts were drawn from each of the fourteen video sessions. These sections were brief as the transcription work was extremely time consuming for the reasons given above. The transcriptions made by the language specialists matched those produced by the researcher approximately 80% of the time. The specialists stated that this was acceptable due to difficulties in transcribing the material. All transcriptions may be checked for accuracy by reference to the taped material.

Validity and Reliability of the Linguistic Structures

Once the transcriptions were completed, general categories of language were extrapolated. Even a cursory reading of the transcripts indicated that episodes of gossip, rumour, grassing and insult, as defined earlier, were present in the scripts. All episodes in each of the categories; insult, gossip, rumour and grassing, were presented to the two language specialists. Random samples from each of the categories were selected and compared to the definitions used in the study.

Once the categories had been checked against the definitions used, the episodes of gossip, rumour, grassing and insult were examined for an identifiable structure. The analysis of the episodes identified a structure for gossip and rumour. A less complex but identifiable structure was found for grassing and insult. The structure of gossip and rumour was checked by reference to other professionals with specialist knowledge.

Participants at a meeting of the North East Branch of the Association of Educational Psychologists were requested to verify the definitions and structures identified in gossip and rumour. The 16 psychologists present, all of whom had a longstanding interest and expertise in language use, were put into groups of three and asked to gossip among themselves. Two people in the group gossiped together, whereas the third member was asked to make notes of the conversations. In the case of a group finding difficulty in setting up a gossip episode, it was suggested that they imagine a fictional character. They could then begin the gossip by saying, ' (name) went to London last week and guess what happened?' In this way, none of the groups found any difficulty in starting to gossip. Participants were reminded that, although this was an exercise embarked upon in a research ethos, any fact or fictional remarks made in passing about another must be treated as confidential to the closed, professional meeting.

The notes made by the process recorder in each group were analysed in an attempt to identify a common structure. A common structure was found. Broad, general categories of: attention grabbers, permission, factual, expansion, challenge, clarification and closure were identified as described in Chapter 10. Although identified as having the purpose described in the study, these categories had not been allocated the names given by the researcher in this work. None of the professionals present had given any thought to the structure of gossip, rumour, insult or grassing prior to this meeting.

The proposed structure of gossip, previously elicited from the transcripts of the conversations of the girls by the researcher, was presented to the group. The process recorders compared the notes they had made with the structure displayed. The group members agreed that, although each category may not be in evidence on every occasion, the overall structure proposed for a gossip episode, as given in Chapter 10, was valid and reliable.

There was a brief discussion of rumour where the structure identified for rumour in Chapter 11 was presented to the group. Comparisons between the structure of gossip and rumour were discussed. It was agreed that the structure of rumour would be similar to that of gossip but would be expected to be more simplistic as rumour is defined as dealing with the impersonal, whereas gossip concerns the personal matters of an absent other. This distinction makes it likely that the gossips will offer more elaboration and detail as is discussed in the Chapter 10.

The spreadsheet designed to display the structure of gossip was presented to the group. All members agreed that it showed the individual elements of the structure clearly. An example of the spreadsheet is given in the Appendix 2.

It had been hoped that a further meeting of the group would allow validity and reliability checks to be made for the categories of insult and grassing. This was not possible but the more simplistic structures of insult and grassing were discussed with the two language specialists who had helped with the transcription checks. They were asked to role-play girls of the age of those in the study insulting each other using as many different types of insult as possible. The researcher wrote down these insults as they were delivered. The language specialists were then asked to put them into categories. The categories identified by the two language specialists were compared to those given in Chapter 9. They used topping, directives and name-calling, insult

sequences and sound patterns. Although they used these structures as the written record showed, they did not name them as given in Chapter 9 as they had not been asked to consider the analysis of insult in any context prior to this exercise. They identified the broad categories of content as given in Chapter 9; appearance, abilities and behaviour. Given prompts, they also identified insults as jokes.

The girls in this study, as individuals and as a group, may not be comparable to randomly chosen others of the same age and intellectual ability. A simple match of economic status would not necessarily reflect the essential characteristics of the group. For example, the unusually high level of aggression would make any random comparison invalid. The sample would need to take into consideration the particular social mores and attitudes shared by these girls. However, the structures of the insult, gossip, rumour and grassing episodes identified in their conversations would be expected to match those presented in later chapters in this study.

6. The Sociometric Data

The Sociometric Analysis

The information about friendship choices was gathered, primarily, from the results of a sociometric study. A sociometric analysis of the group identified the behaviour, attitudes and social standing of each girl. This information was used to track the friendship patterns of individual girls, plus the movements within and between the friendship groups. The sociometric analysis took the form of individual questionnaires filled in by each girl as described in the following section. The responses were collated and sociometric tables and diagrams drawn up to show the changes in friendship choices over the time of the study.

It was considered essential that confidentiality was upheld at all times concerning the girls being video taped while working in the small group; that they were not

139

overheard, nor visible to the others in the larger group working elsewhere. The level of aggression displayed by several of the girls in the full group, meant that any remarks or gestures that could be interpreted as negative could lead to conflict.

In addition, the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews tapped into the views of self and others so that all written and oral comments needed to be given in private and collected with the utmost care. This process needed to be seen to be carried out carefully to ensure the girls retained their confidence in the ethical standards of the research.

The research design tapped into the issues of popularity and unpopularity, friendship bonds and bullying. Research into such issues demands care in the execution of the process in order to avoid any child becoming aware of rejection or exclusion by the peer group. Even if aware of such difficulties, realisation that others in the group, or professionals external to the group, have been made aware of their stigma could increase their feelings of distress. Eliciting such sensitive information leads to a minefield of ethical issues. These are discussed at the end of this chapter

The girls in this study, as individuals and as a group, may not be comparable to randomly chosen others of the same age and intellectual ability. A simple match of economic status would not necessarily hold the essential characteristics of the group. For example, the unusually high level of aggression may make any comparison invalid. The sample would need to take into consideration the particular social mores and attitudes shared by these girls. However, the structures of the insult, gossip, rumour and grassing episodes identified in their conversations would be expected to match those presented in later chapters in this study,

In addition to the video taped sessions, sociometric questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews were carried out with the class

teacher and those teachers that accompanied the girls on a residential field trip

The Sociometric Questionnaires

The aim of administering the questionnaires was to track the social relationships, in particular the friendship groupings over time such as the best-friend dyads, triads and periphery members of the groups. The video material was to offer clues to these groupings from visible evidence as was the content of the conversations. In order to complement this work sociometric data, in the form of questionnaires, were collected for each girl. This occurred at the start of each of three of the four terms covered by the study in order to take a longitudinal measure of the changing pattern of group formation and fluctuation.

The Procedure

The questionnaires were administered to the girls when they were working in the room next door to the group in front of the video camera. On each occasion, two adults were in the room with approximately 12 of the girls. (The other 6 girls being video taped alone in the adjacent room). The girls spaced themselves out in the room for privacy although, with the ratio of girls to adults, privacy was assured. The questionnaires were conducted orally in the first session of each term. The girls wrote their answers on cards that were collected immediately. Borgatta (1951) argued that if subjects are asked to give responses orally, there is a danger that they may make a choice they would not otherwise have made due to the contaminating effect of the interviewer.

The Questions

The design of the questions followed the traditional sociometeric design as first

described by Moreno (1934). The design of the questions, and the quality of responses demanded, took into account the restricted literacy skills of some of the girls. The rationale given to the girls for being asked the questions was that it was to help in arranging the composition of the groups for the coming term. Proctor and Loomis (1957) point out that the choices made will be more real if the subjects believe that their responses will be acted upon. The questionnaires were administered at the start of each term to give a rationale for this probe.

Presentation and Format of the Questions

Each session began with confidentiality being assured. It was emphasised that the answer cards would be collected immediately the girls had finished writing and that they would not be kept on the school premises. As is usual in sociometric work of this type, they were asked to keep the nominations to no more than three for each category (Thomas, 1979). It was emphasised that just one or two names would be acceptable. The purpose was to know who they did or did not wish to sit with; it was not a competition to see who had most friends. If they wrote more than three names, only the first three would be used. The questions were asked one by one with time given in between for the girls to write down their responses.

1. Write down the names of those girls in the class you would like to sit with this term.

2. Write down the names of those girls in the class you are friendly with at home.

3. Write down the names of those girls you are particularly friendly with in class.

4. Write down the name of your best friend in class.

5. Write down the name of any girl in class that you would prefer not to sit with this

term. This could be for lots of reasons. Maybe you have fallen out with a friend or perhaps you would just like a change. Perhaps you would like the chance to sit with someone new.

Sociograms were drawn up from the responses to show the social relationships among the girls in the whole class group, the dyad and associated friendship groups, and nominations for popular and unpopular girls.

The last question addressed the issue of unpopularity. The format shown above was considered a more sensitive way of approaching the issue of popularity and unpopularity than asking directly who was friendly or unfriendly with whom with such a volatile group. This question, in particular, was presented in a casual, low-key fashion to lessen the risk of any conflict. It was stressed that someone may be nominated for a variety of reasons. The girls appeared to accept the rationale given as they wrote, without hesitation, their responses to this question. Their responses reflected the well-known antagonism that existed between some of the girls.

Validity of the Questionnaires

Validity poses the question of whether or not the study measures what it set out to do. Does the material reflect what the researcher sought to understand? (Plummer, 1983). There has long been some doubt about the extent to which the traditional concepts used in test construction can be applied to sociometric research (Gronlund, 1959). Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) proposes that, because of the nature of qualitative research, it cannot be judged by traditional criteria. The dynamic nature of social relationships prohibits perfect consistency between tests, although an individual test may produce a perfectly valid measure of the social relationships existing in a group at a particular time (Thomas, 1979). In a defence of this stance, Northway and Weld

(1957) reviewed relevant sociometric studies to examine the issues of reliability and validity. They concluded that most sociometric tests measure accurately, and repeatedly, what they say they are measuring. As with most types of study, it may be that error falls mostly in the administration, calculation and conclusions drawn rather than in the choice of design. The three specific issues considered in the design and administration of the questionnaires; the threat of aggression, the poor literacy skills of some of the girls, and the restriction on time for the administration of the exercise. Attention to these issues was essential to success.

The Semi-Structured Interviews

A point frequently missed in the design of research is that it is essential to tap into the perceptions of the participants themselves (Eder, 1985). For example, what does the concept of popularity mean to different students, and how does it affect each individual? It would seem to be that a core requirement of any study is to draw out participants' views of the intricate processes taking place. Personal perceptions are required to put other types of research into a valid context. Neither the video taped material, nor the questionnaires, was expected to offer sufficient insights into the friendship patterns. It was necessary to tap into the perceptions of the girls themselves in order to gain in-depth understanding of the processes involved, and the underlying attitudes and thought processes concerning their friendship choices.

In order to address this, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each girl to glean further information about the attitudes of the girls towards themselves and each other. This was carried out in the last term of the study. The aim was to understanding the attitudes, mores and beliefs that had led to the querulous nature of the friendships. The interview technique was adopted as a means of teasing out and clarifying the constructs the girls were using in the process of making sense of their lives, in relation

to their friendships, and identifying the connections between them. The interviews tapped into the concepts of popularity and unpopularity, liking and disliking peers, bullying and leadership, along with their views on friendship and the causes of quarrelsome behaviour. Each girl's view of herself was correlated with the view of her held by her peers and teachers.

The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to elicit the construals held by the girls of themselves and the other girls. Constructs are our own idiosyncratic way of defining the world (Kelley, 1950). The construction of the 'self' takes form through interactions with close others and the social world conducted on a daily basis (Rosenberg, 1981; Damon and Hart, 1988). We are continually absorbing and working upon these interpretations of ourselves transmitted to us by relevant others. These interpretations gel to form our view of ourselves and our place in the surrounding environment and society. In making a study of the individual girls, and their peer social interactions, it seemed remiss not to examine the perception held of each girl by the others in the group, as well as each girl's own perceptions of herself. This was done to consolidate the information culled from the video material. Replicated findings would contribute to the validity of each individual mode of research.

It is proposed that there are two main categories of difference in the structure of self (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Those who form an independent self-construal make representations that are separate from the self whereas those who form an interdependent self-construal see others as part of the self. Individuals with an interdependent self-construal would look to close relationships to enrich their sense of self. Those who have an independent self-construal may enjoy relationships with others, but these are more likely to reflect individualistic goals (Maccoby, 1990; Markus and Cross 1990).

The hypothesis is developed by Cross and Madson (1997) who propose that boys tend to form an independent self-construal, whereas girls are more likely to accrue interdependent constructs. They suggest that their proposal is supported by studies showing that girls, more often than boys, include others in their self-conceptions (Eccles et al., 1989; McGuire and McGuire, 1982). Conversely, individuals with an independent self-construal examine their achievements in a more external and competitive manner, and may exaggerate their abilities and strengths in relation to others in order to boost their self-esteem (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Boys have been found to do this more than girls (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974b; Frey and Ruble, 1987). However, this finding is challenged by Baumeister and Sommer (1997). These authors say that as men tend to interact in larger, more loosely constructed groups than women, they act and react differently in specific social situations.

This model of independent versus interdependent self-construal is examined in this study. According to Cross and Madson, the girls would be expected to have an interdependent self-construal, with the attendant attributes. They would be identified by: a regard for interpersonal harmony and sensitivity in relationships, a critical stance taken towards inconsiderate, neglectful or condescending attitudes taken by friends, and reciprocated levels of commitment demanded from friends. Lack of personal integrity and jealousy would be high on the list of causal factors of conflict. Disputes would cause distress and social exclusion would result in sadness and loss of self-esteem. These constructs are discussed later in the Results.

If each girl was found to possess qualities from each category, or both categories were represented among the girls as a group, it would throw some doubt on the reliability of the model. However, it may simply show that it does not apply to a small, possibly dysfunctional, group of girls.

One of the main aims of the study was to identify the causes of the high incidence of conflict among the girls, and to examine the effect of this on their friendships. The hypothesis of Cross and Madson, concerning the rationales for anger and aggression, was to be applied to the findings of the study. Several of the girls were known to use physical modes of aggression, normally thought to be more typical of boys (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Cairns et al., 1989). The hypothesis of Cross and Madson would suggest that these girls would show a cluster of characteristics supporting an independent self-construal. They would consider it provoking if others encroached on their need for autonomy, competence and freedom, or thwarted their progress towards individualistic goals. They would be likely to vent their anger externally.

Anger was a positive predictor of peer popularity for males but not for females (Coats & Feldman, 1996; Fabes & Eisenberg, 1992). The findings of Cross and Madson would suggest that an examination of the popularity rating of these more aggressive girls within the group would be of interest. The girls with an interdependent form of self-construal would be more likely to use various forms of indirect aggression in disputes. A priority would be to maintain the relationship despite a difference of opinion. In same-gender conflicts, adolescent girls were found to favour strategies of social exclusion and alienation, such as the use of rumour, whereas these modes were not as prevalent in disputes between boys (Cairns et al., 1989; Bjorkqvist et al., 1992). These girls could be expected to show a keen interest in the affairs of others, and to become upset if others failed to live up to their expectations (Cross and Madson, 1997). They would use gossip, rumour, and other modes of indirect aggression in disputes in preference to direct physical means, the use of which would result in a loss of respect and popularity within the group. Attacks on personal integrity are considered the strongest cause of anger in adults for both genders (Campbell & Muncer, 1987). The

second most nominated cause showed a gender difference in that women nominated

jealousy, that was manifest in a concern with relationships, whereas men nominated

threat of harm, violation of space and other matters relating to status and territory. This

finding would seem to offer some support to a gender difference in self-construal.

Due to the severe time restrictions placed on the execution of the work with the

girls in school, a requirement of the design of the semi-structured interviews was that

they would be brief and relatively simple.

The Procedure of the Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured format was chosen in order to elicit relevant information more

readily than would have been possible in informal conversations with the girls. As the

restriction on time spent in the school was by far the most worrying aspect of the study,

there was limited choice in this decision.

These semi-structured interviews probed the issues emerging from a cursory

inspection of the video taped material. It was not possible to carry out an in-depth

analysis of the material at this time. In summary, it took at least 600 hours of analysis

to gain any legitimate understanding of the video material. In retrospect, any

preliminary or cursory viewing frequently led to facile and erroneous assumptions.

The construct of popular- unpopular was examined in an attempt to identify the

relationship of the construct to the inclusion and exclusion processes underlying the

querulous nature of the friendships. Did the popular girls act in ways that manipulated

friendships, or did they have intrinsic qualities that attracted other girls, unsolicited, to

them? If so, these qualities, attracting popularity, would be named as such by the girls

themselves. If present, these qualities would be compared to those proposed as being of

influence in the American studies (Alder and Alder, 1995; Eder & Sanford, 1986; Eder & Kinney, 1995; Goodwin, 1990).

The interviews were conducted in the last term of the study. It was predicted that there would be a number of disruptions to the school programme that would prohibit the continuation of the activity group. This was the summer term and the girls wished to be outside in the warmer weather. In addition, the rooms used for the group were being painted. Several events had been planned for the term; a residential field trip, sports day, end of term play, leaving parties, and visits to the secondary schools the girls would be attending after the summer holiday. Most importantly, the project had run successfully for a year and, as would be expected, it had a 'shelf-life'. The girls were ready to move on to other activities and interests. It was decided to halt the activity club for the duration of the last term, but that the researcher would keep contact with the girls until the end of the school year by conducting the individual interviews. By assuring the interviews were conducted in absolute privacy, on most occasions, only one interview could be completed in a session. This meant that the interviews continued throughout most of the term. The girls were going on to the secondary school after the summer break and so this seemed to be the best way of bringing the 16 months of intensive practical and emotional involvement to a natural end.

The Interview

The questions were formulated from information and insights gleaned incidentally from contact with the girls throughout the year of the study, and from information gathered from initial viewing of the video material. The degree of sensitivity deemed essential to the success of the interviews, may not have been necessary in a less volatile community.

The interviews were carried out individually, each one taking about 20 minutes. Time was taken to walk with each girl across the school campus to a room where it was possible to ensure an atmosphere of trust, confidentiality and ease. This left time to complete only one interview each lunchtime. To ensure privacy, the interviews took place in a room located on the other side of the school from where the other girls were playing. The room was off a lobby area so that it was possible to keep the door ajar, to avoid any feeling of unease, as the other doors leading into the area could be heard opening if anyone approached. To ensure that the girls were comfortable with the procedure, halfway through the interview each girl was asked if she had the time to continue. This was to offer an acceptable an exit route, to bring the interview to a close. None of the girls took the opportunity as all were happy to continue to the end of the session.

Each girl was welcomed to the session and reminded that the aim was to understand more about the friendships and quarrels that occurred among girls of their age. It was explained that it would be helpful to know more about their friendships, and how they got along with the others in the class. It was stressed that there were no right or wrong answers, the aim was to further an understanding of the friendships, and that they need not reply to a question unless they wished to do so. It was explained that their co-operation would be extremely valuable as adults find it difficult to understand what goes on in friendships and quarrels as they are rarely present. The girls were thanked for allowing the video material to be collected and told that it had been extremely useful but that a little more help from each girl in private conversation would be appreciated. The girls were told that the room had been chosen as it was away from the other girls so that anything said would be confidential. The girls had already agreed to give the interviews but it was stressed that their participation was voluntary. None refused.

Only one girl initially appeared apprehensive but she was willing to participate.

The interview was carried out in a manner which incorporated many features of a non-interventionist approach (Rogers, 1961). Although some direct questions were asked, the verbal and non-verbal communication was made with the aim of encouraging and facilitating as natural a conversational style as was possible. The ethos was non-judgemental as the aim was to build up rapport and empathy. A non-opinionated stance was adopted. If pressed to contribute or respond, the researcher replied, 'I'm not always there with you so it's hard to understand what really goes on. That's why I'm doing this study, to understand better.' No one pressed for a further response. The interviewer is experienced in using this approach with young people of this age.

The conversation started with general enquiries about a recent residential field trip (referred to as 'camp') as the girls were still talking about their experiences. This information was encouraged in order to compare and contrast it with the situation in school. Time spent away from school, in the company of classmates, appears to be a prime time for friendship formation and disruption. The interviews started with inclusive, broad questions that were narrowed down to specifics. A variety of question formats were applied such as open, closed, prompts and probe, but the majority were open questions to encourage development of themes and details. Examples of these are *'Would you tell me about...?'. 'What do you think about....?' 'Will you tell me a bit more about that ?' 'Can you add anything else?'*

Early on it became clear that anticipated themes were emerging and the information was accruing as had been hoped. Unambivalent constructs were formed as there was similarity in the responses from different questions and from different girls. Within each interview, the answers to the questions were checked by asking the same

151

question in a different way. For example; *'Would you say that there is any aggression among the girls?'* Answer - *'Yes. Colette is.'* *'Are there some people you don't get on with as well as others?'* Answer *'Yes. Colette'*. *'Why?'* Answer *'Because she's aggressive.* To ensure all questions were asked of each girl, single word prompts for the researcher were written on a small card in code and placed out of sight of the girls. Oblique prompts were used to elicit information if a targeted topic did not arise in the natural conversation.

The Questions

The questions embedded in the semi-structured interviews were as follows:

Who do you think is the most popular girl in the class? Why?

Who would you say is not popular? Why?

Is there any girl in the class you would like to be more like? Is there any girl you are a bit jealous of?

Who would you say you are most friendly with in class? or Who do you like best in class? What is it that you like about her?

Who do you like least? Why? Who do you not get on with in class? What is it about her that you do not like?

Who causes most of the trouble in the class?

What do you think causes most of the trouble in the class?

Who is your best friend?

How do you feel if you are playing with your best friend and someone else comes and

152

joins in? The girl just joins in without asking you.

Who do you go around with out of school?

<u>Popularity and Unpopularity</u>

The constructs of positive and negative were extracted from the descriptors given by each girl of herself and others in the group. These were decided on by the girls saying why they did, or did not, like a particular girl. If an evaluative comment was made by one participant about another, that participant was encouraged to elaborate the statement. For example: if a girl's name was mentioned as being 'nice' or 'not nice' the participant was asked for the reasons for the category 'nice' or 'not nice' being allocated. If a participant claimed that there was a lot of fighting in the class, the question was asked *'Who do you think is usually the cause of this trouble?'* The participant was then asked how she felt about the girl in question.

<u>Additional Questions</u>

<u>Bullying</u>

In addition to the prepared questions as given above, other probes were embedded in the conversations to elicit further information about specific topics and issues that could be relevant to the fragmented nature of the friendships.

Who gets picked on? Does this happen a lot? Why is this?

Who picks on others? Does she do this a lot? Why is this?

Is there anyone you/everyone is afraid of?

As far as possible, the probes were presented in the form of indirect questions in an

open format. In many cases the girls touched on these issues of bullying and jealousy naturally in the course of the conversation.

The questions and probes were prepared in advance of the interviews, but the detail of presentation, and the order of the questions, needed to be left open for adaptation, should any girl appear uncomfortable in the interview. The priority was on getting the girls to talk honestly and, in particular, in safety rather than a consideration of the rigour of the design and delivery of the interview.

All the girls seemed to enjoy the sessions. Even the girl who was initially taciturn soon became relaxed. Their non-verbal body language indicated trust and comfort (Argyle, 1969; Goffman, 1959). It is of interest that the observation of the non-verbal behaviour was a two-way process. The researcher was watching the girls, but they were watching the researcher. There was close observation of the researcher for non-verbal clues when they considered that their comments could have been sanctioned, or they thought they could be overstepping conventional boundaries. This did not prevent them from speaking freely. Working in a volatile environment, the teachers in the school had the highest standards of integrity, and it appeared that the girls looked on the researcher as part of a trusted team. Although the individual interviews were time consuming, the girls had a more open and trusting attitude working individually than would have been the case if more than one girl had been present.

Each interview ended with a question such as *'Is there anything we've missed out?' 'Is there anything else you'd like to say?'* This was done to ensure that each girl had the opportunity to introduce a new topic or add further detail thought to be relevant.

The responses were written down as it had been considered that the girls would be suspicious than of technical equipment. Each girl was able to see the written notes. At the end of each session the notes were read to the girl, the script being held in her view

154

as it was checked for errors, to ensure that she felt comfortable with the record of the conversation. The girls were able to see that the scripts were anonymous. They were assured that no name would be written on them until the researcher had left the building. After the last interview, the scripts were examined for thematic content and summarised. These stable categories were organised and listed (Huberman and Miles, 1994).

Reliability of the Constructs

To check the reliability of the constructs elicited from the semi-structured interviews, a list of positive and negative qualities was compiled for each girl from this information. Two experienced educational psychologists were asked to check the categories of positive and negative qualities. Transcripts of each interview were presented to each psychologist. Separately, each identified comments given in the scripts by each girl about self and others. These comments were written on individual pieces of paper and each psychologist, in private, was asked to rate them as positive or negative. The slips of paper on which the comments had been written were then allocated once more to the relevant girl and checked against the original scripts. The allocation of the comments to either the positive or the negative category was checked with the selections made by the researcher.

Collation of Results

Information from the above resources was collated to form a profile for each girl. The material also gave additional information regarding the rationales behind the instability of the friendship bonds of the girls. In addition, observations and comments from the video material were added to supplement and substantiate the above findings.

Interviews with Adults

To complement the material from the video taped sessions, the sociograms, and interviews with individual girls, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the class teacher. The teacher kept a desk diary of relevant events throughout the length of the study. The researcher had access to this material which was discussed with the teacher, approximately once a month, or whenever an incident of particular note had occurred.

In the last term, unstructured interviews were conducted with several teachers who had accompanied the girls on the residential field trip. This gave novel insights into the thought processes, attitudes and behaviour of the girls. In addition to observing and working with the girls on the field trip, these teachers were able draw on their knowledge of the girls in the normal school environment.

A cross check of as much of the material as possible was built into the research design of this part of the study. The views of each girl, given in the semi-structured interviews, were checked against the views of other girls, their choices made in the questionnaire material, and the information gained from the video material. This information was added to the opinions and observations of the teachers, including the desk diary of the class teacher. In addition, the researcher gained knowledge of the girls, individually and in friendship and conflict groups, as she worked each week with those girls not in the video taped sessions.

The sociometric findings were used to correlate the interaction between the use of individual language structures and the social behaviour of the girls. When all the facets of the analysis were completed, as described above, the findings of the sociometric studies were collated with the linguistic analysis so that it was possible to identify which girls used which specific language structures. It was possible to carry out a

frequency count in order to identify any correlation between the use of gossip, rumour, grassing and insult, and the personalities and friendship qualities of the girls. In this way, the various components of the multidimensional analysis were integrated into a holistic approach. This information was added to the profiles and clearly marked as additional observations

Validity and Reliability

In considering the issues of validity and reliability in sociometric research, it is necessary to attempt as robust a defence as is feasible for the specific case. An established way of ensuring internal consistency in the results of an ethnographic study is to employ a triangulation technique (Plummer 1983; p.59). The researcher does not rely on a single piece of data. Findings from other methodologies are accumulated, sorted and linked, so building towards a bank of information (Huberman & Miles, 1994). If there is internal consistency of results, this triangulated information is then considered to be reliable and transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach was adopted in this study. As outlined above, the sources of information used in the ethnographic section of the study that formed the major part of this work, were compiled with the findings elicited from the interviews held with each girl. This information was cross-referenced with findings about her from the other girls. In addition, interviews were conducted with the class teacher and each of the teachers who accompanied the girls on the residential field trip. For the final collation of results, information from the insult, gossip, rumour and grassing episodes on the video material was incorporated. The compilation of information is given in the individual Profiles for each girl presented in the Appendix, and in the case studies of selected girls, and friendship groups given in Chapter Seven. Internal consistency and construct validity were examined by the independent opinions of two experienced professional

psychologists who found the design satisfactory.

Many weaknesses in the design of both quantitative and qualitative methods have been delineated and discussed earlier, such as researcher bias in regard to prior knowledge and experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As in any similar design, contamination may have crept in for a variety of reasons. The girls may have wanted to say the right thing or to help the researcher. They may have been tempted to be evasive when discussing aggression in defence of a friend or afraid of reprisals. In an attempt to address this possibility, the girls were told that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. They were simply helping the researcher to gain a better understanding of girls of their age.

An element of contamination could have arisen from the researcher having a priori knowledge of the content of the videotaped material so leading to slanted perceptions and skewed findings. As the researcher was busy working with the larger group of girls, many of the more subtle interactions were missed. The girls being video taped worked alone in a room next door. For these reasons, the researcher did not begin the research with any preconceived ideas that would have skewed the findings.

Reliability is assured if the information is evaluated as transferable and so trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Methods of standardisation and control are integral to quantitative methodology to ensure replication by others. This study aimed at standardisation in that one controlled set of questions lay at the core of the interview, but the semi-structured format allowed the input of other relevant information.

In summary, the intention of the triangular design of the study was that the results from the collection of findings from these small studies would add up to a more robust result than would otherwise be the case. It was envisaged that, although giving only

general trends and tentative insights into the relationships between the girls, the results of the multidimensional approach would offer an accumulative picture, and so a more robust finding, than would be available if each small study were considered independently.

7. Ethical Issues

Ethics must remain to the forefront in the initial stages of the design of any study, particularly those involving living organisms. Ethnographic studies have inherent difficulties that may not always be as pertinent in other forms of study. By definition, ethnographic work involves inspection of the lives of others. As stated earlier, ethnographers have been described as professional gossips (Schoeman, 1994 p.72). Therefore, in the initial stages care must be taken to ensure that there is a valid rationale to pry, especially into the interpersonal relationships of children. In this case, one aim was to understand the hidden interactions that could be perceived as bullying. Such actions are the cause of immense suffering, even, on occasion, suicide. This can occur among girls younger than those taking part in this study. Young people report indirect aggression as being the most distressing and damaging type of aggression (Boulton & Smith, 1994). It is stressful for the girls themselves, but also worrying for teachers, and a common cause of intense anxiety in parents. This study in itself may not offer clear resolutions, but it could offer information useful in identifying ways forward.

Successful ethnographic studies rely on the participants behaving in a natural manner, going about their business without contamination of an outside influence. Although every opportunity should be offered to the participants to be aware of the study, the aims, procedures and the proposed dissemination of findings, it is tacitly built into the expectations of the researchers that the participants will become less aware of any observers or equipment as time proceeds. The likelihood of this happening means

that it is essential that the highest of standards are upheld in day-to-day practice. This is especially so when children are involved. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that children do not say or do anything throughout the course of the research study that could jeopardise their future welfare.

Aspects of confidentiality must be guarded with the utmost attention in ethnographic studies for the reasons stated above. This is especially so in the case of studies involving the young. Not only do they need protection more than adults do, but also they may be more likely to become completely absorbed in their conversations and actions. This may result in them being less aware of external observation.

A further ethical issue requires thought. Communities that display particular qualities, such as an unusually high level of aggression, may become the focus of a range of professional researchers and treated as a goldfish bowl. The majority of the families in this study were conducting their lives successfully in the only way they knew and thought appropriate under very difficult circumstances. They drew on a range of resources, external material ones plus personal and internal forces, with ingenuity and imagination. It is a salutary experience to count the number of professionals who are involving themselves at any given time in the personal lives of the people who live in such communities. Girls of this age may not appear to behave in a similar manner elsewhere, but we are slowly becoming aware of the amount of covert aggression among young girls. It would appear that the level of aggression among young girls has been underestimated. Others may be equally as aggressive, albeit not as obviously so. These girls may use more overt, physical violence, and their language may be more openly aggressive in presentation than the norm, but it may be that the intention to hurt another is just as intense in girls' groups elsewhere.

One question concerning ethics that was anticipated, and did emerge, was that of how to respond should evidence of bullying, or other violence, be seen during the course of the study. To intervene would contaminate the study to the extent of disrupting the process beyond repair, yet to ignore the distress such actions could cause would be heartless and unethical. Further notes on how this was resolved are given in Chapter 13.

The girls who were to take part in the study were told about the rationale for the activity club as described previously in this chapter. Letters were sent to the families to seek permission for the girls to be involved in the study. Confidentiality concerning the viewing of the video material was promised. An assurance was given to the girls that no one would see the video material other than the researcher and possibly other psychologist colleagues who would help her understand the conversations. Much of this dialogue can be seen on the video tape of the first meeting with the girls held prior to the start of the activity clubs when the concept was first introduced.

In discussing the professional ethics of practicing psychologists, Francis (1999) writes that it is often necessary to think of creative solutions to these dilemmas. He concludes 'Although we might try our hardest to resolve ethical dilemmas properly, the least we should do is to leave the situation improved.' There may have been no noticeable improvement in the situation of these girls at the time of the study, but no detrimental effects were in evidence. Hopefully, the study will offer insights and ways forward concerning the covert behaviours of conflict common among girls so improving the situation for others.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESULTS OF THE SOCIOMETRIC STUDIES

1. Advantages of the Multidimensional Design of the Study

As the concept of friendship is complex and multifaceted, it needs to be examined in a multidimensional manner. Buhrmester (1996) suggests that studies be designed so that the voice of the child is heard, along with those of the teacher and parent, and that observations carried out by trained observers should be included. This study drew on all three of these sources by using a range of techniques. The triangular design culled information from a variety of sources to gain additional material, and was used to crosscheck findings gleaned from any one source. The video material was a permanent record of interpersonal interactions that would not only give specific information about the girls, but also allow information not directly in the focus of the study to inform and expand the findings. This information was supplemented by sociogram nominations. The interviews held with the girls, and with the teachers, gave insights into the relationships between the girls, as well as into their individual personalities, not available from other sources. These comments throw light on the covert nature of these relationships and enhance the information gained from other sources.

The interviews allowed various responses to the same girl, or event, given by different girls. This gave the opportunity to build up a richer and more multidimensional pen portrait of each girl than would otherwise have been possible. For example, it was known that there were on-going conflicts within the group that may have triggered jealousy or anger at the time of the interviews. This meant that the questions may have triggered an emotionally laden response at the expense of a more accurate reply.

162

It was clear that some girls were allowing current disputes and conflicts to influence their comments so that some degree of projection occurred. There are several instances where girls known to have a negative trait or behaviour, immediately stressed this as a negative quality in someone with whom they had quarrelled. Some girls attacked each other in synchrony, each accusing the other of identical traits, such as calling each other 'tarts'. This process can be identified from the comments given by each of the girls in the interviews, as well as being in evidence on the video material.

It was common for a girl to give conflicting statements within the one interview. For example, a girl may say another was 'not a fighter' yet a couple of sentences later say that she was afraid of that girl as she would be capable of 'chinning' her. Many of the girls could hold contrasting facets of another's personality in parallel, although not all were at the cognitive stage of being able to assimilate these into an integrated whole. Usually, these were presented as separate constructs as though they were speaking of two different girls. One girl nominated another as her best friend, but later described her as mean. Another stated that she would not trust a girl, earlier nominated as her best friend, with a secret. The more intelligent girls could hold two contrasting aspects in mind as an integrated whole. S said of Col 'She is aggressive, but I like her. She can be nice and she can be nasty'.

An incident may have been only half remembered or forgotten by one girl, but remembered and remarked upon by another. Information from a single response could have been misleading, whereas replies taken from several girls, over a period of time, combined to contribute to the validity of each response. Positive appraisals given to friends would be balanced out from comments given by less partial girls.

The information contained in the interviews gave insights into the complexity of the personalities of the girls and, in particular, how these were interpreted by the other

girls in the group. For example, one girl said that another, known to be the most aggressive in the group, was 'not a fighter'. It seemed as though judgement could be based on how the girl in question had interacted directly with the respondent, or how she had witnessed her interact with others. I would suggest that this reflects the complexity and multifaceted nature of personality. Such comments emphasise the need to approach studies from a variety of viewpoints in order to pick up the nuances of behaviour and attitudes.

Another reason for the variation in responses, even those given by the same girl, may have been due to the differing value judgements allocated to some actions. Clearly acting in the physical defence of a friend was an admirable quality among these girls, yet that same quality, of being 'hard' and 'jumping' someone, was feared. The allocation of a positive or negative value depended on the context. A girl could be described as 'hard' in both the positive and negative sense, by the same girl, within the same sentence.

The conflicting responses may have had an element of denial at their source. One girl said that she was not afraid of another although it was clear that she was. She rationalised this by saying that she was only afraid of the girl when she was with her gang. An individual's answer could have been influenced by the presence of the interviewer. It is possible that some of the contradictory responses stemmed from the girls giving what they thought to be an acceptable or expected response, later altering it to a more truthful reply as they became more relaxed in the interview.

The results highlight an advantage of the individual interview. It appears that some of the girls may have been more honest in relaying their views about the more aggressive girls in that situation. This was despite their responses for the sociograms being given in privacy and in confidence. The location chosen for the individual

interviews was an isolated room. This appears to have been conducive to eliciting honest information. The nominations for popularity for some of the aggressive girls was reduced in this situation, whereas nominations for their unpopularity increased.

The interviews offered the opportunity to elicit individual insights from the girls. Comments made by some of the girls indicated an unexpected level of intuition and perception. For example, one girl had the verbal and intellectual ability to sum up another by using the word 'paranoid' as she thought that everyone was always talking about her in a negative fashion. The same girl made the perceptive comment that being powerful was a quality that attracted friendship.

An analysis of the transcripts of the interview shows that some girls held a degree of power over others. The reports of the teachers show that the staff members were not fully aware of how influential some of the girls were or, if they were aware, they did not indicate this in the interviews. Many of the girls appeared to be living in fear of an attack on them or members of their family. The teacher knew of many such incidents and they were recorded in her desk diary. However, it did appear that she underestimated the atmosphere of fear and unpredictability in the class. This was not due to negligence on the part of the teacher, rather it indicated the covert nature of the interactions. Several episodes of bullying are exposed on the video material.

Subtle concepts evolved from the conversations that were not apparent in the sociograms. From an inspection of the sociograms, it would appear that one girl did not have strong friendship links in the group, but the semi-structured interviews showed that she was liked and respected. However, if she did not want to play a particular game, or join in if a certain girl was playing with her friends, she was mature and confident enough to remove herself quietly and find her sister or another activity. Her periphery status was self-imposed and an indicator of maturity, not rejection. The positive

165

teacher reports on this girl, especially concerning the residential field trip, are illuminating. Although a member of the class who was valued by the teachers and girls alike, her many positive qualities would not have been noted if only the video material had been available.

Not all girls were equally represented in quantity or quality of comments. One girl receives few nominations and this places her correctly on the fringe of the group. This gives an underestimation of her social skills. The girls and teachers describe her as a tomboy in the interviews as she preferred to play football with the boys. This girl gave, and received, little comment although inspection of the video taped material shows that, being lively and amusing, she is accepted and liked. Although not aggressive herself, she is accepted on the fringe of the aggressive group.

Most girls in the class were overshadowed by the group of overtly aggressive girls and two others, less overtly aggressive, who were on the periphery of the group. These girls were loud and argumentative. One, in particular, was loud, but amusing and entertaining to the others. These girls presented a great deal of troublesome behaviour and demanded the lion's share of adult attention. The composite results gained from the study show that the teachers were not always aware of the more subtle dynamics being played out in front of them involving the rest of the class. One girl, who only parroted what others said, may have been more destructive than another who was thought of as a 'loud mouth' and had little popularity or influence among the girls. As she frequently told tales (grassing) about the other girls, she was considered a troublemaker by the teachers and the girls, but her influence and power as a provocateur, and disruptive influence, was underestimated. A close inspection of the video material shows that her mode of immediately picking up negative statements and 'parroting' them, meant that she was often the direct cause of igniting a conflict. Her pervasive power to control

action within the group is only understood by analysis of the video material. One girl has a loud and highly visible presence on the video material but the content of the conversations show that, despite this, she is ignored by most of the other girls. A cursory inspection of the video material could lead to an erroneous view of her power and influence in the group.

Two of the girls were cousins. One has a strong presence on the video material that is missing from the teacher reports. The class teacher worried about her and thought her overshadowed by her more lively and gregarious cousin. Results from the sociograms, together with inspection of the video material, show that this was not so. The sociograms show her to be the more popular, and possibly more powerful girl. Away from adults, she presents as a very different girl, lively, amusing and able to hold her own against most girls in the class. She is able to direct action, counter argument and criticism. When she speaks, others listen. Comments made by others in the interview material, show her to be emotionally supportive of her cousin who began to steal, presumably as a result of trauma at home. This was not mentioned on the video or by the teachers.

Perhaps the most powerful girl in the group was not mentioned by the teachers. Although she was in the aggressive group of girls, most of the girls considered her trustworthy, friendly and helpful. Her power came from her popularity. Several girls wanted to be her friend and would function on her terms. Neither the girls, nor the adults, identified her role as the 'pacifist' leader of the aggressive group. The video material shows numerous instances of her calming situations, mediating in conflicts and confronting the aggressive girls when erroneous or nonsense statements were made that were intended to mock others or incite trouble. The popularity of this girl reflects the profile of popular children given by Gottman, Markman & Notarius (1977). These

authors found that the ability to remain calm and impartial, and the skill to take on the role of mediator in conflict situations, are major factors contributing to popularity among peers.

2. Results from the Sociograms and Semi-structured Interviews

Profiles of the Friendship Groups

There were several small friendship groups in the class. None had a static membership although the dyad of Ce and Cl was stable over the time of the study. Three groups were prominent in the class with several girls on the periphery of these groups, moving in and out or across them. The profiles of the friendship groups are compiled from information given in the sociometric questionnaires, the semi-structured interviews with the girls and teachers, the content of the video taped activity sessions and informal observations.

Group: Col, Ce, Cl, L (M) (Km)

This friendship group contained the most aggressive girls in the class including M and Km who were on the periphery of the group. The video material shows many instances of these girls being aggressive towards each other. In addition, there were many references made in their recorded conversations to their aggression and conflict occurring at times when they were not attending the video sessions.

M was an aggressive girl but she did not use overt physical means as did the other members of the group. Km was a girl who did use physical aggression in her attacks on others. Km fell foul of Col and, as a result, she was excluded from the group after the first term of the study.

The sociogram material showed that only the dyad of Ce and Cl was sustained over the four terms of the study. This caused tension in the group. The questionnaires identified Col's wish to be Ce's best friend, but Ce nominated Cl as her best friend over

the four terms. Col was chosen as a friend by Ce over the four terms, but not as her best friend as this nomination was reserved for Cl. Col was frequently in both verbal and physical conflict with Cl. It would seem that her jealousy of this close friendship was at the root of these troubles.

There are several instances of harsh physical conflict reported in the semi-structured interviews perpetrated by Col. These reports would seem to be valid as they were reported by several girls, including the most reliable in the class such as La. In addition, they were corroborated by remarks made by the teachers, and comments recorded in the desk diary of the class teacher.

The video material identifies many instances of verbal aggression including gossip, rumour, insult and grassing. These girls are shown telling tales about each other as well as about other girls in the class. Their teacher reported that they mainly kept their quarrels among themselves. The interviews with the class teacher highlighted the frequency of the quarrels. She described these girls as fighting over anything. Most conflicts would begin with a relatively insignificant event that would be quickly blown up out of all proportion. Triggers for most of the quarrels were invitations to stay overnight at the home of a friend, and squabbles over 'boyfriends' selected from the few boys in the class. There was no evidence that these were reciprocal relationships. The details, nuances and violence of these quarrels are captured on the video material.

These girls also displayed aggressive behaviour to others outside the friendship group. Both Col and Km are seen on the video material forcing others to allow them to copy their work. M and Km are seen bullying So who was tiny in stature and the butt of many of their jibes.

After the first term, Col did not choose Km as a friend. Over the time of the study, Km became increasingly at risk of physical aggression from Col, Ce and L. On more

than one occasion, two of these girls held her while the other kicked and punched her. The other girls and teachers reported these incidents independently. The girls reported them in the semi-structured interviews, and the teachers in the informal conversations. The school records also held reports of such events. The verbal aggression directed at Km became more intense over the time of the study. Km is rarely included in the same group as these girls for the activity sessions shown on the video taped material. This was her preference. Therefore, many of the name-calling and insults episodes are reported only in retrospect in the discussions recorded on camera. There are several extended episodes of gossip about Km involving this group of girls.

One of the other girls in this group played an influential part in the social dynamics of the group. L was not considered as aggressive by the teachers or the girls as Col or Cl. However, L is seen on the video material inciting quarrels, introducing and extending gossip and generally causing friction between the girls in this group. She was a very active troublemaker whose influence was not fully understood by the girls or their teachers.

In the questionnaires, L nominated Col as her best friend but this was not reciprocated in the first term as Col had formed a dyad with Km. Many instances of spiteful comment made by L towards Km are shown throughout the video material. These comments may stem from jealousy of Km's friendship with Col in the first term. In addition, Km was an attractive girl, proud of her good looks and advanced physical development. Her recorded conversations show her to be attention seeking. This was the opinion of her teachers, especially those who attended the residential field trip. They gave several examples of her vanity. This may have been at the root of some of the antagonism she aroused among the other girls. Km sought admiration from both the

boys and the girls in the class. This behaviour incited many quarrels with the other girls in this group.

Ce was nominated as popular by several girls in the semi-structured interviews due to her ability to settle quarrels and restore order to this volatile group. Her skills as a mediator were not mentioned by the teachers. They seemed unaware of her skills and positive influence on the group. In addition, she was popular as she had ideas for activities and she was a competent organiser. She was considered trustworthy and fair minded. Ce and Cl formed the only reciprocal dyad for best friends that lasted throughout the study. There are instances of aggression between Col and Cl, some of which involved Ce. Several remarks made in the video taped sessions show how jealousies erupted quickly between the girls on occasions when Ce invited Cl home for the night. It appeared that both Col and L felt left outside this close friendship.

M was not included in the group until the last term of the study. She became closer to Col at this time due to her willingness to attack Km. This was suspected by the teachers. She is seen on the video material making derogatory comments about Km. Comments made by the other girls in the semi-structured interviews, and by the teachers in the informal interviews, stated that M behaved in a pompous manner, overestimating her abilities and insulting others more vulnerable. She was not trusted and she was considered immature by all as she sulked if her wishes were thwarted by the other girls or teachers. M and Km float on the periphery of the groups, usually finding a friend for a time, but neither was embedded in a stable friendship.

In summary, the group had a high profile in both the school and neighbourhood, due to the factious nature of the group, and the high level of aggression and conflict of the individual girls. The root of these conflicts was the jealousy between the girls concerning their friendship choices in addition to their competition for the boys in the

class. Evidence of this is on the video taped material and given in the comments of the girls and teachers in the interviews.

In the last term of the study, Col and Km had both outstripped the other girls as far as physical maturity. Separately, they had formed friendship bonds with older boys and girls and relied less on their classmates. This did not lessen the conflict that continued into their next schools.

Group: Ky, CS, CWh, La, So, G

In contract to the aggressive group, the above girls formed a loose friendship group known as the 'baby group'. This name was allocated to them as the core members, Ky, CS, often chose to play more immature games than the others in the class.

The membership of the group changed frequently, causing dispute and conflict. This group was as volatile as the group of more overtly aggressive girls. Ky and CS were the girls who took decisions on the membership, yet their mutual friendship was conflict ridden. The sociogram material shows that Ky and CS chose each other as friends for three terms of the study when offered 'best friend plus one other' choice. The sociometric material shows that CS chose Ky more often than Ky chose CS, and that Ky was more popular than CS. This put her in a more powerful position from which to pick and chose friends. Ky's babyish behaviour irritated the more mature girls. This led to her being rated unpopular by some as well as popular by others. CS was not as popular as she was considered spiteful.

The video taped material shows that Ky and So were smaller than the rest of girls in the class, being physically immature for their age. They were also developmentally immature, although there were significant differences between the two girls. Although Ky was tiny in stature, she was a confident girl. In the semi-structured interviews, she said that her mother had told her that she must 'stick up for herself' and not rely on her

172

to sort out her difficulties with the other girls. Ky interpreted this as permission to use physical means in self-defence. She said that her mother had told her to 'fight her own battles' so she did. In the interviews, one of the girls described Ky as a 'good little fighter'. Another girl confirmed that 'Ky can stick up for herself'. This was one of the reasons given by the girls for why she was not bullied.

Ky was the most powerful girl in the group and took on the role of a leader, although none of the girls considered that the group had a leader. The girls did not nominate anyone as leader when asked in the semi-structured interviews. However, it was Ky who decided who could play in the group at any time. She was also the girl who stated her decisions forcefully about the games they should play. If her wishes were over-ridden, she would go off in a sulk. Her sulks and moods could last a couple of days.

Ky's power as leader of the group, or the most dominant member, lay in her positive qualities. Ky had a very bubbly personality. She was outgoing, friendly and gregarious. Ky was an attractive girl with long, blond, curly hair. She was lively and active, moving around the group during the activity sessions, taking a keen interest in all that was going on. She was always singing, laughing and joking. She often acted in a silly, immature manner to entertain the other girls and to cover her embarrassment at her mistakes. The video taped material shows that she was not academically able and relied heavily on others to help her with her work. Once she understood the instructions, she would complete the work as well as she could. For this reason, the others were willing to help her, unlike Km, whom they considered lazy.

Part of Ky's popularity lay in the fact that she was a skilled conversationalist. The video taped material shows her including all in her conversation. She looked around the group when speaking, and asked those who had not made a vocal contribution for their

opinion. The video taped material shows her giving good eye contact when speaking or listening, her body movements were appropriate to encouraging communication. Her hand, face and body movements were explicit and expressive. Ky formed a communication net around any group, drawing them together into an activity by questioning and commenting on what everyone was doing. There was no evidence in the semi-structured interviews that the girls were aware that these processes were in progress, or that they were instrumental in creating the positive mood that Ky's presence often gave to any group. However, all the girls questioned about her in the semi-structured interviews, said that she was popular because she was friendly and generous. Ky was quick to share sweets and games. She is seen doing this on the video taped material. She would also offer to help the girls with their work although she was not academically able herself.

Ky's popularity was also due, in part, to her ability to think up ideas for games, organise them and carry them out successfully. Several girls mention this in the semi-structured interviews. This skill was important to the success of their play. Although not stated by the girls, it would have been a covert reason for her acceptance as leader. As with Col, although troublesome and quarrelsome, any group would be less cheerful and lively without her presence. Some girls, such as La, thought that some of her games were immature, being about witches and dragons, but there were always other girls vying to be included in the group.

The sociometric circles show that Ky is placed in the centre, or nearby, for all four terms of the study. This illustrates her popularity. One of the most popular attributes was her excellent singing voice. The video material shows that she is frequently singing in the activity groups, or being requested to sing. On one occasion, several of the girls ask her if she would like to sing professionally in later years.

However, Ky's other attributes contributed to the conflict in the group. She could be disloyal and tell tales about others. She is seen on the video taped material changing allegiance in a dispute. She supports CS against La in an argument although CS is clearly in the wrong. Ky would interpret this as loyalty to CS, although La had been her friend earlier in the week.

Ky's moods were well known. In the interview with the researcher, the class teacher reported that Ky's truculent moods and stubborn nature, displayed when things did not go her way, were troublesome. Many instances of this were reported in her desk diary. The teachers on the camping trip said that she was a troublesome influence on the others when thwarted. Ky herself said that she was moody and this caused trouble at home.

Although Ky was the most influential in the group, CS was also a powerful girl. The sociometric circles confirm that CS was not as popular as Ky. The other girls in the class offered little comment about CS in the interview. CS was a troubled girl who had described her life as a nightmare. In the semi-structured interview, she said that her family was bullied by the family living upstairs. Much of her influence came, vicariously, from her friendship with Ky.

None of the girls recognised the power CS wielded over the group although they reported her in the semi-structured interviews as being truculent and moody. CS's power came from her ability to set one girl against another in the discussions and conversations. She picked out features of appearance or behaviour to ridicule in the hope, or expectation, that others would follow suit. Ky would do so if she had quarrelled with the target girl. The bond between Ky and CS, that formed the core of the group, stemmed from their preference for imaginary, immature games. The others in the group, or on the periphery, would try to persuade them to play other games. If

they would not, more mature girls such as La, would go away to find another activity or companion.

CS appeared jealous of La and used their different choice of secondary school to attack La by spreading rumours about the one chosen by La. Details of this unrelenting process are tracked on the video taped material. The obvious jealousy shown by CS may have stemmed from her aggravation about La's choice of a school of high repute. However, the source may have lain in jealousy of Ky's long-standing friendship with La. As they were neighbours, Ky and La often played together in the evenings.

One aspect central to the instability of the membership of the group was the bond between Ky and La. On the video taped material, Ky asks La to call for her that evening. She is clearly persuading La who appears reluctant to comply. The diagrams of the reciprocal dyad friendship bonds, shows that, in the first term, Ky and La are close friends. In the two following terms, La chooses Ky as a close friend but this is not reciprocal as Ky chooses CS. In the final term, Ky and So form a bond after being together on the camping trip.

The intricacies of the friendship between Ky and La show the advantages of the multidimensional design of the study. The sociometric diagrams would give the impression that Ky was in the more powerful position of the two girls. La considered Ky her best friend in the class for three of the four terms, but she often played with others outside the class. In the semi-structured interview, La said that if Ky and CS were involved in a 'baby game', she would go to find her sister as she thought these games silly. La was a mature and confident girl who did not depend on Ky for friendship. However, the conflict between CS and La, possibly due to the jealousy of CS over Ky, resulted in a situation where one girl would leave the group if the other arrived.

La was well liked and respected by all the girls. Many positive comments were made about her in the interviews. However, she was not as highly rated in the popularity measures as would be expected. This was because she spent a lot of time with her younger sister, especially if the other girls were involved in an activity she did not find interesting. La was more mature than most of the others and spent a lot of time on her own. She was self sufficient, but this did not draw antagonistic attitudes from the others. She was able to defend Km and G from the more aggressive girls, and would defend So if she were aware of the bullying. The other girls did not attack her but respected her values.

Other girls such as G and CWh, hung around the group. Sometimes invited in but at other times they remained on the periphery. G was a girl who had entered the school within the year of the study. She had found it difficult to find friends although she had come from another area in the town. In the semi-structured interviews, G explained that La had 'taken me under her wing'. G was very grateful for this and described how generous and kind La was to her. Other girls attributed these sentiments to La in the interviews. G remained a loyal supporter of La and chose her as 'best friend' for three of the four terms. Only in the final term was this reciprocated.

The girls in this group were lively and talkative. The video material shows them chatting and singing throughout all the activities. Analysis of their conversation shows that Ky triggered and joined in many of the name-calling and insults directed to Km. Jealous snipping between CS and La led them to be the highest users of rumour. This was the result of their habit of entering into a verbal duel about their choice of secondary school. They traded rumours about these two schools. Each girl would deliver a positive rumour about the school she had chosen, countered with a negative rumour about the one chosen by her opponent. This verbal duelling both indicated, and

escalated, the tension between the girls that seemed to stem from jealousy over their friendship with Ky.

Group: Sa, N, Sh, Km, Cm, CWh

The core relationship in this group of girls lay in the firm friendship of Sa and N who were cousins. They were proud of their relationship and mentioned it several times in the conversations on the video material. Throughout three terms of the study, they had a reciprocal dyad relationship. They had always been close friends, according to comments made by the teachers and the girls in the semi-structured interviews.

The friendship was not without tension. This was due to other girls waiting to enter into this close relationship. N appeared to be the favoured girl as she gained more choices than Sa for best friend. Sh was very fond of N in the first term of the study. Sh had been admitted into the school at the start of the study as her family had moved into the area from Scotland. During the semi-structured interview, she expressed her gratitude to N and Sa for looking after her at that time. She had felt under threat and was pleased to have made friends. She said that her parents told her to look after herself. Later, Sh gained a reputation for aggression in that she would get her brother to defend her. It was not clear to the teachers whether this was a defensive or aggressive mechanism. Sh chose N as her best friend on the sociometric questionnaires, but not Sa, even when she was allowed two choices. There appeared to be jealousy between Sh and Sa. As Sh continued to look around for friends, she moved on to seek a friendship with Km. In one of the activity sessions, she is seen asking Km to be her friend several times. At this time, Km repeatedly asked Sa to be her friend.

When Km was rejected by the girls in the aggressive group, as the result of a quarrel with Col, fully reported in the conversational material, she moved towards Sa for friendship. N and Sa welcomed others playing with them, but it is clear that they

retained the dyad relationship. The video material shows that they sat together in all the activity sessions, sharing ideas and work. Their conversation was often disputatious, as they squabbled over sharing space, materials and attention from friends. Their conflict talk took the form of grassing to the camera, or threats to grass in a bid to gain advantage for their own point of view, or to encourage one another to comply with their wishes. This on going squabbling, seen on the video recordings, seemed to occur because they spent more time as a close dyad than others in the group.

The multidimensional style of the study gave an insight into the personality of N that would otherwise have been lost. N was viewed by the class teacher, and others, as an 'appendage' of Sa. This opinion was given in the semi-structured conversations. The picture of N given by the teachers was very different from that given by the girls in their choices for best friend, and in their comments in the semi-structured interview. In fact, N was perhaps the more powerful of the two girls. She rarely offered her opinions in class as frequently or as confidently as Sa, but a very different picture was gained of her from the video taped sessions than that held by the teachers. N would gain and hold the attention of the other girls in the activity groups even though she spoke quietly. They listened to her ideas and acted on them. The teachers did not see the confidence, humour and lively contributions N made to the social life of the class. N was remarkably quiet in the presence of the teachers. In fact, the class teacher made the remark in the interviews that she was worried about the extent that N was over-shadowed by Sa.

Both girls were respected by their classmates and teachers. Unfortunately, Sa was troubled by the break-up of her family throughout the latter period of the study and had begun to steal. This was revealed in the semi-structured interviews by a couple of the girls. This happened only a couple of times. La thought it was because of the upset at

girls. This happened only a couple of times. La thought it was because of the upset at home. Sa's mother had left the marital home and her father had threatened to commit suicide.

There was a separation between N and Sa in the last term of the study. The other girls made no comment about this in the semi-structured interviews. Sa still chose N as best friend although N chose CWh, who had always been on the periphery of the group. Cm also chose N. Sa and N were going to attend different secondary schools at the end of the term and this may have led them to develop other friendships. However, Sa had still chosen N as her best friend.

Sh made an interesting, and unsolicited, comment about the two girls in her interview. She said that she liked to play with N and Sa as they 'didn't cheek the teachers' and that they 'didn't get you into trouble'. Incidental comments such as this could be missed if the detail of social interactions are not collected and considered from a number of sources. Such seemingly incidental comments add much to our understanding of the social relations of young girls.

Vignettes of Selected Girls

These studies are compiled from the same sources as the profiles of the friendship groups given above: the sociometric material, the semi-structured interviews conducted with the teachers and girls, and the information gained from the video taped material. Only two vignettes are presented here as a profile for each girl is given in Appendix 1.

Col

The findings of the semi-structured interviews, conversations with the teachers, and informal observations carried out by the researcher throughout the time of the study, show Col to have the highest profile among her peers. In this context, profile is defined as the amount of non-repetitive information collected about the girls. This was far

profiles drawn up for each girl as presented in the Appendix. These profiles contain all information given about each girl collected from comments given by the girl herself, or from those given by others. The comments about Col are distinguished by the frequency and degree of violent conflicts mentioned concerning her. The remarks contained in her profile are cross-referenced; her own remarks about herself cross-referenced with the comments of her peers and teachers.

An example of this is that Col's teachers and peers considered her the most aggressive girl in the group. Both groups gave descriptions of the same incidents where Col was the instigator of aggression. Col herself, unprompted, gave her own version of these incidents and did not deny her aggressive attitude. She had a self-image of being the 'hardest in the school' even though, at the start of the study, she had not reached the final year of primary school. In the semi-structured interviews she said, 'I haven't got the fright in me'. She also spoke of another occasion where the reason she gave for attacking another girl was that, 'My fist just came out'.

The sociometric charts show the pattern of movement within the friendship groups. This information indicates that Col had stable friendships but that she was not in a stable dyad as were some of the girls. In the first term, Col had a dyad relationship with Km that soon ended. The video taped conversations show that the degree of jealousy between Col and Km intensified over the following three terms. Threats of serious violence were issued to Km from Col. By the final term, Col had made several physical attacks on Km who became so afraid that she had to be escorted home by other girls. At one point, the parent of a girl from another class drove her home by car. This information is given in the video taped conversations and is replicated in the semi-structured interviews with the girls.

Col had the loyal support of L and a dyad relationship is identified in the sociometric questionnaires between these two girls over three of the four terms of the study. Even in the first term, when Col and Km were close friends, L voted Col as her best friend. The video taped conversations hold many examples of L courting Col's friendship and approval. However, Col herself wanted the close friendship with Ce that only Cl enjoyed. This is not evident in the sociometric diagrams, but the video taped sessions show that Col chose L as her best friend because Ce was in a dyad relationship with Cl. The multidimensional aspect of the study identified this as a source of conflict. This skewed weighting in the dyad relationships led to jealousies and arguments that erupted into frequent, aggressive outbursts.

Most of the quarrels occurring between the aggressive girls were to do with these friendship dyads. These mainly concerned 'sleepovers' where close friends would stay overnight at each other's house. Invitations to stay overnight at a friend's house were highly prized, and rejections and omissions led to violent and longstanding conflicts. Lengthy discussions about these invitations are on the video taped conversations. Girls would accuse each other of stealing friends away. The semi-structured interviews held with each girl in private, showed that they found this the most worrying aspect of life in school. They named trust and loyalty as the most prized characteristics of a friend.

Col had the support of her cousin, a boy in the same class. He had influence over other boys who would support him when he went to Col's aid. The class teacher identified that Col, Km, Ce and Cl all aggravated each other. However, the video taped conversations identified L covertly stirring up trouble between these girls. There are many instances of L accelerating the quarrels by issuing provoking comments. The quarrels may have stemmed from L's jealousy of Col's wish to be friendlier with Ce. However, the sociometric findings show that Ce was in a stable dyad relationship with

Cl. The taped conversations, and the comments of the teachers and the girls, all show that the quarrels were most often triggered by unimportant matters but would quickly blow up out of all proportion. At one point, Col aggravated Km to such an extent that the latter threw a chair at Col knocking out two of her front teeth. This is reported by the teachers, the rest of the girls and the two protagonists themselves. The incident is also discussed at length on the video taped conversations.

Surprisingly, the semi-structured interviews indicate that Col was not as unpopular as were some less aggressive members of the class. She was never without votes when the girls were asked to nominate their friendship choices at the start of each term. In the first term, she received most votes when they were asked to nominate their best friend plus one other. In the interviews, the other girls described Col as entertaining and amusing. The video material shows Col to be the central figure in any group, laughing and joking, talking over past events or planning the next escapade. The comments of the girls in the semi-structured interviews show that she was highly regarded as a lively and entertaining companion. The quality stated in the semi-structured interviews as her most valuable quality was her intense loyalty to her friends. These friends changed, but whoever she was close to, she would defend at all costs. This was a quality prized most highly by the girls.

In the semi-structured interviews, several conflicting comments were made about Col. This can be explained by the attitude of individual girls to her behaviour. Some described her as aggressive, whereas others said that she was not aggressive but a good friend who would offer help if needed. If she was a friend of the respondent, she was considered loyal as she would attack others in defence of a friend. However, those not on good terms with her would consider themselves at risk of attack.

There were numerous and varied instances of Col's aggression observed on the video material and reported throughout the time of the study. She is seen on the video material forcing more vulnerable girls to let her copy their work. She not only physically attacked girls on the way home from school, but there were many attacks in the play areas and parks in the neighbourhood. Such incidents were mentioned in the semi-structured interviews by other girls and noted in the desk diary kept by the class teacher. In addition, some were related in the informal interviews held with the teachers who ran the after school clubs and those who went to the camp.

The other girls were aware of the more obtuse modes of conflict employed by Col and some of her friends. They reported such instances in the semi-structured interviews held in private. The more perceptive girls described the oblique mode of her attacks on others. She would force one girl to challenge another so that she would not be blamed for the attack. She would challenge a girl in public to call her abusive names so that she had a rationale for attack. Col had a wide repertoire of aggressive behaviours that she used to intimidate others and maintain her powerful position in her fights with the other girls. This gave Col enormous power and influence in the class in addition to her being physically strong enough to win in any physical confrontation. These issues were discussed in the semi-structured interviews and with the class teacher who noted the events in her desk diary.

Col's immediate and extended family were reported as being very aggressive, both in the semi-structured interviews given by the girls, and the informal interviews held with the teachers. Her classmates related several instances of severe aggression involving her family. In the interviews, Cl talked of her mother being attacked by Col's mother in the street. Cl said, ' Her mother was going to bash my mother'. Col also quoted these instances to indicate the quality of reprisals from her family members she

could draw upon if provoked. The girls were all wary of her family. Km stated in the semi-structured interviews, that Col's father, and the other males in her family, went weight lifting (to keep physically fit in case of trouble), and that they were always involved with the police for stealing. All in the neighbourhood were aware of such happenings as news travelled fast. This consolidated the reputation of the extended family.

Many of the girls in this class had a reputation for taking excessive care over their appearance. The teachers described Col and Km as particularly vain. This vanity was evident when they accompanied the girls to residential camp. The interviews given by the teachers showed that Col spent the most time getting ready to go out. She even looked in car windows to check on her appearance when in the street. The teachers reported that she and Km were always to be found in front of a mirror.

Although Col looked as physically mature as Km, the teacher observations, collated from discussions following the residential camp, indicated that Km had developed a more mature attitude than Col in several respects. Km appeared to be less interested in the disco held in the camp as she was beginning to take an interest in friendships with much older girls and boys. Col only showed these interests later in the year. This maturity only surfaced in specific areas of functioning as both girls continued to seriously aggravate each other until the end of the school year when they left to attend separate schools.

Col ranked only average for the giver of insult, gossip, rumour and grassing. This may have been because she did not hesitate to use physical modes of attack. The abusive language she used was primarily directed towards ridiculing Km in her absence. This caused a great deal of amusement to the other girls as Km became increasingly excluded from the class group over time. Col made abusive remarks to So but, as with

those she made about Km, they were couched in humour. There was no evidence on the video material, or mentioned made by others, that Col had made any physical attack on So although there were reports of their mothers fighting in the street.

The profile of Col shows her to be a most interesting girl with conflicting personal qualities. These positive and negative attributes were powerful and influential in the class. The multi-dimensional approach to the study allowed a full examination and appraisal of Col's personality that would otherwise have been lacking.

M

M was known to be an aggressive girl although she tried to hide this from the teachers. Although well proportioned, she was well built and rather large. At times, the others accused her of bumping into them. This may have been due to her clumsiness and build, but often it was the result of a deliberate action. M used this as a type of covert aggression. In the semi-structured interviews, La describes how she repeatedly, bumped the basket she was carrying into her while onstage during the school play. This was an aggressive attack and known as such by the girls. Several mentioned such incidents in the interviews when asked about aggressive girls in the class. If the girls complained and she was challenge by a teacher, M would deny that the attack had been deliberate, claiming that the 'bump' had been accidental.

Actions such as this had resulted in M being described as deviant, untrustworthy and disliked in the semi-structured interviews held with the girls and in the conversations held with the teachers. Together with Km, M roved around the periphery of the two main friendship groups in the class. The aggressive group became impatient with her 'bossy' attitude and rejected her. In the final term she formed a dyad with Col as they were to attend the same secondary school. An additional reason may have been her willingness to support Col in her aggressive attitude towards Km. On occasions, M

186

was included in the 'baby' group, but her more mature attitude did not suit the games these girls played.

The main reason the girls gave in the interviews for disliking M, was that her truculent personality brought about conflict. She had previously attended a private school. This was unheard of among these girls. M thought herself superior in home background and intellect to the others. The video material shows her giving directives to the others and distributing unsolicited advice. M thought herself the cleverest in class. The class teacher, and the others on the residential field trip, volunteered the information that M had claimed to do the best work. The teachers said that she was clever, but not as clever as La, and certainly not as clever as she thought.

The analysis of the conversations shows that M gave a high proportion of the insults in the class. These were made to the more vulnerable girls such as So. M also spread gossip about the research. This was quashed quickly by La who pointed out an obvious flaw in her argument.

M was a bully who only attacked the vulnerable or absent. The video material illustrates this in showing an episode where she describes attacking a far younger neighbour. She can also be seen in prolonged attacks on So who was extremely vulnerable in both stature and personality. M bullied others on the residential field trip. This was reported by the girls and the teachers. A very close eye was kept on her as she attempted to bully a younger child once her mother had left for home. This bullying behaviour, and her disregard and disrespect for the teachers, was contributory to the dislike of other girls for M. None of the girls liked anyone challenging the teachers in this way at camp. These girls were surprisingly protective and appreciative of all their teachers.

Other girls would check M as can be seen on the video material. The more powerful girls such as Col would forcefully, but verbally, halt her verbal attacks. Ce would take a softer but equally strong defence of the victims. La is seen challenging her misperceptions and misunderstandings. In summary, although an aggressive girl, M's excesses were kept in check by the others. This process led to her loosing credence in the group.

In addition to her bombastic comments and challenges, M was disliked because of her truculence and mood swings. Several of the girls mentioned this aspect of her behaviour in the interviews. They said that she got under the table and sulked when challenged by the teacher in class. The class teacher, and the teachers who had accompanied the girls to camp, volunteered this information in the conversations. They all voluntarily described M as the most difficult girl to manage at camp. When challenged she would be obstructive and defiant. She was wilful and demanded her own way. If thwarted, she packed to go home. One of her most annoying traits was to get ready for anything extremely slowly. This was possibly a power game as others, adults and peers, were kept waiting. M knew of her reputation and described herself in the semi-structured interviews as 'having a temper'. She continued without pause by saying, 'My Ma says I take after my Dad. He has a terrible temper'.

Both M and Col were aggressive, Col in a manner more obvious to the girls and teachers, M in a more covert mode. All found Col more likeable and placed her far higher on the popularity rating. M came second in the rating list for being most disliked. The reasons given for disliking a girl were primarily aggression, and being quarrelsome as second. Col was, undoubtedly, more physically aggressive than M. However, the aggressive girls, such as Col, tended to keep their attacks within their friendship group, according to the comments given by the teachers and girls in the

interviews. M was more truculent and querulous than Col and, importantly, she moved around on the periphery of groups causing trouble in her attempts to break up the friendships. In addition, an important factor was that Col was a lively, humourous companion. She was generous and loyal to her friends. No such comments were made about M. She did not appear to have such redeeming features.

In summary, although she was not seen as the most aggressive girl in the class, M was described by the girls, and teachers, as the most troublesome member of the group.

Instability in the Friendship Groups

One aim of the study was to identify whether or not frequent changes in the dyad relationships of girls occurred as is suggested by Alder and Alder (1995), Harris (1995), Savin-Williams (1979) and Lever (1976). Surprisingly little is known about reasons for this instability in friendships, in dyads, tetrads and small groups (Bukowski, Newcomb & Hartup, 1996; Toth, 1978). These authors suggest that answers may be found in looking at the properties of individuals and the interactions between them. It would seem that research needs to be broadened out to consider the wider social network of the peer group. The small friendship clusters are open to influence, not only from the individuals within the larger group, but to other direct and indirect influences. Earlier authors had recognised that friendships are embedded in a network of peer relationships Moreno (1934) and some current authors are pursuing this approach in stressing the influence of the wider social network (Duncan, 1999; Lee, 1993; Harris, 1995). In one study of adolescent girls, one third questioned said that they had more than three friends, and that by the age of twelve to thirteen, the girls had groups of friends rather than one best friend (Lee, 1993). In the final stages of this study, these girls were approaching this age. It appeared that some had already reached this developmental stage emotionally and physically.

A pattern of fluctuation in the friendship bonds, tracked over four terms, is seen in the following tables 7.1 to 7. 13. The tables show the friendship clusters within the full class of girls. The nominations for all tables were taken from the sociogram material for the first three terms, and from the semi-structured interviews for the final term. When given the opportunity to nominate more than one other as 'best friend', not all girls did so as can be seen from the tables. Some girls did not nominate anyone so have no arrows indicating nominations. The information for tables 7.1 to 7.3 was taken from the sociometric questionnaires for the first three terms, and from the semi-structured interviews for the fourth term. The information for Table 7.5 is drawn from these tables. The individual dyad and triad relationships were examined by extracting only reciprocal choices. Tables 7.1 to 7.4 show reciprocal friendships within the full class group of girls when nominations for best friend plus two other choices were allowed. Reciprocal dyad relationships are marked by arrows and circled. Table 7.5 shows these reciprocals over the four terms of the study presented as a full array. As for the previous tables (7.1 to 7.4) these nominations are for a best friend plus two others. Reciprocal dyad choices are marked by arrows. All the tables show the fluctuation of the mutual choices for friends within the class.

Using the same information as for tables 7.1 to 7.4 Table 7.5 shows how, over the four terms of the study, some reciprocals end, some are begun and some renewed. Such fluctuation within a small group of approximately twenty girls would give reason enough for the anxiety most of the girls expressed about another girl 'sneaking' her friends away. The information given in all the tables shows how others on the periphery of a dyad could be influential in causing or exacerbating any instability. The influence of the wider peer network seemingly contributed to the disputatious nature of the dyad relationships.

Reciprocal choices are marked by arrows and are circled.
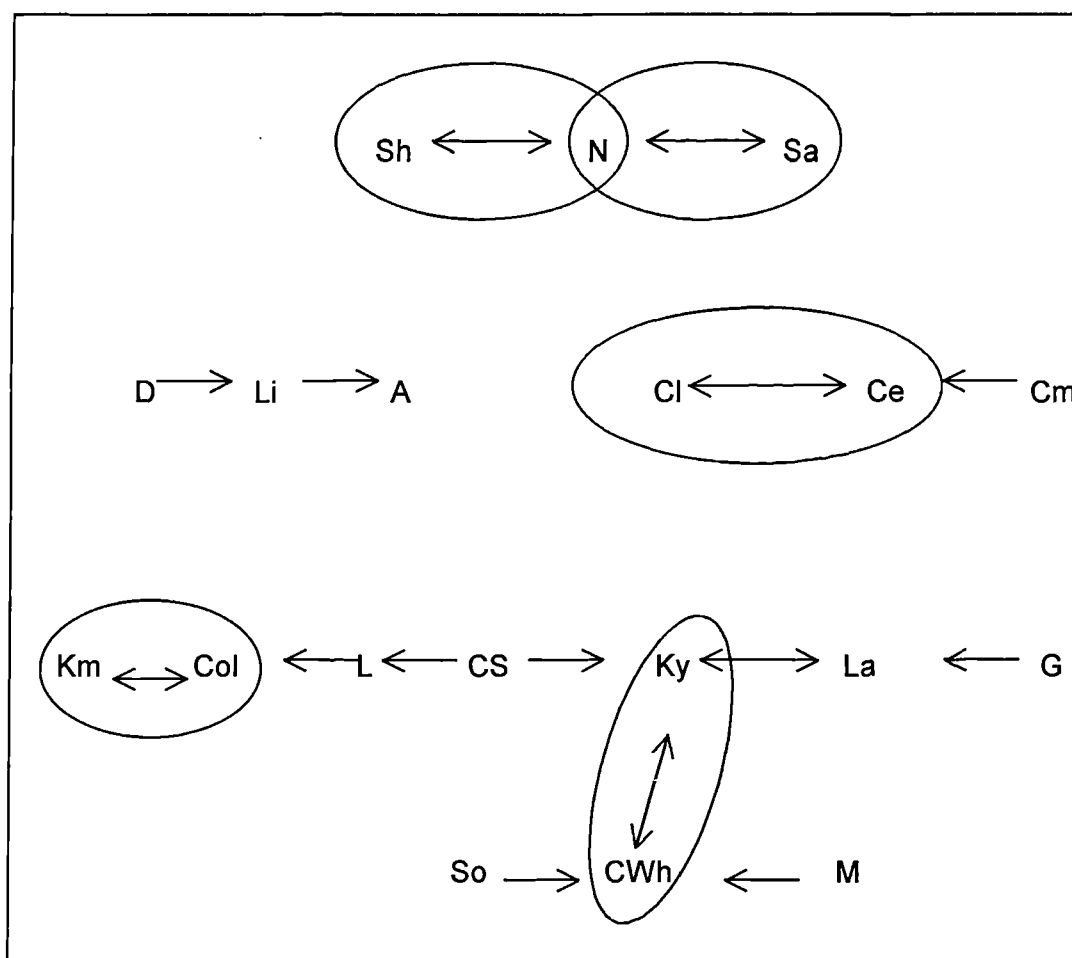
Dyads

Sh ⟵⟶ N

Sa ⟵⟶ N

Cl ⟵⟶ Ce

Km ⟵⟶ Col

Ky ⟵⟶ CWh

Ky ⟵⟶ La

Dyads

N $\longleftrightarrow$ Sa

L $\longleftrightarrow$ Col

Ce $\longleftrightarrow$ Cl

Li $\longleftrightarrow$ D

Cs $\longleftrightarrow$ Ky

Dyads

L	<—>	Col
Ce	<—>	Cl
Li	<—>	D
N	<—>	Sa
CS	<—>	Ky
CWh	<—>	Ky

Dyads

Ce $\longleftrightarrow$ Cl

G $\longleftrightarrow$ La

Ky $\longleftrightarrow$ So

Table 7.5 Changes in the Relationships Within the Small Groups of Friends Over the

Four Terms.

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Sa-N	Sa-N	Sa-N	Sa-N
Sa-Sh			Sa-Sh
Sh-N			Sh-N

	CWh-CS	CWh-CS	CWh-CS
Ky-CS	Ky-CS	Ky-CS	Ky-CS
Ky-La	Ky-La		
Ky-CWh	Ky-CWh	Ky-CWh	

Col-Ce	Col-Ce	Col-Ce	Col-Ce
Cl-Ce	Cl-Ce	Cl-Ce	Cl-Ce
Cm-Ce		Cm-Ce	

Li-D	Li-D	Li-D	Li-D
		Cl - Col	Cl-Col
	L-Col	L-Col	
	L-Ce		L-Ce

Dyads

Sh $\longleftrightarrow$ N

S $\longleftrightarrow$ N

Col $\longleftrightarrow$ Km

Ce $\longleftrightarrow$ Cl

Ky $\longleftrightarrow$ La

Dyads

N ⟵⟶ S

Li ⟵⟶ D

Ce ⟵⟶ Cl

L ⟵⟶ Col

CS ⟵⟶ Ky

Table 7.8   Friendship Cluster Based On Best Friend Plus 1 Other Choice
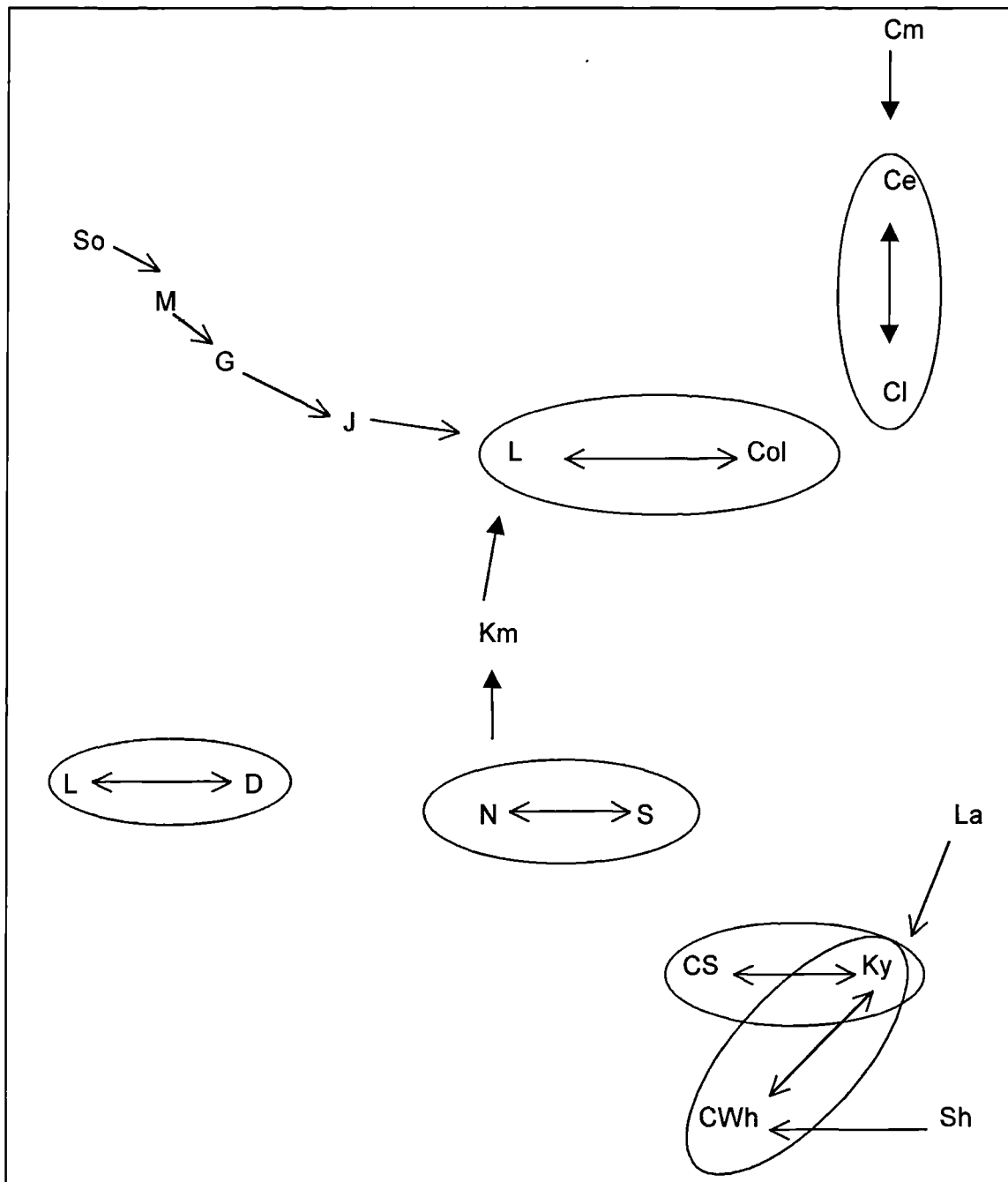
Dyads

Li $\longleftrightarrow$ D

Cl $\longleftrightarrow$ Ce

Col $\longleftrightarrow$ L

Ky $\longleftrightarrow$ CWh

Ky $\longleftrightarrow$ CS

S $\longleftrightarrow$ N
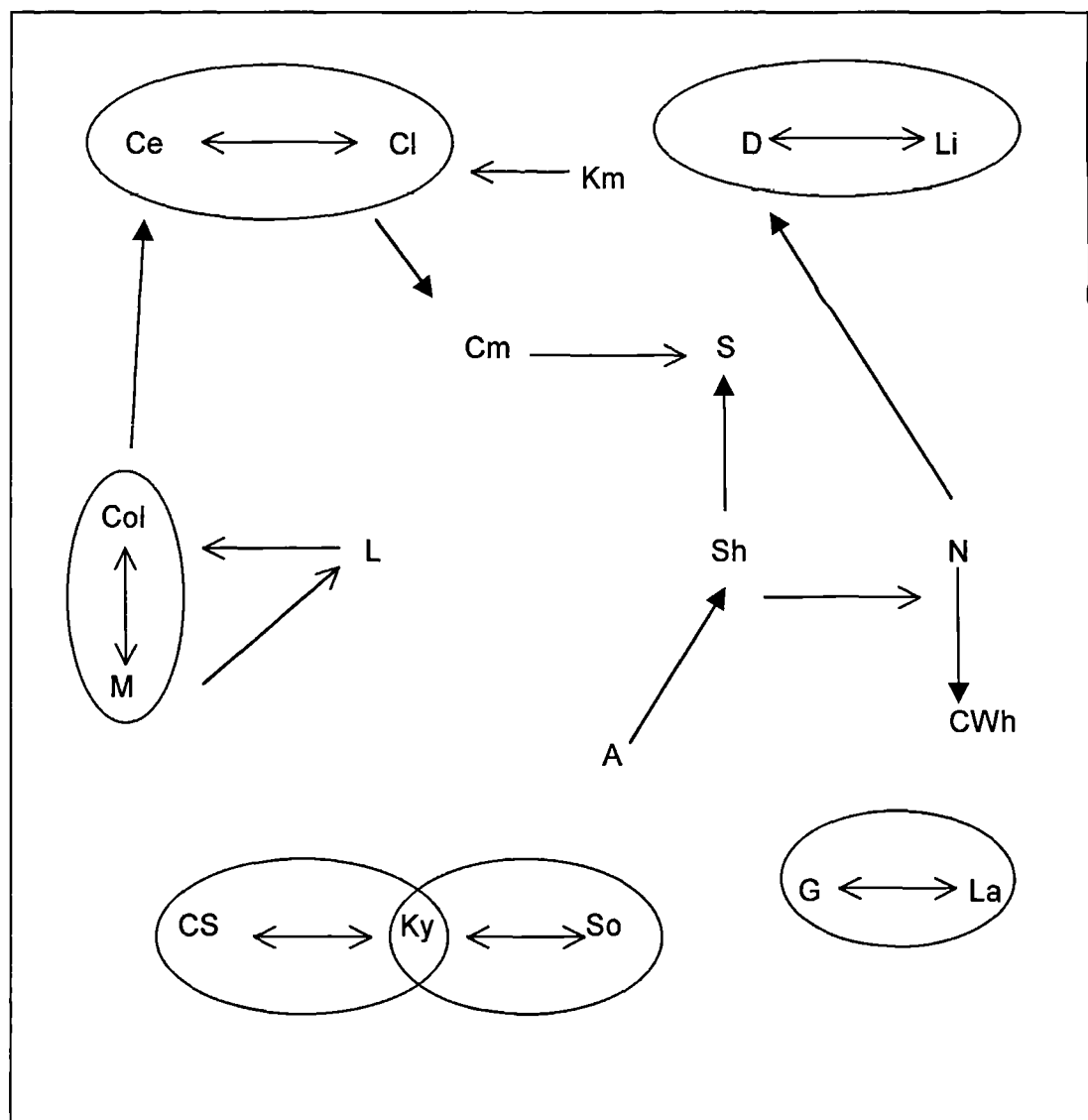
Dyads

L	⟷	D
G	⟷	La
Ce	⟷	Cl
CS	⟷	Ky
So	⟷	Ky
Col	⟷	M
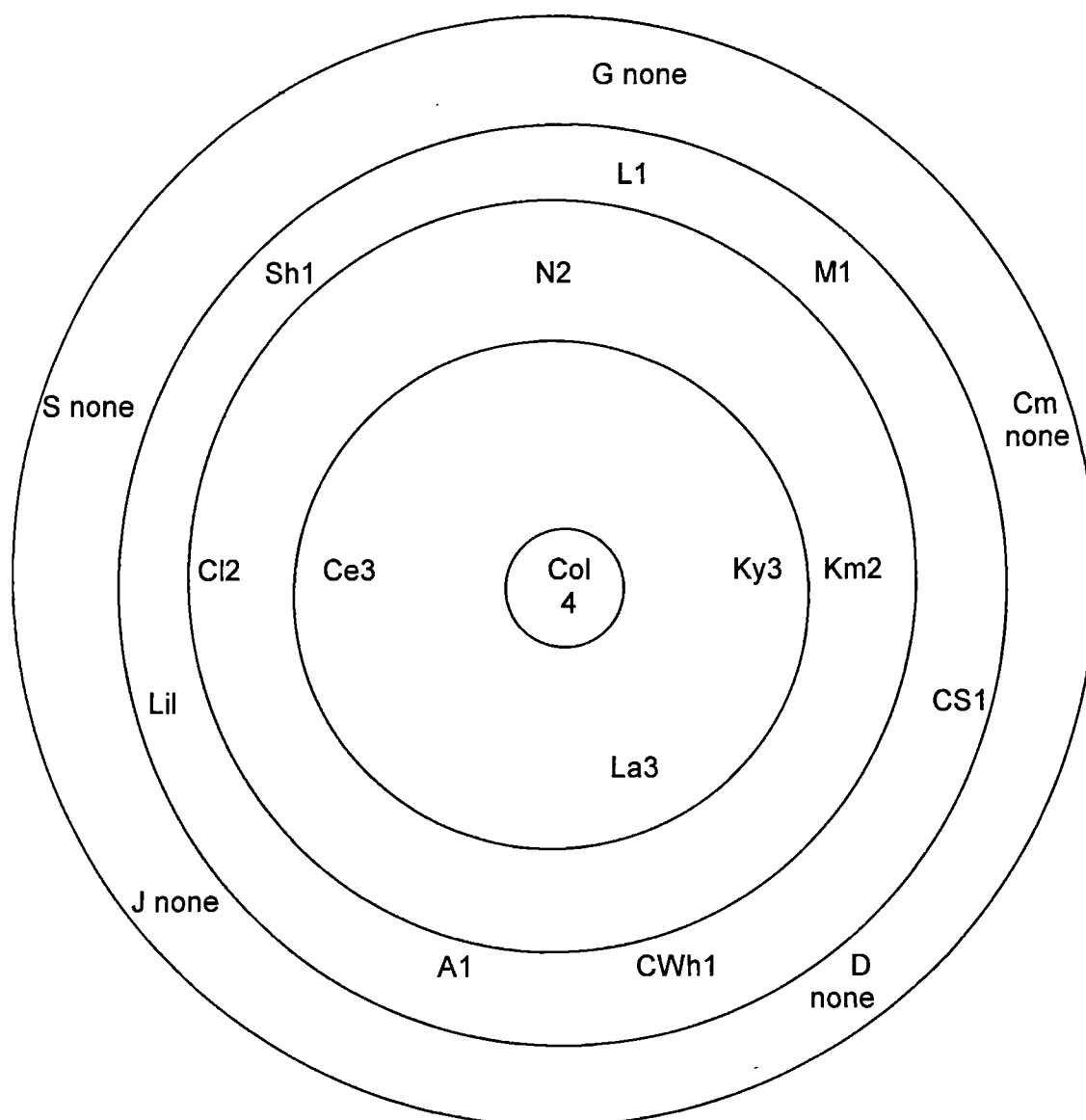
Table 7.11 Sociometric Circles - Best Friend Plus One Other Nomination For Friend
Term 2

Cm none

Ce1

K
none

Cl2

G none

La1

CS2

M none

Ky3

L2

Col 1

Sh none

N2

D1

S2

Li1

S none

CM none
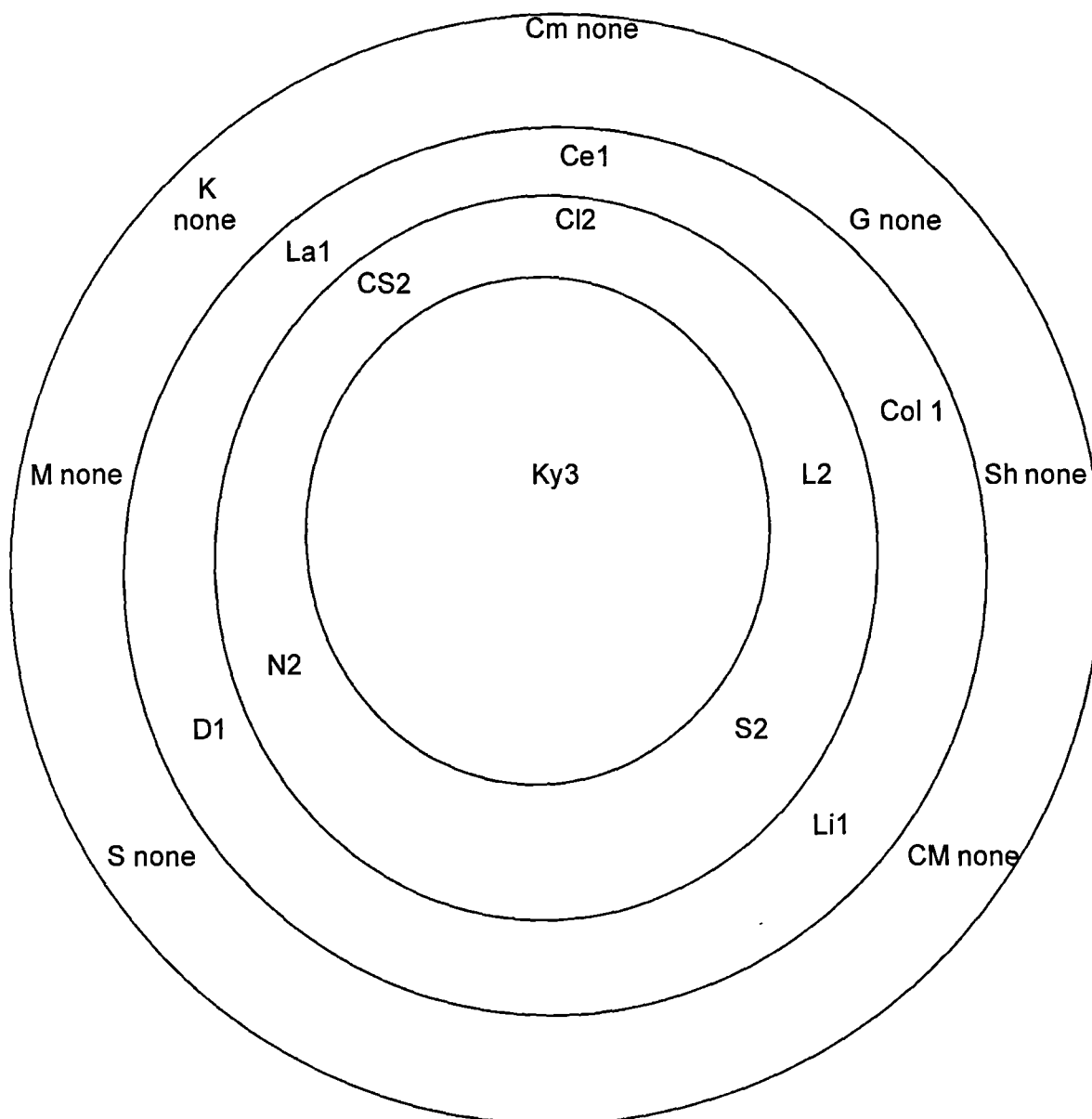
Table 7.12 Sociometric Circles - Best Friend Plus One Other Nomination for Friend Term 3
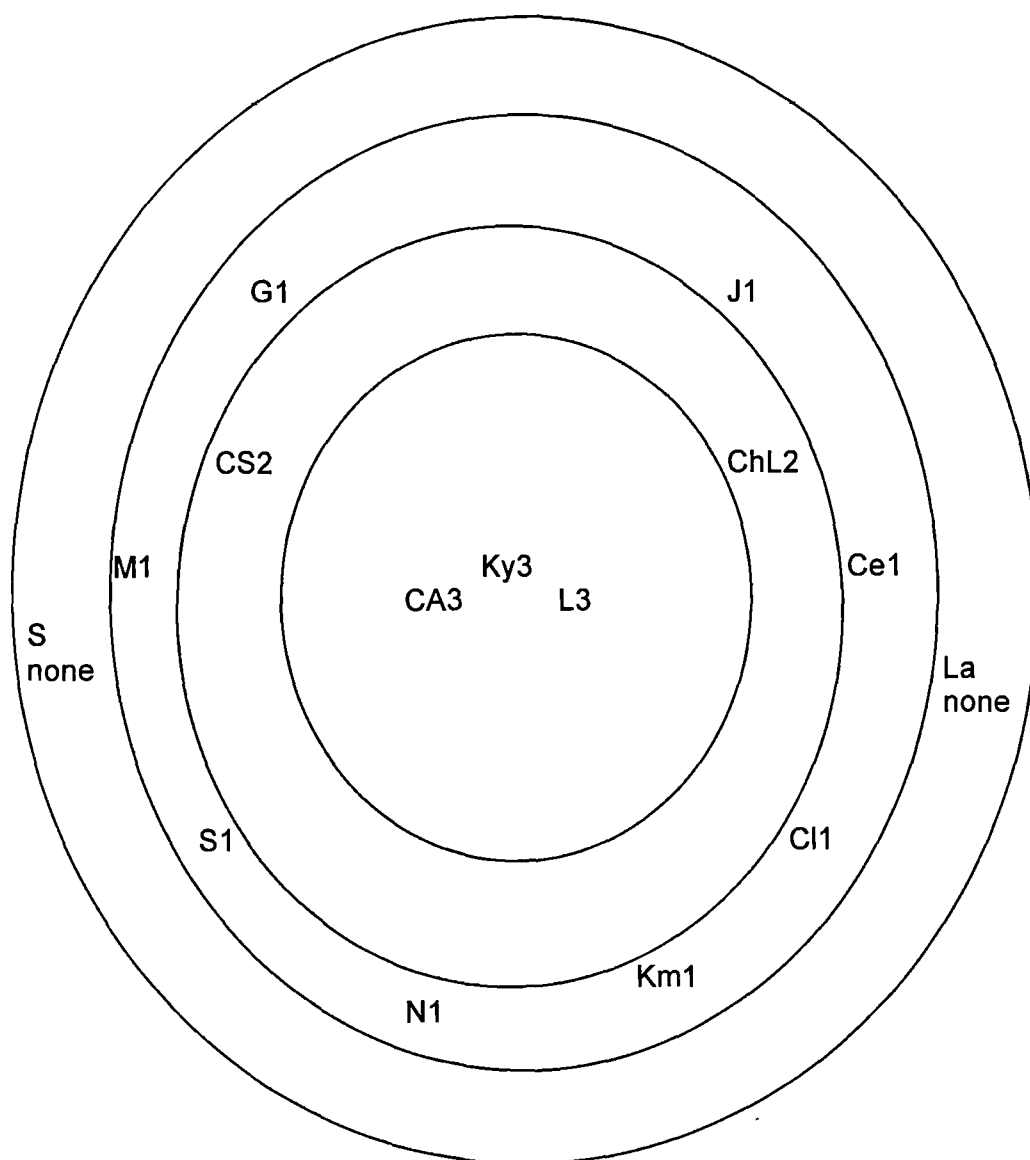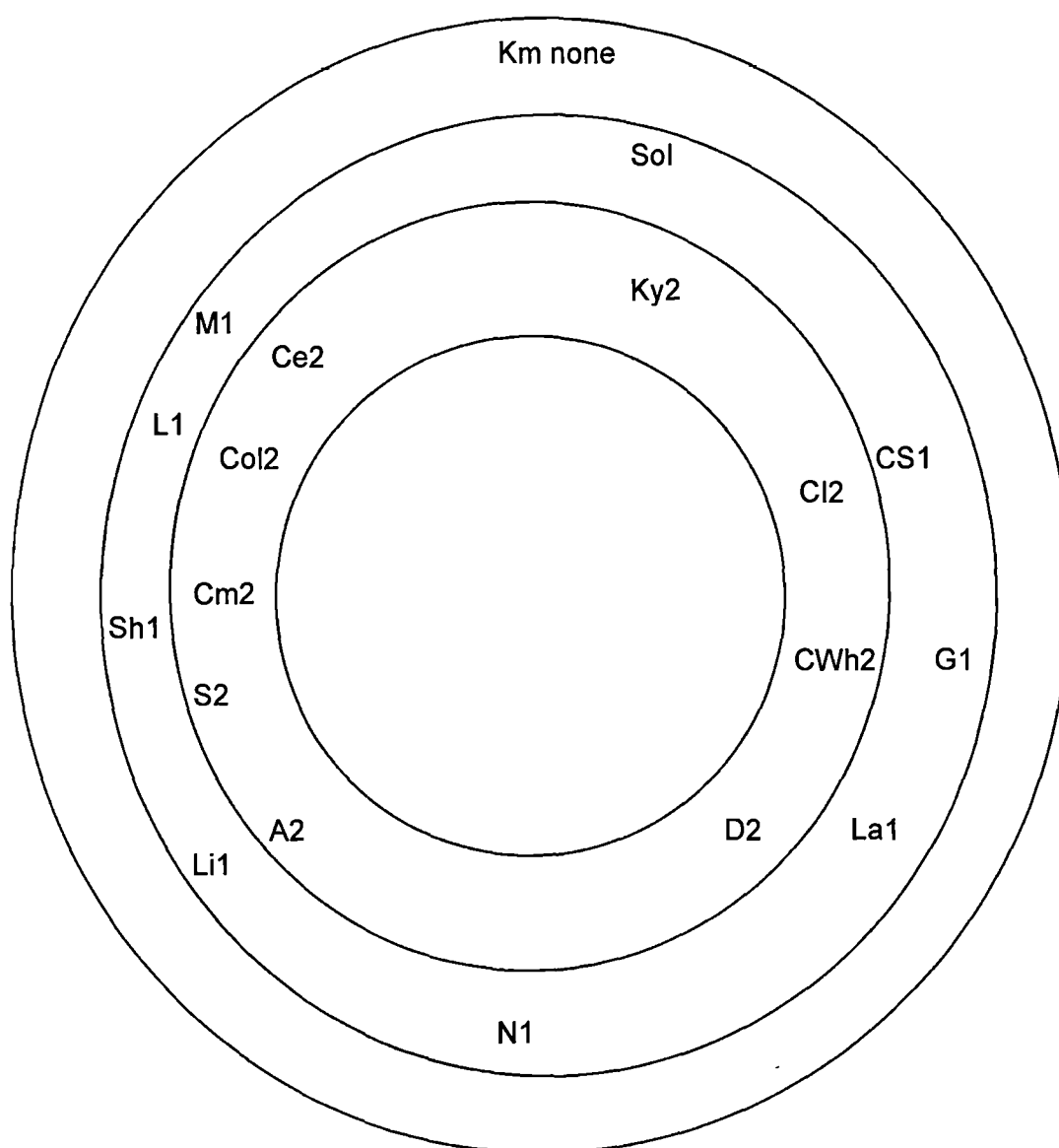
The most disruptive influence in the friendships appeared to be the presence of a third girl alongside the dyad relationship forming a ' triangle of tension' (Toth, 1978). As these girls had been chosen as second choice for best friend by one or both girls, the structure of these triadic relationships was considered. The information in Tables 7.6 to 7.13 shows the nominations for best friend and one other. The information was taken from the sociogram material for the Tables 7.6 to 7.8 and 7.10 to 7.12 and from the semi-structures interviews for Table 7.9 and 7. 13. These tables and the sociogram circles displayed in Tables 7.10 to 7.13 draw on the same information. The numbers shown by the side of each girl record the number of nominations for 'best friend' she received when two choices were allowed. These diagrams give a visual overview of the fluctuating popularity of each girl. The sociogram circles show considerable fluctuation in the composition of both best friend dyads and triads among these girls over the four terms of the study. As for all the tables, although offered more than one nomination, not all girls made more than one choice and some did not nominate anyone.

The tables show that some relationships were stable over the four terms of the study. There were many relationships where there was a nomination for best friend, with a further friend forming a triad. For example, the reciprocal choice of Col and Ce as friends was stable over the four terms, but Ce and Cl were the only two reciprocal 'best friend' choices. Interestingly, although Col was chosen as second choice for Ce, she was not chosen by the other partner in that dyad. It may be supposed that Col was on the periphery of the dyad of Ce and Cl. This could indicate that there was covert antagonism between Col and CW. Ky and CS also had second choices, a factor that unsettled the relationship between these two girls. The girl who was second choice for 'best friend' could contribute to the jealousy and suspicion that underpinned many of the relationships. The tables show these second choices. These girls 'waiting in the

wings' appeared to be at the root of many violent conflicts throughout the period of the study. These groupings form triangles of tension (Toth, 1978).

The full set of reciprocal choices for best friend for each girl, over the four terms of the study, is given in the individual profiles in the Appendix (Profiles). Only one nomination was allowed, as explained to the participants at the time of the administration of the sociograms. This was for 'best friend. When only the single nomination for 'best friend' was accepted, just one dyadic relationship was sustained over the 15 months of the study, that of Ce and Cl. Only three others were sustained for 3 of the 4 terms. Li and D kept out of quarrels between the rest of the girls. N and S were cousins and their families kept in close contact and this helped to gel their relationship. Ky and CS also sustained their dyadic relationship over three terms. Col, regarded by the girls and teachers as the most powerful girl in the group, did not sustain a 'best friend' dyadic relationship over the four terms of the study.

The teachers, and most of the girls, considered that Col dominated the other girls by using her aggression to gain acquiescence or submission. The semi-structured interviews show that other girls may have been equally as influential, but that they operated in a covert manner. One small group of girls was powerful, influential and turbulent. Ce and Cl had a strong bond, being the only dyad to remain intact throughout the study. This caused upset to Col and L who were always on the periphery of this dyad. Km broke into the dyad from time to time by inviting either Ce or Cl home for the night. This usually set up a quarrel between Km and the other girls. L would incite or develop such quarrels with well-placed comments. The girls were sensitive to invitations being issued and reciprocated and these caused tensions that inevitably led to challenges. These challenges are shown on the video material and in the gossip episodes discussed later. Although L was in the group, she did not receive any

nomination from either girl in the stable dyad for best friend, but was second choice for one of them on two occasions.

L was a friend of Col's and nominated by Col as her best friend on two of the four opportunities offered. However, on the other two occasions, Km and M were nominated by Col as best friend. The provocative comments made by L were all directed at Km whom she considered to be a threat to her dyadic relationship with Col. The physical and verbal attacks on Km, by girls in this group, resulted in her becoming increasingly marginalised over the four terms of the study. Km was nominated as best friend by Col on the first sociogram, but not again.

The information shown in all tables was taken from the questionnaires for the first three terms but for the fourth term the nominations were extracted from the individual interviews held with the girls. This resulted in several girls identifying reciprocal relationships for the first time possibly influenced by the choice of the technique used. These relationships may have been present in the previous terms but the choice of the sociogram technique may not been conducive to the girls identifying them in their written responses. Although every effort was made to ensure privacy for the administration of the sociograms, the isolation of the room used for the semi-structured interviews may have been more conducive to the girls giving a more honest response.

One of the reasons for looking into the interaction of the dyad relationships within the full class group was the occurrence of repeated squabbles and conflicts concerning Km and M in relation to their friendships with other girls. These two girls, separately, formed one of the more forceful factors contributing to the disputatious nature of the friendship groups throughout the class. They were often on the periphery of one group or another, making attempts to infiltrate the group, or attempting to entice

a member away to become a friend. At times either would be included in a group, sometimes nominated as best friend, but neither formed a stable dyad over the time of the study. This would cause inter-group bickering. Ladd & Kochenderfer (1996) describe how popular children home in on their friendships and develop relevant social skills because they have the relevant entry skills, or because they are already accepted and so develop further experience. Disliked children are rejected and so develop extensive, but fleeting, play contacts. This is described as being 'bounced' from group to group (Ladd & Kochenderfer, 1966). They never get the chance to learn how to socialise appropriately. On occasion, Km or M, would be the cause of intragroup conflict but, considering the high level of conflict in the full class group, intragroup conflict was relatively rare as the difference in the maturity levels and interests of the girls was so marked. Most intragroup aggression occurred between individual members of different groups, with one or two friends supporting on the sidelines, rather than any group against group conflict.

3. Conclusions

The skills needed to initiate a friendship may be different from those required to sustain the relationship, and the skills required for success may change in character over the developmental stages. The underlying skills related to this would appear to be prosocial skills, sociability and low levels of aggression and emotionality (Asher et al., 1996). This was not found in this study as the only dyad to remain intact over the four terms contained one of the more aggressive and volatile girls in the class. Her partner was also aggressive, although usually in a less overt manner.

Several of the other dyads sustained over two or three terms also contained girls who were aggressive and volatile. However, alongside these negative behaviours, many of these girls were sociable and displayed many sound and positive social skills. This

207

may relate to the findings of Sutton, Smith & Swettenham (1999) who suggests that those who bully others (aggressors) may have a range of effective social skills that may have been underestimated in the past.

Although the sociogram questionnaires were used to identify patterns of fluctuation in the friendship clusters, the rationales and causes of the conflicts, leading to these changes in the friendship bonds, was sought in the interview material. In addition, sources and rationales for popularity (liking a girl) and unpopularity (disliking a girl) were considered. The interviews tapped into the differing self-construals held by the girls, their attitudes to aggressors, victims (those said to be picked on) and triggers for bullying. Unsolicited insights offered by the girls themselves were examined in the semi-structured interviews. These are discussed later.

From the start it became apparent that the cause of many of the conflicts were rooted in suspicion and jealousy. However, what was not clear was the underlying rationale for this ethos of wariness and mutual monitoring. Many of the conflicts in the class were caused by changes, threatened or imagined, in reciprocal friendships. Conversely, these conflicts and arguments, in turn, contributed to the instability of the friendship bonds. The close monitoring of each other inflamed the jealousy that clearly lay just below the surface of the friendships of these girls, setting the scene for volatile reactions to any embryonic suspicions.

One reason for the rapid changes in friendship could have been the imbalance of power in a dyad-triad relationship. A girl who had more than one best friend simultaneously, could be expected to hold more bargaining power over a friend who had no other relationship. This dynamic could cause jealousy and offer a wealth of opportunities for playing one friend off against another. Unsolicited comments showed the concern that many of the girls had about losing a friend. At least one girl in each of

the tetrad friendships said that the threat of her friend being taken away was the most pressing worry about her life in school. Most gave 'sneaking my friends away' as the cause of most distress. They named this as being the most frequent cause of the quarrels. Each girl in a triad specifically named the other girl in the tetrad grouping as being likely to steal away the girl who was the mutual friend. No girl considered this 'sneaking away of friends' as being the responsibility of the lost friend in choosing to break the friendship, but placed the blame firmly on the other girl for 'sneaking' her friend away.

This in itself would be cause enough to ignite a conflict. It may be more difficult to challenge a friend for leaving a friendship by choice, than to attack someone responsible for 'sneaking' that friend away. These comments were unsolicited. This anxiety was identified from the spontaneous responses they gave to the question *'What causes trouble in the class?'* The respondents chose to interpret this question in terms of the most troubling aspect of school life for them. It was evident that most quarrels stemmed from arguments directly connected to the friendships. Enticing friends away from one another was considered unethical and was clearly distressing. Several girls mentioned in the interviews that they were unhappy when they quarrelled with their best friend, and that it was a bonus if their friend was someone who would resume the friendship quickly.

There were two distinctive groups of girls in the class, the aggressive girls and girls in what was known by the rest as the 'baby group'. These girls were not as mature physically as those in the more aggressive group. The rest of the girls in the class formed friendship clusters of a less distinctive character than either the aggressive or the 'baby 'group. The dynamics in the 'baby group' group were equally as unstable as in the group of more overtly aggressive girls. These girls were known as the 'baby group' as

they tended to play immature, imaginary games about witches, dragons and unicorns. The choice of game was usually determined by one dominant girl. If she was present, the girls who did not like these 'baby' games would go away, some in a more truculent mood than others

None of the girls in the class appeared to alter the dynamics of the friendships for the sake of displaying power, as may be more the case in conflicts between boys. The aim seemed to be to gain a friend, whether or not this was at the expense of another. However, if the intent was to deliberately cause distress to another girl, this would be an abuse of power for its' own sake. There were incidental comments made throughout the study on the video material, and in the interviews, to this effect. This would be a further reason for the fluctuation in the friendship dynamics.

The content of the interviews, and the gossip episodes, shows the girls had rules and expectations that were mutually understood concerning their friendships. There were expectations of reciprocity, empathy, trust and support, any violation resulting in the sanction of breaking the friendship or a face-to-face confrontation. Deliberate or unintentional breaking of these tacit contracts contributed to the instability within the groups.

The major cause of the high profile conflicts among the girls was a competitive attitude that manifested itself in a variety of ways. As stated earlier, the girls in the 'baby group' were just as disputatious, but far less physically aggressive, than the group of aggressive girls. The other girls in the class fell between these two groups in levels of maturity. As would be anticipated, the more mature girls had different rationales for their aggression than those less mature (Campbell, 1995). Several authors have identified an intensely competitive attitude among girls in relation to boys (Lees, 1993;

Duncan, 1999; McRobbie & Garber, 1976). McRobbie and Garber write that their best friend relationship, and their ability to attract and compete for boys, was the most important aspect of the lives of the girls they studied. They name this the 'bedroom culture' of girls

However, it was apparent that the more mature girls in the group took a greater interest in the boys than the less mature girls and, in addition, drew more interest themselves from the boys. The video material shows these girls ranking boys according to their attractive, athletic, physical presentation and evident sexual differentiation (Weisfeld et al., 1987). Incidental conversations that did not fall into the brief of this study, but that can be inspected on the video material, show that there was intense, aggressive competition for these boys among the more physically mature girls. This may have been because there was a ratio of 2:1 in the class (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Campbell, 1995; Daly & Wilson, 1994). This competition is said to be exacerbated where there is a low socio-economic rating of the neighbourhood, resulting in few good male providers, as was the case in this locality (Draper & Harpending, 1988).

The earlier maturity of girls than boys of the same age meant that the boys in the class did not reciprocate this interest to the same degree (Savin-Williams & Weisfeld, 1989). Most of the attention from the boys seemed to stem from the cousin of the most aggressive girl acting as go-between, directing their attention to her approaches. Towards the end of the study, the more mature level of the physical development of some of the girls, such as Km and Col, compared to the boys in the class, led them to seek older boyfriends (Savin-Williams & Weisfeld, 1989). They moved steadily out of peer relationships into friendships with older and more precocious girls and boys.

Although these girls were only 10 to 11 years old, they may have assimilated a

211

learnt pattern of competing for the best males and resources. The recorded

conversations, plus comments in the semi-structured interviews, showed a high level of

instability within the group of mature girls that was due to the aforementioned rivalry

directly or indirectly attributable to boys. The video material in particular, but also the

gossip episodes, show the high frequency of the boys as a topic of conversation and the

focus of quarrels. A similar pattern of conversation was identified in older females

(Duncan, 1999). Although the most 'mature' girls focussed their conversations on boys,

thus causing disputes and conflict, the jealousies and arguments were not always based

on fact but on fantasies concerning boyfriends and relationships. I have found this a

common factor in bullying among girls of this age or older. As there were few boys in

this class the rivalry was intense. The resultant emotional effects may be particularly

dramatic when some of the girls have querulous and volatile temperaments, and only a

few boys are the focus of their attention, rivalry and jealousy.

Other pressures appeared to contribute to the tension and stress and the instability

of the relationships. The semi-structured interviews revealed that all the girls had a

perception of whether or not they had friends, a measure of the quality of their

friendships, and how they stood in relation to the other girls in regard to friends. Such

perceptions could have triggered feelings of jealousy, isolation and failure.

In addition, there was a self-imposed academic pressure among the girls in the

form of an awareness of success or failure. Several spoke of not being able to do their

work. The class group as a whole were informally acting as peer mentors and tutors,

there being a tacit expectation among the girls that those who could manage the

academic programme would help those who could not. These pressures may have

contributed to the instability and querulousness of their relationships.

The disputes arising in class spilled out into the homes and locality, and those initiated in the community made their repercussions felt in the school. Physical fights in the street between the mothers were common. Some of these are described in the profile section of the Appendix(Profiles). These fights among the families triggered off yet further disputes and conflicts between the girls and, in doing so, further contributed to the fractious nature of the friendship groups. Some of the girls felt it essential to uphold the family reputation for being 'hard' and not 'losing face'.

In summary, the information drawn from the sociograms and the semi-structured interviews tracks the unstable friendships of the girls showing, as anticipated, a pattern of fluctuation and conflict in the friendship bonds of these girls. There were several reasons for this instability. For example, the more mature girls concentrated their attention on competing for the relatively few boys in the class. The reasons for the unstable nature of the friendship bonds among the less mature girls were different, but equally to do with jealousy in relationships.

It appeared that many of the girls found solace and support in talking to their friends about issues concerning their family. Several girls commented on their unhappiness when they quarrelled with their friends. Secure friendship seemed essential to their happiness. Cross and Madson (1997) compare the facets of friendship deemed important by the girls in their studies (self-disclosure, expressiveness and empathy) to a needle and thread that is used to stitch together warm and supportive relationships. The value the girls placed on the support and comfort they gained from their friendships made them guard closely such a prized possession as a close friend. This contributed to the jealousy and suspicion underpinning the quarrels and conflicts

4. Leaders

Pertinent to an analysis of group dynamics is the role of leader. The role of the leader is of great significance in understanding how the conflict processes described above are initiated and established (Simmel, 1964). The role individuals take, or are allocated, within groups was studied by Bales (1958). He observed that each role allotted was dependent on those taken by others in the group. There would appear to be gender preferences for leadership style: males prefer autocratic leadership, whereas females prefer a democratic and empathic leadership style (Tannen, 1994). Adult males are said to be more concerned with immediate problem solving than establishing and maintaining group harmony; whereas women use more collaborative interchanges to make decisions and resolve difficulties (Eagly and Karau, 1991).

The concept of leader, as outlined in the American studies of Eder (1985) and Alder and Alder (1995) is challenged by the results of this study. In each of the above studies there was a stereotypical leader, having recognisable characteristics and a predictable pattern of attitudes and behaviour. The leader in the groups could incite a dispute, arrange the exclusion of a girl from the group, or welcome back a past member or a new entrant.

There are differences in the leader characteristics between these studies, but each proposes that there is an identifiable model in place. The present study reflected more the work of Savin-Williams (1979) who found that within a large group of girls, several small groups would be functioning somewhat independently. This study also showed that there were different types of leaders in the small groups, some having more than one leader, each with a different, influential, role to play. For the purposes of this study, the term leader is used to denote power and influence. When mentioned in informal conversations with the girls, at various times throughout the study, they did not

recognise the term leader. The suggestions given below are drawn from observation of the informal interactions in the group; who was ignored, defied, listened to, sought out to give advice or support, or help with curriculum matters. This information was obtained and collated throughout the period of the study. The retrospective analysis of the video material and semi-structured interviews provided further insights.

There was no formal structure of power in this class, as in prefect, class captain or monitor. A leader in a group was in place only by common consent. Each group had at least one girl who would be allowed, or even urged, to make the decisions. The choice would depend on who was present. Even so, the process would most often be conflict ridden and disputatious. There were various friendship groupings acting more or less independently, due to a difference in interests and activities, with little interaction between the groups. The number of groups, and their constituent membership, changed from time to time. Some girls were always on the periphery of the groups for a variety of reasons

Studies of girls regularly congregating together show that one will emerge to take on a leadership role (Charlesworth & Dzur, 1987). These authors found that some girls would often gain more than a fair share of scarce resources. They were less likely to be leaders due to skills relating to 'toughness', and refusals to back down in confrontations, as was the case with boys. These girls possessed other leadership qualities. In this study, no one girl held control or power over the full class group that may have contributed to the fractious nature of the interactions. There were no obvious leaders in the small friendship groups although each small friendship group had one or more powerful girls with skills relevant to the specific dynamics integral to that group. In most groups there would be others who would take over a leadership role from time to time.

One girl was by far the most dominant presence in the full group. She led partly by fear. Many girls commented on her aggression. However, she deferred to another girl in the group on occasions. This dominant girl was not academically able. She is seen on the video material at a loss when faced with some of the work tasks, submissive and seeking help from others. Her leadership skills were in taking decisions concerning the social curriculum that ran in parallel to the work agenda. She created the fun, the chatter and laughs, and she took decisions about the instigation and outcome of many of the disputes. In this role, she was undoubtedly the powerful force. She enjoyed some degree of genuine popularity as she was fun to be with for most of the time.

One girl took on a less obvious leadership role alongside the girl described above but her power and influence was not identified by the teaching staff. Her role in this group may have made her the most powerful girl in the class. Many of the girls wanted to be her friend. She is seen on the video material using proficient mediating techniques, challenging the most aggressive girls to keep to facts when they were exaggerating, and to behave appropriately and fairly. Although one of the aggressive girls, she prevented many of the proposed attacks on others. Her power may have been due to her skill in controlling these aggressive girls. It may be that this girl was the more powerful of the two as her presence in the group was the more stable although the other led the girls in aggressive attacks on other girls. The dominant girl was more querulous, moving in and out of the group as a result of disputes and conflicts.

One girl was powerful in the 'baby' group, described earlier, as she was fun to be with due to her sense of humour and her generous, gregarious and playful personality. She was influential in deciding who could play in her group, and in choosing the game or play activity. This girl was the mirror image of the popular girls described earlier in the American studies of Alder and Alder (1995) and Eder (1985). She was extremely

physically immature, there was no indication that she owned more material possessions than anyone else, she was not conventionally pretty nor was she academically able. Although influential, she was not considered a leader in the way the girls were in the American studies.

Another girl in the same group was powerful but she was a fearful, troubled girl with problems at home. She once said 'My life is a nightmare' in all seriousness. She could dominate this group but was not liked as she could be spiteful and jealous. Some would leave the group if she arrived. She was a more overtly dominant leader than the other girl whose power lay in her popularity across the class due to her bubbly personality. She was accepted readily in most other groups. This was a major factor in the fluctuating dynamics of that group as the other girl was not able to do this and remained in the one group where she retained some control. These two powerful personalities in the one group led to frequent disputes, sulks and complaints to staff, and fluctuation in membership.

One girl had a leadership role as both teacher and mediator. She is witnessed in this role on the video material reasoning with protagonists in disputes. Her skills helped to stabilise the group. If the girls were in difficulties they went to her for support or advice as she could reliably defend and protect those in need, and help in intellectual affairs such as in the creating and sorting of ideas. The conversations revealed that this well liked and respected girl does not figure prominently as very popular on the sociograms. She would remove herself from the fray and play with her sister in another class. She was not in a leadership role all the time as she usually took on the role by request.

Another girl had similar leadership qualities. She misunderstood the instruction given to the first activity group when the girls were asked to decide among themselves

the activities they would like included in the programme for the coming weeks. This girl was used to taking decisions for others and mistakenly took on the role of teacher. As can be seen on the video material, she taught the group of six girls throughout the whole one half-hour session in a professional manner. The girls frequently turned to her for advice and instruction for both academic work in the classroom and for suggestions for playground activities. She is shown as second on the list for most liked girls (Table 7.15). Unfortunately, she was often the target for Km who would try to elicit support from others to attack her verbally or physically. This girl was not the leader of a group although a leader in some situations. She played in a closed dyad with her cousin N that was divided by the arrival of a new girl. She did not name her cousin as her best friend in the last term.

In summary, the grouping of the girls, and the role of leader in these groups, shows a different pattern to that given in the American studies (Alder and Alder, 1995; Eder, 1985; Goodwin, 1990). Not only were there several friendship groups in the class, but there were several types of leader. In addition to the leaders, other girls held influential positions in the groups. It seemed that leaders evolved to match the character and need of each individual group, in a variety of situations. However, the instability within the groups meant that a leader could lose influence for a time, to re-emerge as powerful at a later stage.

The cause of the conflicts in the American studies related to the role of the leaders in the groups. The groups in this study had leaders who could incite conflict and manipulate the dynamics in the group to include or exclude specific girls causing instability and a pattern of fluctuating membership as shown in the American studies. However, the leaders and the group members in this study also encompassed a wider brief, fulfilling a range of functions that were both positive and negative in their

manifestation.

5. Popular and Unpopular Girls

To supplement the information on the fluctuation of reciprocal friendships, sociogram questions were designed to tap into other aspects of friendship such as popularity and rationales for liking and disliking others. There has been some confusion in the literature about the overlap in working definitions of peer friendship, acceptance, liking and disliking, popularity and unpopularity (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996). This semantic confusion has been compounded as studies have used differing research designs and populations; children at differing ages, developmental stages, single-sex or mixed gender. Definitions, as in friends, playmates and work colleagues, have lacked clarity. There is now a recognition that questions about popularity and friendship tap into different aspects of children's peer relations. An aggregation of friendship nominations is not the same as popularity among peers, nor a lack of them an indication of rejection ((Berndt, 1986; Bukowski & Hoza, 1989; Parker & Asher, 1993a). Children may be generally well accepted but have no close friends, or have a few friends and allies although they are not accepted by the majority of their peers (Asher, Parker & Walker, 1996). Friendship implies reciprocity of choice, whereas popularity and liking is evidence of a collective index (Ladd & Kochenderfer, 1996).

Care is needed when approaching the issue of unpopularity to avoid highlighting stigma or rejection. These girls closely monitored each other's every move, so the issue needed extreme sensitivity. The questions in the sociograms were phrased carefully to lessen the possibility anyone overhearing suspecting that they were unpopular. In the privacy of the individual interviews, each girl was asked directly whom she did not like in the class. The frequency of responses given in the private interviews shows a marked

219

difference from the responses given for the sociograms. It would appear that the girls were far more honest about admitting to not liking someone in the private interview, despite the precautions taken to ensure as much privacy as possible for the sociograms. This is particularly marked as the highest nominations are for the most aggressive girls.

Comments culled from the interviews with the girls showed them to be confused about the concept of 'popular' and 'unpopular'. When asked who they thought was popular in the group, and why, some girls gave the consensus opinion of others in the class rather than their own view. The question was rephrased as 'Who do you like in the class?' and 'Who do you not like?' This was done to ensure that each girl was giving her own opinion of others regarding who she did or did not like, in addition to who she thought was popular or unpopular with others. For example, several girls said that everyone thought the most aggressive girl was popular as she had many friends. Only a few girls had come to the conclusion that the 'friends' may not have been true friends but acolytes seeking protection. Two girls said that her popularity stemmed from wise judgement as to cross her could be risky. The information was volunteered that she had friends due to her threatening behaviour, it was better to be her friend than enemy. One girl said that it was wise to compliment her on a new hairstyle or clothing if you didn't want to get hit. These three were possibly the most intelligent girls in the group. All three had responded to the question separately and in private.

Some girls were nominated as disliked because of their aggression, but later nominated as liked if they had entered a fight in defence of the respondent. Some girls were nominated as disliked because of their aggression, but later nominated as liked if they had entered a fight in defence of the respondent.

Lists of popular (liked) and unpopular (disliked) girls have been drawn up as shown in Table 7.14 and 7.15. Figures for these tables have been collated from the nominations in the sociogram material in answer to the questions 'Who are you particularly friendly with in class?' and 'Who would you prefer not to sit next to this term?' As these may not be reciprocal choices the question may tap into popularity, or wishful thinking, rather than valid friendship. For the fourth term the figures are taken from the individual semi-structured interviews in answer to the questions 'Who do you like in class?' 'Who do you not like in class? Up to three nominations were allowed. The correlation of responses between the sociogram responses and those given in the individual interviews, suggest that the questions tap into the same information.

In some cases the opinions were clearly biased but this does not cancel the validity of the nominations as quarrels over friendships was one of the major causes of relegating a girl to unpopular status and excluding her from a group. This highlights the advantages of using a longitudinal and multidimensional design.

There were some unexpected findings as several girls, clearly well respected, did not gain a high rating in popularity. Conversely, one or two girls, disliked outside a transitory friendship, gained higher scores than anticipated. One unexpected finding was that some girls received nominations for being both popular and unpopular. These girls were liked by some girls but disliked by others, attaining high scores for both categories. The group of aggressive girls scored surprisingly highly in the popularity list perhaps because they formed a tight, although fractious, group that was always the largest friendship group in the class, each girl voting for the others. There were plenty of girls on the periphery of this group, waiting for invitations to join, who may also have increased their scores.

Table 7.14 Girls Ranked in Order of Nominations for Being Liked

Name	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Total Votes
Ky	4	8	5	5	22
S	8	4	4	5	21
Col	4	4	4	6	18
Cl	6	6	3	3	18
L	4	6	5	6	18
Ce	4	5	5	3	17
N	4	4	4	4	16
CS	5	5	4	2	16
La	3	5	2	3	13
CWh	3	4	3	2	12
Km	4	3	3	2	11
Sh	2	3	1	4	10
D	3	2	2	2	9
Li	3	2	2	2	9
M	1	3	2	1	7
G	2	-	3	1	6
Cm	1	2	1	-	4
So	-	-	-	4	4
A	3	abs	abs	abs	3

Table 7.15 Girls ranked in Order of Being Nominated for Not Being Liked

Name	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Total Votes
Km	5	10	5	7	27
M	4	6	3	8	21
So	4	1	2	10	17
Col	1	4	-	8	13
Cm	1	3	3	2	9
Sh	2	-	3	3	8
Ky	1	2	1	2	6
La	-	-	2	2	4
L	2	1	-	1	4
CS	1	-	2	1	4
G	1	-	1	2	4
A	3	-	-	-	3
CWh	-	1	2	-	3
Ce	1	1	1	-	3
S	1	-	1	1	3
D	1	1	1	-	3
Li	1	-	1	-	2
N	1	-	1	-	2
Cm	-	-	1	-	1

The high level of votes some girls gained for both popular and unpopular nominations may relate to other research findings. A group of children with similar profiles has been identified and described as 'controversial' (Coie, Dodge & Coppotelli, 1982). Controversial children have the characteristics of disruptive and aggressive behaviour that are unpopular with their peers, but they also have positive qualities that often put them in the role of leader (Coie, Dodge & Coppotelli, 1982; Putallaz & Gottman, 1984). Some of these girls were aggressive bullies, as can be seen on the video material. These findings underscore the contention that bullies are not necessarily unpopular with everyone (Olweus, 1979). The qualities of amusing, kind, having good ideas for games, were attributed to some of the aggressive girls by those who allocated negative qualities to them. The abusive comments made by some of the girls to those more vulnerable could be seen as amusing and entertaining by those not in the firing line. The most aggressive girl had a good sense of humour, often used at the expense of another. Any group was less lively in her absence. One factor of seeming importance was that this girl was considered to be loyal to her friends. If she was your friend, you could depend on her for support in trouble.

Recent work on the concept of theory of mind would dispute the myth of the bully being asocial, a loner, or one in need of emotional support. The recent work of Sutton, Smith & Sweetenham (1999) found that the profile of many bullies indicated that they had a range of social skills. Bullies may need to understand the complex dynamics in a group, to identify the weak points of both the target and possible defenders. The well aimed cutting comment, the use of humour to denigrate, and the ability to elicit or commandeer group support, all demand a range of social skills that could be used in a pro-social manner in other circumstances. Leadership skills are often required of a bully. However, leadership may or may not be democratic whereas bullying is always

an abuse of power. Not all those who bully would have access to such pro-social skills but the representation of some girls high in the lists for both popular and unpopular, would suggest that they had a range of social skills that could be used in a positive or negative manner.

Girls in stable dyads appeared to be popular as they had a predictable vote from their dyad partner. Conversely, the two girls who 'floated' around the groups always found someone to regard them as a friend at any one time.

6. Underlying Constructs for Liking and Disliking Girls

A further aim of the interviews was to identify the constructs underlying why the girls liked or disliked each other, how they interpreted themselves and each other, and to gain an interpretation of their constructs in relation to the changes in the group dynamics. Findings from recent studies suggest necessary features of friendship vary widely (Ladd and Kochenderfer, 1996). It was decided that the clearest picture about their friendship choices would be gleaned from the girls by asking why they liked or disliked other girls in the class that they had nominated in these two categories. These constructs, allocated to each girl by others, are given in the Profiles (Appendix).

Constructs Given For Liking A Girl

There were thirty-seven constructs supplied by the girls for liking others. The seventeen constructs are given ranked in order of nominations (Table 7.16). The other twenty constructs gained only one score each.

In response to the question ' Who do you like in class?' The most frequent response was 'My friend.' Several girls gave the answer ' Because she's friendly'. The girl was then asked what she meant by 'friendly' or what it was about the girl that was likeable. There were forty-three responses given in this way. The second most frequent response was that the girl was kind. This gained eleven responses whereas the next

response in order of frequency gained six. The importance of being kind is noted in several previous studies (Asher et al., 1996; Bukowski, Newcomb & Hartup, 1996; Hartup, 1993; Parker & Asher, 1993; Sullivan, 1953). This may be relevant to the body of research on exchange theory (Laursen, 1996). Although classified under a variety of names, it would seem that reciprocal kindness was an important construct of friendship for these girls.

The next most frequently nominated category was willingness to play gaining six nominations. Playing interesting games only gained two responses, although Rubin (1980) considers it an important element contributing to popularity.

When asked why they liked a girl, six girls simply replied 'because I like her'. Although this seems tautological and requiring further probes, 'being likeable' is considered one of three necessary conditions for enjoyable and rewarding friendship along with reciprocity and having fun (Bukowski, Newcomb & Hartup 1996). The generous spirit and sense of fun, identified in the reasons for liking her, earned one girl not only nominations for the most popular girl, but also protected her from attack. Two girls were tiny in stature and could have been targets for bullying. In fact, only one was, not only because she was tiny, which was the reason the girls first gave, but because of other features of her personality discussed later in the section on bullying.

The subsequent cluster of responses to the question of why a girl was liked all concerned issues of protection and well being. Being trusted to keep secrets was mentioned frequently as being important. The girls valued the intimacy close friendship offered. They told each other intimate details about their lives at home and gained comfort and solace in this way. All the girls had a clear code of conduct concerning the keeping of family secrets, and telling secrets featured largely in disliking a girl. However, there was a powerful sense of ambivalence in many of the girls.

Table 7.16 Constructs Given For Liking a Girl

Construct	Votes
friendly	43
kind	11
likable	6
plays with you	6
keeps secrets	5
helps you	5
protects you	5
doesn't quarrel	4
not bossy	4
makes me laugh	3
a leader	3
doesn't get you into trouble	3
plays good games	2
makes up quarrels quickly	2
can talk about problems	2
can stick up for herself	2
doesn't tell tales	2

Nearly all reported that being able to confide in a friend was important, yet these same girls were apprehensive about their relationship breaking up, and their former friend betraying their trust. A friend carrying secrets abroad was not only a betrayal of trust, but it could lead to the girl getting into serious trouble at home. Lees (1993) found that girls defined a friend as one they could trust. The greatest crime was betrayal and a breach of confidence. The instability in the friendships of the girls in this study meant that there was a constant threat of secrets being publicised.

The video material shows evidence of close bonding within many of the families despite suspected levels of interfamilial aggression. Several girls were very protective of younger siblings and their mothers. One girl would not tell the teachers of any bullying in case the aggressors attacked her younger sister as a reprisal. Another girl illustrates her pride in her mother when she says, 'My ma can be reasonable. She deals with things at the door, but her ma just barged in my house and dragged my ma out.' The girls needed to talk these things through with close friends in an atmosphere of trust.

Being ready to offer defence when a friend was under attack was also a very important role for a friend to play. The older girls in Lees (1993) gave loyalty and 'sticking up for a friend' to be the characteristics next most important in friendship after trust. A girl who was able to stick up for herself was viewed favourably and rated as popular, perhaps because she would not need as much protection from her friend as would a more vulnerable girl.

The girls were very protective of their somewhat disputatious friendships Not being quarrelsome was mentioned as a positive quality, and making up a quarrel quickly was valued. Being amusing and fun came lower down the list than expected as this is one of the three factors mentioned by Bukowski, Newcomb & Hartup (1996) as

being most important in peer friendships. Not being bossy was a positive quality. Being bossy would relate negatively to the concept of mutuality and equality as noted by Laursen (1996). Being bossy was viewed differently from leadership that was a quality noted as contributing to popularity. One of the more intelligent girls said that power attracted popularity. Being a leader may have meant as much to do with offering protection against the more powerful girls as the intrinsic qualities associated with leadership.

An unexpected feature given as contributing to liking a girl was that of her not getting another into trouble. It was said of two girls 'you don't get into trouble if you're with them'. Telling tales, both grassing and telling lies, was not tolerated by the majority of the girls. Gossiping was rarely mentioned yet the girls gossiped about each other. This included telling tales, telling secrets, lying about others, and calling people behind their back, all of which could form part of a gossip sequence. These behaviours were disliked, and subsequently sanctioned by the initiation of acrimonious disputes, that appeared to contribute to the instability in the friendship groups.

The characteristics nominated as most likeable in others are associated with a female, interdependent self-construal as discussed earlier (Cross and Madson, 1997). Being friendly, kind and likeable; trustworthy and protective; amicable and even tempered are relevant to an interdependent self- construal. Most of the less overtly aggressive girls showed the relevant characteristics associated with an interdependent self-construal; a sensitivity to needs of others, and an interest in the relationships of others. This would support the hypothesis of Cross and Madson, that there is an identifiable self-construct shared by females. However, most of the girls shared characteristics of a male self-construal although these were nominated as disliked characteristics as can be seen in the table below. This is discussed more fully later.

Constructs Given for Disliking a Girl

There were forty-three individual constructs supplied by the girls (Table 7.17). The fourteen constructs given are ranked in order of number of nominations. The other nineteen constructs only gained one, two or three scores each. The constructs as allocated to each girl are given in the Appendix (Profiles).

The overwhelming response to being asked why a girl was disliked pertained to aggression and quarrelsome behaviour. There were forty-three responses naming aggression. As can be seen from Table 7.17, in addition to the various types of overt aggression that were listed as most disliked qualities, these girls were well aware of the damaging effects of covert forms of aggression and bullying. Km received a particularly high score in the final term due to the privacy of the interview allowing a more open response to the questions, and her increased marginalisation over the year by the rest of the girls.

All the characteristics listed in Table 7.17 were in full display in the two girls most disliked in the class over the period of the study. These two girls were more disliked than the more aggressive girls. An interesting insight offered by some girls was a distinction made between these two girls who were indiscriminately aggressive, and those who tended to keep the aggression between themselves. Several girls said that the most aggressive girls rarely brought the rest of the class into the quarrels, and that one or two would only fight to support a friend. The class teacher confirmed that the quarrels between the most aggressive girls tended to be within the group. These girls constantly fought among themselves, unable to let a quarrel rest. This may explain why they were more popular than expected.

Table 7.17 Constructs Given for Disliking a Girl

Construct	Votes
aggressive	43
quarrelsome	40
frightening	18
stirrer	13
bossy	9
shows off	8
calls people names	7
tells tales	7
tells secrets	7
in a gang	7
sneaks your friends away	6
calls you behind your back	5
lies	4

The two most disliked girls were physically strong and powerful so most girls were wary of them. One could be overtly physically abusive, whereas the other attacked in a covert manner, rarely resorting to overt physical violence. For example, she would attack other girls by knocking into them 'accidentally'. Such actions gave her a rationale to offer the teachers if challenged. As both girls spent a lot of time, independently, manipulating and manoeuvring others in order to gain entry into groups, they were known as 'stirrers' which got thirteen nominations as a disliked characteristic. They were unpopular girls in that they frequently used unprovoked verbal abuse, such as name calling, which gained seven nominations for being a disliked quality. They told tales, both lying and grassing, and neither could be trusted with any secret or confidence. Other negative behaviours were attributed to these girls describing the repertoire of unpopular behaviour used in their attempts to manipulate the group dynamics. Both were considered bossy, which gained nine nominations for being a disliked quality. Two girls said one tried to 'treat others as slaves'. Both were described as spiteful, mean and unkind, all qualities rated as undesirable.

These girls would fall into the category described as marginalised children (Asher, Parker & Walker, 1996). No sooner were they in a group than they would cause a quarrel and so find themselves without friends again. Both were unsettling influences in any of the friendship groups and this was recognised by the other girls. These girls aggravated the others by their behaviour towards the teaching staff. Not causing trouble with the teachers was a positive attribute for a girl as mentioned previously. They were disliked because of their truculent, disobedient and obstructive attitude to the staff. These girls appeared to have few redeeming features and neither had a dependable support system in the form of friends.

One of these two girls was the most attractive girl in the class in the traditional

sense, and the most physically mature. This in itself contributed to her unpopularity as she flaunted her physical development by wearing very tight T-shirts. This caused jealousy among some of the more aggressive girls, who were vying for the attention of the boys. She offered the unsolicited comment that 'It doesn't do to be popular' (with the boys) as it made other girls jealous and spiteful. This was her rationale for the aggressive attitude towards her. There was some truth in this but it was not the only reason why she was unpopular. Duncan (1999) writes of the hidden feminine 'industry' that could ostracise a girl and reduce her 'availability' to the boys. This process is akin to the 'tall poppy' syndrome in Australia where those considered bumptious are cut down to size. In this case, the most aggressive girl got her cousin to coerce the other boys into ostracising this girl. Girls in other studies, asked about their quarrels, gave sexual jealousy as the prime reason for their fights (Campbell, 1981; Davies, 1984).

Although the most unpopular girl in this group, this girl would seem to fit the stereotype of a popular girl in the American studies of Alder and Alder (1995) and (Eder, 1985, 1991). Compared to most of the others, she had more money to spend and she dressed more fashionably and expensively. She was the most physically mature.

Stealing was only mentioned twice as a rationale for disliking a girl but there was clearly an embargo on such behaviour. Interestingly, two girls suspected of stealing at the time gave this response.

The girls had a clear moral code that most recognised, and aimed to keep. This concerned issues such as blaming others, stealing, lying, protecting and caring for vulnerable siblings. The conversations gave insights into the constructs that formed this ethical code held in common among the girls. There are several episodes shown on the video material where the girls are discussing their teachers. There was a great deal of affection, evident on the video material, between the teaching staff and the girls. It was

233

clear that these girls were very appreciative of whatever the teachers did for them, and protective if slights were aimed at them. Some of the girls could be disobedient but casting doubt on the integrity of a teacher made a girl unpopular. One girl is heavily criticised for telling a lie about the class teacher. Such lies were given as a reason for bullying her.

As discussed previously, 'sneaking friends away' was the most worrying aspect of school life for many of the girls. The girls in the triad relationships mentioned this as a major concern. 'Sneaking friends away' was nominated six times as a reason why a girl would be disliked.

Several of the girls in this study were known to use the physical modes of aggression thought to be more representative of boys (Bjorquist et al., 1992; Cairns et al., 1989). The hypothesis of Cross and Madson would suggest that these girls, more than others in the group, would show a cluster of characteristics supporting the independent self-construal characteristic of boys. They would be likely to consider it provoking if others encroached on their need for autonomy, competence and freedom, or thwarted their progress towards individualistic goals.

An examination of the constructs of individual girls, showed that disliked characteristics, such as being dominant, aggressively boastful and competitive, were related to an independent self-construal. All the girls bickered and argued, but those who were the most physically aggressive were the most inclined to be verbally abusive and denigrating towards the achievements of others, and to be the more boastful about their own success. These qualities gained most nominations for unpopularity which supports the finding of Cross and Madson, 1997 and Fabes & Eisenberg, 1992..

Accumulated information gained from the semi-structured interviews with the girls

and staff, the sociometric questionnaires, informal observations and the video material shows that all the girls had access to both an interdependent and independent self-construal. It would seem necessary that this should be so although this finding disputes that of Cross and Madson. Girls of this age are entering into a time when the dynamic of personal development is one of turbulence and disruption (Duncan, 1999). These girls were leaving childhood and entering the period where they would need to become independent, adventurous, competitive and self-reliant as adolescence approached. They would need to draw on elements of an independent self-construal but, simultaneously, they would be expected to retain their interdependent skills of caring, sharing and concern. It would seem appropriate, if not essential, for successful development that they should straddle both independent and interdependent self-construals as they moved out of the cloistered situation of a primary school.

7. Why are some girls bullied?

Each girl was asked if anyone in the class was bullied and, if so, why they thought this happened. The girls termed this 'being picked on' and so this was the phrase used in the semi-structured interviews. The girls all nominated one of the two smallest girls. A few said that the other girl was vulnerable, but rarely bullied. When asked why some girls were bullied, responses were varied. One girl was considered vulnerable as she had recently entered the school. On further probing, it was clear that the underlying factors of great influence were concerned with personality and temperament, such as being volatile, moody and not mixing in with the group. Lying and stealing were not tolerated and play activities that were considered odd, such as playing weird games, could give rise to alienation. Interestingly, the three most vulnerable girls reported that their mothers had been involved in physical fights with the mothers of other girls in the class. There was a long-standing feud between two mothers that had resulted in serious

physical fighting on more than one occasion. Reports of these fights are in the Appendix (Profiles).

Some girls were confused as the issue of bullying is a complex one. The class victim was unpopular and several girls described her as 'sad', 'not liked' and 'won't join in'. Most of the girls appeared unable to see that it may not have been by choice that she did not join in, but because they rejected her. No one admitted to bullying her, but most said that other girls gave her a hard time. She was very small in stature and this was given by most girls as the rationale for why she was bullied. This ignored the fact that another girl was of similar stature but not bullied. On further probing, most girls recognised the difference between the personalities of these two girls. The bullied girl was disliked as she was said to be a liar, untrustworthy and mean so she received little support or protection from the more neutral girls. She may have been acting in ways that were inappropriate in a bid to win popularity. Although another girl was equally small in stature, she was described as 'a good little fighter' who could 'hold her own' if provoked. In a threatening situation she would have presented as more confident than the bullied girl.

An additional factor contributing to the vulnerability of the bullied girl was that she was laughed at because of her inappropriate, party-type dresses that were bought from a charity shop. The comments were made about the inappropriateness of the clothes as they were over-dressy and party-like, not because they were bought second-hand. The culprits were girls who were unpopular themselves because of their rude manner and bullying behaviour, not the majority of the girls.

Apart from the overt bullying by the more aggressive and powerful girls, there were many instances of girls bullied by others in a variety of ways. The girls recognised the repeated, covert aggression of one girl but did not term it bullying. The

girls mention threatening and frightening behaviour, mocking, name calling and telling lies about each other, but they did not place these behaviours in the framework of bullying. In addition, a more insidious form of bullying occurred. A favourite strategy of the most aggressive girl was to put others in a position to cheek her, such as calling her a 'daft cow'. This gave her a 'genuine' rationale to hit out. She would often get her male cousin, who was in the class, to help by enlisting the support of other boys who were afraid of him. The more powerful girls forced others to tell a rival that they were no longer their friends, or to insult the rival on their behalf. This put the carrier of the news in the dangerous position where the recipient of the unwelcome news could 'shoot the messenger.' This was a favourite technique of Col's. It may be incorrect to include this as a bullying behaviour as there was no indication that there was intent to put the messenger at risk. However, it was bullying by default in that no consideration was given to the risk the 'messenger' faced.

8. Summary

A pattern of fluctuation in the friendships of these girls was evident over the four terms of the study. Only one dyad relationship lasted for the four terms, and only three lasted as long as three terms. The friendships were characterised by dyad, triad and small groups, the members of which kept a close watching brief on each other. Sneaking friends away was considered unethical and distressing. The close, possessive relationships led to quarrels that exacerbated the splits in the friendships they all feared. There was a high level of aggression among all the girls although not all were overtly aggressive. All the groups were fractious and unstable, with girls on the periphery causing additional tension and unrest. There was considerable interaction between quarrels in school and those between families.

All the girls placed a very high value on their friendships. Some reacted with an

aggressive response to disappointment concerning their friendships, such as evident loss of trust or commitment. Sophisticated and valuable use was made of friendships regarding comfort and protection from the more aggressive girls and from their own families. This may have been one of the reasons why trust was so important to them. Lack of trust was given as a rationale for breaking a friendship.

On probing the concepts of popularity and unpopularity, as perceived by the girls, a clear distinction in rationales given for liking and disliking nominated girls was evident. Consensus of opinion across the group concerning these rationales focused on personality and behavioural factors. The girls in this study appeared to hold more personal, individual evaluations of each other than those held by the girls in the studies of Eder (1985, 1991) and Alder and Alder (1995). The popular girls in the American studies were those seen to have the most friends. This seemingly tautological definition, made by the American girls themselves, takes into account only the numerical aspect of friendship. Like the American girls, most of these girls were fashion-conscious, but the popular girls were judged to be popular more from their interpersonal skills than external factors such as access to money or fashionable clothing. None of the girls mentioned money or fashionable clothing as a reason for voting a girl popular, or in their ideal-self choices.

Unpopular girls had opposing characteristics to those who were popular, being untrustworthy, volatile and manipulating. In general, aggression led to unpopularity but some of the most aggressive girls were popular due to other features of their personalities. The two most unpopular girls were covertly aggressive. They were disliked more than those who were overtly aggressive as the latter tended to keep their quarrels among themselves. They were unpopular as they were seen to be instrumental in trying to break up the friendships of the other girls.

There appeared to be a range of leaders in the class, at least one emerging from each group with the skills and personality to fit the need at the time. There did not appear to be a stereotypical leader, although there were powerful and dominant girls in the class.

Two girls in the class were very small in stature and so physically vulnerable. One was bullied but the other was not, the difference seeming to lie in their personalities. However, the dynamics of the group led to some misunderstanding about the bullied girl as the others did not understand the part they played in these dynamics

CHAPTER EIGHT

ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE OF CONFLICT

1. Definition of The Language of Conflict

This study considers the role of specific negative language structures in the peer relationships of the girls taking part in an informal, weekly activity group. The aim was to relate these language forms to their social functions as used by the girls. The use of insult (including abusive remarks, directives and name-calling) plus gossip, rumour and grassing, is identified in the recorded conversations of the girls. The rationale for the use of these linguistic forms is considered, along with an examination of the structure, incidence, content and function of each form. The analysis also considers the girls who use these negative language structures and their targets.

This first section offers an overview of the use and effects of the language of conflict as used by the girls. This is followed by an analysis of the use of insult, including abusive remarks, directives and name-calling. The following chapter gives an analysis of the use of gossip and rumour. This section concludes with an examination of the use and function of the strategy of grassing.

The overall impression given by the girls in this class was one of aggression. This came not only from the preconceived impression of the group as having a reputation for violence, that spread beyond the school into the local environs, but from direct contact with the girls in class. Not all the girls were aggressive, nor did many have such a reputation. Most were polite, well mannered and caring, but the overall atmosphere in the class was one of tension and unrest.

However, analysis of the individual linguistic forms of insult gossip, rumour and grassing, revealed a surprisingly low frequency count in each category. This appeared

to belie the overall impression gained when in the presence of the girls. This was so both in the small activity groups that formed the focus of this study, and in the full class group where the small number of boys in the class were also present. However, the accumulation of all the specific negative forms of language studied formed a constant backdrop of linguistic interactions that was aggressive in presentation. There was an on-going language of conflict underpinning the social interactions between the girls throughout the school day, not only in the casual arena of the playground, but within the academic forum of the classroom.

Even an examination of the language of individual girls did not reflect the impression gained of a continuous flow of verbal abuse. This disputatious language was carried out primarily by the more aggressive girls in the group, and spread throughout the class by means of challenges and denials made by those who had not instigated the conflict utterances. In addition to the specific language structures considered in this study, the conversations and verbal interactions within the group were characterised by disputes, arguments, contradictory turns, quarrels and challenges. There was discussion of fights being planned, those pending, others mulled over in retrospect, and the effects and outcomes dissected and blame apportioned. Conversations would flit from topic to topic with disputing dyads changing the focus but remaining in opposition roles.

These girls used the language of conflict in differing forms to establish or display power, to maintaining the status quo, or to create or confirm an imbalance of power. Most of the girls monitored each other closely to keep what Goodwin (1990) calls the 'egalitarian rule'. The more aggressive girls were the most vigilant and challenging. Anyone stepping out of line would be admonished by the use of some form of aggressive language. This process was in evidence even though the structure of this group was not as egalitarian, and appeared more diverse and intricate, than Goodwin (1990), Eder (1985) or Alder and Alder (1995) described in the American girls they

studied. This group of girls encompassed several smaller friendship groups, each having little in common with the others, rather than there being a single hierarchical structure as in the American studies noted above. However, there was a close monitoring and evaluative system in place used in an attempt to hold the girls within a grid of informal rules. These were not referred to unless broken when the girls would remind each other of them in a vociferous manner and threaten to grass on the miscreants.

A random sample of conversation, taken from the video recordings, illustrates the high level of conflict language used routinely by many of girls. Nearly all the language structures considered in this study are present in this extract.

Cm   CW, I'm grassing on yer. (*threat to grass*)

Cm   DK get out! (*command directive*)

Cm   CW, I'm grassing on yer for letting everybody in. (*threat to grass*)

CW   So! (*challenge*)

L   Faggot. Faggeriod. (*abusive name-calling*)

CW   So! (*challenge*)

Cm   Look at her just walking back and forwards. (*inciting group disapproval*)

Cm   Here, man, different coloured eyes....

Col   Her ma lets....her....her say in front of her baby....(*grassing-gossip*)

L   You faggeroid. (*grassing –gossip, abusive name-calling*)

Col   You faggeriod. And she says.'Stop saying that'. She went 'You faggeriod.'
      (*grassing-gossip-abusive name-calling*)

Col   She swears....she swears....in front of the baby and all yer know and her ma
      doesn't say nowt. (*gossip*)

D   L, why are you cutting them up for? (*challenge*)

CW Eee she's....(*grassing*)

CW Eeeh. I can remember when I had some of them Cm, when I was cutting them

all up and Mr E pumped in the room you know, farted. (*abusive vocabulary-gossip*)

Cm When me and Km went.

Col He....he did when yous went out he was going....'Why're you doing....?' (*loud,*

aggressive volume)

CW Shurrup man. (*abusive directive*)

Col I was just standing like this. I was standing like this and going like

that....(*gossip*)

CW Get away. (*command directive*)

All Get away (*command directive*)

D Stop kissing the window you little creepy....(*name-calling*)

Col Cm, I was just going like....

Cm Come and kiss CW instead of the window (*joking directive*)

CW Na. He's ugly. (*verbal abuse*)

L Come and kiss CW instead. (*joking directive*)

Col Cm, I was just standing like that when he went 'What are you doing?' Oh, sir,

    sorry....' He said, 'Ye'll get knacked.'. I said, 'I'm just cutting them up. Sir." He

said, 'Get off then. You shouldn't be in school on a Sunday, anyway."

All Sunday? (*challenge, demand for evidence*)

L The Summer Fair was on. (*explanation*)

CW Aye, the Summer Fair. I forgot about that. The horse's manure shit's all o'er.

    (*abusive vocabulary*)

Cm Oy....oy....oy. That's enough. (*command directive*)

CB Did you say that you knew everything about horses? (*direct challenge and start*

of a controversy turn)

L She does. (*alignment structure formed-supportive assertion*).

D   She goes horse riding. *(controversy turn)*

CB   Did you say eeeeh 'I know everything about horses'? *(direct challenge- covert demand for evidence)*

L   Her cos she….*(assertion-controversy turn)*

CB   Did you say you knew everything about…..? *(repetition for emphasis)*

Col Who to?

CB   CW

Col (nods) *(affirmative)*

CW   See! *(command directive-competitive insult)*

Col Na. *(denial-negative-contradicory turn)*

CW   See, I telled you, man. *(scornful challenge – insult directive)*

CB   No you didn't. *(denial-argumentative turn)*

CW   I did. I telled you. *(argumentative turn)*

Cm   Ooh. Goggle eyes. *(plausible deflection move?)*

Col Oh. I've gotta do my hair.

L   Look at Col's. *(benign directive)*

CW   Eeh. Look at me, man. It's a right mess. *(joking directive)*

Despite the aggressive, abusive and challenging language used in this episode, it ends without eruption into a violent incident. There is no identifiable argument in this sequence, with parties taking a developed opposition stance, rather it is made up of mini-sequences of dispute and challenge.

It can be difficult to identify negative from positive or neutral language solely from examination of the written text. Identical vocabulary and sentence structure may be used for a number of differing purposes. Lacking the spoken word, identification of intention from text is aided by the addition of extended clauses, imaginative vocabulary

and sophisticated sentence structure. None of these tools are present in the excerpt given above. The sentences are abbreviated with minimal spates of talk. Challenge is represented by repetition as in the question 'Did you say you knew everything about horses?' which is asked three times. The advantage of the video material is that it shows how this was spoken more emphatically each time. This emotive content is not accessible from the written text. Inversions and escalations form argumentative turns as in 'See, I telled ye.' 'No you didn't.' 'Yes I did.' From the text alone, it is clear that this conversation contains argument, contradictory turns, threats and demands. With the addition of tone, volume, expression, body language, gesture and facial expression, as illustrated in the video material, the overall impression is one of aggression and unease. The central figures in the conversation appear to be using the strategy of impression management to present themselves as confident young girls who can cope with whatever others throw their way. This strategy may have been employed not only to display power, but also to warn off intended assaults from powerful others.

CHAPTER NINE

AN ANALYSIS OF INSULT

Definition of Insult

Insult is defined in this study as abusive comment, or gesture addressed face-to-face to another, with the intention of causing distress. This study encompasses only the language of insult; insulting remarks, directives and name-calling. Influential to the definition is the tone of voice, intonation, facial expression, gestures and body language. Insults are usually given from those with power to those without, highlighting a status differential. This allows them to be effective modes in the use and abuse of power. The power of insult depends on the intention of the giver and the manner in which the comments are received.

INSULTING REMARKS

1.   A Framework for Insulting Remarks

Tied Comments

Insults are normally made with direct reference to the preceding remark (Brenneis & Lein, 1977). Older children may refer to a remark made earlier in the same sequence, or even a prior conversation, but it is more usual for an immediate response to be made to an insult. The most frequent response to an insult is a return insult, the aim being to send an insult back to the giver (Opie & Opie, 1959). This prolongs the exchange, but it is critical to have the last word as this signifies the winner.

An Opposition Stance

An insult may have the sole purpose of setting up conflict. Any response is likely to set up a short, repetitive conflict exchange based on a denial, a counter insult or accusation. A structured and coordinated competition ensues where the parties take up

a symmetrical, opposition stance. In this way they mirror each other in the manner the insults are bounced back and forth. Stances are not immutable. They can be aggravated, maintained or diminished. This helps to make sense of the proposition that children do not often 'resolve' their disputes (Genishi & DiPaulo, 1982, Goodwin, 1990: Maynard, 1985). An example of this process of opposition stance taking is seen in an argument between Km and La. Km wants La to be her friend but, in tandem with this positive attitude, Km is also jealous of La. When La addresses the small group of girls, Km cuts in with the comment 'La, stop thinking yourself good.' La replies, 'I'm not good.' In saying this, La means that she is not conceited. Interestingly, Km makes the routine, although erroneous, opposition response to La by saying, 'You are' which, in fact, is opposite in meaning to what she intended. La ignores the mistake and exaggerates the comment, possibly with the intention of deflecting Km and ending the contest. La jokingly says, 'I'm brilliant.' Km continues by saying, 'You're not brilliant. I'm telling you that'.

Most of the girls do not appear to have the skills necessary to compete in a sophisticated verbal mode with the result that they frequently resort to swear words or abusive invective in their attempts to defeat their opponents. An argument occurs between N and Cm where Cm becomes annoyed and uses a swear word to end the dispute. The argument arises over cutting out the bells on a Christmas card. Cm asks, 'N, have you got any bells, any bells? I wanna bell one.' D repeats what Cm said but mocks her by using a whining tone of voice. Cm becomes angry and responds by repeating her request more forcibly adding 'Fucking shurrup' to D to bring the dispute to a decisive end.

Topping

A verbal standoff can escalate with each party trying to out-talk the other. This is known as topping. In the heat of the battle, taunts and jeers may accompany the claims

and counter claims to the extent that the discourse degenerates into nonsense. Unrealistic and extravagant claims become increasingly more exaggerated. A characteristic of insult turns is repetition. Even the basic none-escalated turn can continue for some time. An example of such escalation occurs in a dispute between CS and La. There is an underlying sense of unrest between CS and La that surfaces from time to time. La and Sh discuss exchanging cards and CS begins this sequence by telling them to stop arguing.

CS   Shut your gob or I'll rip it (Christmas card) up.' (*abusive directive*)

La Look what I got. (*non-abusive directive*)

CS Horrible rabbit. (*sneer*)

La That's a lovely rabbit. (*challenge)*

CS 'That's the horribilest.' (*counter challenge*)

Ky, surprised by this comment enters the dispute.

Ky   What one?

CS 'That, she's got.' (*abusive lack of Christian name*)

Ky is known as a trouble maker. She attempts to escalate the dispute.

Ky La....'

Sh 'I think that's a nice one.' (*interruption*)

Ky eventually makes her comment intended to incite the argument

Ky 'La. CS says that yours is horrible.'

CS 'Well, I don't like them kind of cards.' (*defends her insult*)

La 'Well, I don't like yours.' (*anticipated reverse reply*)

This has topped the response made by CS leaving La having the last word.

CS 'Just look at her merry (Christmas) card.' (*revives the insult sequence*)

Having made a comment to incite trouble, Ky now re-enters in the role of peacemaker.

Ky ' I think you girls should stop fighting.' (*arbitration)*

Sh 'Exactly.' (*supporting the ending of the quarrel*)

CS is determined to have the last word and so makes a defense without a climb-down.

CS 'I only said I don't like them kind of cards.'

The antagonists alone may cause an escalation with minimal input from the target. A loser in an insult exchange is identified as the party who falters or fails to respond within the appropriate time scale. The usual requirement is an immediate response. Although their language was limited in some ways, most of the girls were able to make such responses.

Sound Patterns

The most difficult insult to respond to is the sound pattern as there is no content in the prior comment to tie the response to. When L challenges Col about a remark she has made, Col responds, 'I fucking didn't'. L decides not to get into an escalation sequence of repeated turns as in, 'Yes you did' ' No I didn't ' where there is an equal chance for each party to win. Instead, L resorts to the sound pattern response of 'bla bla di bla bla.' This ends the contest. However, this type of insult can incite the target to respond with violence, this being one of the few response modes available to counter a sound pattern.

Rhymes and chants as swear words and sound patterns, are often used when the speaker has no access to more sophisticated responses. As with swearing, there is no other appropriate response other than to repeat the same nonsense utterance. This being so, each response tends to become more exaggerated and aggressive in length, tone and gesture until the opponent is talked down.

Stylistic Categories of Insult

Insulting comments may be grouped in categories. For example, evaluative comments have embedded evaluative element. The category of negative evaluative comments may be made in the absence or presence of the subject. Examples of negative evaluative comment made by these girls are, 'I hate her' 'She's brain damaged' 'You

greedy thing' 'That looks daft' and 'That's crap.' These girls frequently draw on a
further category of insults, the expletive. Insulting expletives used by the girls are
primarily single words such as, 'So!' and 'Tough.' Even neutral comments are voiced
in such a way that they imply sarcasm and scorn. Examples of scornful comments
found in the study are 'I'm not thanking her!' 'Who'd wanna be like her!' 'What are
ye going on about?' Sarcasm is also used to insult others. Examples are, 'How are we
supposed to do that?' As the girls use a simplistic language structure, a common mode
of sarcasm employed is that of using a word opposite in meaning to what is really
intended as in the use of 'brilliant' to convey the opposite evaluation. The tone of voice
transmits the element of sarcasm. This is resonant of black American vernacular where
opposites are employed as in 'bad' or 'wicked' to signify approval. In the case of
sarcasm, the context and manner of delivery leave no doubt that the connotations are
negative.

A refusal may be couched in neutral, supportive or abusive terms. The word 'no'
can be stated in a manner that is insulting. Variations on a refusal or denial used as an
insult by the girls are, 'You must be joking', 'No way', 'I couldn't give a shit.'

Insult Sequences

Perhaps the most distressing of all types of insult is the prolonged insult sequence
where a vulnerable girl is the focus of verbal insult. Three girls So, Cl, Km are the main
targets of prolonged insult sequences, defined by the occurrence of several insults
directed to one girl in an unbroken sequence.

Unlike some other girls, who are the target of insulting remarks in their absence,
So has to face her attackers. So is vulnerable in stature and personality. Lacking in
confidence, she is the easiest girl to target and is subject to prolonged insult attacks to
her face. Only the aggressive girls target her for insult. These girls rarely discuss or
converse with So but communicate by use of directives, threats and insults. In the first

session the girls are discussing their preferences for choice of activity for the forthcoming sessions. So disagrees with one choice and remarks that she thinks it would be 'absolutely boring'. GT rounds on her immediately and claims 'Everything's boring' (you say). Later, when So tries to interject a comment into the conversation, M addresses her by using insulting directives 'Shurrup man. We're trying to get this organized'. M is implying that So's contribution is not only unnecessary to the successful completion of the exercise, but that it is hindering progress. All So's contributions are either ignored or met with insult.

An example of a prolonged and unprovoked insult sequence is given below.

This extract begins with L having repeated what So has said in a mocking tone.

Col   I na. She talks wee little.

M   So, learn to talk before you...

Ce   She didn't say that. She said that...(defending So)

Cl   I fucking didn't (insulting So).

M   So, why do you wear that top? ...came into the toilet and looked down and said it
was a total failure. Fried eggs.

Cl   On a beach with fried eggs. Do you get that?

Col   She's got no tits.

Cl   No tits at all. I made her slip (with her pencil).

So   I'm not bothered.

Cl is another girl who is the target for insult sequences. Although Cl is argumentative and appears to be domineering, she is not as powerful as her conversation would depict. Her language is often violent in character, but few of the girls take heed of her threats. Her only power lies in her alliance with Ce who has considerable influence in the class. Cl sets up conflicts and subsequently receives insults in return. She is the target for insults both in her presence and absence. On one occasion, Cl

leaves the room with the comment, 'I'll not be a minute. Don't let me miss anything.' Once the door has closed L responds with, 'What? Miss her? We're not gonna miss you anyway.' Sa continues, 'What did she say? She's pathetic her.' L agrees, 'Aye. I know'. Cl's habit of showing off in front of any audience annoys the other girls. On entering the room at the start of the session she has sung in front of the camera. This infringed the unspoken rule that the girls did not boast. Sa ends the sequence by saying, 'She just has to sing in front of the camera.'

In a later sequence, Cl enters the room where the girls are working. Sa tells her to go away as she should not be there. Accompanied by L, Cl feels confident enough to embark on an insult sequence towards Sa. 'This is the teacher you're talking to. You're not gonna grass....you naughty bitch. You naughty bitch witch. Fuck off.' The sequence continues for several turns before she leaves the room.

2. The Givers and Targets of Insults

A frequency count of insults given to others was compiled. The results held some surprises. Col, who was the most physically aggressive and verbally abusive girl, was not the one who issued the most remarks that fell into the category of insult. Although her conversations were aggressive in ethos, they held less directly insulting comment than would perhaps have been expected.

This may relate to Col's pattern of behaviour as she preferred to carry out disputes out of sight of the teachers. She would catch individual girls outside school where there would be less chance of credible witnesses. Over time, Km became alienated from the whole of the group. Initially, this was triggered by her dispute with Col. In addition, her bossy and aggressive behaviour and conceited manner annoyed the others and she aroused considerable jealousy among some of the girls. Yet she was not a prime target for insults from Col to her face. Her aggressors would mount a premeditated, physical attack off the school premises. Km was subject to a tirade of insulting comment but this

Table 9.1 The Givers and Receivers of Insult Remarks.

Givers of Insults		Recipients of Insults	
Cl	27	So	30
L	20	Cl	30
Km	19	La	19
La	19	Km	19
A	18	M	11
M	17	CS	10
Col	17	L	9
S	16	S	7
CS	15	Ce	6
Ky	9	N	5
Sh	7	Ky	5
Cm	6	Col	4
Li	3	A	5
D	3	CWh	4
G	2	Sh	3
Ce	2	D	2
CWh	2	G	1
N	1	Cm	1
So	-	Li	1

was embedded in gossip episodes conducted mainly behind her back. An additional factor was that Km was physically well developed for her age. As she could be both physically and verbally aggressive, more insulting comment occurred in her absence than when she was present. Km received insults from most of the girls but the frequency of these remarks, and the degree of insult, was less than would be expected from the quality and quantity of aggressive comments made behind her back. The insult sequences addressed to Km in her absence are given in the gossip section.

Insult remarks flew back and forth between all the girls. The insults were targeted mainly to the more aggressive girls in the group, but two girls receiving a high number were outside that group. The insult sequences directed at So were made primarily by two aggressive girls, Km and M, who were on the fringe of the friendship groups. When the girls in the aggressive group, such as Col or Cl, made insulting comments to So, Ce stepped in and prevented them getting out of hand. Ce was a quiet but powerful member of the group who seemed able to control the more volatile members.

L was a girl who did not appear to be as aggressive as others in her friendship group, yet she was influential in orchestrating attacks on other girls. L would add comments to the remarks made by others to incite emotional tension, and she would 'parrot' insults spoken by other girls. In this way she was able to trigger verbal and physical attacks without being seen as a trouble-maker. She is high on the list for giving insults as those given as repeats of comments made by others have been included.

There were several pairs of girls in competition with each other over friendships and other matters. The disputes that occurred among the girls were frequently between these rival dyads and rooted in jealousy. The rivalry often took the form of an argumentative turn. There are many instances of such insult turns between La and CS.

La   I was the bravest to stand up in the hall to sing.

CS   No you weren't. Anyone can stand up.

La   Why didn't you stand up then?

CS   I didn't want to.

The on-going dispute between La and CS increased the frequency score for insults of these two girls. La was often at the receiving end of insults from CS due to jealousy about the secondary schools they would soon be attending. La did not insult CS directly but she did make remarks that could have been interpreted as boastful that triggered the insults from CS. This accounted for the high score of insults La received although she was well liked by both the teachers and the girls.

3. Content and Function of Insult Remarks

The content of the insults are grouped into categories. The major categories placed in order of frequency were: comments relating to behaviour (89), work, skills and abilities in the context of school (52), insults used in a joking manner (17), those relating to the appearance of another (16), plus a further category of insults that related to a variety of topics (46).

Insults Relating to Behaviour

One group of insults relating to behaviour contained those that focused on the accepted social mores of the group. The girls recognised an agreed standard of behaviour, frequently criticising any infringement of these rules, though they themselves would be guilty of behaving in the same deviant way. The function of challenging these behaviours in an insulting manner may have been to demonstrate their power to do so, rather than with any expectation of bringing about change. The function may have been similar to that of grassing. By pointing out the mistakes of others, it is less likely that one's own will be noted, or be considered as deviant as would otherwise be the case.

Table 9.2 The Content and Function of the Insult Remarks

Content	Function
That's excellent that is	disapproval of swearing
She'll probably do ...next	disapproval of autocratic attitude
You're just showing off	maintain equality
She's grinding her teeth	critical of antisocial behaviour
Didn't realise you were a puff	disapproval of name-calling
Look at her walking backwards and forwards	flaunting class rules
She knows the whole fucking world	checking conceit
No we haven't Ki. So what ye on about?	establishing truth
She's copying the way I frigging write	disapproval of copying
You're getting as bossy as CS	disapproval of dominant attitude
She has a pack of lies in her gob	disapproval of lying

Insults Relating to Work, Skills and Abilities

These insults contain a negative evaluation about skills or abilities and may be made for a variety of reasons. It may be to ensure that dominance over another is established by being seen to demean the ability of the target; to maintain control over the group by putting down a potential adversary; to put usurpers in their place or to keep the 'egalitarian rule' as noted by Goodwin (1990), Eder (1985) and Alder and Alder (1995). The comments may be a minor, negative evaluation of the effort of the target girl, or hurtful and intended to ridicule. To judge a girl's efforts as 'crap' is more damaging than making a mild unfavourable judgment.

Intellectual Ability

There were few critical comments or insults relating to intellectual ability although there was a wide spread of intellectual ability among the girls. The girls paid little attention to this and those finding difficulty with the academic tasks could always persuade or demand others to give them aid. The conversations of all the girls included remarks such as 'stupid' or 'daft' being addressed to one another but most of these comments were spoken in a moment of frustration, with affection, or as a joke. In addition, they occur in the on going currency of the language spoken by the girls to each other and are not targeted towards particular girls. When used as names they are discussed in the later section on name-calling.

Insults as Jokes

Most of the girls used insults to tease and joke with each other. The content of these jokes was mainly sexual. These girls were probably sexually inexperienced yet they displayed a vocabulary of sexuality. There was no evidence that the girls had any real understanding of the full meaning of some of the words. It was more likely that they were solely in possession of shadowy half-truths. The words they use are risqué accompanied by sniggering and loud whispers. The 'naughty' words are picked out

Table 9.3 Insults Relating to Work, Skills and Abilities

Content	Function
Look how you've spelt it	ridicule
That's spakka work, that is	display of superiority
You've totally fucked up	display of superiority.
It looks like a rocket (not a drawing of a house)	ridicule
You need some brains.	ridicule
You've spoilt it now	negative evaluation
Look at the clip of it	ridicule

and giggled over even when there is little point to the joke. The function seems to be to explore the use of the vocabulary of sexual terms and ideas rather than to produce hurtful insults. There appeared to be collusion in the risk taking in the form of an

empathic bonding function where the girls are involved in a covert and forbidden dialogue.

Some of the insult sequences are more complex than would first appear. In one session there is an exchange about breast size that is carried out in a joking manner but carries a covert purpose. Km is proud of her breast development and frequently sets up a discussion about the comparative size of the other girls. She chants 'La's got big boobs' in the manner of an insult. Km does this in the hope that La will respond by using an inversion strategy by saying that hers are not as big as Km's. In this way Km would have achieved her aim, to gain a compliment. Later a similar sequence occurs. Km reverses what she has said by stating that La has little boobs. La response to this is to say 'I'd rather have little ones than ones like yours Km.' At last, Km has gained her compliment, via an insult sequence.

In one sequence La and A joke about the underwear A is wearing. La accuses A of wearing men's underpants instead of knickers. This could have been possible as A came from an impoverished family. A does not get upset and plays along with the joke as it gets more daring.

At one point, Col accuses each girl in turn of 'pumping' causing great hilarity. Each time the joke fades Col resurrects it by accusing yet another girl. The sole purpose of this may have been to have fun, but it could be that Col, and the other aggressive and powerful girls, are taking note of the responses of others. Young boys are able to tease out the vulnerable during bouts of play fighting (Smith, 1990; Pelligrini, 1988). It may be that Col is doing the same, possibly without conscious recognition of the process she is engaged in.

<u>Appearance</u>

The girls made surprisingly few comments, directly or indirectly, about the appearance of others. Towards the end of the sessions, Km became the target of gossip focussed on her appearance. These episodes are given in the section on gossip.

ANALYSIS OF DIRECTIVES

1. A Framework for Directives

<u>Directives as Advice</u>

Advice is given, sought or unsolicited, for a number of reasons. It is considered here in the context of insult defined as advice given as an unsolicited directive delivered with abusive intent.

N was not considered to be a powerful girl by any member of staff. She was seen as an appendage of Sa, her cousin and best friend, yet she used a surprisingly high number of directives, most of which are used in the numerous contradictory turns occurring between the two girls. The following are contradicting turns incorporating the use of both direct and indirect directives.

N You have to write them all down. (Direct)

S We're talking about that later. (Indirect refusal)

N You do. She said you could. (Direct)

S Put your hand up for table tennis. (Direct)

N You don't have to put your hand up if you don't want to. (Indirect refusal)

Demands and Commands

Direct Commands

Direct commands are used to start, stop, prevent or prohibit an action frequently used in conjunction with a Christian name as in the simple shout of 'Ky!' Km's directives are dominant in intent and directly insulting as in 'Let's have a look' and 'Lend us your rubber.' A series of demands from Km run throughout the sessions concerning copying Sa' work. Examples are, 'Let me see your work, Sa' 'Move your thumb. If you don't...' In a different episode Col makes the same threatening directives to D. Other examples of demands issued by the girls are 'Gimme' 'Sh sh sh' and 'Hurry up, man.' There are many examples of some girls using demands in an attempt to get others to misbehave. L urges Col to do the splits in the classroom 'Go on. See if you can do the splits.' There was use made of sarcasm by some of the girls. When Cl was laughing loudly, she was admonished by Louise saying, 'Cl, laugh why don't you?

Abusive Directives

A great deal of abusive language used by the girls was in the form of swearing. This was commonly in use in the locality. This swearing could be used as aggressive invective, meant to communicate an attitude of violence, or in a benign mode. The latter was used as a matter of course in the locality in the form of adjectives, adverbs and general descriptors to add emphasis or vehemence to speech.

The following were terms used frequently by the girls, peppering their conversations as a matter of course. They were not always being used in the manner of invective or abuse. The continuous use of swear words gave their speech an aggressive character.

Fucking shurrup. Fuck off. Fuck you

Frig off you.

Piss off.

Gerroff you little.... Stop being a ...Get lost you....(plus the addition of an abusive

name such as tart, cow, wimp, arsehole)

Shove it up yer bum.

Shut yer gob or I'll shut it for you.

Such terms as those given above were frequently used in a casual manner, as a

joking form of communication. Some of the girls would say, 'Fuck off' to a friend in a

neutral tone of voice meaning 'Don't do that.' Depending on the circumstance, such a

comment could produce a gasp of feigned shock from the listeners, resulting in a fit of

giggles. Even though not malicious in intent, these comments aggregated to consolidate

the impression of a high incidence of aggressive speech.

Implied Commands

The girls employed commands that were issued in an indirect manner such as 'Do

you mind not putting things on this?' However, the tone and volume of voice shows the

sarcasm or scorn intended so contributing to the atmosphere of conflict.

Commands Implying Moral Persuasion

Rather than issuing direct demands, the girls often used covert forms that

incorporated a sense of need or urgency. This was intended to illustrate the need of one

girl over another in an attempt to gain advantage. Examples are 'I need that' 'Who's

got my pen?' The inclusion of the possessive article 'my' or 'mine' inserts a moral

obligation to return a possession to the owner. This structure was extensively employed

when there was dispute over the sharing of materials and equipment. The contestant

would make a statement including a possessive article such as 'my scissors' meaning

that she had been using them when they had been appropriated by another. This would

be done in an attempt to put moral pressure on the culprit to return the equipment. In

one sequence, Km puts moral pressure on So to share her work with Sh who had been absent. Km approaches So as she is the most vulnerable girl. It may be assumed that Km chooses to employ a tangential, covert directive to So as a direct command could have been noticed and thwarted by the other girls in the group. Km says 'So, it will be the best idea you've had yet' as though it was So's own idea to give up her work to another. Seeing So waver, Km presses home her advantage so that So has little hope of avoiding responding to the covert directive.

Benign Directives and Consensus Commands

There are occasions when commands are benign in intent. Although not issued as insults, these directives contributed to the overall impression of aggressive speech used by the girls. Commonly, the girls would urge each other to 'Listen everybody' or 'Look everyone' to attract attention. These directives were used to draw together the members of the group in thought or action. Although the language of command is used in these utterances, the intention is to gain everybody's attention for what is seen as their own benefit, rather than being given as a power issue. These directives are used for instruction and clarification. In the instruction 'We gotta do the ones that haven't been done' the intention, in this case, is to clarify the task demand. La enjoys the sessions. In a series of command directives she suggests the girls thank the organisers, 'Right everybody. Here, speak 'Thank you.' Ready? After three we all say it. Speak.

There were many instances of the girls issuing directives with benign intent but their manner of delivery gave the impression of demand. They rarely used the prefix, 'Why don't we...' or ' Lets'. The advice was given in an unelaborated and forthright manner that contributed to the overall ethos of dispute and conflict. In addition to the argumentative turns between the dyad of N and Sa, these close friends offered each other helpful comment and suggestions. For example, as a particular shade of wool was in short supply, N advises Sa, 'Sa, you just keep that wool in your bag for extra'.

Directives were also employed in mediation and reparation processes. On one occasion, Cl wanted to partner Col who had already chosen her partner. A division of loyalties required a mediation resolution. L offers a solution 'Well, do disco dancing with a partner...and do gymnastics moves with me.' Although this remark is only a suggestion, it is couched in terms of a directive as this is the preferred mode of speech of these girls.

2. Directives as Issued by Individual Girls

Surprisingly, Col, who was considered by all to be the most aggressive girl in the group, issued the least number of directives that could be interpreted as demands or commands in three of the four sessions she attended. Col may have issued so few directives due to her being on the periphery of the group when engaged on an academic task. She often worked in parallel to the other girls, monitoring what they were doing and then openly copying their actions or work. Col was rarely challenged over this behaviour. This could have been because there was a lot of peer support offered in the group, or because few girls would challenge Col openly. There was a difference in the way the girls responded to Col and Km. Col usually took a relaxed attitude to the work tasks she was given. She would spend the time chatting, joking, gossiping and giggling about past events and recounting stories of past happenings or planning future escapades. Her academic ability was limited and the girls appeared happy to help her complete the tasks. On the other hand, Km was able to do the work but she was lazy. The girls appeared to make this distinction and would threaten to grass on her if she attempted to copy. An additional factor contributing to the low count of directives given by Col was that she did not compete for the role of teacher and so gave very directions or instructions to others regarding their work. Km made comments on the work of others posed in the form of directives as in 'You don't do it like that.' Other girls took on the role of teacher, using directives to instruct or offer advice to others.

This was nearly always done at the behest of those who were struggling with their tasks. Sa, La and Ce, in particular, took on this role. This contributed to the high frequency of directives these girls used. A high count of directives did not necessarily indicate an aggressive mode of speech.

Both Sa and N rank highly for giving and receiving directives. Even though they were perhaps the closest dyad in the group, they squabbled, argued, and drew on directives and insults in their controversy turns. Their differences were voiced immediately and resolved on the spot rather than escalating into conflict. The high number of directives issued by the dyad reflects the fact that, being best friends, N and Sa worked closely together. In all sessions that they attended they would invariably be sharing space, equipment, materials and the attention of friends. This was not always done amicably and their talk could quickly become disputatious. The frequency of their contradictory routines, often based on giving each other contrary directives, reflects the finding that close friends quarrel more frequently than non-friends (Menesini, 1997).

Two other girls are high on the lists for issuing and receiving directives. These girls are ranked highly for all types of conflict language. Km and Cl were the most bossy and argumentative of the girls although neither was the most physically violent girl in the group. Cl was insolent and abusive. She gave loud and dominant commands that were ignored by the other girls. Cl had few linguistic subtleties to call upon, and so issued directives in a blustering, bombastic manner, intended to thwart or threaten girls such as Sa whom she did not like. Cl appeared to be a jealous girl who tried to dominate where she could not compete. In one session she was only in the room for two or three minutes but her conversation was made up of abusive directives made to Sa. Cl used directives that are brief, repetitive, and simplistic in format and style. They tended to be in the form of threats and commands as in 'Fucking shurrup'.

Table 9.4 Girls Ranked According to Giving and Receiving Directives

Givers of Directives		Targets of Directives	
Km	70	Sa	57
Sa	70	Cl	49
Cl	61	Km	42
N	53	Ky	42
Ky	42	L	30
L	37	N	29
Sh	31	M	28
CS	30	La	24
A	27	Cm	22
Cm	28	GJ	22
Ce	25	Sh	21
M	19	Li	17
CWh	18	A	16
Li	17	Col	15
Col	14	CS	15
La	11	Ce	14
GJ	11	So	14
D	11	CWh	10
GT	8	GT	7
So	-	D	-

Some of the girls said that Km tried to treat them like slaves. In the course of the study she became alienated from the group, and so lost her power to dominate, but she continued to issue directives to the more vulnerable girls. Km was fond of cavorting in front of an audience. She punctuates several sessions with comments to the others that give her leeway to do what she wants to do. She does this under the cover of getting the others to 'wave to the camera everybody' and 'everybody shout Toon Army.' Km is the only girl who continues to be aware of the camera throughout the series of sessions. Although So is the butt of aggression in the form of name-calling and insult, she receives directives only from Km and one or two others in the form of insult sequences that contain directives.

Ky ranks high in both the giving and receiving of insults although she was not an aggressive girl. Ky could be quarrelsome and a troublemaker. Her speech contained directives aimed at mischief making. Ky enjoyed setting one girl against another, or drawing the attention of the girls to the shortcomings of one another.

The more aggressive girls did not have a higher than average representation in the issuing of directives. As for many of the girls, the number of directives used by Ce, who was in the aggressive group, depended on the nature of the task or conversation. The other girls in the aggressive group looked to Ce for advice and mediation in the same way others approached Sa and La. Her responses increased the frequency of her use of directives. In addition, there were challenges in the group so that directives and counter directives ranged among these girls. In one session, the group of girls had been chatting and off task, whereas Ce had quietly got on with writing down notes. Col and Cl realised that she had done this without consulting them, as they were laughing, talking and squabbling. They both challenged Ce by saying that she must take into account their suggestions, (although they had not made any), and not write down her

own preferences. Ce patiently replied, 'Well, you've gotta do the ones that haven't been done.'

M, like Km, was considered bossy but she had a low frequency count for the use of directives. Those that she did use were frank and insulting, reflecting her opinion that she was intellectually, academically and socially superior to the other girls having attended a private school. M saw herself as a fount of knowledge. However, other than some insulting directives, she made her points mainly by use of sneering, demeaning comments, insults and sarcasm. Her frequency for directives was less than anticipated.

ANALYSIS OF NAME-CALLING

1. The Framework of Name-Calling

As with other terms of abuse, the potency of name-calling lies in the manner in which the name is spoken. Name-calling is a two-way dynamic process linking how the name is said and how it is received. The advantage of the video material is that it is possible to assess, from the manner in which any play on names is made, whether or not the intention was to bring about a negative or positive effect.

As in insult remarks, no sequential structure was identified in the incidents of name-calling. Identifiable segments were introduced into the dialogue in an ad hoc manner. These segments are the same as for insulting remarks and so are discussed in full.

Tit for Tat Comments

One girl calling another a 'cow' would get the response of, 'You're a cow.'

Topping

A verbal dual could follow where one girl called a 'cow' would reply with a superlative or exaggeration such as, 'Well, you're the fattest cow in the world.' The escalation built as the annoyance increased.

<u>Alliances</u>

As with insult remarks, the name-calling mainly involved a duo. Others joining in a verbal skirmish can escalate a quarrel. Ky entered into a contest between La and CS about schools. It is not clear whether Ky did so to support CS, as first appears, or whether she involved herself to continue, or escalate, the confrontation.

These girls rarely used pre-allocated nicknames, preferring individually assigned names, thought up spontaneously, often used only once. However, there were descriptive names that were in regular use but they were not allocated to specific girls. These were those names used by children nationwide such as 'daft', 'crackers', 'stupid' 'cow' and 'bitch'

The girls showed an appreciation of sound patterns in words that was evident in the way they played on each other's names, and in the name-calling they became involved in. The most annoying and insulting manner of addressing anyone seems to be by using a singsong, rhythmic chant that can escalate annoyance to fury.

A play on a girl's name could be intended as an insult or as a signal of affection. It was not the wording, but the signal of intention, that designated the name insulting. Occasionally an affectionate form of a girl's name was used. N was called 'Becky-Wecky' by her cousin as it was a play on the surname that both girls shared. If spoken by someone with a different surname, in a sneering or mocking manner, such a name could be interpreted as an insulting and hurtful demeaning. Cm was happy when the group set up a rhythmic play on her name, 'Taroline, Tarolina, Tas, Tas-mania'. This was done in a friendly and affectionate manner and Cm was happy to tap out the rhythm of this spontaneous chant. In one session Km held up a bag in front of the camera with the name of a shop prominently displayed.

Table 9.5 The Givers and Receivers of Name-Calling

Givers		Recipients	
CW	23	CW	11
Ky	9	Km	10
L	9	S	7
S	5	La	6
Col	7	So	5
La	6	L	5
CB	6	CS	5
Car	5	Ky	4
Sh	4	Col	4
M	4	M	4
CS	3	D	3
GJ	3	A	3
CWh	2	N	1
A	2	G	1
Li	1	Sh	1

One girl incorporated Km's Christian and surname with the name of the shop in a semi-joking manner. Km interpreted this as an insult and shouted out a warning that she would not stand for it being repeated. The fact that it was the intent to abuse, and not the content of the abuse, that carried the insulting element, is shown in an episode concerning Sa. Km left the room in one episode to challenge Sa who was an excellent gymnast and very slim. Col told Km to call Sa 'Slimfast', the name of a slimming food, whereas Cl suggests Km call her 'Fat Fast'. These names, diametrically opposed in meaning, show that the content is less relevant than the intention to insult.

As with other insults, the more aggressive girls called So names to her face as she was unable to defend herself. As she was tiny it was not unusual for her surname to be prefixed by 'Skinny'. In contrast, Km was a strong and aggressive girl and so the girls talked about her and called her names behind her back and not to her face. These names were clearly negative and personal such as 'British Bulldog' as she was bossy, and 'all titty and tramp' as she was proud of her physical development.

It was not necessary for the names to make sense to be insulting. L is scornful of D at one point and calls her 'Cheesy balls', then 'Chilli Cheese', and lastly 'Chilli Waffle.' The sequence has no obvious rationale. It was simply a play on string of words that appeared to be done with the intention of being unpleasant.

The largest category of names used by the girls were adjectives used to name characteristics of the target girl such as 'show off'. These were used as names as well as adjectives. These included adjectives related to personal characteristics such as 'bossy', 'greedy' and 'posh'. Other names, related to physical features such as 'deaf', 'blind', 'ugly', would be used to criticize an action or draw attention to a mistake a girl had made.

The collection of words used most frequently related to intelligence as in 'dopey', 'silly', 'stupid' and 'idiot'. The girls used these as common adjectives to refer to all

manner of inferiority. A poorly performed action or task, a foolish comment, or any type of error, would trigger these words. On no occasion were they used with serious intent to refer to intellectual ability. These common descriptors, more than any others, seemed to lend themselves to word play based on strings of words as in 'daft, dafty, cracker daft and dappo daft'; 'thick, thick stick, thicket'; 'dumb, dummy, dumb head, fat head'. Presumably, this was because they were used most often. 'Dipstick' evolved to the more abusive 'dipshit'. 'Divvy', shortened to 'div' was commonly used. A controversy arose when one girl was called 'spakka' (spastic) that signifies low intelligence, and considered a term of abuse. In an attempt to avoid conflict, the accused claimed that she said 'smakka', a word having no meaning. The word play continued with a joking sequence 'smakka, slappa, slapper daft'. This appeared to be a deflection strategy and a route out of a sensitive situation.

As with other forms of insult, name-calling was used to monitor behaviour. One girl accused another of being a 'right Mickey'. This is derived from the phrase 'taking the Michael' meaning to mimic or mock. A word common to the locality is 'wagger' meaning a truant. Any girl absent from school was accused of being a 'wagger'.

Specific words were used to imply madness, or craziness, such as 'brain damaged'. This was only used once as was 'stupid nut' presumably taken from 'nutter' and 'rabbi' derived from rabid.

The girls were not at an age where sexual vocabulary had any real relevance although, when sexually abusive names were used, they were highly offended. One boy was called a 'right puff' in his absence, and the word 'faggeroid' was used, which seems to be related to faggot, with reference to a girl in the group. 'Slag' 'slag bag' 'slapper' 'tart' and 'tramp' were commonly used by the several of the girls. Although these words signify a prostitute, the girls used them more generally. The girls who used these descriptors did so with reference to girls who were in competition with them for

boyfriends. There appeared to be no correlation with the behaviour of the target girl (Lees, 1993)

There was a large category of words used that signified non-humans. This vocabulary was made up of animal names. Word play was used to develop a theme as in 'bitch, naughty bitch, bitch witch'. 'Cow' had several variations 'fucking cow', 'fat cow', 'stupid cow'. 'Pillock', 'bullshitter' and 'copy cat' were used frequently as was 'arse' with variations such as 'arsehole'.

2.   Summary

As the wording of insults can be interpreted in more than one way, it was useful to have the video material to supplement the scripts. This material aided understanding of intent, and also showed the speed in which the insults and responses were made. Several girls showed the ability to make fast and appropriate responses with wit and humour.

A high level of aggression was in evidence in the speech of the girls, little of which culminated in violence. All the forms of insult were seen to be effective in highlighting, or using, differentiated power. These forms of verbal communication were used in a flexible, often idiosyncratic, manner to manipulate relationships.

A structure was given for insult, although no sequence was identified other than the oppositional verbal dual characteristic of an insult skirmish. Directives and name-calling were similarly lacking in sequential structure. Presumably, the lack of the extended sequences found in gossip, and to a lesser extent in rumour, is due to the probable presence of the target. The style and variation in delivery were noted for all forms of these structures, but there was no identified order in which the segments would be used.

However, some insult sequences were identified where one girl, in particular, was targeted. This too was simplistic in format, with the extension coming from repetition

of comments from the same, or other girls, plus a few similar utterances. Another girl, more disliked, was not targeted in this way as she was less vulnerable both physically and psychologically.

The insulting remarks, directives and name-calling shared a common content. The focus of these conflict structures was related to issues that concerned the girls such as sexual reputation, body image, behaviour and relationships. There was very little comment made about intellectual ability. The remarks that were made were those in common usage to display irritation or negative evaluation such as 'daft' and were not made with reference to the restricted ability of individual girls. A bank of words targeting sexual reputation was used containing 'slag' and 'bitch' among others. These were the same as reported in other studies including those carried out in Australia (Owens, 1999; Nilan, 1992).

A range of directives was identified. The video material aided interpretation as non-verbal modes of communication give more than the semantic content. Several comments in all three categories of language studied seemed abusive in script form. However, the video material illustrated how these forms may be used as commonplace remarks, with no insult implied, and may be used as entertainment.

Most of the aggressive girls were highly represented in usage and receipt of these structures. Possible reasons for this were explored. All the structures showed how effective such language is in the manipulation of relationships.

CHAPTER TEN

ANALYSIS OF GOSSIP

1. Introduction

Even within this group of girls, renown for making negative and malicious comments about each other, analysis of their conversations found surprisingly few structured gossip episodes, although there were many comments that could be described as gossip in character. Those episodes that did occur are found mainly in the conversations of the 'troublesome' group of girls. For this reason it has been necessary, in some cases, to repeat the same episode to illustrate more than one example of a language structure or speech act.

A great deal of incidental chatter and informal conversation could be considered as gossip in that it is evaluative talk focused on an absent target. However, those comments offering opinion only are not considered as gossip in this work. The criteria used to select episodes for inclusion were taken from the definition given earlier; the presentation of an evaluative comment about someone absent followed by comments from one or more of those listening. Remarks that did not including any information, new or otherwise, have not been included. As these episodes did not meet the criteria of the study, they have not been counted in the forty episodes recorded for analysis (Table 10.1). A development on the comment was required from the speaker or audience but this would not need to be new information and could be the revisiting of that given previously. The development of a completed story line was not considered necessary. An evaluative comment made about another would not be defined as gossip if no response were forthcoming from those listening. Some remarks containing a negative evaluation were challenged immediately so prohibiting gossip from developing.

A reasonable assumption is that the girls in this study had not been formally instructed in how to conduct and take part in gossip, yet they were all proficient in the multiplicity of sophisticated skills involved as seen in the examples given later. No doubt, they absorbed the skills from overhearing and listening to gossip from an early age. For example, they were skilled in working for, and holding, dramatic tension, and

in allowing themselves to be encouraged to give out the gossip slowly to the best advantage. The underlying purpose of this hesitancy may be to hold the attention of the audience, to increase audience participation, and to give optimum dramatic presentation of the tale. The strategy of withholding the information may be done to encourage the soliciting of further information so enticing listeners to participate actively in the gossip. This would spread the responsibility and blame for the gossiping.

There may be a pause to ensure that the consensus view will be in support of the gossip, rather than the target. However, it may be that a reluctance to offer the gossip information too easily stems from a period of testing out the audience to see whether or not the response is going to provide a worthy trade-in for the loss of power. Lastly, the gossip may wish to check that the information will be acceptable to the listeners, and that there will be no loss of face. A further skill displayed in the gossip episodes is that of repair work. If challenged, most of the girls could embark instantly on face-saving repair work.

Gossiping is an interactive process. The episodes in this study show both the gossip and the listeners in the conversations working together in order to get the most entertainment out of episodes. There is collusion between speaker and audience so that the flow of talk is maintained (Haviland, 1977). There is an underscoring of the harmony. These girls engage in a contrapuntal style of narration where the gossip tale is woven between speaker and audience. The girls displayed a range of skills that brought about good entertainment, a function noted by Besnier (1989). Examples of this can be found in the frequent instances where they indulge in dramatic responses. The video sequences show all the girls attending avidly to the gossip episodes.

The language used by young people gossiping shows a high level of competence and skill (Gottman, 1986). The language is highly organised and arguments presented in a systematic fashion to minimise the occurrence of communicative breakdown (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). The statements used by these girls were creatively constructed by use of descriptive phrases and embellishments, and the necessary mechanical workings were covertly organised and unobtrusive. As with other

common skills, it is only in breakdown that the level of sophistication involved is recognised (Besnier 1989).

2. The Framework of a Gossip Episode

Examination of the transcripts of the conversations shows an identifiable framework to the gossip episodes. Parts of the framework had already been identified by Bergmann (1993), Eder & Enke (1991), and Goodwin (1990) but some sections of the gossip episodes, appearing regularly in the conversations of the girls, had not been identified. None had given a comprehensive sequence of events as set out below. Segments referred to as 'not previously identified' refers to sections of gossip that may have been included in extracts quoted by others, but not identified in the descriptions of the episode or the relevant text. For example, no reference to the technique of parroting, neither the purpose nor intent of parroting comments, appears to have been noted previously. This also applies to attention grabbers. The headings above with no accompanying note may have been embedded in previous descriptions, but not necessarily distinguished as distinct conversational moves. For example, Bergmann (1993) recognises that a gossip statement is often expanded by the gossip, or those listening, but does not identify it as such, or delineate as a separate section referred to as an expansion in his gossip sequence. Some of these headings have been identified in general texts on language use and linguistic processes, but they have not been referred to in the studies specifically on gossip. This format is evident in the gossip episodes in the study. Further analysis is given in the Appendix.

The Sequential Stages of a Gossip Episode

The stages of the gossip episode are discussed in sequence. However, on occasions, the sequence may loop back, repeating part of the format, resulting in several mini-episodes appearing within one sequence. The stages of the sequence are discussed separately below, followed by an extract from the video taped material showing how they occur in normal conversation. Further gossip extracts identifying this structure are given in the Appendix.

Context

The gossip episode may be set in the context of an on-going conversation, or it may occur without preamble or reference to prior subject matter. An example of a gossip statement introduced out of any context occurs when Km makes an announcement to the other girls in the form of a question. 'You know what? Sa says you says to Gy that I'm seeing Ge and I'm not.' Gossip may occur in a conversation where the topic of the conversation becomes the topic of the gossip. In one extract, several girls are talking about Km in her absence. Cm continues the conversation saying, 'She says that that someone was going around saying that she had been in bed with Gy.'

Attention Grabbers

Attention grabbers do not appear to have been identified in previous studies on gossip. There are identifiable attention-grabbing comments occurring throughout the gossip episodes. The comments may be single words, phrases or sentences. They may be made at the start of the episode for dramatic impact or, if a previous attempt to introduce a gossip episode has failed to gain sufficient attention, they will come later in the sequence. This strategy may be used to boost flagging attention at any point in the gossip sequence.

There are various types of attention grabbers employed to encourage the listeners to pay attention. A question demands attention as it is implicit that a response will be expected. As shown above, Km starts a conversation out of context by asking a rhetorical question, 'You know what? Sa says that.....' The use of a name catches attention. This is a mechanism frequently used in everyday speech to attract attention in a polite manner. These two strategies are used in conjunction, a name and a question being combined, as when Km says 'Does anyone know who N fancies?'

The conversations of the girls contain an increasing number of references to sexual matters over the time of the study as they move towards adolescence. The girls were at the age when most sexual matters were still somewhat mysterious, confusing and taboo (Gottman, 1986) with the result that any remark with a sexual connotation would get

their attention. Cl is joking when she says, 'Col was in bed with Gy' but the comment still gets the full attention of those within earshot.

Specific names were guaranteed to demand attention such as the names of high profile girls, popular or unpopular. When Col proclaims, 'Km's dead naughty, isn't she?' she knows that any reference to Km will catch, and hold, the attention of the group. Reference to any adult by name would catch the attention, especially a member of staff. G opens a discussion with, 'Everybody says that Mrs A is the best headteacher'. A command or demand would attract attention even if it was ignored. In addition, there were single trigger words that, for a variety of reasons, were likely to catch the attention of the girls when introduced in a sentence such as; tramp, drunk, transplant, boobs, jail, party.

Permission

Although tacitly understood as being integral to gossip, this is a further stage previously unidentified. Permission is required from the listeners in order to continue if the gossip episode is to be successful. This can be given in a variety of ways and at various stages in a lengthy sequence. It may be a single utterance, 'Aye' or a phrase showing agreement, 'I know she did'. A bland statement with no emotive content, or even silence, may be effective in allowing the gossip to continue.

Parrot

This comment is another example of a stage previously unrecognised. The parrot comment mimics a preceding one. The comment could be made by one girl repeating a statement given by another immediately before, or it could occur later in the conversation. It may be used to support either a negative or positive statement. As with a permission statement, it gives confirmation to what has been said, and encouragement to continue. The parrot comment may be employed to back up a challenge as well as to confirm a gossip statement. It may be used anywhere in the sequence, more than once, by the same person, or by several, in the one episode. The parrot comment is a powerful strategy, influential in empowering the comments made by either the gossip or challenger. However, the person making the parrot statement is not uttering any gossip

statement and so accountable for any slanderous remarks. A parrot comment may be made in an effort to gain popularity and entry into a group.

Core Statement

The core gossip statement may be presented as factual evidence in order to strengthen the proposed veracity of the gossip. There is a tendency to hold back the supposed facts, a snippet of gossip having been given as a taster, to allow the listeners to entice more information from the speaker.

Expansion

This stage is referred to indirectly in other work, but it does not appear to have been identified and named as a separate stage. Expansion is a technique used to develop the gossip as the most effective gossip is told as a story. The gossip may encompass several small sequences in the one episode, or the same group could move sequentially from one focus to another within the one conversation. The linguistic skills of these girls allow the use of brief, but novel, adjectival and adverbial clauses. Dramatic tension is employed so that there is opportunity for expansion and story development.

Clarification

Clarifications are given as a response to requests from the listeners in order to fully comprehend the information given by the gossip. These requests, and subsequent clarifications, could occur several times within the one sequence.

Challenges

The literature on gossip suggests that challenges need to be made early in the gossip episode (Goodwin, 1990). In this study, some challenges occur late in the sequence, but made only by the more powerful, confident and influential girls. These challenges occur once the listeners have the full information so that a realistic and intelligent challenge can be made.

Repair Work

This strategy is used to make a recovery from a challenged or erroneous statement. The repair may be a correction of fact, an apology (rarely used by these girls), deflection by use of humour, or a change of focus. Repair work is regular and

predictable (Hedstrom, 1984). There could be a series of repairs made before the gossip is reconciled to the audience. A series of choices is available. The speaker may be given the opportunity to make the correction, the speaker may make a self-initiated alteration, a side issue may be introduced to deflect attention, or the challenge withdrawn.

Self initiated repairs help to save face and take up less time so maintaining the flow of conversation. The underlying assumption in a conversation is that all contributors are telling the truth as well as they can, that there is an unspoken agreement between conversationalists that they should strive for harmony, and downplay any threat (Haviland, 1977). Face threatening moves are kept low in frequency and severity, as the common aim is to maintain and maximise interpersonal harmony. Participants may feign collusion as the impetus is to keep the conversational flow. Unless there is dispute, it is tacitly understood that the aim is to uphold the dignity of all those involved. These girls appear to have little regard for harmony and the flow of the gossip episodes. High status girls, particularly, jump in immediately with a challenge if confident that a statement is erroneous. The language used in the conversations of the girls in the study is flexible and adaptive. Once a challenged, the speaker usually draws back quickly and turns immediately to correction or repair work, although disputes do occur if the person challenged is confident. Justifications, clarifications and elaborations are used with ease. The truth may not always be evident, but the skilled use of lively, functional language is apparent.

Closure

Various endings to a gossip sequence are available. The conversation may drift to a non-gossip mode on the same, or different, topic or the listeners may loose interest. An effective punch line in a joke could disrupt concentration or the exit or entrance of someone could break up the flow of conversation. Often gossip dies down naturally as all angles have been covered.

In the episode below, M has made a claim concerning the integrity of the researcher. La challenges the statement made by M with a reasoned argument, difficult

to countermand. M immediately makes a repair response by blaming D who is absent, so absolving herself of any responsibility. When La reiterates her challenge, M repeats her repair. This time she aims to give added weight and credibility to her statement by bringing a named adult, D's grandmother, into the conversation.

M   Do you know that Mrs B?   (*attention grabber; name of adult plus question*).

G   Aye.   (*permission to continue*)

M   Do you know those questions she was giving wi?   (*attention held by question format plus commonality of topic*)

G   Aye.   (*permission to continue*)

M   Mrs A didn't know anything about it.   (*dramatic climax, shock at adult transgressing rules; name of teacher plus adult as focus provides attention grabber*)

All   What?   (*request for clarification*)

Mi   Them questions Mrs B was givin wi.   (*emphasis by repetition*)

G   About the family?   (*expansion*)

Mi   Aye.   (*clarification*)

Ky   Mi says Mrs B ....doesn't....Mrs B doesn't.... that ..I mean..Mrs A....doesn't know about.... them questions.   (Ky has combined both statements made by M using M's words. This appears to have the aim of inciting the rest of the group to outrage).

All   Sh..sh..sh   (*awareness of censure regarding gossip, especially about a teacher*)

M   D told me (repeated three times).   (*repetition giving emphasis; specific name given in attempt at veracity*)

La   Oh man. She does. (Pause) Well she wouldn't have got permission would she?
        Tell me that then.   (*challenge by emphatic denial backed by intelligent challenge to facts*)

Ky   No. She wouldn't have got permission.   (*parrot comment*)

M   D told me..cos D's Nan went...(*specific adult name given in attempt to confirm veracity*)

La   D's telling a pack of lies in her gob.   (*scornful challenge*)

M   Cos D's Nan went to Mrs A about it.   (*high status name given in attempt to reaffirm veracity, dramatic bid for closure*).

3. Gossip as a Story

Gossip should be told in a story form (Bergmann, 1993). Most of the girls in the study are skilled in making use of a full range of linguistic skills in order to tell a gossip story. The piece of news is given with the intention of making the biggest impact. The conversations are spoken in strong dialect, ungrammatical in structure, and interspersed with a wide variety of vulgar and swear words. Nevertheless, the language proficiency of the girls is functional. The arguments are well structured, developed sequentially, and backed up by statements given as 'evidence' whether factual or not. Although unelaborated, the language used is as sophisticated as that used for any academic task undertaken by the girls in the classroom setting (Cummins, 1984).

Gilmore (1978 p. 95) lists a variety of speech forms used in gossip episodes. The information and comment could be passed in idle chatter with the intent of passing the time. There could be a heavy air of secrecy so that the news is passed on in scandalised whispers, and criticism can range from niggles about trifling issues to cutting remarks, malicious verbal comments, or even unrelenting lashing attacks. The girls in this study draw on the full range of utterances and styles of delivery as described by Gilmore in their constructions of arresting and entertaining gossip episodes. There is use of dramatic tension, cliffhangers, suspense, climax and humour.

Dramatic Tension

The content of the gossip must be of mutual interest, provocative, exciting and novel. The story builds up in layers to a climax that causes shock, excitement, interest, or laughter. The episode given below contains all these elements.

M   I'm sure Km F's had a transplant.

Ce   What....transplant?

M   Had them blown up.

Cl   That's not a transplant, M.

M   I know it isn't but she's had them blown up.

Cl   Where do you think she's had them done? I think she wanted plastic surgery ...like....

M   Michael Jackson.

Cl   I think she's Michael Jackson's sister, the way she looks. Her nose is horrible.

The topic of Km's 'boobs' ensures the full attention of all as there is a lot of discussion and comparisons made by the girls about the size of their breast development. The mention of one of the most popular recording stars of the time, Michael Jackson, is particularly astute. He is a household name, and very much to the fore of news at this time due to the extent of his plastic surgery and widely publicised allegations of sexual abuse. The scene is skillfully set for a negative mental set in which to place comments about an unpopular girl.

The dramatic tension in the gossip episodes is created, in part, by the sophisticated delivery of the story line. The video material shows the use of the full range of dramatic vocal devices used by the girls. Many of the speakers are able to use the appropriate linguistic structures and modes of enunciation required to hold the attention of the audience throughout a gossip episode. To achieve this, the girls appear to be using a range of well-proven linguistic and vocal structures, seemingly subconsciously. They use emphatic enunciation, change of pace, pauses, variations in tone and pitch, whispers, shouts and crescendos of tone and volume to build and maintain the interest of the audience. The most effective gossips, by use of these established techniques, treat the listeners as an audience to be entertained.

<u>Mutual Acquaintance</u>   .

A gossip episode benefits in dramatic tension if the target is someone well known to all parties, especially if that person has a high profile. Gossip scenarios used by comedians often focus on common acquaintanceship such as 'the mother-in-law' where members of the audience identified with the target although not personally known to them. The mention of any mutually known adult, such as a teacher or parent, or a particularly popular or unpopular girl, caught and held the attention of these girls. The episode quoted earlier about Km's 'boobs' illustrates the use of a subject of mutual interest, a high profile target. As she was unpopular, any conversation including Km was of interest to the girls. Mutuality of topic is also present as breast size is a frequent topic of interest for these girls.

<u>Role of Audience/Listeners</u>

Gossip is an interactive process, a contract between speaker and audience. It may be that the role of those listening may have been underestimated in research, although note has been made of the co-operation between gossip and audience (Haviland, 1977). Those listening have an active part to play in the development of the sequence. I would suggest that, in some cases, gossip only develops if the audience plays an active part by introducing evaluative statement of the subject into the conversation. The intention of the gossip may be to cause a negative evaluative gossip sequence, but this may only materialise in the exchanges between the gossip and listeners.

This is shown in the comments of one girl in particular. L, more than any other girl, frequently backs up a negative remarks made by her friends, Col and Cl, by immediately repeating their preceding comments, especially if Km is the topic of conversation. An initial remark may not have been interpreted as negative without her additional remarks. She is very powerful in this incendiary role. She rarely introduces a gossip episode but expands comments made by others. These comments are often made in a covert manner with single words such as 'aye' employed rather than sentences. L cannot be accused of gossiping as she is not adding new information to the gossip, she is only 'parroting' what others have said. However, these comments could be used with the intention of ingratiating the speaker into a friendship group, rather than the intention being to support the comments of the speaker. In the sequence below, L supports the comments of Cl. Her intention may have been to incite the negative attitude towards Km, or to ingratiate herself with Cl. It is likely that the purpose was a combination of both.

Cl   Km was licking up my arse ye na.

L   Aye, well.

Cl   She was there and I said .....

L   *And Cl said*, 'Shurrup, man.' (*parrot comment and adding to Cl's tale*).

Cl   She was getting on my wick and G (boy) pushed her and I went...

Are you friends?

Cl   *She's a cow*

L   Na. *She's a cow (parrot comment in answering for Cl).*

Although the other girls used this parroting technique, on occasions, L is the main culprit, perhaps because she was on the periphery of the group of aggressive girls and eager to be assimilated into the group.

In the two extracts given below Cl challenges Col but L compounds the accusation by repeating her comment.

Cl   I bet you she was ...(repeated three times)...cos she doesn't want me to ...playing with you..

Col   She does.

Cl   *She doesn't like me playing with you.*

Col   I na she doesn't.

L   *She doesn't like me playing with her.*

Cl   She had *a big greeny up her nose* when I was trying to play the recorder, and I'm not lying. *A big greeny.*

L   Aye. I know. You and me were there. You went.'Eeee, Col, I mean, Km, you've *got a big greeny up your nose'*, And she went... 'So!'

Cl   No. Not today, man.

L   Aye, but the last time cos I remember when we were next to the organ.

4.   Description of theVocabulary

Although the school was in an area of social and economic deprivation, even the least academic girls (some of the girls were academically able) could draw upon a bank of vocabulary and linguistic phrases. The girls themselves created the most apt and humourous, spontaneously. They also had access to a wealth of vocabulary in the local dialect. This is discussed later in this section and has already been noted in the name-calling and insult sections.

Although the language may be somewhat restricted in grammatical terms, as used by the girls it is lively and colourful. La, wanting to challenge what D has said, remarks that 'D has a pack of lies in her gob'. In expressing her view that her work has been spoilt Cl remarks, 'It's a right clip man. Look at the clip of it!' (unacceptable state)

In giving unsolicited advice on dress code, M explains that the wearing of leggings with a short T shirt will result in an embarrassing revelation. M warns the girls, 'Cos your lips talk'. This refers to the rubbing together of the cheeks of the buttocks when walking.

The high level of aggression in the speech of the locality is reflected in the choice of vocabulary used to express emotions and ideas. Crude, vulgar phrases used in the conversations as in ' licking up my arse', 'licking mi thingy' 'punch her face', 'I hate....', 'foaming'. 'I hate her' is a comment made by some girls about others. Anger is expressed vehemently by the use of extreme phrases such as '...will beat her up', 'give her black eyes', 'kick her fucking head', 'kill her'. Frequently the girls use threats to one another such as 'I'll slap ye' meaning anything from a light tap to a heavy beating. Cl described how she treated one girl who went to her house to make friends with her again after a quarrel. She says that she 'shut the door in her face'.

5. Use of Dialect

Brenneis & Lein (1977) found a reversal to dialect use in gossip episodes. Presumably, this consolidates feelings of commonality, strengthens mutual bonds encouraging the trust necessary for intimate disclosures. The girls used dialect language in any informal situation, in or out of school, seemingly unconsciously transferring to a modified form in the hearing of teachers. They were able to transfer smoothly between the orthodox language (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, CALP) used for formal tasks, to the heavy dialect (Basic Interpersonal Social Competence, BISC), used for communication among themselves (Cummins, 1984, 1986).

As the activity sessions were without direct adult supervision, the dialect is unmodified. This is famously difficult to interpret and the video material, where several

speak simultaneously, was almost unintelligible to me although I had worked in the area for fifteen years.

Since the invasion of the Vikings there have been very strong links maintained between this area and the Scandinavian countries. Many of the dialect words the girls used are taken straight from Norwegian; bairn- child, gan - to go, yous, yees - you. 'Know' and 'no' are commonly substituted by the use of 'na' 'Na' meaning 'No, I don't' or 'No, I won't' are employed throughout the episodes. A word much in common use is 'divvent' meaning 'don't' but can also mean 'didn't'. The phrase 'Toon Army' used throughout the sessions is the colloquial name for the local football team and comes from the dialect word 'toon' (town).

The word 'man' is neither gender nor age associated but used to refer to male and female and is substituted, or attached, to a personal name as in 'Cl man'. It may have affectionate connotations or provide emphasis to a comment. 'Bonny' is a term of appreciation that has wide applications. As is commonly the case, some dialect words are local abbreviations or adaptations of other words. 'Yours' is substituted for your house, 'last time when she was sleeping at yours and everything'. To 'work' someone means to tease or annoy and there are many references to 'getting wrong'. This indicates getting into trouble.

The video material displays the sense of rhythm and balance the girls used in the construction of their sentences. Most of the girls were extremely interested in pop music and were accomplished dancers. They sang spontaneously solo, or in chorus, most displaying very tuneful voices and an excellent sense of rhythm. In the following extract, the girls pick up the word 'tushty' (excellent) created by Ce and develop a spontaneous rhyme. Ce says, 'Everyone. Look at mine, it's tushty, tushty, tushty, belta (twice). All join in and a rhythmic rhyme develops. Cushty (twice) Belta (twice) Tushty (three times) Belta (twice) Belti, Belta. Tushty would seem to be a corruption of cushty that is the Romany word for excellent)

In summary, although the language used by the girls is colourful and expressive, the grammatical structures are somewhat simplistic. The girls can communicate with

great ease, but there is little evidence of extended or elaborate clause structures. The sentences are short and to the point. Rather than employ protracted adjectival and adverbial clauses, a variety of orthodox and unorthodox adjectives give pace and colour to their utterances. The girls are not shy of using the quality of swear words usually associated with adult use. Their conversations are full of short, explicit, economical phrases that leave little doubt as to the meaning of the speaker and the anticipated response. None of the grammatical errors lessens the clarity of the lively and spontaneous speech of the girls.

5. The Gossips, Targets, Topics and Functions of the Gossip

The main culprits for gossiping are those who are the most troublesome and aggressive in the class. This included those considered aggressive due to their use of overt aggression, and those who were not labeled as aggressive but used indirect and covert aggression to control others. Some girls used both direct and indirect aggression.

The prime target for the gossip was Km. She was disliked by the girls as she was guilty of several of the behaviours featured in the list of reasons why a girl would be disliked given in the previous chapter. Some of the behaviours were ascribed to her erroneously due to the jealousy of some girls in the group as Km was a physically attractive girl. These aggressors were the more physically mature girls and those most interested in boyfriends. The majority of the accusations and criticisms of Km, contained in the gossip, relate to the intense competition for boyfriends.

The topics chosen for gossip are shown in Table 10.1. They relate to findings that girls talk mainly about their relationships (Duncan, 1999; Gilmore, 1978; Lees, 1993). These gossip sessions largely concern destroying reputations. Gilmore (1978) proposes that we are most at risk from gossiping friends. Very little boosting of the achievements of others is in evidence. Many of the topics identified are related to the negative constructs offered in response to the questions in the semi-structured interviews relating to those girls they did not like. The constructs of being aggressive and quarrelsome, boastful, bossy and untrustworthy were high on the list for unpopularity. Not keeping secrets and taking friends were considered characteristics that broke the tacit code of behaviour, as was name-calling and talking behind a person's back.

Table 10.1 The Gossips, Targets, Topics and Functions of the Gossip

Gossip Giver	Target	Topic	Function
Cl	Km	boys	eliminate contest for boys
Cl	Km	boastfulness	correcting boast re boys
Cl	Km	selfishness	comparison to self
Cl	Km	bossiness	comparison to self
Cl	Km	telling secrets	moral censure re mores
Cl	So	physical development	fun, ridicule
Cl	Col's sister	gossiping	moral sanction
Cl	Col's sister	taking friends	problem solving
Cl	Km	spoiling the play	criticizing acts & mores
Cl (3)	Km	boys	competition for boys
Cl	Km	ingratiating	ridiculing
Cl	Km	boys	inciting trouble
Cl	Km	quarrel	inciting aggression
Cl	Km	quarrel	inciting aggression
Cl	uncle	drunk	affirming attitudes & fun
Cl	older girl	boasting	correcting information
Cl	Km	meanness	censure of behaviour
M	group	fashion	problem solving, fun
M	group	Na	pretend scandal as fun
M	Km	physical development	ridicule
M	researcher	prying	loss of trust in adult
M	little girl	mocking	fun
L	researcher	gossiping	loss of trust in adult
L	researcher	eavesdropping	mistrust of adult
L	researcher	suspicion	mistrust of adult

Table 10.1 The Gossips, Targets, Topics and Functions of the Gossip (continued)

Col	Km	gossiping	ridiculing
Col	teacher	behaviour	fun
Km	boys	comparison	ranking boys
Km (2)episodes S		gossiping re boys	indirect attack
CS	teacher	leaving	affirmation, bonding
CS	a girl	fashion	ridiculing clothes
Ky	teacher	comparison	affirmation, bonding
Ky	M	quarrels	inciting trouble
A	N	discussing friends	inciting trouble
A	cousin	watching films	censure, entertaining
N	A's cousin	been in jail	social mores-exploration
N	boys	comparison	ranking boys
G	teacher	comparison	affirmation, bonding
La	mother	cancelled party	loss of trust in adult
Ce	boy	boyfriend	affirmation, bonding

The gossip used by the girls fulfils a spectrum of functions, all of which relate to interpersonal relationships. The gossip episodes track the highs and lows of the interpersonal relationships within the class group. Study of the sociograms in the context of the sequence of academic terms in which each gossip episode occurred, shows that the escalation in frequency and severity of gossip comment reflects the quarrels and violence within the group. The role of gossip has a Janus quality. It can be idle chatter used to pass the time and to create bonding links between members of the group, or used in a destructive and malicious manner to ostracize and exclude a girl.

There is a spectrum of functions fulfilled by gossip, most of which can be identified in this study. Table 10.1 gives the functions of gossip linked to their presence in the conversations of the girls. The list of topics relates to their incidence at the developmental stages as outlined in the work of Gottman and Mettatal (1986). One of the most interesting aspects of this study is that these girls are on the cusp of adolescence. Gottman and Mettatal describe gossip as the rehearsal process for adolescence, to ease the transition from childhood to adolescence. This appears to be in evidence with these girls, highlighted in this particular situation as the period of the study coincides with a significant stage in their educational career. At the commencement of the study, the girls are in the last term of the penultimate year of primary education. By the end of the study, sixteen months later, they are about to transfer to the secondary sector. The study shows some girls remaining developmentally at the primary stage, while others are somewhat precocious. The girls straddle these two developmental stages, both individually, and as a group over time.

Children of primary school age are still discovering features of their own personality, often relating these revelations to others of their age. There are instances of this in the study where a girl uses gossip as an aid to self-exploration. La has strong negative emotions about being let down by her mother. She expresses these to her friends to test out whether or not her own responses are valid and acceptable. La was promised a party for her 11th birthday as this is a family tradition. Just before her birthday, her mother said that this was not happening although a party was planned for her younger sister later in the year. La was surprised, disappointed and angry. She needed to discuss her feelings with her friends, feeling guilty about having negative feelings about her mother. .

La   I'm not having a party this year like Le (sister).

Ky   I know why. Cos..(repeated three times). Le's better than her.

La   I'm not really bothered but my Mam says every four years you can have a party. Like this is my double figures (11 years) and I'm supposed to have a party now, this year, but my Mam says 'Tough if it is your second double figures. It's not running in the family any more. It's only for Le.'

All   (Silence, somewhat shocked by the action of La's mother).

(The girls whisper the rest of the sequence showing that La is well aware that she is overstepping the boundary of acceptable behaviour in speaking of her mother in this way).

La   That's horrible that is. Isn't it?

All   Silence.

A   Are you gonna murder her? I'd kill her, me.

A's comment is not meant to be taken seriously. However, it gives La support and affirmation, as does the shocked silence of this loquacious group, never short of an opinion to give on any matter. It is clear that the girls are in tune with La's feelings.

There is a lot of talk about boys. Many of these relationships are just fantasies. Ce does have an embryonic relationship with a boyfriend and she talks about this with her close friend. This is the only dyad that lasted the full time of the study. She needs to disclose her relationship in confidence and this leads to a brief gossip sequence. The girls are using the gossip structure as one mechanism whereby they can explore their emotions, compare them to those of others and mentally and linguistically rehearse possible courses of action. They can test out opinions, measure their own against those of others, and come to understand the norms and mores of acceptable behaviour with the opposite sex. This happens with their relationships with girls as well as boys. Gottman (1986) claims that the main function of gossip at the later secondary age is discovery of self in relation to others. This results in relentless remarks about friendships and relationships involving checking the self against others, as well as monitoring the nuances of the friendships. These processes are already evident in this study.

Gottman (1986) found that primary age children begin to use gossip as a problem-solving device. The most pressing problems for these girls are to do with relationships with other girls and with their own families. Several girls mentioned in the semi-structured interviews that talking with their friends about family issues and problems is a most valuable feature of their friendships. Those gossiping often offer a comparison

of the reprehensible behaviour of the target, with the exemplary behaviour that they claim would have been their own course of action. They consider that they have the justification to take a moral stance on the issue under discussion. Table 10.1 shows that this is a common theme in the gossip of these girls. Criticism of others is embedded in the gossip in such a manner that the behaviour of the gossip is compared overtly or tacitly, but favourably, with the target girl under discussion.

The girls are clearly aware that gossip may be challenged or sanctioned. La makes a challenge regarding truth as a requirement of acceptable conversation. She challenges as improbable M's claim that the researcher did not have permission from parents for the study. Some of the girls were unwilling to allow improbable chatter to continue unchallenged, even in the most shocking and exciting gossip episodes.

There was an awareness of the moral and social implications of making negative value judgements of others. Cl makes a 'disclaimer' to the camera to give a rationale for her gossip, recognising it to be uncharitable. She speaks directly to the camera. 'I'm sorry talking about Km but I can't stand her'. Cl and Col both make statements such as, ' I'm sorry to say this but.....' before making adverse comments about others (see excerpt below). The use of this type of disclaimer takes the place of similar phrases used by adults such as, 'I like Mary but...' ' You know I'm not one to gossip but...' 'As you know, I am a friend of Mary, but....'.

There is evidence of an exploration of moral issues embedded in the gossip sequences. Gossip is used at this age to figure out and clarify group norms and mores such as the public reaction to telling tales or name-calling. Negative constructs, given by the girls as rationales for not liking another girl, appear in the critical evaluative comments within the gossip statements. Gossip is used to clarify a definition of common ground. Col asks a rhetorical question, 'Km's dead naughty, isn't she?' Cl gives confirmation by continuing, 'She does stuff....you don't want her to'. Commonality of attitudes is important at the primary stage and these girls monitor each other to ensure they are fitting in with the group attitudes and mores. Gossip is used in this role of monitoring the use and abuse of formal and informal social rules and mores.

Later, at the secondary stage, a keen awareness develops concerning the positive and negative qualities found in others. Personal characteristics and qualities take on more significance and there is evidence of this in the conversations. Gottman (1986) writes that at this age there is less tolerance of deceit and lies. So is challenged when suspected of lying. This is given as a rationale for antagonistic feelings towards her. Positive qualities in others are identified as in one gossip episode where consensus is sought in the exploration of the qualities of good teachers. A characteristic of this age is that positive evaluations of others occur more commonly than previously. Even the negative evaluations are more likely to have a positive end, and positive and negative evaluations of same person may be held simultaneously (Gottman & Mettatal, 1986). Sa says of Col, 'She can be aggressive but she can be kind'.

The extracts given below show that the girls are seeking affirmation for actions, beliefs and attitudes as suggested by Gottman and Mettatal (1986). These primarily concern issues to do with friendship relations. Enticing friends away is an action that is severely criticised by all the girls although it appears to be commonplace. The loss of a friend was a major concern of several girls and some gossip episodes concern friends being enticed away. In a conversation between Col and Cl, it becomes clear that Col's cousin, Ln, is to be criticised for behaving in an underhand manner. There is an exposure of her deviant behaviour. Clearly, it is not morally acceptable to the girls that Ln uses such underhand tactics to entice Col away from her best friend.

The issue of breaking a friendship has wide repercussions and so has a prominent place in the gossip sequences. A girl leaving a friendship not only leaves her former friend with negative emotions about the loss of a friend, but there is the possibility of shared secrets being widely disclosed. The girls in the study voted those girls who gave away the secrets of others, and could not be trusted, as the most unpopular. These issues, discussed in the previous chapter on popular and unpopular behaviours and constructs, are central to gossip among the girls.

Cl   Was your Ln talking about me last night?

(Silence - shock that such a direct challenge has been made to a girl as powerful as Col).

Col   Na.

Cl   I bet she was cos....(repeated three times) .... *she doesn't like me playing with*

you.

Col   She does.

Cl   She doesn't like me playing with you.

Col   I know she doesn't.

(At this point L, 'parrots' a comment to join in the criticism to support Cl)

Col   I na. *She sneaks you away.*

L   *She doesn't like me playing with her. She sneaks you away from me. She*

sneaked you away from me last night   *(parrot comment)*

Col   I na.

Cl   *That's what I went in for.*

L   *That's why I went in* last time, Col. *She sneaks her away from me. That's why I*

went in last time cos...Col...cos..   *(parrot comment)*

Cl   That's why I went in last night for.

The girls in this study show evidence of self-disclosure among friends, the opposite

sex being a favourite topic. Gottman (1986) suggests that gossip is one mode used to

select friends by the mechanism of looking for commonalties. Although gossip may be

used in a positive manner to forge group support, this very function can used to group

together to exclude an individual from the group.

There are many segments of conversations devoted to agreement and listening

attentively to the ideas and opinions of others. Even these argumentative and

quarrelsome girls employed a wide range of supportive verbal structures in their social

engagements between themselves and the others in the group. In the following

conversation, the girls are discussing those adults who had taught them in previous

schools.

La   I love Mrs P. Right?

A   I know who my best teacher is.   .

Ky   Mr S.

A   Aye. He used to...

Ky   Aye. He's dead funny, isn't he? He goes like this..He goes..eeeeeeh! (repeated twice)

Ky   He used to go eeeeeeh.

A   He went like this to me...(repeated twice). He went, 'A! Stand up.' Like shouting, right?

Get your jacket off. (whispers as the teacher did to show the joke).

Ky   That's how he goes.

Lis   He's lovely. 'G (a boy) come here'. That's what he did to G. He goes 'G. Stand up and go and stand in the corner'. (a joke)

All   (laugh)

La   ' Go in that corner and shut your gob'. (silly voice to show extension of the joke). 'That one there.'

If the target is mutually known, the moral evaluation embedded in the gossip may be explicit or hidden. This would lessen the danger of challenge or censure as a mutually known acquaintance can be referred to in code. An example of hidden criticism would be, 'Sharon's taking a job in Thailand.' Those who know Sharon may read into this statement that she is making this somewhat surprising and unwise change for questionable reasons. A further example could be 'Mike's applying for the advertised promoted post'. Those who know Mike could read into this statement that Mike is over estimating his abilities and achievements. Such non-evaluative statements could conceal a wealth of tacit gossip. These two examples show that a historical context is required, in many instances, in order to understand gossip as it may be given in shorthand with little overt criticism. In this way, comments and evaluations are ambiguous and less open to challenge and criticism. In addition, should the target hear of the gossip, it is possible to deny that any negative comment was intended. This process would seem to be somewhat sophisticated for these girls to use in a premeditated fashion. However, as with many features of linguistic processes, such as

name-calling (Besag, 1989, pg. 43), the procedure and content appear part of the linguistic heritage passed down through generations of proven effective practice.

Overall, the most frequent rationale for gossip, regardless of any underlying content, is enjoyment. Heidigger (1962) claims that the main purpose of gossip is that it is an idle and relaxing activity. At the secondary stage, as with younger children, there will be many instances of drama, incredulity and shocked response to add enjoyment and interest to the gossip story. As can be seen from Table 10.1, gossip often appears as entertainment, although there may be a more serious underlying motive.

Perhaps the most powerful weapon in a gossip episode is humour and ridicule. A lot of gossip is just fun, idle chatter carried out without malice, but the humour may be cruel and destructive. Several gossip episodes appear to be based on the intention of the girls to have a laugh together, that the laugh is directly or indirectly at another's expense appears to be disregarded in some instances. The role of gossip as a tool for bonding is seen in the way that the humour encourages the listeners to find a common target. The comment about Km having had her 'boobs' ' blown up' ensures that she becomes the target of fun and ridicule. This holds the interest of the group longer than would have been the case if a non-humourous comment had been made.

Gossip can be used as a display of power, or in a bid for recognition as powerful. As stated previously, the holding of information is power that is lost once the gossip is transferred to others. A gossip episode often begins with a preamble, followed by a snippet to entice further information. At this stage offers the gossip retains the power as the holder of the information alone decides on the speed of disclosure. Lastly, the giving of the gossip may come after a build up of anticipation to a dramatic end. At each stage, the gossip has been able to use and display power so that the structure of the process compliments the power the gossip holds by having the information as a commodity

6. Summary

Gossip is a commonplace activity, used over time and across cultures. Little has been written about gossip in any context, and hardly anything about gossip as used by

school children. Although seemingly used as part of daily speech, an attempt at investigation shows how difficult it can be to investigate such an ad hoc occurrence in a natural setting. The episodes that were eventually collected were enough to identify the presence, usage and structure of gossip.

Gossip has a wide range of functions. The girls in this study used it mainly to control the group dynamics. Gossip was used to avoid challenge, yet achieve change. This can be seen in the role gossip played in the attacking, and eventually excluding, of Km who was physically powerful, but who aggravated the others with her selfish and pompous manner. Gossip was used primarily by those who were confident and in secure friendships. Although Cl was in the most secure dyad friendship, the only one lasting the full length of the study, she was the girl who gossiped most, unlike her dyad partner Ce. In contrast, Col was a frequent gossip but she not in such a secure dyad friendship. However, although aggressive she was popular and had other friends outside of the school

The defining feature of the gossips would seem to be an intense interest in others.. Cl and Col, prime gossips, closely monitored any threats or intrusions on their friendships and would immediately made effective challenges to the potential intruder as well as their partner. The other main source of the gossip was the jealousy both these girls felt towards Km, both saw her as a threat to their friendships and to their popularity with boys. These factors were compounded to such as extent that Km became marginalised to a degree where she was placed in physical danger. This process was expedited by gossip

Research would indicate that it is people who are popular who gossip and that gossips are socially and linguistically skilled (Ben Ze'ev 1994; Bergmann, 1993). As those unpopular do not have the confidence and support of others, they may be challenged by the more dominant members of the group (Godwin, 1990). Those who are isolates or loners by choice have little interest in the actions of others and so take no part in gossiping episodes. This was evident in this study as the girls who appeared to be less popular than others did not gossip. Some girls took no interest in others outside

their own particular friendships.

Gossiping is a skill and, at times, an art. These girls showed a surprisingly highly developed range of skills used in what may be considered a carefree, leisure activity. This may link to the recent identification of the range of social skills at the disposal of the more successful bullies (Sutton, Smith & Sweetenham, 1999). It would appear that the potency of gossip, learnt through use over generations, for positive as well as negative reasons, has infused the process with a sound structure and a polished and effective mode of presentation. The role of the listeners may have been underestimated in the past. Gossip is an interactive process and the listeners have an active role. These girls show that good gossips are proficient entertainers. They, and their listeners display a sophisticated range of linguistic and social skills. The study developed the structure and taxonomy of gossip, adding previously unidentified elements. Gossip, as used by these girls in this study, was shown to be an interactive, entertaining mode of communication used to cement, disrupt or initiate the complex interpersonal relationships. This study shows that the examination of a brief extract may not offer the rich contextual information necessary to an accurate understanding of the hidden implications embedded in the gossip material.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ANALYSIS OF RUMOUR

1. **Introduction : Comparison of Gossip and Rumour**

    The episodes of rumour identified in the transcripts highlight the difference between rumour and gossip. The switch between rumour and gossip may be subtle and can occur in the same sequence. The focus of a conversation could be a rumour but, once the rumour has been presented, the conversation could then develop by the listeners discussing one or more of the people involved. If the discussion slips so that a person is the target of the conversation, and evaluative comments are made about that person, the episode will have drifted from rumour into gossip

    This distinction can be seen in the following episodes. There is a suspicion that the researcher is employed by some official body to discover if there is any fraudulent social security claims being made by the families. (Many of the men in the locality took the pseudonym of 'Geordie' to fudge any issues of identification as they were claiming social benefit payments from more than one address). The discussion focuses on who has sent the researcher and for what purpose.

Rumour Episode

Cl   Aye, but how did Mrs B....I know where they're from ye na.... (repeated twice).

All   What?

Cl   I know where they're from,

Cl   Any way, cos Gl, you know, ...she's got one of them things....(identity badge)

S   They're from Ly (a school). I mean the Leisure Centre.

Cm   The Council.

L   The Civic Centre.

Cl   To find out all about .... (repeated twice)....your family.. .cos she asked me ....that's who she's gonna tell....the Council......So!

L   Aye.

Cl   I'm not coming any more.

L   Cos...do you know what?

Cm   Aye, she's from the Council.

S   Hey. The camera's on.

L   Like, if the Council's not supposed to know about your Dad living with ye...

This first segment holds the 'the council' as the target of the conversation. This is a rumour segment for, although the girls see the council as being represented by the researcher, the negative focus is the council wanting to pry into private family information and not an individual person. The girls, representing their families, see this as prying and so couch their comments in a negative, evaluative manner.

In this next segment the target of the rumour has slipped from being 'the council' to the specific role and responsibilities of Mrs B. She is seen as a spy for the council and must take the blame for 'grassing' about the families and the claims. As Mrs B personally is the subject of the negative evaluation, I would suggest that this episode has now slipped from an episode of rumour to one of gossip. The conversation continues for several turns. As it contains personal comment, the episode continues as a gossip sequence.

Gossip

Cl   Them'll know. I know. But he's not living with us. And she might tell'em. So! So! I'm not coming any more.

L   Ye Dad's not living with ye anyway Cl.

Cl   I know. Because she promised us that she wouldn't tell.

Cl   And I've just found out that Gl had got that thing (badge) on ...that Mrs B...

Cl   That's got nothing to do with Mrs B about our business. Or anyone else. And I'm not laughing because it's just....I telled mi....telled me Mam...

Cm   Or my Mam'll know.

L   Don't tell her (Mrs B).

Cl   I telled mi Ma when....we shouldn't have telled her.

Cl   My Ma when I got....(repeated twice)....and she ...."Don't tell her any of your business because I know ....what them Leisure people are like."

Cl   She did. And I'm not bothered.

N   Oh, my wardrobe's going red. (refers to her drawing).

Cl   And I'm getting wrong for it. Cos I got wrong for telling her all my business.

N   All your business.

Cl   You know....(repeated twice) she'll show this video to the council you na... .council....

L   I na.

Sa   Where's the black?

Cl   I divvent say to....(repeated twice) say to her ...watch the video.

L   I want to tell her...I want to say to Mrs Bn (class teacher)...'Miss, why do you want to know all our ....business for?'

2.   The Framework of a Rumour Episode

A rumour episode, as shown above, appears to have a structure similar to that of a gossip event. The difference lies in the proposition that gossip, concerning the personal matters of another, and touching on emotions and reputations, may have a more complex structure than rumour. It may be that the gossip act, targeting a person and not an impersonal target, attracts more avid interest and serves more focussed and personal ends than rumour. The gossip episodes give rise to more humour, play on words, inventive vocabulary and a wider discussion content than the rumour episodes. It must be stressed that different girls originated the rumour and the gossip episodes in the conversations. Any differences in style and content may be due to the difference in the personality and skills of the two different groups of girls rather than a difference in the process.

There are similarities in the structure of gossip and rumour although the purpose may differ. For example, a pause may be inserted in a rumour sequence as in gossip. It may be that the pause in gossip is to allow for any challenge due to the personal matter of reputation being at stake. Rumour challenges would be more likely to concern disputed facts and so less personal in character. Even so, the seeking of permission to continue would be advisable in both cases. A core statement, development and clarification would be expected, as would challenges and subsequent repair work.

Context

Rumour and gossip may be set in a context, but not necessarily so as both may be presented unannounced. Two girls are having a discussion about the relative size of schools. La brings a new issue into the conversation although it continues within the same theme.

CS   And have you seen the news....that school? Have you seen the toilets? I bet you haven't. You want to see the state of them toilets.

The conversation continues with counter remarks made by other girls who are to attend that school. La brings in the rumour comment.

La   Well, that's not what I meant. My sister....my step sister goes there and she says that....she says....it's got thingy (graffiti) written all over it.

Attention Grabbers

Attention Grabbers may be used in the same way as in gossip and for the same purpose. Names catch the attention, especially those that have a particular resonance at the time, such as the names of the two schools at the core of the heated discussions between La and CS. Superlatives such as 'the best school ever made' not only draw attention to the remark but have an in-built challenge to those with a vested interest in contesting this evaluation. Unusual words, as in 'nitric acid', grab the attention of the girls. La introduces 'nitric acid' into an argument in an attempt to confound CS. La has learnt some basic chemistry and knows that CS, who was not as intelligent as La, will be bewildered by this unfamiliar vocabulary. La clearly hoped that this would confuse CS and win her the battle. However, the unfamiliar name of nitric acid caught the interest of the rest of the girls, as an attention grabber is intended to do, although that was not the purpose of La using it in this instance. They discuss possible properties of nitric acid and, in so doing, re-open the on-going verbal skirmish over schools.

Permission

As with any conversation, rumour can only be successful with the overt or tacit permission of the receiver. CS begins her challenge to La by making a claim. 'Do you know....you know....Ly (school)? It's the best school ever made'. G is to attend that

school later in the year and so gives permission for the episode to continue by confirming the comment with, 'Aye. In' it?'

Parrot

Parrot comments may be made in rumour sequences to emphasise previous statements. In a conversation about a school visit, Ky makes a parrot comment to support a previous comment. G states that all the girls in the class are keen to visit her choice of school as they, too, wish to apply for admission. These remarks are made to confirm the superiority of this school. G says, 'You know when we go the next time? The whole class is going up to Ly. In two weeks time'. Ky offers support by parroting her speech, ' In two weeks time. All the class'.

Core Statement

The core statement giving the essential rumour 'fact' may begin the episode or be embedded in the conversation. In discussing her new school uniform, Ky gives a full description of tights that she assures the girls will be the obligatory dress code.

Ky   I've gotta wear dangling tights. (wrinkled or loose fitting)

CS   What for? You don't have to wear tights.

Ky   I do. I've gotta wear tights with a short skirt. I gotta wear different length tights....you know, them tights you can flippin see through? I've gotta wear them ones.'

Ky is making a bid for status in describing the short skirt and sheer tights all the girls would love to wear to school.

Expansion

Ky gives a graphic description of the toilets in the school under discussion that she has visited. This is done to support her prior positive comments and dispute a claim made by La that the toilets in that school are 'manky' (dirty). This comment of La's supports her view that the school is not as nice as the one she hopes to attend. Ky expands on a previous comment about the visit that La missed, 'Even when you weren't there and the toilets are absolutely shining like gold. Don't they?' Ky implies that she has seen the toilets, but La has not.

Clarification

Some of the girls are confused about the technical equipment in the room. They

are not sure of the function of the separate microphone in relation to the camera.

Sh   You can hide it.

Cl   Don't hide that cos you can put stuff on top of that and it doesn't show.

Sh   It's a microphone.

Cl   It's not.

Sh   It is. It's a microphone.

S   It is.

Cl   It's not. If you touch that....

S   It's a microphone Cl man. It is.

Cl   She telled us as it's not. If you put anything over that you can't see owt.

S   You can't. You can't hear anything.

Challenges and Topping

It would appear that one segment of the structure of gossip, challenge, is different in character from that presented in the rumour episodes. The type of challenge and topping sequences in rumour do not appear in the challenge process in gossip. The few rumour episodes in the study show a far greater degree of challenge and contest than the gossip extracts. Extended verbal duels occur in the rumour episodes as can be seen in those between La and CS concerning schools. As the target in a gossip episode is absent, those listening must make a challenge in defense of the reputation of the target. In a rumour episode this does not apply in the same way as the impersonal focus of the rumour may or may not be present. The Pritt Stick (a type of glue) that is the focus in one episode is present in front of the girls, whereas the television aerial that is the focus of another is not. This makes the giver and challenger of a rumour episode of equal status which may give rise to the extended challenges and topping processes that are not as evident in a gossip sequence. Topping has been discussed in the chapter on Insult.

Repairs

The variety of repairs used in a rumour sequence are of the same structure and format as those found in gossip. After making strong assertions about her knowledge of medical matters (she refers to herself as 'I am the nurse here' in order to dominate the

conversation) M realises that she has said something foolish and makes a fast repair. Immediately, she explains that she thought the conversation was about a television aerial, not the washing powder of the same name. She says, 'Ariel, the washing up liquid? Oh, I thought you meant those radiational things at the back of the telly'.

Closure

An exit from a rumour sequence can be made in the same way as one from a gossip episode. In a sequence where La gives a long explanation about the properties of nitric acid, CS asks why nitric acid is made if it is so dangerous. CS asks, scornfully, 'Well, why do they make it if it explodes?' La replies, ' Cos they were stupid. They aren't like that any more.' CS can find no way to counter this immediately and so the argument draws naturally to a close.

Similarly, a rational comment by La ends the following dispute. Cl disputes Sa's comment that Pritt Stick is not hallucinogenic. La remarks, 'It cannot because they wouldn't have it out' (for sale in the shops). This appears to be the end of the matter but Sa adds a final comment to end the dispute, 'Children's glue canna'. As with gossip, a humorous remark, a deflective comment, an interruption or introduction of an indisputable fact, are all mechanisms whereby a rumour episode may be brought to a close.

The episode given below shows the sequential structure of a typical rumour episode. The girls are debating the merits of the schools they are to attend in the near future. This topic dominated the conversations of this group of girls. The subject worried many of the girls, but it is La and CS who hold heated debates on the issue.

La   Are you still going to Ly? (a school) *(No context and so the question acts as an attention grabber).*

CS   Oh, fucking shurrup you. Are you? *(A question gives permission to continue).* Aye, ye.....cos....? Aye, ye..it's all right there really isn't it? No. It's fucking horrible. *(A question contains the core issue - will the school be alright? Raises a doubt)*

La   Anyway, Carol. If... *(Attention held by use of name).*

CS   Na man, it's good.

La   Ah man, Ly and T H (these are the names of the two schools) are getting together

so I don't know what you're going on about. *(Names act as attention grabber. Core statement)*

Cm   I na. My Mam's putting my name down ye na. *(Extension)*

CWh   Na. It's all reet there. *(Extension)*

La   When me and Cm are in the second year they're all from T H gettin...are coming in to Ly and they're building it bigger. *(Core statement)*

CWh   You can go to any school you want to after that. *(Core statement)*

CS   A lot of schools are getting knocked down aren't they and then building bigger ones between them. *(Core statement)*

CS   What for? *(Clarification sought)*

La   They're probably have to stay off at home while it's getting done.*(Extension)*

All   Na! *(Denial)*

CS   Na! We don't get....get hauled on to another school man. *(Extension)*

All   Yeh! *(Agreement)*

Sh   You do. You do! *(Agreement)*

CS   You do. (Repeated twice). You definitely do. *(Closure)*

3. The Givers, the Targets, Topics and Function of Rumour

The Rumour Givers and the Targets

As can be seen from Table 11.1 two girls dominated the initiating of rumours. Surprisingly, the group of aggressive girls did not become involved in the rumours. This may have been because rumours are concerned with impersonal matters, whereas gossip and grassing involve interpersonal matters. The most aggressive girls were more concerned with watching the moves each other made regarding friendships, with both the boys and girls in the class, than in discussing impersonal issues.

At the time of the study, the girls were soon to transfer to secondary education. It was clearly a worrying time for the girls and many of their parents. Theoretically, parents could select any school in the Borough. However, this was rarely successful and many students and parents were disappointed in not being offered a place in their first, second or even third choice of school. This uncertainty and disappointment resulted in the girls being even more apprehensive about the transfer to secondary

education than had previously been the case. In addition, there is an evident

undercurrent about the competition for places in some of the schools. The spread of

rumours concerning the secondary schools highlights this undercurrent of tension and

anxiety. Rumours flourish in times of anxiety and uncertainty (Adams & Bristow,

1979; Allport & Postman, 1947b; Knopf, 1975; Rosnow & Fine, 1976a; Shibutani,

1966).

This anxiety is shown in the verbal dueling between La and CS. This triggers the

majority of rumours as can be seen in Table 11.1. La hopes for one of the heavily

sought-after places in a local college. CS had only one successful application and this

was for the nearest comprehensive school that did not enjoy a good reputation. La's

excitement taunts CS, possibly unwittingly. This prompts CS to make exaggerated

claims for the local comprehensive school. This verbal duel results in an escalating

sequence of claims for each school given by each disputant in turn. The resulting

rumours are so far fetched that neither school would be recognised. It is not clear from

these discussions whether or not the two girls believed what they were saying, whether

they were repeating rumours they themselves had heard, or whether they were simply

trying to top each other in exaggerating the claims made for each school.

Topics

The other topics of the rumours all concerned objects the girls were confused about

as in the semantic confusion over the word aerial and the cause of an allergy. In the

other rumour episodes there is confusion over whether or not Pritt Stick is

hallucinogenic, and confusion over the properties of the camera as opposed to the video

equipment. It was clear that the rumours emerged when there were anxieties or at times

of doubt or confusion.

The table below shows how the rumour episodes were dominated by the one topic

of the schools. In the conversations there is abundant use of superlatives. The schools

are described as the best, biggest, newest, having most students. Of the 14 episodes, 11

are taken up by La delineating each supposed attribute of her school. Soon after these

conversations, the sociometric measures show La to be less frequently nominated as a

friend. Her boastful attitude may be contributory to this as boasting was named as an

unpopular quality. M's aggressive boastfulness contributes to her nomination as unpopular.

The Function of the Rumour Episodes

The main function of the rumour episodes appeared to be to establish, challenge or confirm status. This can be seen in the extended verbal contest between La and CS where each girl appears to use a school as a vehicle for challenge. The schools become personalised, in that attendance at the school proven to be the best implies the girl attending to be the better student.

There are contrasts in the presentation of information. M is dominant and aggressively assertive, giving unsupported and unsolicited information. S contradicts by quietly stating facts. M is an unpopular girl whereas S is one of the most popular. Girls displaying knowledge or information make bids for status, although in most instances the content was erroneous. Competition over school uniforms gave the opportunity for one-up-manship. A black and white uniform, being the colours of the local football team, was considered the most desirable by some of the girls.

The verbal skirmish about schools between La and CS mirrored their antagonism over friendships. Both girls had mutual friends but were not friendly towards each other. Cs was the most dominant girl in the 'baby' group. La had friends in the group but she did not always join in the games. These mutual friendships caused competition for these friends between the two girls. It would seem that these rumour sequences, made up of elongated disputatious turns, formed a vehicle for their mutual antagonism. As La was an intelligent girl, the exaggerated and unrealistic claims made about her future school may have been a measure of the intensity of her animosity.

It may be indicative of rumours serving as a vehicle for conflict, rather than carrying unsubstantiated information, that none were developed. None of the rumours was taken up later in an episode, and none were revisited in later episodes. Once a string of turns closed, the individual rumour would be forgotten, although the general topic could be repeatedly revisited.

Table 11.1   Rumour Givers, Targets, Topics and Functions

The Rumour Givers	The Targets	The Topics	The Function
La	CS	school -newest	boasting - status
La	CS	school - most students	boasting -status
La	CS	school -hockey fields	boasting-status
La	CS	school-chemistry lesson	boasting -status
La	CS	school-sledges	boasting-status
La	CS	school -netball pitches	boasting -status
La	CS	school-libraries	boasting-status
La	CS & others	school-toilets	boasting-status
La	CS & others	school amalgamated	cause anxiety
La	CS & others	school-computers	boasting-status
La	CS	move schools	cause anxiety
CS	La	school-defense	jealous-status
CS	La	school-uniform	status
CS	La	school -chemistry lesson	defense
Sh	La	school uniform	defense
Ky	La	school-uniform	defense
G	others	school-popular	defense
CS &G	La	school-computers	defense
CWh	others	move schools	status- has info
CS	others	move schools	status-has info
Car	others	move schools	status-has info
Cl	Sa	Pritt Stick	fun, excitement
M	La	aerial/Ariel	boasting- status
Ky & G	rest	next teacher	status -have info
Cl	Sa & Sh	equipment	status-info

311

In summary, the function of the rumours initiated by these girls was to provide a vehicle for the manipulation of status within the group. In addition, by the process of eliciting support from the by-standers, and noting who was aligning themselves with the disputants, the girls were able to monitor and engineer support or opposition.

4. The Language of the Rumour Episodes

The language used in the rumour episodes was similar in style and function to that found in the gossip sequences (Appendix). There was evidence of the short sentence structure and non-elaborated phrases found in the gossip sequences. The story line found in gossip was not used as the girls used brief sentences to punctuate the points they wished to make. This seemed to be the process by which the evidence for an argument was built up, by claim and counter claim, rather than by the use of descriptive phrases. In the debate on the relative merits of the two schools, the girls punctuated their remarks by the use of superlatives in a bid to out-talk each other.

As the rumours were about impersonal matters, there did not appear to be the same use of colouful phrases, humour and inventive vocabulary as was found in the gossip episodes. There were few rumour episodes in the conversations of these girls, most being dominated by two girls on a sole topic. This being so, there is difficulty in making valid comparisons with the language used in the gossip sequences. In addition, different girls originated the rumour and the gossip episodes in the conversations. Any differences in style and content may be due to the difference in the personality and skills of the two different groups of girls rather than a difference in the process.

5. Summary

Gossip and rumour were compared and the difference in the definitions was upheld in the use the girls made of these modes of communication. Gossip concerned interpersonal affairs, whereas the rumour episodes concerned impersonal matters such as schools, objects and allergies. There was a difference in the girls who took part in the gossip and rumour. The more aggressive girls used gossip but not rumour as a mode of aggression.

The underlying function of the rumour episodes appeared to be the challenging, manipulating or affirming of status. Although the girls using rumour were not the most

aggressive and, in fact had no reputation for being aggressive, they were involved in bouts of attack and counter atttack concerning issues of status. Two girls were involved in an on-going verbal duel that mirrored their antagonistic relationship, whereas some girls made a bid for status by giving the rumours as valid information that they alone held.

The language of the rumours was similar in form to that in the gossip episodes, but curtailed and presented in turn-taking style rather than a story line. As the gossip and rumour modes were used by two different sets of girls, differences in the language of the girls could have accounted for the differences found in the language used.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ANALYSIS OF GRASSING

1. Definition of Grassing

The definition of grassing used in this study is; 'the relaying of information to those empowered to bring about change, about an individual or group, informally or formally constituted, with or without the consent of those concerned'. As noted earlier, grassing has similarities to gossip, but gossip takes place behind the back of the target being evaluative comment about one who is absent. Grassing may or may not be a covert activity. In this study, all grassing was done in front of the target girl whether it was telling tales or issuing a threat to do so.

An analysis of the transcripts of the conversations of the girls showed that the grassing events could be divided into threats to grass and the act of telling tales. This division does not appear to have been identified in previous work, nor has there been a sequence or structure given to a grassing episode.

2. A Framework for Grassing

From an inspection and analysis of the transcripts of the conversations of the girls, it would appear that there is a structure evident in an episode of grassing. The individual sections in this framework may not necessarily follow one after another as there may be interjections concerning other on-going events. As with gossip and rumour, there may be a loop back, or jump forwards, with one or more stages missed out. However, it would appear that there is an identifiable sequence of utterances in grassing episodes in this study.

Statement - Accusation

A girl intending to grass usually made a clear accusation to her target before

making a threat to grass or, in fact, doing so. This gave the target girl a chance to alter her offending behaviour or make an apology. This is not always the case. Someone intent on grassing may do so directly, in secret, without giving any warning by issuing a threat. Commonly, the targets of the grassing do not know that someone has grassed on them and are only aware of the grassing when repercussions take place. In this study, this did not occur as all those targeted had warnings. However, some girls may have grassed about others at times when they were not on camera and so not recorded.

In one episode, Sa is accused of being silly. Others in the group warn her that the teacher will find out about her behaviour. As no teacher is present, Sa asks how any will know. The other girls quickly chorus with a threat to grass, 'Cos we'll tell them'.

Threat to Grass

A typical example of a threat to grass is given by Cl when she warns Col, 'Ee, I'm telling. I'm telling if you write my name in there.'

Telling Tales

If the threat to grass is ignored, the accuser could then carry out the threatened grassing. The girls in this study used a variety of methods to tell tales about one another. This could be directly to someone in the room, directly to an adult, or indirectly to an adult via the camera. When Cl copies Ce's work, no threat to grass is issued. Ce is told directly that Cl has been copying her work. If an adult was present, it would be almost inevitable that one girl would accuse another of a misdemeanour by telling the adult directly. There may have been no prior warning given. Without any warning, threat to grass, or any other preamble, on seeing the adult enter the room, Li says, 'Miss, they've all been singing songs, the songs we used to sing like Auden and the Polar Bear'. On occasion, grassing to an adult occurs indirectly by use of the

camera. Cm tells of Col swearing by addressing the camera, 'Mrs. B. I'm sad to say that Col swored'.

<u>Denial</u>

An accusation may be ignored, deflected or denied. When Cl is accused of swearing by saying 'dipshit' she makes a denial, 'I only said dips.' The threat, or execution, of the grassing may be treated as a joke and laughed off. In several episodes, the accusation develops into a singsong joke segment with the girls accusing each other in turn. This round continues for a couple of minutes to be resumed later in the session.

Ce   I'm telling Miss. You just swore. Next to the camera....just before....just there.

Cl   It was her.

Ce   It wasn't. It wasn't.

Ce   Yeh. Cl W.

Cl   M. R.

Ce   Yeh. Cl W.

Cl   It was L E.

L   It was M. R

<u>Counter Attack</u>

A response may take the form of a reciprocal threat to grass. It was common for a threat to be followed by a counter threat. The target may threaten to grass on the girl making the initial threat by stating that the accuser is equally at fault. Col's response to Cm telling the camera that she swore, is to counter attack by addressing a teacher entering the room later in the session by saying, 'Sir, Cm's just sweared'.

<u>Repeated Challenge/ Elaboration</u>

If there is a challenge by the target, or another person in support of the target, the accuser may repeat the attack. The repeated challenge and accusation may be

accompanied by a comment from another girl, or from a chorus of several. Often an elaboration is added, such as an extended clause, to expand or explain the original challenge. At this stage, the content may include some degree of incitement. Even if it is repetition of a previous phrase, the tone of voice, or an accompanying gesture, could encourage the listeners to make stronger claims, or ignore any protestation the target makes.

In one segment, L tells Ce that she will tell the teacher that Ce is not using democratic discussion before writing down what are supposed to be the agreed suggestions from the group. Both Cl and Col support L who repeats the threat to grass. When the teacher enters the room L carries out the threat and extends it with an explanation.

L Ee. I'm telling the teacher. (threat to grass)

L Ce's just writing them down. (accusation)

L I'll tell the teacher me. (threat to grass repeated)

L Ce's just writing them down. (accusation repeated)

Cl I'm not writing what you like. (defence)

Col I just might not like it. I'm gonna tell the teacher. (elaboration with threat)

L Miss. Cl's writing everything down and she's not even discussing it with us. (grassing with elaboration)

Closure

An episode may end in one of several ways. The target could respond positively to the threat and cease the offending behaviour. Peer pressure could cause the target to alter the offending behaviour, the accuser may not find support from others to uphold the threat, or the accuser could lose interest and drop the threat. The denial, or counter challenge, could be successful so thwarting any further challenge. As in gossip and

317

rumour, an interruption, a joke, or a loss of interest could bring the episode to an amicable close. The carrying out of the grassing could lead to closure or lead into repercussions.

Several parts of the structure of grassing are shown in the following extract. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the sentence structure in the grassing sequences was shorter than that in the gossip or rumour episodes. The usual format was of brief sentences and phrases with none of the colourful vocabulary and storyline characteristic of the gossip and rumour episodes.

In this extract, the offending behaviour is that Col swears on camera. There follows a sequence where the rest of the girls join in passing this information to an adult with the aim of getting Col into trouble. Ce informs an adult by talking directly to the camera and others join in.

Ce   Miss, Col did something. (*telling tales* about Col to the camera)

Col   Pumped ? Na. I done the splits, Miss (denies what she is accused of doing and adds a deflection). (*denial*)

Ce   She was....*(repeated challenge)*

Ce   She's done something bad. (*repeated challenge-telling tales*)

L   She swore. (*repeated challenge- telling tales)*

Cl   No. Miss, she'll...behind....She telled her....(repeated twice) (*denial)*

Cm   Mrs, B I'm sorry to say that Col swored. (*repeated challenge- telling tales)*

Cl   Eee She telled it! (Car has informed an adult via the camera that Col has sworn). (*telling tales- target now Cm)*

At this point, the target changes from Col to Cm. Cm is accused of grassing by stating that Col swore, yet it was Ce who first made the accusation, and L herself who first made the first explicit claim. The sequence ends with L denying responsibility,

emphasising that it was Cm who grassed on Col.

L   She telled the camera you swored. (L *telling tales- target now Car*)

3.   The Culprits, Targets, Topics of Grassing

The study contains many examples of the girls using grassing. All the teachers reported that grassing was an on-going part of the school day, and that it was one of the most stressful elements of their contact time with these girls. There were seventy-two grassing episodes identified in the study when repetitions of the grassing by the same, or different, girls is included. If these were excluded the number is reduced to fifty-two episodes. The instances can be divided into: threats to grass as in 'I'm gonna grass on ye' and the actual telling tales about another girl to a relevant other as in 'Miss, I'm sad to say that .....' As the proportion of threats to telling tales is just less than 50% this would indicate that the threat to grass is a realistic mode of social control used by the girls. It was quite likely that a threat would be carries out.

It must be stressed that the threats seen on the video sessions were not necessarily followed by the act of grassing. Conversely, there may have been instances of grassing that were not recorded on camera but that did relate to the actions of the girls that were recorded. The two processes, threat to grass and telling tales, run in parallel.

The chart given below shows a frequency count of the incidence of grassing, as used by individual girls, divided into threats to grass and telling tales. The third column gives a composite score for both threat to grass, and telling tales, for individual girls.

Grassing is bound up in the concept of power. The one grassing holds power in the threat or act of resorting to an ultimate power. However, the target holds the power that is at the root of the dispute in that it is the target who is able to carry out the behaviour that has triggered the need to grass. If the target could be stopped by simple request, or

Table 12.1 Grassing: Issuing Threats and Telling Tales

Table 12.1 gives the rank order of the girls who used threats to grass and those who grassed on others.

Name	Threats	Telling tales	Total Score
Cl	9	10	19
Cm	4	10	14
L	5	9	14
S	9	-	9
Col	4	2	6
Km	3	3	6
Ce	2	3	5
N	5	-	5
D	1	1	2
A	1	1	2
M	1	-	1
Li	1	-	1
CWh	1	-	1

TABLE 12.2 Grassing: The Targets for Threats to Grass and Telling Tales

Table 12.2 gives the girls in rank order as the target of threats to grass and of those who were the targets of grassing.

Name	Telling Tales	Threats	Total Score
Km	4	6	10
Cl	6	7	13
M	4	9	13
Col	4	9	13
Cm	2	3	5
Ce	2	6	8
S	-	5	5
N	-	4	4
L	1	1	2
Li	1	1	2
A	-	1	1
CWh	-	1	1

persuasion, these modes could have been tried instead of the grassing. As stated, there are many reasons for grassing, but one may be the intent to correct a perceived imbalance of power. This being so, as would be expected, the group of volatile girls, jealous of their own status and power, and wary of that of others, were the girls who were primarily involved in the grassing episodes.

Tables 12.1 and 12.2 show that the girls who featured most prominently as culprit or target were in the aggressive group of girls. These were the girls who were the most prolific gossips, and they were those who jealously monitored the interactions in the group most carefully. They were suspicious of any perceived slight or insult and guarded their friendships intensely. For example, both L and Cl were involved in every grassing sequence, as culprit, target or chorus, whenever they were present. As can be seen from Tables 12.1 and 12.2 no other girl had a similar ranking position to Cl who was a troublemaker, in both the active and passive sense, in that she issued threats and she was the main recipient of threats from others. This would confirm the reports of her given by the teachers. It did not appear that the grassing behaviour was due to any sense of insecurity relating to friendships as her dyad relationship was the only one to remain intact throughout the four terms of the study. It may be that her personality, rather than any justifiable suspicion or threat, was at the source of her behaviour.

A major cause of challenge was the flaunting of rules. When any girl broke a rule she was quickly checked by the others. This was likely to be in the form of threats to grass or direct grassing. Cl, the girl most frequently involved in grassing as culprit and target, frequently ignored and challenged the rules, both the formal rules set by the teachers, and the social rules accepted by the girls. This contributed to her high scores.

As in the gossip episodes, L was always ready to parrot the negative comments of others and frequently repeated a previous grassing comment. This resulted in her

gaining the high score for culprit as seen in Table 12.1. L was not trusted by most of the girls as she was known to get others into trouble. L made her parrot comments to discredit, or attack in other indirect ways, those girls she felt were threatening her particular friendships. She monitored the behaviour of the other girls in her friendship group intently.

The girls who rated highly as culprits and/or targets included L and M who were on the periphery of the group of aggressive girls. These two girls were often at the root of trouble, causing conflict and unrest in their attempts to break into an established group. They were less overtly aggressive than the main aggressors but described by teachers as causing most trouble in the class. They had a high level of involvement in telling tales and threatening to grass that contributed to their range of indirect aggressions. L ranked highly for telling tales and issuing threats, whereas M ranked highly as a target. This was how others dealt with her provoking behaviour. This pattern of behaviour indicated their inability to form and maintain friendships in an appropriate manner.

There was not necessarily an association between threatening to grass and telling tales although some girls were heavily involved in both behaviours. Sa was mature and often took it upon herself to try to keep the other girls in order. Her high score on threatening to grass reflects her attempts to control and warn those stepping out of line. The fact that she did not tell tales would indicate that she did not seek to get others into trouble by telling the teachers of their behaviour unnecessarily. This is confirmed by the video material. As she was intelligent and sensible, the others looked to her for help and advice, and did not object to her in the role of self-appointed monitor.

4. **Content**

The grassing by the girls was, by definition, directed towards those who were

considered guilty of breaking some form of rule. The major category of behaviour that resulted in grassing included those behaviours considered to flaunt socially acceptable mores. The most highly represented in this category was swearing. Many of these girls frequently used swear words. It was noticeable that the girls who swore most were those who grassed on others for swearing. These were the girls in the most aggressive group. Many of the girls swore openly among themselves for various reasons; to show off, to draw attention to themselves, to intimidate others and in any state of heightened emotion such as surprise or frustration. The reason for those who swore habitually to challenge others could be that this was used as a mode of confrontation, revenge, attention seeking or fun. It was a conduit for the communication of a covert intent.

Other behaviours that were censored, resulting in grassing sequences, concerned behaviour that would have been sanctioned by an adult. These behaviours were those that would normally be acceptable, but considered disruptive when executed in the wrong place at the wrong time. This category included being out of seat, singing, doing handstands and cartwheels in the classroom, and letting students from other classes into the room. A less well represented category were those misdemeanours related to work issues, such as sharing materials and space, copying work or spoiling the work of another girl.

A range of rules was in operation among these girls common to many of this age. These rules are discussed later in this chapter under the heading Social Rules and Mores. The girls shared a code of behaviour that was covert in practice until broken. At such a juncture, the offending girl would be reminded, quickly and volubly, of the rules and mores of the group. There was a sense of what was appropriate behaviour within the group, and all the girls knew the expectations of the adults. As they were so watchful of each other, the flaunting of any rule was commented on immediately.

TABLE 12.3 The Topics and Functions of Grassing

Topics of Grassing	Functions of Grassing
'D, let me copy or I'll say you swore'	bullying, exerting power for gain
'Cm, she put your painting... '	ingratiation with another girl
'Miss, they all went up the stairs'	ingratiation with teacher
'Miss, they've all been swearing'	highlighting own exemplary behaviour
'I'm telling, you're doing cartwheels'	policing to keep order
'Sa, Km's copying your work'	justice and fairness
'I'm going to tell you sweared'	get others into trouble with teacher
'Miss, Km's showing off '	jealousy, reprisal
'Tell Sa Miss, she's pinching my material'	seeking arbitration, justice
'She's pinched your scissors'	get others into trouble with another girl
'Miss...'	attention seeking
'Miss, Col ran home'	policing or reprisal
'You've spoilt it now. I'm gonna tell'	defence of poor/spoilt work
'I'll tell on ye' 'I'll tell on ye then'	joke, word-play, or reprisals
'I'll tell on ye if you don't ...'	bullying, repertoire of aggression
'I'm gonna tell you're showing off'	ridicule, divest of status
'Miss, Col sweared,	challenging status, reprisals
'Miss, Cl's being nosey, opening letters'	highlighting social mores, moral code
'Miss, tell her. She's...'	evening the balance of power

Although these rules appeared to be understood, some of the girls in the study may have made genuine mistakes, possibly due to a misunderstanding, which brought forth a call for arbitration in the form of a threat to grass. In addition, it could be assumed that an awareness of the right's of others may develop in parallel with an awareness of one's own rights. This would suggest that, over time, there would be an increased demands for justice and arbitration. Gottman (1986) describes young people of this age as having a strong sense of fair play, and an emergent sense of the rights and opportunities of others. Gottman writes that at the age of these girls, an awareness of inequalities and injustices is present, and modes of mediation, negotiation and arbitration are becoming mutually acceptable. However, it does not necessarily follow that an awareness of what is appropriate behaviour will lead to an adherence to the rules.

There could be other reasons to explain why rules were broken and why the girls maintained a tight watching brief on each other. The girls were of an age when genuine feelings of empathy and reciprocity should have been well established. Not all reach this stage at the same chronological age, and some may never do so. Several of the girls clearly adhered to rules due to external controls exercised by teachers and the peer group, not because of any internalisation of the underlying feelings of empathy with others. There was a wide discrepancy between the stages of moral development of the girls, and it is clear that some of the girls flaunted the rules and saw their own needs as most pressing. Several of the families would resort to fighting physically in disputes. When Ky complained to her mother that she was being bullied she was told to 'go and learn to fight your own battles'. This was encouragement to use physical aggression to settle quarrels, whereas La quoted her mother as having taught her that ' violence never settles anything'. There is plenty of evidence in the video material that La had

developed a strong sense of reciprocity and genuine empathy, and that she had developed into a skilled mediator. As can be seen from Table12.1 and 12.2 she is not named as a grass or a target.

On the whole, the girls did adhere to the rules when the teachers were present, except under provocation or when tempers frayed. Out of sight of the teachers it was a different matter. Some girls tested the boundaries of sensible behaviour, such as doing gymnastic exercises close to the video equipment. There were many incidents of bullying in the form of threats and name-calling. Quarrels over the sharing of equipment provoked grassing and tale telling, and there was a considerable amount of swearing and abusive language. These inappropriate behaviours provoked a threat to grass to the teachers, to other girls or, vicariously, to the video camera. This appeared to be a mode informally organised among the girls themselves to keep order and uphold the social mores of the group. The triggers for grassing among the girls, both the threats and telling tales, could be classed into three main categories. All concerned the flaunting of rules; teacher/school rules, rules concerning personal and interpersonal issues and accepted rules about the use of equipment and materials.

Teacher/school based rules.

The teacher/school rules were mainly to do with inappropriate behaviour designed by those in positions of authority. They are clear and unambiguous, well established and familiar. There is no argument as to whether or not such a rule has been broken as there is common acknowledgement of these rules. Several behaviours occurred in the video taped sessions that would fall into this category. These included: doing the splits in front of the camera, holding work and belongings in front of the camera, walking around the room, being out of seat, hiding from the camera, encouraging students from

other classes to enter the room, shouting out of the window, doing handstands in the classroom. These behaviours would inevitably call forth a chorus of threats to grass from the bystanders.

Social Rules and Mores

These are the rules instilled in children by teachers and parents, in a generalised form, and over the formative years, concerning the physical and emotional welfare of others. These rules concern behaviour and are mutually acceptable, agreed to and upheld in a tacit manner. These rules are similar to those above, but there is an absence of an objective judgement so they do not necessarily have clear parameters. It is far easier to see that a girl is out of her seat than to delineate whether or not a nickname has been given in fun or with malicious intent. These rules are more open to interpretation, and so more likely to trigger challenge and dispute. There was clearly a common rule, rarely upheld, regarding name-calling. Name-calling is discussed in the relevant section in the chapter on Insult.

Rules about Materials

The third category of rules concerned the use of materials and equipment. Issues such as sharing equipment, turn taking and sharing space come into this section. The girls most involved in disputes over these issues this were S and N as they worked together whenever possible, sharing equipment and materials. As well as being a mode of communication used to keep order and uphold accepted rules, the use of grassing was also a way of keeping all in their place and preventing any one girl from taking advantage of another. The girls frequently complained of something 'not being fair'. There was petty bickering and squabbling about the sharing of the materials throughout the activity sessions. Suspicion of one girl having more than her fair share of materials,

328

space or attention would bring forth an immediate chorus of chastisement, and calls for arbitration. All of the girls were aware of their personal space and any encroachment would give rise to protest, often in the form of threats to tell tales to an adult. The most aggressive girls were the most voluble and vehement, but all the girls were extremely protective of their own property, work and personal space.

5. The Function of Grassing

Grassing as a Power Strategy

Telling tales can be a powerful strategy of control. In this study the strategies of gossip and grassing were used by the girls to exert power and influence over one another. Although rule breaking was the overt rationale for grassing, or the threat to grass, there would appear to be a range of motives behind this concern with rules. The main function of grassing appeared to be the manipulation of power carried out with either benign or malicious intent. Most of the grassing by these girls was done in a bid for justice. The girl making the complaint would be seeking some adjustment to a situation perceived as unfair. The complaint would be presented in terms of a rule being broken to her disadvantage. For example, one or two girls doing handstands in the room could cause damage to equipment, but all present would be at risk of being blamed. A teacher overhearing one or two girls swearing may take the decision to punish everyone present. If reasonable requests had not brought about change, a girl would threaten to move to a higher authority. A threat to grass is a direct bid for change. Even if it is to get another into trouble, it is an effort to alter the status quo. The girls made the threats in the hope, or expectation, that the threat alone would cause the offender to alter the target behaviour or attitude.

If the offender did not make the requested change, a bid would be made to someone in power who could alter the unwanted situation or event. Even grassing to

another girl in the class, as in alerting one girl to another copying her work, was a route to power. In this case, the wronged girl held the power as she could take retribution. In summary, the main function of grassing was to redistribute power by means of divesting it from those who were considered to have wrongfully acquired it, or to reaffirm power in order to keep the status quo.

Some of the girls appeared to use grassing to wield power in a devious manner in order to get their own way. A fair and equal outcome of arbitration may not be the agenda for some. It may be that calls for arbitration are made with the intent of a resolution being given in the plaintiff's favour, deserved or not (Maynard, 1985). Maynard disputes the central tenet of Simmel (1964) that, within disputes, the implication is towards resolution. Maynard suggests that the disputants seek arbitration for adult participation, to elicit support for their own point of view, not in order to seek a fair hearing and true mediation. If no adult is available to support them, they will turn and collaborate with a third party to fulfil the function. These girls exemplified this point of view and found a number of such ways to divert the course of justice.

The use of grassing and threat to grass was a defence mechanism in some cases. There are several instances in the study of the girls using the process of grassing, threats and tale telling, to absolve them from any possibility of blame or criticism. If work was spoilt, substandard or unfinished, it was common for the owner to blame another girl, rightly or wrongly, and threaten to tell the teacher. Taking up too much space, not sharing materials appropriately, knocking elbows, spilling glue with the result that work was spoilt, or in danger of being so, would bring forth exclamations that would put the blame on another. In one sequence, Ce is not happy with her work as Cl has knocked her arm and spoilt the finished article. As soon as a teacher enters the room Ce declares, 'Every minute, man, she keeps knocking us'.

Most of the grassing and threats to grass were carried out for emotional reasons, mainly to do with the manipulation of the friendship dynamics, but there were other reasons for the grassing. The threat to grass was made by some girls to gain material benefit from others, in the manner of extortion. In one session the threat to grass was used by Col to coerce D into telling her the answer to a question in her work. Col challenges D by saying, ' D, tell me..tell me.. (the answer)..or I'll tell the photograph (camera) that you just sweared'. All D can do is to reply, 'I never!' Km threatened to grass to a teacher if not allowed to copy S's work.

Grassing was used as entertainment. Threats to grass would do the rounds where the girls would use the phrase 'I'll grass on ye' to each other in turn. 'I'll tell on ye' was likely to get the reply 'Well, I'll tell on ye then.' This would be taken up immediately by the bystanders who would join in, enjoying the rhythm and pace, whether the verbal patterning was being used as a taunt or a joking mechanism.

There was a range of people to whom the girls in this study directed the grassing. It appeared that the choice of who to grass to was purely circumstantial. It seemed to be a practical decision, rather than a matter of a personal choice, depending on who was present at the time and available to listen. Often a girl in the group was informed directly of a misdemeanour carried out against her best interests. This could stem from a genuine intent to be helpful, in a bid for friendship with the wronged girl, or to get the target girl into trouble. The threats to tell, and the tale telling, were both directed to the same sources in a bid to invoke external sanction. These sources were the teachers, the researcher (in person or via the video camera), or one or more of the other girls. There is no indication that any one girl preferred a particular mode.

More Complex Motives for Grassing

The motives for grassing were complex and overlapping. The underlying motive for the grassing was not always easy to discern as there were few extended language sequences giving insight into the rationales for the grassing. It may be that the underlying function of grassing concerns the redistribution of power, but the manifestation of this could be presented in a variety of ways. Each episode could embody more than one aim, a fusion of more than one purpose. A girl using this mode of interaction, whether the threat to grass or the action of grassing, may not have been aware of the reason why she was doing so. For example, the wielding of power may manifest itself in grassing to ingratiate oneself with a teacher, to the enhancement of the status of the culprit, but to the disadvantage of others. The highlighting of the failings of another could be used to destroy the reputation of that person. These two aims could be incorporated into the one act. Furthermore, it could be a mode of keeping everyone in place, of retaining the status quo so preventing anyone becoming more powerful than the rest. This could be due to a commitment to equality, or to ensure no one monopolises the spotlight. Several effects could be achieved by the one act of grassing to someone in authority about the behaviour or attitude of a peer.

There are many examples in the study of incidents where grassing occurs as a means whereby the girls wield power in some way. This may be a bid for kudos, gaining teacher praise, or it may be a bid for firmer teacher control over the more wayward girls. For example, on one occasion, without any warning, Km grasses on the other girls as soon as the teacher enters the room. The girls were forbidden to use a staircase because of painters in the school. The painters were a great attraction and some of the more precocious girls had disobeyed the rule. As soon as the teacher entered the room Km said, 'Miss, they've all been coming down the stairs'. Here, Km

is highlighting the fact that she did not join in the forbidden activity. Km may be telling the teacher in order to display her own exemplary behaviour by comparison, or she may be seeing herself as an informal policing service in the absence of the teacher. In one session, Cm told the teacher that M had put Km's bag up to the camera. Cm said, 'Miss, that was Km who put the bag....who actually put the ....took N's Body Shop bag....and put it on the camera'. The girls were not allowed near the camera as it was insecurely attached to the stand. In this instance, Cm was perhaps protecting the equipment, rather than comparing her behaviour, favourably, to that of others. The possibility of there being more than one motive means that it is not always easy to identify the most relevant one. The girls themselves may not always have held a clear and accurate rationale for their behaviour.

Grassing as a Mode of Manipulating Relationships

As stated earlier, these girls appeared to use grassing for gain in a variety of ways, but the major function was in the manipulation and control of their relationships. 'I'll grass on ye' was a frequent cry used by several of the girls to alter or distort a relationship. Although one dyad appeared stable throughout the time of the study, the relationship between all the girls in this group was turbulent and volatile. There were violent conflicts between factions when friends would align themselves on opposite sides. In one session, L tells the researcher that Col is not attending the group any more. Col would have been embarrassed and angry that L had raised the issue if she had been present. There was no preamble to the comment made by L, 'Miss, Col's not coming any more. She's playing out.' L appears to have drawn the attention of the researcher to Col's preference for playing out to attending the session in a bid to get Col into trouble. All the girls in the friendship group of aggressive girls, plus those on the periphery, were exceptionally querulous, jealous and suspicious of one another. As the

majority of the grassing incidents, tale telling and threats involved the more aggressive girls, it would seem that grassing was just one more weapon in their armoury.

Many of the girls controlled each other by threat, not only those who resorted to aggressive behaviour. In their bid for power, or justice, several of the girls thought nothing of gossiping behind the back of a girl who had recently been a close friend. Similarly, they grassed, or threatened to grass, on close friends as well as others in the group. Surprisingly, several girls in the more stable dyads targeted each other. This relates to the finding that most quarrels occur within close friendships (Menesini, 1997). S and N had on-going rows about sharing space and materials. There are many threats to grass from these two best friends.

In such cases as grassing between friends, the threat to grass was often given as a matter of course, to add weight to a request, rather than with the intent of betraying a friend. In some cases it was a simply a commonly used shorthand form of requesting a girl to stop behaving in a particular way. It may have been that grassing had become a habitual mode of interaction among these querulous girls, even between friends. Threats to grass were also used in a jocular fashion between friends and formed a routine repartee.

It was not only the aggressive girls who were involved in the grassing incidents as may be seen from Table 12.1. There were many instances of eliciting, canvassing and seeking out of coalitions between most of the girls. They constantly monitored each other for new alliances and allegiances that could result in the making of new friendships and the breaking of old, usually in an acrimonious manner. Maynard (1985) proposes that each time new people, ideas, actions or objects are introduced, social and emotional upheaval occurs. In this way, the frequent realignment of the friendships brought about even further instability. Maynard suggests that this state of

flux requires some method of social control to regain stability. Grassing was one way of achieving this aim. The frequent realignments in the friendship bonds between these girls led them to draw upon a variety of methods to establish and re-establish friendship groups. The process of grassing could be used to break some friendships and cement others. The basic function of telling tales may be used to achieve a particular organisation and restructuring, accomplished with or without a democratic vote (Maynard, 1985).

As the relationships between the girls were so fraught, especially in the aggressive group, it was expected that one particular girl would be the prime target for the grassing. As can be seen from the ranking in Table 12.2, Km was high on the list of targets, but it would appear that this was because she was part of the fractious group, rather than being a specific target. Km was a strong and powerful girl who may have taken reprisals if made the target of grassing, whereas the gossiping about her, that contributed to her eventual ostracism, was carried out in private. An analysis carried out to look for specific pairings, between culprit and target, found no correlation. Grassing would appear to be more closely related to the task and incidence of rule breaking, whether formal or informal rules, than to pairs of girls regularly targeting each other. Although grassing was used as a revenge strategy, it did not appear to be used as a process whereby individual girls would use it as a routine channel for revenge.

The motives for some of the grassing appeared to include jealousy, the Shadenfreude effect and disappointment. Some of the girls enjoyed telling tales against an opponent although, as stated earlier, there were no established dyad relationships where a girl would grass on a regular target. The sociometric and interview studies showed that jealousy and suspicion underpinned the relationships between these girls, so it would be feasible that such emotions were contributory to the decisions some girls

took to grass on others. The process of grassing gave the culprit a powerful weapon at her disposal but there may have been little awareness of such underlying feelings as jealousy fuelling the act of grassing on another girl. It is easy to make a genuine mistake and accuse the wrong person of an offence, but grassing gives the opportunity for a deliberate distortion of the truth.

One way in which grassing was used as a reprisal strategy was in attacks made on Col. The class teacher said that it was common for the girls to tell tales about Col while she did her school work. They would tell her any time Col made a simple error. This was the one method they could safely use in retribution for Col's aggression. As they all did this to each other all the time, it was not easy for Col to take reprisals on individual girls. They would all blame each other. Among the chatter in the room, whispered comments to the teacher could be missed.

Although not proven in the study, some of these girls may have used grassing as an attention-seeking channel for access to adult time. The number of repeated calls on the teachers was one of the core issues underlying the many incidents of grassing. Some of the girls were experiencing difficulties at home, and many were enmeshed in fraught relationships within the class group. Grassing may have offered a recourse to sympathetic adults. They would be more likely to get a positive response from staff if the grassing concerned the flaunting of established school rules.

6. The Language of Grassing

One pattern of language that occurs several times in the transcripts is that of the use of repetitive phrases. This structure is used to emphasise a point, in a contradicting routine, and in a verbal dual made up of a series of denial turns. The following extract between Cm and Ce is typical of such sequences.

Cm   All them are gonna get wrong ..aren't you..for *grassing on them.*

336

Ce   Aye Cl. I'm *grassing on ye.*

Cm   We're *grassing on ye.*

Ce   Cl, I'm *grassing on ye.*

Ce   Cl, I'm *grassing on ye* ...for letting everybody in.

From the text there is no indication of an escalation in vocal tone or volume, it simply looks like repetition. Inspection of the video material shows how this strategy is used to accelerate the pace and emotional content of the utterance. As noted earlier, the same process is used in some instances to turn the threat of 'grassing' into a humorous round of verbal play.

Another specific speech pattern can be distinguished in the grassing episodes. The language used by the girls in these exchanges is more sophisticated in structure than would at first appear. There is evidence of balance, rhythm and alliteration. The sentences are short, self explanatory, direct and to the point, leaving no opportunity for confusions or ambiguities. Little time is wasted on convoluted explanations. For example, Col says, 'Sir, Cm just sweared'. In a further example L says of Ce, 'Ce's just writing them down.'

There is a high degree of repetition of statements made by one person. In addition, there is a mirroring effect in that the words used in the initial statement are used in subsequent statements. This gives a rhythm and balance to the sentence structure. There may be a psychological effect embedded in this rhythm as there is a tendency to give a sing-song quality to the rhythm and rhyme by the use of repetition and alliteration. This could be interpreted, possibly in a subconscious manner, as ridicule and taunting. In any event it encourages others to join in any chanting.

L   Cl's just *writing them down.*

Cl   I'm not *writing what you like.*

L   Miss, Cl's *writing everything down.*

L   She's *writing* all different *things down.*

7. Summary

A structure for grassing has been identified. The study shows that grassing was used as a strategy in the continuous struggle for power and influence between these girls.

It was used as yet another mode of attack by some of the more aggressive girls to check and control each other, often about behaviours of which they themselves were guilty. The most prevalent topic of the grassing was swearing, yet the girls who swore were those who most frequently grassed on others. The most aggressive girls featured most highly in the ranking for both culprits and targets. These girls kept a close watching brief on each other and so noticed every deviation from the rules. This subsequently triggered grassing and threats to grass. The threats were realistic and grassing was an effective controlling mechanism. Even when disputed, the girls most often changed the behaviour that was the target for the grassing.

Grassing focused on behaviour, the flaunting of rules, rather than on specific girls. No one girl routinely targeted another. There were genuine bids made by some girls to help keep the various rules. This may have been in a bid for kudos, teacher attention or a genuine wish to help keep order. These rules included teacher and school imposed rules, social rules that were mainly organised by the girls themselves, and rules concerned with work in relation to space and materials. The flaunting of these rules offered an arena for conflict and dispute.

There were instances of grassing being used as a mechanism for fun but on the whole it was used as yet another technique for low-key attack. None of the episodes resulted in serious conflict. The grassing was mainly used to target the flow of taunting,

338

irritating behaviour and petty quarrels that formed the greater part of the interactions between these girls in the normal school day.

The language not as elaborated as that used in the gossip and rumour episodes. The language used in the grassing sequences was made up of short, factual sentences, with some word play and repetitions of phrases, often in the form of word games.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DISCUSSION

In order to arrive at what you do not know

You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance

*(*T.S.Elliot, *Four Quartets,* East Coker, 111, 11, 39 - 40)

1. Review of the Aims

The aim of this study was to investigate the unstable nature of the friendship groups of girls and the fractious nature of the interpersonal bonds between them. The study examined the quality and use of particular language structures, insult, gossip, rumour and grassing and, in particular, the part played by these linguistic constructions in the unstable nature of the friendships of the girls. These language structures were considered in the context of the processes of inclusion and exclusion of girls in and out of the friendship groups.

2. Results of the Study

Instability in the Friendship Groups

The findings in the study may make a significant contribution to the existing literature as so few studies have addressed the fluctuation in the friendship bonds among young girls. The advantage of this study was that the multi-dimensional design allowed information about friendship choices, culled from the sociometric questionnaires, to be extended by long term, detailed analysis of the interactions and conversations of the girls in the naturalistic setting as viewed on the video taped material. Additional insights were gained from the analysis of the use of gossip, insult, rumour and grassing by the girls in the process of conflict.

Using this multi-dimensional approach, encompassing a naturalistic setting, this study has produced findings on friendship bonds that are significantly dissimilar to those given in the previous studies of Alder and Alder (1995) and Eder (1985). The analysis of the material showed that the class comprised of several small friendship sets as suggested in the small, informal, observational study of young girls at camp by Savin-Williams (1979). The groups in the latter study had their own character without

any fixed, overall hierarchical structure, unlike the findings in the studies of Eder (1985) and Alder & Alder (1995).

This study found that within the large group of girls, several small groups would be functioning somewhat independently. The girls in this study formed distinct groups; one of physically mature girls who were also the more aggressive; a group known as the 'baby group' who were less physically mature; plus two or three other groups with less distinctive characteristics. This led to the various friendship groups acting more or less independently due a difference in interests and activities. Aggression occurred mainly within, rather than across groups. The number of groups, and their constituent membership, changed from time to time but there were always some girls who were, for a number of reasons, on the periphery of the groups.

The difference in findings may be due, in part, to previous studies having a researcher presence influencing the actions and responses of the participants; or because the findings do not apply in a transnational context.

In addition to a difference in findings in the composition of the groups, between this study and earlier work of Alder and Alder (1995) and Eder (1985), a difference in the pattern of instability was evident. There was an identified pattern of instability in the friendship groups, but in this study, the girls moved in and out of parallel friendship groups rather than moving up or down a hierarchy.

Rationales for the Unstable Friendship Bonds

The multi-faceted design not only tracked the pattern of instability effectively, but also allowed the girls the opportunity to offer rationales for the transitory nature of their friendship bonds. The information they gave in the sociometric questionnaires, used to show the pattern of fluctuation, was extended by analysis of the video taped material and the comments of the girls and their teachers in the semi-structured interviews.

The additional information the design of the study allowed, gave a number of significant insights into the rationales behind the making and breaking of the friendship bonds among young girls. All the girls took a lively and pertinent interest in each other. This intense interest and concern had a dual function in that it could be extremely positive, but it also lay at the root of most conflicts. The gossip and other language used

341

in these processes could be both destructive and supportive.

The instability of the friendship bonds was both the cause and result of the fractious and volatile nature of some girls, and the jealous, suspicious attitude of most. The majority of the girls were proprietorial in their attitudes to their friendships, monitoring all interpersonal interactions between each other closely. Many of the girls had close friends, but only one dyadic relationship lasted for the four terms of the study, and only three dyad relationships lasted as long as three terms.

One of the most significant findings of the study was the identification of the power of the friendships and conflicts of these girls. The girls manipulated power over each other in a negative sense by threatening to break their friendships. Paradoxically, their power lay in the positive attributes they offered within their friendships that were always at risk of being withdrawn. This widespread on-going manipulation of each other, using friendship as a form of social currency, is not clearly identified in other studies. Previous studies have described such processes set in a hierarchical framework, concentrating on the interactions within the most favoured group and ignoring the rest of the girls. Other studies have pinpointed the interactions of the most troublesome girls, whereas this study shows the powerful positive and negative interactions, and resultant emotional effects, continuing among all. This study contends that these powerful, manipulative processes encompassed all the girls in the class. The interactions fell within their own friendship cluster, infrequently across clusters, or from girls on the periphery of the groups. Complex and intense machinations, involving the majority of these young girls as actors or recipients, took up much of their time and emotional energy. The findings of this study would point to similar friendship conflicts, and resultant emotional upset, being more widespread than has previously been recorded.

The Value of Friendships

Many previous studies may have failed to identify the extent of the value young people place on their peer relationships, underestimating the depth of emotion many girls feel towards their friends. There was a strong ambience of life and vitality among the girls, their personality, energy and enthusiasm being evident in all their interactions.

Several of the girls mainly went to school to meet, chat, find friends, settle old disputes and set up new quarrels.

Although these girls quarreled and fought with their friends, all considered their friendships indispensable. Many of their quarrels arose because friends had failed to live up to high expectations. The information gained from the semi-structured interviews, held in private with individual girls, elicited deeply felt emotions about their friendships that a sociometric questionnaire, or participant observation, would not have produced. The overwhelming attitude of the girls to their friendships was one of protectiveness. They reported that their fear of others 'sneaking their friends away' was their most common and deeply felt concern. Their discussions on the recorded conversations show that the majority of their talk focused on their friendship interactions. This widespread, intense, on-going involvement with friendship interactions, affecting all the girls, does not appear to have been emphasised in earlier investigations.

Studies of girls such as these, known to be volatile, living in areas with a reputation for aggression, may only stress the negative and troublesome aspects of their relationships. This study illustrates that these girls showed positive qualities such as loyalty, trust, generosity and humour towards their friends, and others, to a similar degree expected of young girls anywhere. In-depth studies of each girl illustrated that two girls with contrasting personalities, Col the most aggressive girl, and La the most mature, were both highly respected for these positive qualities by teachers and peers. Although Col had negative qualities that off set these positives, both girls acted with integrity towards those they counted as friends at the time.

The degree of support and solace some girls gain from their friendships may have been underestimated in previous work. The confidence the girls had built up with the researcher, over the lengthy period of the study, allowed them to give ready and honest responses in the semi-structured interviews. This trust was essential to the validity of the study as it allowed the researcher an access and understanding of the private lives of these girls. Such deep felt emotions in the young, who are bystanders in family break-up, may be over-looked by parents and professionals. Only one girl made a comment

that would indicate such depth of emotion. She had said, in a moment of serious reflection, 'My life is a nightmare'. These girls relied on each other for solace and comfort.

Several of the girls were witness to, or currently involved in, trauma at home. Expectations of intense verbal and physical aggression are associated with a high level of violence in a neighbourhood as was the case with these girls (Archer, 1994). There was sophisticated and valuable use made of friendships with regard to comfort and protection from the more aggressive girls, and in some cases, from their own families. This was an additional cause of tension in some relationships. Close and trustworthy friends were enormously important to all the girls in the study and they considered trust the most valued quality in a friend. Their comments revealed the surprising degree of pressure they placed on a friendship once they had disclosed private information to a friend trusted at the time. This trust was a double-edged sword in that they trusted close friends with their secrets, but this then gave the power of potent information to that friend who could pass on the secret to others. Tension escalated if the information concerned the private affairs of families. The video taped material illustrates quarrels developing due to suspicion of betrayal.

Several of the girls faced distressing experiences in their families and talked in confidence about the violent arguments and behaviour in their homes. One girl belonged to an abusing family and was locked out of the home on a winter night. Two girls came from families in the process of breaking up in a traumatic fashion. One of these girls was taken into care during the period of the study. Another, well-respected girl, whose parents were separating, had started stealing. Such trauma lay as an uneasy, emotional undercurrent in the classroom.

Significantly, those girls living in split families showed deep and conflicting emotions of loss, and divided loyalties, in their presentations on the Family Systems Test (F.A.S.T). The results are given for each girl in the Profiles in Appendix 1. This test did not form a major part of the investigation, but added further information to the background knowledge of each girl, indicating her emotional reactions towards the members of her family.

As females are considered to have their self-construal embodied in their relationships with others, they are more likely to express their feelings to others than males (Cross & Madson, 1997; Hayes, 1984; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974b; Zeman & Garber, 1996). This finding, relating to older females, was clearly upheld in this study of young girls.

In summary, there was a surprising degree of trust and mutual support among these girls, several of whom were known primarily for their negative characteristics. Most gave lack of trust as a rationale for breaking up a friendship. This study illustrates how these girls trusted each other with family secrets, how they relied on friends for solace and comfort concerning home circumstances. The study illustrates that young people may have over-whelming emotions, at least as powerful as those of adults who are able to draw on previous life experiences for support. The semi-structured interviews highlighted the depth and complexity of emotion felt by the girls concerning issues of trust and loyalty set in the context of a harsh family life. It is only in recent years that an understanding of the degree and extent of emotions such as depression, suicide, hatred and revenge in the young is becoming recognised. This study may be able to offer insights into facets of these issues that cause serious dysfunction among the young.

Indirect Aggression

One finding from the semi-structured interviews was the identification of an atmosphere of tension and wariness underlying the classroom and playground interactions between the girls. Other studies have noted an underlying ethos of suspicion, tension, wariness and competition in the groups of adolescent girls studied (Alder & Alder, 1995; Campbell, 1995, Duncan, 1999, Keise, 1992). Episodes of volatile aggression are thought to peak around the age of the girls in this study (Bjorquist, Lagespetz &Kaukiainen, 1992). Perhaps because this finding is relatively recent, there has been little in-depth, longitudinal work looking into aggression among such young girls.

The analysis of the motivation of girls in conflict, offered by the semi-structured interviews, and supported by the long-term study of the girls in the activity groups,

allows a fuller picture of their rationales and processes of interaction than has previously been the case. Although some of the girls used overt aggression in their disputes, the focus of this study is the indirect aggression used to manipulate and influence friendships. The study aimed to explore the incidence and role of insult, gossip, rumour and grassing in bringing about, or consolidating, the exclusion or stigmatising of a targeted girl, or changes in group structure.

This type of aggression has received less attention than more overt modes. Only recently have covert behaviours become the focus of investigation into conflict among girls (Boulton and Hawker, 1997). It is not easy to identify the culprit of indirect aggression, nor recognise the aggressive intent underpinning these modes (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Lagespetz et al., 1988). The long-term, serious effects of indirect aggression have gone unrecognised. Indirect aggression is open to a variety of interpretations and so more easily rescinded than overtly aggressive behaviour. It is thought that close relationships and networks are required for covert aggression to flourish (Bjorquist et al., 1992; Lagespetz et al., 1988) and that quarrels occur mainly between friends (Alder & Alder, 1995; Campbell, & Muncer, 1987; Menesini, 1997).

This study extends the knowledge of how and why girls use various modes of indirect, as well as direct, aggression. Previous studies have shown that girls tend to use indirect aggression in preference to direct aggression, whereas boys use the range of direct aggression more than indirect techniques. Comments made in the interviews with the girls and their teachers, plus information gained from the desk dairy of the class teacher, showed that the girls in this study used a full range of indirect aggressions, but they were divided in their use of the direct modes.

Many of the girls in the class would use direct physical aggression if they felt it appropriate, for example, in their own defense. Only a few of the girls would use unprovoked physical aggression and these girls formed their own rationale to excuse their behaviour. It may be that more could be done to delineate the rationale for the use of physical aggression in order to clarify the terms 'provoked' and 'unprovoked' in relation to this rationale given by these girls for their use.

In relation to gender differences, the findings of Cross and Madson (1977) were

challenged by this study. These authors propose that there are gender-differentiated features of social awareness and interaction that would predict the use of physical or non-physical aggression (Cross & Madson, 1997). However, even the girls using physical aggression displayed those features associated with a 'feminine' approach. These girls were those most interested in the relationships and affairs of others and highest represented in the ranking of gossips. They were acutely aware of the swings and shifts in the friendship groupings, often being instrumental in these changes. They kept the closest of watching briefs on their friends as well as their enemies. They reported that their friendships were extremely important to them, and that the threat of anyone taking their friends away would be the most distressing event related to their life in school.

Causes of Conflict

The study identifies specific causes of conflicts among friends that may have been overlooked in previous work. The rationales given in the American studies of Alder and Alder (1995) and Eder (1985) identify materialistic sources such as fashion items, spending money, or physical appearance as primary sources of conflict. Physical appearance was partly instrumental for the intense jealousy felt towards one girl in this class, but she exacerbated this by her own behaviour.

Other aspects of friendship were identified that have not previously been recorded as important. The quality of their friendships was often the source of conflict, and nearly all quarrels stemmed from a social, emotional or personal source. All the girls made high demands on their friendships, expressing intolerance of any failure to conform to expectations. The high level of overt and covert violence among the girls resulted in some of them reacting aggressively to disappointment in their friends. Some would respond with physical or verbal confrontation, others reacted by moving on to other friends. Such aggressive reactions did not necessarily make a girl more unpopular than the presence of some other characteristics.

One finding, not recorded in other work, was that the girls and teachers reported that the aggressive girls mostly kept their quarrels between themselves. Attacks on others outside the group were directed primarily towards the girl who was the target of

most of the bullying in the class. There appeared to be little evidence of inter-group aggression due to the different levels of maturity and interests between the groups. The different friendship clusters functioned in parallel, only a few of the girls on the fringes of the groups would drift between groups. It was these girls, floating between the groups, who caused most of the inter-group conflicts

The study highlighted other aspects of the hidden, social world of young girls that may have contributed to the instability of their relationships. It appeared that the majority of the girls felt themselves under pressure to compete socially as well as academically. Having friends, and seen to have friends, appeared to be very important. The semi-structured interviews revealed that all the girls had a perception of whether they had friends or not, a measure of the quality of their friendships, and how they stood in relation to the other girls in regard to friends. Unlike the American girls in the studies of Alder and Alder (1995) Eder (1985, 1991) and Goodwin (1990), none mentioned financial factors in regard to popularity, or friendship, although there was a vast difference in the economic status of the families.

There was academic pressure among the girls in the form of an awareness of success or failure, not imposed by the teachers, but stemmed from their own perceptions. Several spoke of not being able to do their work and seeking peer help and instruction. The class as a whole acted informally as peer mentors and tutors, there being a tacit expectation among them that those girls who could do the tasks would help those who could not. The interview and video material shows that these pressures contributed to the pattern of unstable, querulous relationships among the girls. For example, Col, who had genuine difficulty in coping with some of the academic tasks, was allowed to copy work with less resistance than Km, who was regarded as lazy. This is yet another instance of how astute the girls were in their understanding and management of each other.

Conflicts about Boys

One prevalent cause of conflict among older girls is the targeting of the attractive and mature girls (Burbank, 1987; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Faust, 1960; Symons, 1979). Physical attractiveness has the utmost importance (Dion, 1978; Feingold, 1994).

Although much younger than girls in the studies noted above, this was the topic of most of the conversations of the aggressive, more physically mature girls. Accusations about sexual reputations were made by these girls about each other, although many of the comments were highly exaggerated and obviously untrue. Although made in a joking mode, they used the same focus as identified in other research. These accusations would lie alongside an aggressive defense of their own sexual reputation (Athens, 1980; Campbell. 1981; Felson, 1978).

There were two distinct groups of girls in the class, one the more physically mature and aggressive in manner, with most girls falling in between these two extremes. As would be anticipated, the more mature girls had different rationales for their aggression than those less mature (Campbell, 1995). They took a greater interest in boys and, in addition, drew more interest themselves from the boys. The earlier maturity of girls than boys of the same age meant that the boys in the class did not reciprocate this interest to the same degree (Savin-Williams &Wesfeld, 1989). Attention from the boys stemmed from the cousin of the most aggressive girl acting as go-between. Towards the end of the study, the more physically mature girls sought older boy and girl friends (Savin-Williams and Weisfeld, 1989).

There was selection and ranking of high status males in the class by the mature girls. These boys were identified by their attractive, athletic, physical presentation and evident sexual differentiation (Weisfeld, 1987). The video material shows the intense, aggressive competition for these boys among the more physically mature girls, perhaps due to there being a ratio of 2:1 in the class (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Campbell, 1995; Daly & Wilson, 1994). This competition is said to be exacerbated in neighbourhoods such as this with a low socio-economic rating resulting in few good male providers (Draper & Harpending, 1988).

An unexpected finding was that these girls, younger than those in other studies, were using competition for males as a source of conflict. Other studies have looked at this behaviour only in much older females. These girls were only ten to eleven years old, but there may have been a learnt pattern of competing for the best males and resources. The high level of instability within the group of mature girls seemed to be

due to rivalry directly or indirectly attributable to boys. The video material shows the high frequency of these boys as a topic of conversation and the focus of quarrels. Although the most physically mature girls focused their conversations on boys, thus causing disputes and conflict, many of the jealousies and arguments were based on idealistic notions concerning boyfriends and relationships rather than facts. From observation, this appears to be common among girls of this age and older, although no research findings are available. The quarrels may become dramatic when some of the girls have querulous and volatile temperaments, and the few boys are the focus of their attention, rivalry and jealousy.

In summary, this study identified that there was a noticeable difference in the source of quarrels between the girls. The more mature girls centered their squabbles on issues concerning physical attractiveness and competition for boyfriends as well as loyalty and trust, whereas the less mature girls fought over friendship loyalties, trust and choice of games. The small friendship groups that made up the class were characterised by instability and conflict. There were several possible reasons for this. The girls were jealous of their friendships and monitored each other closely, wary of slights and betrayals. They considered 'sneaking friends away' unethical and distressing, and most named it the most upsetting event experienced in their life at school. All considered betrayal of trust a valid reason for conflict.

Individual Profiles

The combination of the semi-structured interviews, and desk diary of the class teacher, enabled a richer picture of each girl to emerge than would have been possible from a more limited design. Insights culled from the recorded observations and conversations gave additional, invaluable information about the individual girls. No similar study appears to have offered such a comprehensive profile of each girl as is composed from this multi-dimensional source.

Leaders

The study challenges the concept of leader as outlined in the American studies of Alder and Alder (1995), Eder (1985), Eder, Evans & Parker (1996). In these studies there is an identified leader, with characteristic attitudes and behaviour, although there

are some differences between these studies.

This study showed that each small friendship group had its own leader with skills relevant to the specific dynamics integral to the group. There were various types of leader among the girls as several commanded the respect of others for differing reasons. No one girl held power over all the girls. This may have contributed to the fractious nature of their interactions. One girl was a covert leader in the group of the most aggressive girls. This perhaps gave her more power than the other leaders. Details of the leadership skills of these girls are in Chapter 7. In summary, Sa was more likely to be a tutor or teacher, La a mediator or advisor, Ky an entertainer and organiser, CS a dominant leader, Ce could mediate and control girls who were able to challenge many adults. N was not overtly a leader, but the girls listened to her and acted on her ideas.

Col was an aggressive and dominant leader who led by fear. She would call on her cousin, in the same class, for support who would enlist other boys who were afraid of him. The power Col enjoyed was rooted in genuine popularity as she was entertaining and fun to be with for most of the time, and she was loyal to her friends.

It seemed that leaders evolved to match the character of a group. However, the instability within the groups meant that a leader could lose influence for a time, to re-emerge as powerful at a later stage. All the leaders were powerful, some in a more covert and manipulative manner than others, although each displayed a personal style of leadership. The difference in the findings of this study, compared to the American work, may be due to this study having the advantage of a multi-dimensional approach. It may be that the complexity of the dynamics in any group requires more than one mode of investigation. There was a need to back up the sociometric questions with individual conversations. These responses gave material to add to the framework provided by the sociometric questionnaires. It would seem that this study has identified the attributes, influence and power of leaders in girls' friendship groups as a fruitful and important area for future research.

3. Bullying and Power Issues

The study identified some of the complexities of bullying behaviour. Insights into the rationales for bullying, identified in the semi-structured interviews, expand the

growing body of information on bullying among girls. By the time the interviews took place, the girls were able to talk feely and confidently to the researcher. Confidentiality was assured and their answers were surprisingly honest and forthright

The girls discussed bullies and victims in the class. Bullies may be more popular than their victims (Olweus, 1978, 1993). They are often giving entertainment to others while taunting a victim. Even the victim may find the bully amusing and entertaining at times. It is intrinsic to bullying that victims often see it as a consequence of their own failings and not the responsibility of the bully. As was evident in the findings of this study, commonly neither bullies nor victims understand the full intricacies and implications of their behaviour.

Col was a bully given both negative and positive qualities by the other girls in the interview responses, illustrating the complexity of the 'bullying' concept of personality. An accurate perception given by the other girls was that Col, and the rest of the aggressive girls, tended to keep their attacks within their own group. As they could be avoided most of the time, the probability of attack from them was low. Two of the aggressive girls on the periphery of the group used verbal abuse indiscriminately, from spite or jealousy, and so attack from them was far more likely. This made them more unpopular than the more overtly aggressive girls.

Two of the girls were tiny but only one was a victim of bullying. The perception of the girls was that it happened because she was tiny. Only on reflection did the girls volunteer the information that it was because she lied, was selfish and untrustworthy. Sadly, some of these behaviours were in response to the bullying

Some bullying took the form of name-calling. The girls used names not necessarily understood by those outside the group. This made it difficult for teachers and parents to understand the powerful negative connotations of certain words in common usage by the girls at the time, or those words that had specific significance for the group.

Bullying may encompass the inclusion and exclusion processes common among girls' friendship groups. Identifying and tracking a cyclic inclusion and exclusion process was one of the main aims of this study. Research findings explain the

emotional roller coaster some of the girls experienced in their friendships. Social inclusion and exclusion processes reflect the level of an individual's self-esteem (Leary, Tambor, Terdal & Downs, 1995). The resultant low self-esteem, following rejection and exclusion, would make the target girls vulnerable to further slights and fights. This may be manifested as insecurity and low-self esteem, perceptions that are considered prevalent at the age of the girls in this study (Coleman, 1966).

Low self-esteem in females is frequently related to stressful relationships (Moran & Eckenrode, 1991; Zuckerman, 1994). It may be of relevance that not being forgiven for a perceived transgression has a greater effect on women than on men (Hodgins, Leibeskind & Schwartz, 1996). These findings would suggest there to be a strong possibility that quarrels and conflicts within female groups would appear to have damaging and long-term effects. Conversely, positive feedback from others boosts low self-esteem (Roberts & Nilen-Hoeksema, 1989).

One of the main targets for the bullying was Km who became alienated from the class towards the end of the study. She tried to divide the group of aggressive girls. This was the source of many of the quarrels and disputes. The study gives powerful insights into the force and effects of the of the indirect modes of bullying used against Km. Alienation left her in an extremely vulnerable and dangerous position. The video taped material shows how these attacks began, and were exacerbated, by gossip, insult and grassing. It appeared that none of the teachers realised how severe and frequent were the attacks on Km. It was salutary to see how quickly the social interactions of a few girls could escalate dislike of a target girl into hatred.

M was the other girl in the class who floated around the periphery of the groups. She was not invited into the groups because she was boastful, stubborn and truculent, but she did not try to split the friendships of the aggressive girls. Their use of covert aggression and devious behaviour, and the fact that they could not be trusted, led to the rejection of these two girls. Eventually both bullies became victims.

The findings of the study offers pointers to the understanding of the covert, social sub-curriculum prevalent among the young. It is in the hidden strata of school and home life that bullying flourishes. Any new information is helpful to those who aim to

counteract this behaviour and those who wish to offer guidance to possible victims. This information is especially valuable when verified by findings from a multi-dimensional source as was integral to the design of this study.

4. Popularity and Unpopularity

The multi-dimensional approach allowed the composition of comprehensive profiles of each girl. This information offered insights into social behaviour that expanded existing knowledge. In looking for reasons for the exclusion of girls from the valued friendship groups, consideration was given to the issue of popularity and unpopularity. A clear distinction in rationales given for liking and disliking individual girls was evident from the results of the interviews. There was a consensus of opinion across the group concerning these rationales. Being trustworthy, generous, amusing, helpful, considerate and a reliable friend rated highly for popular status. Unpopular girls were aggressive, selfish, liars, thieves and troublemakers (causing trouble with the teachers as well as other girls). They would tell other people's secrets, tell tales, take other's friends and fail to offer support.

Perceptions of the Teachers

An advantage of the multi-dimensional study is that it offered the opportunity to seek out further explanations for the comments given in the semi-structured interviews and on the video taped material. Such information is not forthcoming solely from the administration of a questionnaire. The semi-structured interviews showed that most of the girls had a surprisingly sophisticated knowledge of their thought processes concerning their social relationships.

These views, of themselves and others, were often in contrast to those held by the teachers who had access only to an 'outsider' perception. Comments made by the girls are supported by observations of the behaviours shown on the video material and the conflict exchanges in the transcripts of their conversations. Teachers, and other adults, may see group interactions, but not fully understand the implications and effects of the dynamics. It is extraordinarily difficult to be fully aware of the behaviour of each individual in a group with the result that the teachers were unaware of many of the subtle interactions taking place.

For example, the teachers knew that one girl was a 'stirrer' but not how influential she was in this role of covert provocateur. The popularity and influence of one girl was elicited from the semi-structured interviews with the girls, not from the teacher interviews. Although most girls described her as aggressive, and a member of a deviant gang, the same girls considered her to also be kind and supportive. The class teacher missed the only friendship dyad to remain stable throughout the 16 months of the study. These girls were not identified as close friends by any of the teachers because the staff in school mainly focused on the arguments and volatility of their relationship. Both girls volunteered the information that they fought a lot but, as they were very unhappy when this happened, they made friends again as soon as possible.

The perception of the teachers about the two girls who were cousins was that one acted as an appendage of the other. The video material and results of the sociogram show the reverse. The power of one girl was that she always had a second close friend, whereas the other did not. In addition, the video material shows that this girl had a quiet and amicable influence over all the girls in that they all listened when she spoke, accepted her ideas, and met her requests.

The value of the semi-structured interviews lay not only in the role of developing and verifying the material gained in the sociograms, but also in the opportunity they offered to tap into the perceptions of the girls about themselves and others. The girls volunteered their perceptions with surprising honesty and insight. Some saw themselves as rejected and excluded. One said, 'They wouldn't want me as a friend' when speaking of the more aggressive and physically mature girls. She had been coping with living with her grandparents, apart from her parents, for some years and had a far more mature outlook than this quarrelsome group of girls. Another said, 'No one wants to play with me' as she had recently entered the school and had not found a close friend. She did have friends and eventually found a close friend of whom she later spoke with respect and affection. She recalled how helpful that girl had been when she entered the school. Perhaps such intimate comments may only be gained from approaches such as the private semi-structured interviews.

In the interviews held with the researcher, some of the girls gave conflicting

355

descriptions of other girls. The reasons for this have been discussed previously. It appeared that not all girls could hold contrasting aspects of another's personality in mind at the same time. In addition, a respondent would describe a quality such as aggression as negative in the context of attack, but positive if used by the same girl in her defense. If the respondent had not been a target of the aggression, nor witnessed it, she may not have described the girl as aggressive herself, yet acknowledge the girl was considered aggressive by others.

5. Insult, Gossip, Rumour and Grassing

Language

A main aim of the study was to identify the role of gossip, rumour, insult and grassing in conflict situations. In addition, a linguistic analysis of these specific structures was undertaken.

In examining the specific language structures of gossip, rumour, insult and grassing, this study adds significant information to the small amount of work available on these structures. Although these language forms are in common use, with children as well as adults, there is hardly any work on the use of them by young people, especially in a naturalistic setting.

From transcription of the conversations on the video material, the format for gossip proposed by Bergmann (1987) was extended; a similar format for rumour identified; and a more simplistic format for insult and telling tales. The study separated grassing into threats and telling tales, a division not identified in previous work. In addition, the findings show how these language forms play a significant part in the processes of dispute and aggression.

The findings of the analysis support Maynard (1985) in suggesting adults may underestimate the level of language development of young people. I would propose that this is especially so for those who are not conversing in a standard format, and who use a pronounced dialect in the informal and private situation, as did the girls featured in this study.

Insult, Gossip and Rumour and Grassing as Exclusion Mechanisms

The study had no rigorous, preconceived agenda. The aim was to record the

conversations of the girls over time, in the expectation that the material would provide insights into the group dynamics regarding conflict. It was anticipated that linguistic structures, such as gossip and rumour, would be instrumental in this process. The study did not set out to examine insult and grassing, but these processes emerged as significant during the transcription stage of the study. The informal design was an advantage as it is a genuinely naturalistic study with minimal researcher influence so allowing uncensored chatter.

Insult

The study identified a number of ways in which insult was used in conflict situations. Little analysis of the structure or use of insult had been carried out in prior studies. Close matching of observations of the video material, with the detailed transcription of the conversations, gave a surprising finding. The overall ethos in several sections of the material was one of impending eruption of aggression. A high level of aggression was in evidence in the speech of the girls but little culminated in violent action. The aggressive tone of speech, containing insults, threats and challenges, was often misleading.

All the forms of insult used by the girls were effective in highlighting its use in differentiating power. The girls used these forms of verbal communication, insulting remarks, directives and name-calling, in a flexible and often idiosyncratic manner to manipulate their relationships. Some insult sequences were identified where one girl, in particular, was targeted although another girl, more disliked, was not targeted in the same way. This may have been because she was less vulnerable both physically and psychologically.

The insulting remarks, directives and name-calling shared a common content, the focus being sexual reputation, body image, behaviour and relationships. Few insults related to intellectual ability. The remarks made are those in common usage to express annoyance or disappointment such as 'daft' and 'stupid' and were not made with reference to the intellectual ability of the target girl. Many of the remarks and names concerning sexual reputation were the same as those reported in studies carried out in Australia as well as in England (Owens, 2000). The video material illustrates how these

language forms, seemingly abusive in script form, may be used as commonplace remarks with no insult implied. They may even be used as entertainment.

Most of the aggressive girls were highly represented in the usage and receipt of these structures. All these linguistic forms showed how effective such language is in the manipulation of relationships.

Gossip

The terms rumour and gossip have been used interchangeably in most previous studies as in Eder (1985). Several of the few existing texts on gossip and rumour fudge the distinction between the two structures. In this study, a clear distinction was identified in the way that gossip and rumour were used although both were used in the manipulation of relationships. Gossip was used to initiate, or consolidate, the exclusion or stigmatising of a girl in order to bring about changes in the group structure (Bjorquist et al, 1992; Burbank, 1987: Campbell, 1986; Eder, 1985). However, rumour was also used in a circuitous manner for the same purpose. Gossip was used to target the personal qualities of individuals (Bergmann, 1993). Rumour targeted the impersonal.although an object, such as a named school, could be used to attack a girl, by association. Both were instrumental in the inclusion and exclusion processes relating to the friendship groups being used to incite a quarrel or to consolidate one in progress. High status girls attacked those of lower status (Goodwin, 1990). The relegation of a girl to low status could be transitory. A girl previously powerful could be demoted due to the jealousy and machinations of a currently powerful girl.

There is little existing knowledge offering insights into the focus of gossip and rumour. This study identified that the reputation, appearance and personal characteristics of individual girls were targets for gossip and rumour, primarily the more mature girls targeting each other (Burbank, 1987; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Faust, 1960; Symonds, 1979). One girl in particular was a target as she boasted about her own appearance (Dion, 1978, Feingold, 1994).

There was gossip about sexual reputations although these girls were younger than those in other studies presenting the same findings (Campbell, 1985, 1986; Marsh & Paton, 1984, 1986). Such remarks were made in a joking and exaggerated manner,

related to fantasy not fact. I have found it common for girls of this age, and older, to be aggressively proprietorial over boys, the boys themselves being completely unaware of the interest of the girl involved.

Rumour

Rumour was a strategy used by some girls to target an opponent in a covert manner. Two girls used rumour as a mechanism to rile each other about their impending change of schools. One of the girls was the most intelligent in the class. That she allowed herself repeatedly to be drawn into this verbal duel indicates how powerful these social language structures can be when used in an incendiary role.

Rumour is said to be prevalent in times of heightened emotion; excitement, anxiety and uncertainty (Allport and Postman, 1947b; Fine and Rosnow,1978). The rumours in the conversations of these girls followed their circumstances, reflecting their high levels of anxiety in relation to impending change of school. In a locality renown for violence, a move to a situation where you will be the youngest and most vulnerable, among hundreds, could be expected to be anticipated with some qualms. In addition, there was suspicion regarding the role and purpose of this research. This too gave rise to rumours.

The study considered the characteristics of those who gossip and spread rumours. There appears to be little previous work addressing this subject, none at all relating to children. The girls using gossip and rumour most frequently were not unpopular. They had stable friendships and were rated as popular by several girls, not only their close friends. It would appear that the personality of these girls; their wariness of losing a friend, their jealousy of the attributes of others, and their intense interest in the affairs of the rest of the girls, caused them to gossip more than others in the group. Their gossip was usually humourous and entertaining in style so that the gossip in itself contributed to, and consolidated, their popularity. One girl, in particular, rated highly in frequency counts for both giving and receiving gossip. No correlation was found between those who gossiped and their targets, only that one girl became increasingly unpopular and the target of gossip for several girls over the time of the study. This followed a parallel pattern to her exclusion and alienation from the group.

Gossip and rumour were shown to have a range of functions, both positive and

negative. Both have positive bonding functions but this process may have the adverse effect of excluding those not included in the gossiping group. In this study the gossip is used to stigmatise and criticise, the positive function of bonding seemingly being of secondary importance. This may only be on the conscious level. On the sub-conscious level, the whole purpose of the gossip may have been to bond the group by excluding one other. The entertaining gossip about one girl clearly provides fun for the audience, while furthering her exclusion. Here the gossip appears to serve the function of making the strong feelings of jealousy bearable, the ridicule and criticisms giving a justification and acceptable excuse for the malicious gossip. There was a bias in the gossip episodes toward comparing the gossip's own positive attributes to the negative points of the target. Often this was done in such an exaggerated manner as to cause great amusement.

Grassing as an Exclusion Technique

Grassing was a mechanism used commonly by the girls. Little has been written about grassing, especially in the context of the school environment. The paucity of research on grassing, as used by young people, is surprising as most children would recognise it as common practice, and few would be completely guilt-free.

Prior studies had not identified a framework for a grassing episode. No mention appears to have been made of dividing grassing into telling tales and threat as identified in this work. There are threats to grass, used as an immediate controlling mechanism, and the actual carrying out of the tale telling. The threats used by the girls were realistic, being carried out in approximately 50% of the cases.

There is evidence of grassing from those with a legitimate complaint, direct tale-telling in a bid for arbitration. However, Maynard (1985) suggests that the tale telling is employed more to get adult attention, in a bid to override the opposition, than for mediation. There is little direct grassing shown on the video recordings as there was no adult in the room, but there is evidence of grassing being carried out directly to the girl named. The camera was used as a substitute for the presence of an adult for telling tales. Threats to grass were issued in the expectation that the threat alone would result in the wanted change being brought about. Threats to grass were made in a bid to

manipulate others into following a course of action they were unwilling to embark upon.

A further analysis has been made in this study that does not appear to have been given elsewhere. The grassing events were divided into issues relating to rule breaking. There were formal school-based rules, informal, social rules organised by the girls themselves and recognised and acknowledged only in a covert way until the point of breakdown, plus work-based rules pertaining to materials and personal space.

On the whole, the grassing episodes were carried out by girls who were confident and so may have been related to social status, but those incidents concerning work, and issues of personal space, were related more to proximity and situation. These were based on the practical issues and difficulties of sharing materials and workspace, rather than any intention to stigmatise, or exclude, a particular girl from the group as was the case with gossip and rumour.

6.   The Structure of Insult ,Gossip, Rumour and Grassing

The study extends the framework of gossip from the work of Bergmann (1993) Eder (1990, 1991) and Goodwin (1990). There is an extension of the structure of gossip in respect to an identification of a specific Context, plus the identification of the Attention Grabber and Parrot interjections. Both these can be identified in the gossip episodes contained in the conversations of the girls (Appendix). Other parts of the structure have been added that have been mentioned only incidentally in other work, such as Repair work, Expansion and Closure. A similar structure has been drawn up for rumour. As insult and grassing may be carried out in front of the target, unlike gossip or rumour, a structure has been identified that is dissimilar from that of either gossip or rumour. However, a simple structure for insult and grassing has been formulated. Considering that young people are familiar with these terms and their usage, it would appear that surprisingly little work has been carried out on the use and structure of all these processes as used by young people,

7.   The Design of the Study

The aims of the study demanded an innovative approach to the design. The most challenging aspect of the study was in finding a naturalistic, non-intrusive method of exploring the daily social functioning of this group of girls. Researcher influence may

be in the form of the design and administration of questions presented in interview or a questionnaire (Campbell, 1995), by being present using a tape recorder or video camera (Goodwin, 1990), or by personal observation of the participants as in the studies of Alder and Alder (1995) and Savin-Williams (1980). As the aim of this study was to gain information about the girls using an ethnographical design, it was necessary to remove the possibility of researcher effect as far as possible.

There are several reasons why the design chosen for the study was primarily observational, by use of an unattended video camera, although supported by sociometric questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and informal observations. An ethnographic, naturalistic design was considered the most appropriate format for the core study in order to gain a true picture of these girls, many of whom where aggressive, observant and challenging. Many of the social interactions between the girls were recognised as unacceptable, even taboo, by the girls as well as outsiders. This could have resulted in false information being given by the girls in an attempt to present themselves in a favourable light. As it was the aggressive and fractious nature of their friendships that was of interest, and their use of conflict language in these processes, a naturalistic design was essential to success. The girls were required to behave and converse as naturally as possible throughout the time of the study.

In addition to meeting the needs of examining the private, social interactions between the girls, the design of using the video camera, in the non-threatening environment of an activity club as a non-participant observer, allowed the second aim of the study to be achieved. Insult, gossip, rumour and grassing are commonly used processes. However, it is difficult to design a satisfactory study that captures natural conversation accurately, yet is able to run the length of time necessary to include such infrequently occurring language structures. Although commonly used processes, they may not occur daily, or even weekly, within a particular group of people. The paucity of studies of these language structures gave no confirmation that any one of them would occur with any frequency.

A design was needed that would pick up naturally evolving, casual conversation with as little external influence as possible. Previous analysis of these language

structures by adults has been sparse, and those focusing on their use by children in naturalistic settings, without an adult presence, seemingly non-existent. Researcher presence needed to be avoided in studying the language of the girls for the same reason as for the observation of their behaviour. The girls may have been reluctant to use their usual aggressive format of language within hearing of an adult. If so, their natural use of gossip, rumour, insult and grassing could have been curtailed

In addition to the difficulties in designing a study that could meet the requirements outlined above, a longitudinal study was required in order to pick up the transient nature of the friendships and the nuances of the subtle interactions. As the study aimed to track the pattern of instability in the friendship bonds and cliques, it was essential to record the occurrence of conflicts as closely as possible as they were the focus of the study. The conflicts and changing status of the friendship bonds needed to be recorded in detail and over a lengthy period. These were additional factors to be encompassed in any successful design.

The design chosen for the major section of the study, the ethnographic video taped recordings of the activity club, follows the work of Whyte (1943) and his 'kerbside observations' of the 'Street Corner Society'. The methodology described by Whyte, of waiting around for the intermittent to happen, is unnerving. Time slips by, seemingly without any progress made. The most stressful aspect being that the researcher is not certain that something worthwhile will eventually emerge. The conversations of the girls required more than 600 hours of transcriptions, before much sense could be made of the material, due to difficulties encountered in hearing the details of the conversations on the video material.

One of the most stressful elements in ethnographic work is the elusive nature of the focus of the study. If there are no preconceived hypotheses, the events and findings must guide the researcher towards a worthwhile and valid focus. The difficulty in identifying a focus for this type of study is considered by Lincoln and Gubba (1985). These authors suggest that in ethnographic studies there must be a process where interaction in the field leads to the focus of the study. This was the mode followed in this study.

One of the most significant aspects of video recording the complex social interactions was that it enabled the material to be examined at leisure and questions to be formed in a reflective manner. Hypotheses could be formulated in retrospect from leisured inspection of the material. These could then be examined and tested by the analysis of all the collated material from the different sources.

The difficulties in creating an effective design became evident when a previous study had to be aborted in preference to the design adopted. It was clear that sensitivity and ingenuity would be required to gain the full confidence of the girls. Gaining access to their private lives, with their permission, but without disrupting the process, required an innovative design.

Although the study aimed to eliminate researcher influence, it benefited from the researcher being familiar to the school and community. This allowed the study to be set in an ethos of trust without which success would have been doubtful.

A previous, aborted study, was set in the same locality but two factors appeared to be significant to the success of this study. It would appear that the younger age of the girls allowed them to be more amenable, less suspicious and challenging, than the older girls in the earlier study. An added factor, that enhanced the opportunity for success, was the novel idea of using a voluntary, lunchtime, activity club. This setting offered, even encouraged, the use of the linguistic forms at the core of the study. The girls enjoyed the opportunity to fill their lunchtimes with an enjoyable activity so eliminating the problem of regular attendance that has beset many studies. The girls attended willingly and participated in the activities with enthusiasm. Their relaxed manner allowed their natural mode of conversation to flow so encouraging their use of gossip, rumour, insult and grassing. Even so, there was one occasion when the more suspicious and aggressive girls challenged the integrity of the researcher. The progress of the study in this closed, volatile environment was always precarious.

Technical Equipment

The core part of the study, the transcriptions of the video recorded material, needed particular consideration. This facet is what most distinguishes this study from others. Detailed, accurate transcription is essential to follow the nuances in both the

conversations and actions when several girls are talking at once. The naturalistic setting was essentially the core of the study, yet this made transcription of the material difficult. There were practical elements to the study that may have allowed better access to quality information than may otherwise been the case. Recent advances in technology allowed the use of audio equipment of the highest professional standard at the time. As this sensitive, portable and versatile equipment would not have been available to earlier studies, it offers enhancement to this work. The difficulties in transcribing the conversations from the video material meant that such high quality equipment allowed material to be accessed that could have been lost in previous studies.

In summary, the requirement for a comprehensive mode of recording the private lives of the girls, sensitive yet not intrusive, acceptable to all concerned yet practicable in every way, demanded an innovative design and mode of implementation. Once formulated, the idea of the video taped activity club appeared obvious, yet almost a year had been wasted in trying out less innovative ethnographic designs. Perhaps this is why there are very few studies dealing with this issue, particularly in a naturalistic setting. Further development of the design could enhance future studies presenting similar demands.

The 'fly on the wall' design of the study was successful in that it gave the opportunity for appropriate and accurate data collection. However, contamination of the process by the presence of the video camera, even without an adult presence, was a possibility. It was essential to the design that these girls were of the right age to be left to work independently, but young enough to forget, or ignore the camera. In addition, the personalities of most of the girls were such that they became engrossed in their interpersonal interactions regardless of who saw or overheard. The possibility of contamination of the conversations by the girls being unduly influenced by the presence of the video camera, can be judged by comments, discussed earlier, made by the girls during the sessions. These illustrate that the girls ignored the camera in preference to an awareness of the researcher who was in the room next door, out of sight and hearing.

8.   Discussion of the Implementation of the Study

The disadvantages of the design lay in the timing of the sessions and the location of the club within the school. Such restrictions are common to studies conducted in schools. Although the brief period available for the sessions caused difficulties in the management of the study, it did not compromise the content of the research. Fewer sessions took place than had been anticipated. Reasons for this could be classified as; tight time schedule, failed equipment, absence of girls, unavailability of the room, illness, conflict between the girls, girls needed elsewhere in school or at home, girls forgetting their materials or forgetting to attend.

The activity club and the video recording of the girls ended at the close of the penultimate term of the study. The main reason for this was because the girls were about to transfer to various secondary schools and so were involved in visits to these schools, and in the visits of teachers in those schools coming to the primary school to meet the intending students. In addition, the activity club had run for a year and the 'shelf life' had come to an end. The girls were ready to move on to other interests.

Time was also curtailed as no sessions were planned for the first and last two weeks of each term in order to allow the girls to settle after a holiday, so that a maximum of 40 sessions were anticipated to take place over the 16 months

All the girls loved the idea of the club. They appreciated the preparation of the activities, the novel ideas, the use of unfamiliar techniques and materials. They especially liked the finished articles they took home as gifts or for their own use. The girls had their lunch before others in the school but, even so, they had a maximum of forty minutes to enter the room, listen to instructions, get out their work and settle to the task. There were disadvantages to having such a brief period of time; the need for extremely detailed preparation of the task and materials, along with frustration due to lack of time to complete a piece of work to a desired standard. However, an advantage was that the girls concentrated their efforts on finishing their work due to the brevity of time available. This left little time to think of external things such as the video equipment, which always remained in full view, or running between the room were they were and that where the rest of the girls and the adults were working. Normally, they

would have been asking the adults for help with their work, seeking arbitration, or quarrelling with the girls next door. Being mobile, most of these interactions would have been off camera. The shortage of time resulted in them concentrating on the task, and on their conversations within the group, so that they remained in the room and on camera. They were able to chat freely in a totally unrestrained atmosphere without oversight from an adult.

9. Ethics

The ethics involved in bringing about the requirements for the success of the study have been discussed in Chapter Six. Intrusion into the private lives of these young girls, even with their permission, posed the problem of setting the study within an ethical framework. In addition, further ethical issues arose during the progress of the study.

One issue emerged concerning events witnessed by the researcher when the decision could have arisen as to whether or not to intervene or stop the study. This concerned the alienation of one girl from the group over time. Km was aggressive and a bully, characteristics that made her unpopular with most of the girls. However, her boastful and untrustworthy personality, plus the envy of the more aggressive girls concerning her attractive appearance, gradually caused to her be rejected by all. Although the teachers were aware of her unpopularity, none appeared to understand the force of the rejection and the extent of the hatred of some of the girls. Towards the end of the study, Km was in a precarious and dangerous position. Information, slowly gathered over time from the various sources used in the study, allowed the danger of the situation to be revealed to the researcher although the teachers remained unaware of the possibility of an impending crisis. This would have posed an ethical dilemma for the researcher, who would have needed to alert the teaching staff to the danger. Fortunately, by the time all the relevant information had been collated, and the researcher was fully aware of the situation, Km was being protected by one or two girls and escorted home by the parent of a girl in another class and a crisis avoided. The researcher had, retrospectively, picked up a serious situation of which the teaching staff had been unaware.

Another girl, So, was of special concern as she was bullied by some of the other

girls. The rationale the attackers gave was based on their own misperceptions so that they themselves were compounding the problem. They accused her of lying, not joining in, and rejecting their friendship. Most of these behaviours were responses to their rejection and scorn. By their adverse and unfortunate misperceptions, the bullies were unwittingly influencing, or 'designing' her personality, and then rejecting her. The study was so time limited, and the transcripts difficult to transcribe and time-consuming, that during this period the researcher was not fully aware of these traumas and the degree of unhappiness this girl was experiencing. By the time some headway had been made in the detail of the transcriptions, some positive progress had been made. She had made a strong and protective friendship with Ky while on the residential field trip

10. Concluding Remarks

This work offers a comprehensive analysis of the individual girls in the class, and their on-going interactions over the length of the study. The slow build up of information, from a variety of sources, offers the 'thick description' of each girl and her behaviour in the manner proposed by Geertz (1973). The multifaceted approach used in this study; video material, sociograms and interviews, gave insights into the group dynamics that could not have been identified by a single mode of enquiry. The painstaking collection and collation of detail throws illumination on the covert social behaviour, attitudes, emotions and allegiances of young girls. These interactions, normally well hidden from adults, are often the most powerful and influential forces in young lives.

Conflicts among young girls are common, yet we know little of the causes, the emotional wear and tear, the severity of threats, and levels of distress involved. The repercussions affect a wide range of adults, parents, professionals, and others in addition to the girls themselves. The reason why so little has been achieved so far would seem to relate to the difficulty in designing a way of studying these behaviours in a non-intrusive setting where the girls are chatting naturally about what concerns them. No other study has tackled this problem in the way used in this work, but other research may continue with this design or improvements. The design of the study would appear to be one of the most useful aspects others could take from this research.

This study benefited from the unique position of the researcher being known in the school. The participants in any such study must have unrestricted trust in the researcher and the design of the work. Adults involved, or with responsibility for the participants, need to have the same assurance. Without the trust of the girls, teachers and families, the study could not have taken place. Other issues relating to the implementation of the study, such as timing, location and the daunting complexities of school life, have been discussed in the main body of the work.

This study offers not only information to add to the existing bank of knowledge, but also highlights the importance of acquiring an understanding of the social life of young people, a life that runs in parallel to that adults consider of prime importance. Many adults would be surprised at the value these girls put on their friendships, and the sophisticated use they made of their friends. In the cut and thrust of school life it is easy to concentrate of the negative aspects of quarrels but their eagerness to renew the friendship bonds after a quarrel, shows the powerful and genuine benefits the girls experienced from these close emotional relationships.

Opportunities for further research open up for the full range of professionals, and other bodies, who have an interest in the development and protection of young people in school, at home and in society. The findings of the study may be of value to a range of professionals, not only educationalists. Conflicts among the young involve numerous professional bodies addressing young people in school, the home and on the street. Some young people are at work and many attend clubs and other organisations. Unsatisfactory resolution of aggression, dysfunctional personal relationships, damaged emotions and delinquent attitudes involve the police and judicial systems. The levels of anxiety and depression apparent in these girls, stemming from their home situations, as well as the stress in school, needs to be better understood and addressed by psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and the medical practitioners and researchers. Perhaps the issues underpinning daily life are more important than the occasional, volatile eruptions that demand attention.

The study highlights the trauma the quarrels can cause. A great deal of emotional energy was expended by these girls on the monitoring of their friends, in addition to that

369

spent on the manipulations and conflicts in which most seemed to be constantly involved. Recent work alerts adults to the adverse effects witnessing such actions as rejection and bullying has on the by-standers (Cowie, 1998). The power of girls to exclude others from friendship groups, the distress caused by threats to transfer friendship allegiance, the manipulation techniques and covert bullying, all illustrate the hidden emotional trauma underlying the daily life in classrooms. The intensity of such destructive emotions as jealousy and spite, and the velocity with which they can escalate, offers information and warning to all those in close contact with young people. Often, teachers and parents are aware only of the less obvious attacks; yet young people describe these as less distressing than covert harassment. The study shows that, although the teachers were professional and caring, the covert and skilled behaviours of the girls meant that they had little knowledge of these on-going negative behaviours and the degree of distress they caused.

This study illustrates the powerful emotional repercussions family events can have on the young. The responses and recorded conversations of the girls highlight the degree of trauma and harassment many of our young people bring with them into school. Parents and professionals can underestimate resulting levels of anxiety and depression. The value of their friendships, for solace and comfort concerning their home lives, would have amazed both teachers and parents. None of the experienced and caring teachers in the school was aware of the degree of anxiety and tension these seemingly cheerful and exuberant girls experienced on a daily basis. This finding could encourage further studies to focus on undisclosed levels of on-going anxiety and depression among the young.

The study touched on new territory in showing that insult; gossip, rumour and grassing had an influential role in the social processes taking place between the girls. The wide and flexible use of these structures in meeting the practical, emotional, social and psychological needs of these girls is clearly in evidence. The role of each was tracked and quantified, showing a more comprehensive and complex use of each than has been noted elsewhere. Their use by each girl was considered in the context of other attributes and behaviours. This has only been done for gossip in previous work in the

framework of adult use.

In addition to tracking the role of these structures, an analysis was carried out for each language structure. The previous structures offered by Bergmann (1987) and Fine and Rosnow (1978) were extended. A classification of insult was devised. Grassing was identified as having two roles, threats and telling tales, and shown to be an effective mode of social control. The value of this section of the study lies in two areas. One area lies in the extensions identified in the structures that may be of value to those with a professional or other interest in language. However, it is the insights the study offers into their uses in the process of conflict, manipulation and control in the daily interactions of young people that perhaps has the wider appeal. If young people tell us that covert and indirect aggressions are the most potent, then it is of great importance that we fully understand those language processes that are the weapons they wield.

The girls who took part in the study all displayed a surprising range and depth of skills. They had developed a wealth of linguistic and communication strategies to cope with a most challenging version of the world, and they had access to a range of practical, social and psychological strategies and skills. These girls had learnt to use problem-solving skills as an essential part of everyday living. They need to act independently, evolving into fast, imaginative and effective thinkers in order to survive.

Although not foreseen in setting up the study, this longitudinal study gave the opportunity to watch them on the cusp of change. This change was not only developmental, but the girls faced one of the most challenging times of childhood, the leaving of a small primary school to enter secondary schools, each with about a thousand students.

In a brief, retrospective investigation, I found that they had, as expected, all succeeded in making a successful transition. Several years on, they were poised on the brink of womanhood, facing more new challenges as they prepared to leave school and enter the adult world of work.

REFERENCES

Aboud, F.E. & Mendelson, M.J. (1996). Determinants of friendship and quality: Developmental perspectives. In M. Bukowski, A.F. Newcomb & W.W.Hartup (Eds.). *The Company They Keep*. Cambridge University Press.

Adams, B.N. & Bristow, M. (1979). Ugandan Asian expulsion: Rumour and reality. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 14, 191-203.

Ahlgren, A (1983). Sex Differences in the correlates of cooperative and competitive school attitudes. *Developmental Psychology*, *19*, 81-888

Ahmad, Y. & Smith, P, K. (1994). Bullying in schools and the issue of sex differences. In J. Archer. (Ed.). *Male Violence*. London: Routledge.

Alberts, J.K. Kellar-Guenther, Y. & Corman, S.R. (1996). That's not funny: Understanding recipients' responses to teasing. *Western Journal of Communication*, 60, 337-357.

Alder, P.A. & Alder P. (1984). The carpool: A socializing adjunct to the educational experience, *Sociology of Education,* 57 (4) 200-209.

Alder, P. A. & Alder, P. (1995). Dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in preadolescent cliques. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol.58, no3, 145-162.

Allport, G.W. (1942). The General and the Unique in Psychological Science. *Journal of Personality*, 30, no 3. 405-422.

Allport, G.W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York: Addison-Wesley.

Allport, G.W. & Postman, L. (1947a). An analysis of rumour. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 10, 501-517.

Allport, G, & Postman, L. (1947b). *The Psychology of Rumour*. New York:Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Allport, G.W. & Postman, L. (1965). *The Psychology of Rumour*. 2nd Edition. New York:Russell & Russell.

Almirol, E.B. (1981). Chasing the Elusive Butterfly: Gossip and the Pursuit of Reputation. *Ethnicity*, 8, 293-304.

Altrichter, H., & Posch, P. (1989). Does the 'grounded theory' approach offer a guiding paradigm for teacher research? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, vol.19, no 1.

Antarki, C. (1994). *Explaining and Arguing: The Social Organization of Accounts*. London:Sage.

Archer, J. (1993). Childhood gender roles: Social context and organization. In H. McGurk (Ed.) *Childhood Social Development: Contemporary Perspectives*. Hillsdale, B J: Erlbaum.

Archer, J. (1994). (Ed). *Male Violence*. London:Routledge.

Argyle, M. (1969). *Social Interaction*. London:Tavistock Publications (Methuen).

Asher, S.R. & Coie, J.D. (1990). (Eds). *Peer Rejection in Childhood*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Asher, R., Parker, J. G. Kochenderfer, & Walker, D. L. (1996). Distinguishing friendship from acceptance: Implications for intervention and assessment. In W.M.Bukowski, A. Newcomb & W.W. Hartup. (Eds). *The Company They Keep*. Cambridge University Press.

Athens, L. (1980). *Violent Criminal Acts and Actors*. London:Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Austen, J. (1946). Emma. Oxford:Clarendon Press.

Austen, J. (1986). *The Complete Novels of Jane Austen*. Penguin Books.

Bailey, F.G. (1971). (Ed). *Gifts and Poisons: The Politics of Reputation*. New York: Schocken.

Bales, R.F. (1958). *Interaction Process Ananlysis; A Method for the Study of Small Groups*. Cambridge, Mass: Addison Wesley.

Bateman, A.J. (1948). Intra-sexual selection. *Drosophila. Heredity, 2*,349-368.

Baumeister, R.F. & Sommer, K.L. (1997). What do men want? Gender differences and two spheres of belongingness: Comment on Cross and Madson (1997). *Psychological Bulletin, 122,* no1, 38-44.

Bavelas, A. (1948). A mathematical model of group structures. *Applied Anthropology, 7,* 16-30.

Bavelas, J.B. Rogers, L.E. & Millar, F.E. (1995). Interpersonal Conflict. *In Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. C. West & D. H. Zimmerman. (Eds.) Vol. 4. London:Academic Press.

Belle, D. (1989). Gender Differences in children's social networks and supports. In D. Belle (Ed). *Children's Social Networks and Social Supports*. New York:Wiley.

Benenson, J.F. (1993). Greater preference among females than males for dyadic interaction in early childhood. *Child Development, 64,* 544-555.

Benenson, J.F. Apostoleris, N.H. & Parnass, J. (1997). Age and sex differences in dyadic and group interaction. *Developmental Psychology, 33,* 538-543.

Ben-Ze'ev, A. (1994). The vindication of gossip. In *Good Gossip*. R. Goodman & A. Ben-Ze'ev. (Eds.). University of Kansas Press.

Bergmann, J. (1987) Translation (1993). *Discreet Indiscretions*. New York:Aldine de Gruyter

Berndt, T. J. (1979). Developmental changes in conformity to peers and parents. *Developmental Psychology, 15,* 608-616

Berndt, T.J. (1983). Social cognition, social behaviour and children's friendships. In E.T. Higgins, D.N. Ruble and W.W. Hartup (Eds.). *Social Cognition and Social Developmen: A Sociocultural Perspective.* Cambridge University Press.

Berndt, T. J., & Heller, K. A. (1986). Gender stereotypes and social inferences:A developmental study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 50. 889-898.

Besag,V.E. (1986). Bullies, victims and the silent majority. *Times Educational Supplement,* 5 Dec., 22-3.

Besag, V.E. (1988). *Report of the European Teachers Seminar on Bullying in Schools:* Report for the Council for Cultural Co-operation. Strasburg: CCC.

Besag, V.E. (1989). *Bullies and Victims in Schools: A guide to understanding and management.* Milton Keynes:Open University Press.

Besnier, N. (1989). Information witholding as a manipulative and collusive strategy in Nukulaelae gossip. *Language in Society,* 18, 315-341.

Bjorkqvist, K. Ekman, K. & Lagerspetz, K.M.J. (1982). Bullies and victims: Their ego picture, ideal ego picture and normative ego picture. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 23,* 307-313.

Bjorkqvist, K. Lagespetz, K. & Kaukiainen, A. (1992). Do girls manipulate and boys fight? Developmental trends regarding direct and indirect aggression. *Aggressive Behaviour,* 18, 117-127.

Bjorkqvist, K. Osterman, K. & Lagespetz, K. (1994). Sex differences in covert aggression among adults. *Aggressive Behaviour, 20,* 27-34.

Blackburn, R. (1993). The Psychology of Criminal Conduct. Chichester, UK:Wiley.

Blackburn, R. *Horizon, BBC, TV.* Nov., 1996.

Boden, D. & Zimmerman, D. H. (1991). *Talk and Social Structure: Studies in Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis.* Oxford:Basil Blackwell.

Borgatta, E.F. (1951). A diagnostic note on the construction of sociograms and action diagrams. *Group Psychotherapy, 3,* 33-308

Boulton, M. J. (1992). Rough physical play in adolescents: Does it serve a dominance function? *Early Education and Development, 3,* 312-333.

Boulton, M.J. (1993). Proximate causes of aggressive fighting in middle school children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology,* 63, 231-244.

Boulton, M. J. (1994). The relationship between playful and aggressive fighting in children, adolescents, and adults. In J. Archer (Ed.). *Male Violence.* London:Routledge.

Boulton, M.J. & Underwood, K. (1992). Bully/victim problems among middle school children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 62, 73-82.

Boulton, M.J. & Smith, P.K. (1994). Bully/victim problems in middle-school children: self perceived competence, peer perceptions and peer acceptance, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 62, 73-82.

Boulton, M.J. & Hawker, D.S. (1997). Non-physical forms of bullying among school pupils: a cause for concern, *Health Education, 2*, 61-64.

Bowers, K.S. (1973). Situationalism in psychology: An analysis and a critique. *Psychological Review*, 80, 307-336

Bowers, L. Smith, P. K. & Binney, V. (1992). Cohesion and power in the families of children involved in bully/victim problems at school. *Family Therapy*, 14, no 4, 371-387.

Boxer, D. & Cortes-Conde, F. (1997). From bonding to biting: Conversational joking and identity display. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 27, 275-294.

Brenneis, D. & Lein, L. (1977). 'You fruithead':A sociolinguistic approach to children's dispute settlement. In S. Ervin-Tripp & C. Mitchell-Kernen (Eds.). *Child Discourse* 49-65. New York:Academic Press.

Browne, K.R. (1995). Sex and temperament in modern society: A Darwinian view of the glass ceiling and the gender gap. *Arizona Law Review*, 37, 971-1106.

Buhrmester, D., & Furman, W. (1987). The development of companionship and intimacy. *Child Development*, 58, 1101-1113.

Buhrmester, D. (1996). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497-529.

Bukowski, W. M. & Hoza, B. (1989). Popularity and friendship: Issues in theory, measurement, and outcomes. In T. Berndt & G. Ladd (Eds.). *Peer Relations in Child Development*. New York:John Wiley.

Bukowski, W.M. Newcomb, A.F. & Hartup, W.W. (1996). Friendship and its significance in childhood and adolescence: Introduction and comment. In W.M. Bukowski, A.F. Newcomb, & W.W. Hartup. (1996). (Eds.). *The Company They Keep: Friendship in Childhood and Adolescence*. Cambridge University Press.

Bukowski, W.M. Newcomb, A.F. & Hartup,W.W. (1996). (Eds.). *The Company They Keep: Friendship in Childhood and Adolescence*. Cambridge University Press.

Burbank, V.K. (1987). Female aggression in cross cultural perspective. *Behavior Science Research*. 71-100.

Burbank, V.K. (1994). *Fighting Women: Anger and Aggression in Aboriginal Australia*. Berkeley:University of California Press.

Buss, A.H. (1961). *The Psychology of Aggression*. New York:Wiley.

Buss, D.M. (1981). Sex Differences in the evaluation and performance of dominant acts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40, 147-154. 347

Buss D.M. (1988). From vigilance to violence: tactics of mate retention in American undergraduates. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 9. 291-317. 2, 354

Buss, D. M. (1988a). The evolution of human intrasexual competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53, 1214-1221.

Buss, D. M. (1988b). From vigilance to violence: Mate guarding tactics. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 9, 616-628.

Buss, D.M. (1989). Sex differences in human mate preferences: Evolutionary hypotheses tested in 37 cultures. *Behavioural & Brain Sciences*, 12, 1- 49.

Buss, D. M. & Schmitt, D. P. (1993). Sexual strategies theory: An evolutionary perspective on human mating. *Psychological Review*, 100, 204-242.

Cairns, R.B., Cairns, B.D., Neckerman, H.J., Ferguson, L.L. & Gariepy, J.L. (1989). Growth and aggression: Childhood to early adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 25, 320-330.

Campbell,A. (1981). *Girl Delinquents*. Oxford:Blackwell.

Campbell, A. (1992). *The Girls in the Gang*. (Second Edition). Oxford and Boston: Blackwell.

Campbell, A. (1994). *Men, Women and Aggression*. New York:Basic Books.

Campbell, A. (1995). Friendship as a factor in male and female delinquency. In *Friendship and Social Relations in Children*. H.C. Foot, A.J.Chapman (Eds.). London: Transaction Publishers.

Campbell, A. (1995). A few good men: Evolutionary psychology and female adolescent aggression. *Ethology & Sociobiology*, 16, 99-123.

Campbell, A., Bibel, D., & Muncer, S. J., (1985). Predicting our own aggression: Person, subculture or situation? *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 24,169-180.

Campbell A. & Muncer, S. (1987). Models of anger and aggression in the social talk of women and men. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 17, 489-512.

Campbell, A., Muncer, S., & Gorman B. (1993). Sex and social representations of aggression: A communal-agentic analysis. *Aggressive Behaviour*, 19,125-135.

Campbell, A., & Muncer, S. (1994). Men and the Meaning of Violence. In J. Archer (Ed.). *Male Violence*. London:Routledge.
Campbell, A. & Muncer, S. (1994). Sex differences in aggression: Social roles and social representations. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 33, 233-240.

Caporeal, L.R. (1995). Sociality: Coordinating bodies, minds, and groups. *Psycoloquy*, 95.6.01. group-selection.1.caporeal.

Cash, T.F. (1995). Developmental teasing about physical appearance: Retrospective descriptions and relationships with body image. *Social Behaviour and Personality*, 23, 123-130.

Charlesworth, W.R. (1996). Cooperation and competition:Contributions to an evolutionary and developmental model. *International Journal of Behavioural Development,* 19, 25-38.

Charlesworth, W.R. & Dzur, C. (1987) Gender comparisons of preschoolers behaviour and resource utilisation in group problem solving. *Child Development*, 58, 191-200. 319

Chevallier, G. (1936) translation (1951). *Clochmerle*. Great Britain: Penguin Books.

Chung, T.Y. & Asher, S.R. (1996). Children's goals and strategies in peer conflict situations. *Merrill Palmer Quarterly,* 42, (1), 125-147.

Cicourel,A. (1964). *Method and Measurement in Sociology*. New York:The Free Press.

Coats, E.J. & Feldman, R.S.(1996). Gender differences in nonverbal correlates of social status. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 22*, 1014-1022.

Coffield, F. (1983). Entrée and Exit. *The Sociological Review,* 31 (3), 520-545.

Coghill, N. (1973). Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. (Translation). Harmondsworth, England:Penguin

Coie, J. D. (1990). Toward a theory of peer rejection. In S. R. Asher & J. D. Coie. (Eds.) *Peer Rejection in Childhood*. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Coie, J. D., Dodge, K. A. & Cappotelli, H. (1982). Dimensions and the types of social status: A cross-age perspective. *Developmental psychology*, 18, 557-570.

Coie, J.D. & Dodge, K.A. (1983). Continuities and changes in children's social status: A five year longitudinal study. *Merrill Palmer Quarterly*, 29. 3.

Coie, J. D. & Whidby, J.M. (1986). *Gender Differences in the Basis for Social Rejection in Childhood.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Research Association, San Francisco.

Coie, J.D., Dodge, K.A., & Kupersmidt, J.B. (1990). Peer group behaviour and social status. In S.R. Asher & J.D. Coie (Eds.). *Peer Rejection in Childhood*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Coleman, J.S. (1966). The Coleman Report. *Equality of Educational Opportunity*. Washington: US Government Printing Office.
Collins, W.A. & Laursen, B. (1992). Conflict and relationships during adolescence. In C.U.Shantz & W.W.Hartup (Eds.). *Conflict in Child and Adolescent Development*. New York:Cambridge University Press.

Colson, E. (1953). *The Makah Indians*. Manchester University Press.

Conan Doyle, A. (1999). *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Wordsworth:Puffin Books.

Cosaro, W.A. and Eder, D. (1993). Children's peer cultures. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 16, 197-220.

Cowen, E. L., Pederson, A., Babigian, H., Izzo, L.D. & Trost, M.A. (1973). Long–term follow-up of early detected vulnerable children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 41, 438-436.

Cowie, H. (1998). Perspectives of teachers and pupils on the experience of peer support against bullying. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 4, 108-125

Cowie, H. & Sharp, S. (1994). Empowering pupils to take positive action against bullying. In P. K. Smith and S. Sharp (Eds.) *School Bullying: Insights and Perspectives*. London:Routledge.

Cowie, H. & Sharp, S. (1995). *Peer Counselling in Schools*. London:Davis Fulton.

Cowie, H. & Sharp, S. (Eds.) (1996). *Peer Counselling in Schools: A Time to Listen*. London: David Fulton.

Crick, N.R. and Ladd, G.W. (1990). Children's perceptions of the outcomes of social strategies: Do the ends justify being mean? *Developmental Psychology*, 26, 612-626.

Crick, N.R. & Dodge, K.A. (1994). A review and reformulation of social information processing mechanisms in children's social adjustment. Psychological Bulletin, 115, 74-101.

Crick, N.R. & Grotpeter, J.K. (1995). Relational aggression, gender and social psychological adjustment. *Child Development*, 66, 710-722.

Crombie,G. and Desjardins, M.J. (1993). *Predictors of gender: The relative importance of children's play, games and personality characteristics?* Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for research in Child Development, New Orleans, March 1998.

Cross, S.E. & Madson, L. (1997). Models of self: Self construals and gender. *Psychological Bulletin*, 122, 5-37.

Crozier, W.R. & Dimmock, P. S. (1999). Name-calling and nicknames in a sample of primary school children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. 69, 517-531.

Cummins, J. (1984). *Bilingualism and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedogogy*. Avon:Multilingual Matters.

Daly, M. & Wilson, M. (1990). Killing the Competition: Female/female and male/male homicide. *Human Nature*, 1, 81-107.
Daly, M. & Wilson, M. (1994). Evolutionary psychology of male violence. In J. Archer (Ed.). *Male Violence*. London:Routledge.

Damon, W. (1977). *The Social World of the Child*. San Fransisco:Jossey-Bass.

Damon, W. (1980). *The Moral Child*. New York:Free Press

Damon, W. & Hart, W. (1988). *Self Understanding in Childhood and Adolescence*. Cambridge, UK:Cambridge University Press.

Davey, A. G. & Mullin, P. N. (1983). Inter-ethnic friendship in British primary schools. *Educational Research*, 25, 184-190.

Davies, B. (1984). Friends and Fights. In M. Hammersley & P. Woods (Eds.) *Life in School: The Sociology of Pupil Culture*. Milton Keynes:Open University Press.

Davies, B. (1989). *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales*. Allen and Unwin.

de Klerk, V.& Bosch, B.(1996). Nicknames as sex-role stereotypes. *Sex Roles*, 35, 525-541.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln,Y.S. (Eds.) (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage:London.

DeRosier, M.E., Gillensen, A.H.N. Coie, J.D., & Dodge, K.A. (1994). Group social context and children's aggressive behaviour. *Child Development*, 65, (4), 1068-1079.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. DSM IV (1994). American Psychiatric Association. Washington, D.C..

Dion, K.K. (1978). Physical attractiveness and interpersonal influence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 14, 97-108.

Douvan, E. & Adelson, J. (1966). *The Adolescent Experience*. New York:Wiley.

Draper, P.& Harpending, H. (1982). Father absence, and reproductive strategy:An evolutionary perspective. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 38, 255-273.

Draper, P. & Harpending, H. (1988). A sociobiological perspective on the development of human reproductive strategies. In K. MacDonald (Ed.), *Sociobiological Perspectives on Human Development*. New York:Springer-Verlag.

Dunbar, R. (1992). Why gossip is good for you. *New Scientist*. 21.11.1992.

Dunbar, R. (1996). *Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language*. London:Faber & Faber.

Duncan, N. (1999). *Sexual Bullying*. London:Routledge.

Dunn, J. (1986). Sibling quarrels and maternal intervention: Individual differences in understanding and aggression. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 27, 583-595.

Dunn, J. (1988). *The Beginnings of Social Understanding*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Dunn, S. & Morgan, V. (1987). Nursery and infant school play patterns: Sex related differences. *British Educational Research Journal*, 13, (3), 271-281.

Dweck, C. (1981). Social-cognitive processes in children's friendships. In S.Asher & J. Gottman. (Eds.). *The Development of Children's Friendships*. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Eagly, A. H. & Steffen, V.J. (1986). Gender and aggressive behaviour: A meta-analytical review of the social psychological literature. *Psychological Bulletin*, 100, 309-330.

Eagly, A.H. & Karau, S.J. (1991). Gender and the emergence of leaders: A mete-analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 685-710.

Eccles, J.S., Wigfield, A., Flanagan, C., Reuman, D. & Yee, D. (1989). Self concepts, domain values, and self-esteem: Relations and changes at early adolescence. *Journal of Personality*, 57, 283-310.

Eckerman, C.O., Davis, C. C. & Didow, S.M. (1988). Toddlers' emerging ways of achieving social coordination with a peer. *Child Development*, 60, 440-453.

Eder, D. (1985). The cycle of popularity: Interpersonal relations among female adolescents. *Sociology of Education*, 58, 976-985.

Eder, D. (1988). Building cohesion through collaborative narration. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 51, 225-235.

Eder, D. (1990). Serious and playful disputes: Variations in conflict talk among adolescent females. In A. Grimshaw (Ed.). *Conflict Talk: Sociolinguistic Investigations of Arguments in Conversations*. Cambridge University Press.

Eder, D. (1991). The role of teasing in adolescent peer culture. *Sociological Studies of Child Development*. Part 4. 181-197.

Eder, D. (1992). *Ability Grouping in Social Studies*. Paper for the Committee on Ability Grouping. NCSS:Kactis.

Eder, D. & Hallinan, M.T. (1978). Sex differences in children's friendships. *American Sociological Review*, 43, 237-250.

Eder, D & Sanford, S. (1986). The development and maintenance of interactional norms among early adolescents, In P.Adler & P. Adler (Eds.). *Sociological Studies of Child Development*, vol (1). 283-300. Greenwich, CT:JAI Press.

Eder, D. & Enke, J.L. (1991). The structure of gossip: opportunities and constraints on collective expression among adolescents. *American Sociological Review*, 56 August: 494-508.

Eder, D. & Kinney, D. (1995). The effect of middle-school extracuricular activities on adolescents' popularity and peer status. *Youth & Society*, 26, 298-324.

Eder, D, Evans, C & Parker, S. (1996). *School Talk: Gender and Adolescent Culture*. New Brunswick:Rutgers University Press.

Eliot, G. (1974).*Middlemarch*. Pengin Books.

Eliot, T.S. (1944). *Four Quartets*. London:Faber & Faber.

Ellis, L. (1995). Dominance and reproductive success among nonhuman animals: A cross-species comparison. *Ethology & Sociobiology,* 16, 257-333.

Emler, N. (1998). Sociomoral understanding. In Campbell, A & Muncer, S. *The Social World of the Child*. Hove, UK:The Psychology Press.

Emler, N. (1994). In R.F. Goodman & A. Ben-Ze'ev (Eds.). *Good Gossip*. University of Kansas Press.

Endelman, M.S. & Omark, D.R. (1973). Dominance hierarchies in young children. *Social Sciences Information,* 12 (1), 103-110.

Erikson, K.T. (1968). Notes on the sociology of deviance. In T.J. Scheff (Ed.). *Mental Illness and Social Processes*. New York:Harper &Row.

Eron, L. Huesman, R. Brice, P. Fisher, P. and Mermelstein, R. (1983). Age trends in the development of aggression, sex typing and related television habits. *Developmental Psychology,* 19, 71-77.

Ervin-Tripp, S. (1979). Children's verbal turn-taking. In E. Ochs and B. Schieffel (Eds.). *Developmental Pragmatics,* 391-414. New York:Academic Press.

Ervin-Tripp, S. & Mitchell-Kernan, C. (1977). (Eds.). *Child Discourse*. New York: Academic Press.

Erwin, P. (1985). Similarity of attitudes and constructs in children's friendships. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology,* 40, 470-485

Eslea, M. and Smith, P. K. (1994). Anti-bullying work in primary schools. Poster presented at the Annual Conference of the Development Section of the British Psychological Society, University of Portsmouth, Sept., 1998.

Evans, C & Eder, D. (1993). No Exit. The process of isolation in the middle school. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* 22, 139-170.

Fabes, R.A. & Eisenberg, N. (1992).Young children coping with interpersonal anger. *Child Development,* 63, 116-128.

Fagot, B. (1984). Teacher and peer reactions to boys and girls play styles. *Sex Roles,* 11, 691-702.

Fagot, B. (1994). Peer relations and the development of competence in boys and girls. In C. Leaper (Ed.). Childhood Gender Segregation. San Francisco:Jossey-Bass.

Faust, M. S. (1960). Developmental maturity as a determinant of prestige in adolescent girls. *Child Development,* 31, 173-184.

Feingold, A. (1994). Gender differences in personality: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin,* 116, *429-456.*

Feldman, S.S. and Gehring, T.M.(1988). Changing perceptions of family cohesion and power across adolescence. *Child Development,* 59, 1034-1045.

Feldman, S.S., Wentzel, K.R. and Gerhing, T.M. (1989). A comparison of the views of mothers, fathers and preadolescents about family cohesion and power. *Journal of Family Psychology,* 3, 39-61.

Felson, R.(1978). Aggression as impression management. *Social psychology,* (41) 205-213.

Ferguson, T.J. & Rule, B.G. (1988). Children's attributions of retaliatory aggression. *Child Development,* 59, 961-968.

Feshbach, N.D. (1969). Sex differences in children's modes of aggressive responses toward outsiders. *Merrill- Palmer Quarterly,* 15, 249-258.

Feshbach, N.D. & Sones, G. (1971). Sex differences in adolescent reactions toward newcomers. *Developmental Psychology,* 4, 381-386.

Festinger, L. (1954). A Theory of Social Comparison Processes. *Human Relations,* 7, 117-40.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance.* Evanston, Illinois:Row, Peterson.

Fillion, K. (1997). *Lip Service. The Myth of Female Virtue in Love, Sex and Friendship.* Harper-Collins.

Fine, G.A. (1977a). Social Components of Children's Gossip. *Journal of Communication,* 27, 181-185.

Fine, G.A. (1977b). Humour in situ: The role of humour in small group culture. In A.J. Chapman & H.C. Foot (Eds.) *It's a Funny Thing Humour.* Oxford:Pergamon Press.

Fine, G.A. (1981). Friends, impression management, and preadolescent behaviour. In S.Asher & J. Gottman (Eds). *The Development of Children's Friendships.* Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Fine, G.A. (1986). The social organization of adolescent gossip: The rhetoric of moral evaluation. In *Children's Worlds and Children's Language* (Eds.). J. Cook-Gumperz, W. Cosaro and J. Streek. Berlin:Mouton.

Fine, G. A. (1993). Ten lies of ethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* part 3, 267-294.

Fine, G.A. & Rosnow, R.L. (1978). Gossip, Gossipers, Gossiping. *Personality and Social Psychology,* 4,161-168.

Flannery, K.A. & Watson, M.W. (1993). Are individual differences in fantasy play related to peer acceptance levels? *Journal of Genetic Psychology,* 154, 407-416.

Francis, R.D. (1999). Why I study ethics. *The Psychologist*. June. p.291

Francis, R.D. (1999). Ethics for Psychologists: A Handbook. Leicester: British Psychological Society Books.

Frazer, J. G. (1923). *The Golden Bough*. 3rd edition. London:Macmillan.

French, D. C. (1990). Heterogeneity of peer rejected boys: Aggressive and non aggressive subtypes. *Child Development*, 59, 976-985.

Frey, K.S.& Ruble, D.N. (1987). What children say about classroom performance: Sex and grade differences in perceived competence. *Child Development*, 58, 1066-1078.321

Frodi, A. Macaulay, J. & Thorne, P. (1977). Are women less aggressive than men: A review of the experimental literature. *Psychological Bulletin*, 84, 634-660.

Gangestad, S. W., & Thornhill, R. (1997). The evolutionary psychology of extra pair copulation: The role of fluctuating asymmetry. *Ethology & Sociobiology*, 18, 65-88.

Gaskill, Mrs. (1974). *Canford*. Chivers Press.

Geary, D.C. (1996). Sexual selection and sex differences in mathematical abilities. *Behavioral Sciences*, 19, 229-284.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York:Basic Books.

Geertz, C. (1983). *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York:Basic Books.

Genishi, C & Di Paulo, M. (1984). *Children's Talk*. Cambridge Mass:Harvard University Press.

Genta, M.L., Menesini, E. Fonzi, A., Costabile, A. and Smith, P.K. (1996). Bullies and victims in schools in central Italy. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 11, 97-110.

Gerhing, T. M., and Wyler, I. L.(1986). Family System Test (FAST): a three dimensional approach to investigate family relationships. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, 16, 235-248.

Gilbert, P. (1992). *Depression: The Evolution of Powerlessness*. Hove:Erlbaum.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge:Harvard University Press.

Gilmore, D. (1978). Varieties of gossip in a Spanish rural community. *Ethnology*, 17, 89-99.

Glaser, B & Strauss, A., (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago:Aldine.

Gleason, J. & Greif, E. (1983). Men's speech to young children. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae, and N. Henley (Eds.) *Language, Gender and Society*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.

Gluckman, M. (1963). Gossip and Scandal. *Current Anthropology*, 4, 307-316.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York:Doubleday.

Goffman, E. (1963). *Behaviour in Public Places*. London:Collier Macmillan Publishers.

Goffman, E. (1968). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Harmondsworth: Pelican.

Goodman, R.F. Introduction. (1994). In R.F. Goodman, & A. Ben-Ze'ev. (Eds.). *Good Gossip*. University of Kansas Press.

Goodman, R.F. and Ben-Ze'ev, A. (Eds.). (1994). *Good Gossip*. University of Kansas Press.

Goodnow, J.J. (1988). Children's household work: Its nature and its functions. *Psychological Bulletin, 103*, p. 5-26.

Goodwin, C. (1984). Notes on story structure and the organization of participation. In J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (Eds.) *Structures of Social Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goodwin, M. Harness (1980a). 'He-Said-She-Said': Formal cultural procedures for the construction of a gossip dispute activity. *American Ethnologist*: vol 7, 674-695.

Goodwin, M. Harness (1982b). Processes of dispute management among urban black children. *American Ethnologist* 9, 76-96.

Goodwin, M. Harness. (1990). *He-said-She-Said: Talk as Social Organisation Among Black children*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Gottman, J. M. (1996). The observation of social process. In J. M. Gottman & J. G. Parker (Eds.). In *Conversations of Friends: Speculations on Affective Development*. Cambridge University Press.

Gottman, J. M. Markman, H. & Notarius, C. (1977). The topography of marital conflict: A sequential analysis of verbal and nonverbal behaviour. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 39, 461-477.

Gottman, J. & Mettatal, G. (1986). Speculations about social and affective development: friendship and acquaintanceship through adolescence. In J. M Gottman and J. G. Parker (Eds.). *Conversations of Friends: Speculations on Affective Development*. Cambridge University Press.

Gottman, J.M. & Parker, J.G. (1986). (Eds.). *Conversations of Friends: Speculations on Affective Development*. Cambridge University Press.
Greer, S. (1995). *Supergrass*. Oxford:Clarendon.

Grice, H.P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole and J. Morgan (Eds.) *Syntax and Semantics 3; Speech Acts*. New York:Academic Press.

Grimshaw, A.D. (1990). (Ed.). *Conflict talk. Sociolinguistic Investigations of Arguments in Conversations*. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Gronlund, N.E. (1959). *Sociometry in the Classroom*. New York:Harper and Brothers.

Guareschi, G. (1951) reprint (1953). *The Little World of Don Camillo*. London:The Reprint Society.

Hallinan, M.T. (1979). Structural effects on children's friendships and cliques. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 42: 43-54.

Hallinan, M.T. (1995). Patterns of cliquing among youth. In H.C. Foot and J. R. Smith (Eds.). *Friendship and Social Relations in Children*. New York:Wiley.

Hammersley, M and Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography: Principles and Practice*. London:Tavistock.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1987). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.

Hanawalt, B.A. (1988). Lady Honor Lisle's networks of influence. In M. Erler and M. Kowaleski (Eds.). *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Hannerz, U. (1967). Gossip, networks, and culture in a black American ghetto. *Ethnos, 32*, 35-60.

Harris, J. R. (1995). Where is the child's environment? A group theory of socialisation. *Psychological Review*. 97, 114-121.

Hartup, W.W. (1983). Peer relations. In P.Mussen (Ed.). *Handbook of Child Psychology* (4th ed.). New York:Wiley.
Hartup, W.W. (1992a). Friendships and their developmental significance. In H. McGurk (Ed.). *Childhood Social Development*. 175-205. Hove, UK: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Ltd.

Hartup, W. W. (1993). Adolescents and their friends. In B. Laursen (Ed.) *Close Friendships in* Adolescence. San Francisco:Jossey-Bass.

Haviland, J.B. (1977). *Gossip, Reputation, and Knowledge in Zinacantan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hawker, D & Boulton, M. (1996a). Subordination and exclusion: two or more ways of being bullied in school. Paper presented at the British Psychological Society Annual Conference, Brighton.

Hawker, D. and Boulton, M. J. (1998). *Sticks and stones may break my bones - the effect of bullying on victims*. Paper given at the British Psychological Society Annual Conference, Brighton.

Hayes, R. B. (1984). The development and maintenance of friendship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships,* 1, 75-98.

Hedstrom, K. E. (1984). A study of repairs in speech. *Stockholm Papers in English Language and Literature* 4, 69-101.

Heidigger, M. (1962). *Being and Time.* New York:Harper and Row.

Hey, V. (1997). *The Company She Keeps: An Ethnography of Girls' Friendship.* Milton Keynes:Open University Press.

Hodgins, H.S., Liebeskind, E. and Schwartz, W. (1996). Getting out of hot water: Facework in social predicaments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 71:300-314.

Hoeg, P. (1996). *Miss Smila's Feeling For Snow.* Faber & Faber.

Hoyenga, K.B. & Hoyenga, K.T. (1993). *Gender-Related Differences: Origins and Outcomes.* Boston:Allyn & Bacon.

Hovland, C. & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly,* 15, 635-50.

Huberman, A. M. & Miles, M. B. (1994). Data Management and Analysis Methods. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln. (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* London:Sage.

Hughes, L.A. (1988). 'But that's not really mean': Competing in a cooperative mode. *Sex Roles,* 19, 669-687. 316, 318

Hutchins, E. (1991). The social organisation of distributed cognition. In L. Resnick, J. M. Levine, and S. D. Teasley (Eds.). *Perspectives on Socially Shared Cognition,* 283-307. Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association.

Hyde, J.S. (1990). Meta-analysis and the psychology of gender differences. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* 16, 55-73.345

Jaeger, M. E., Anthony, S. & Rosnow, R.L. (1980). Who hears what from whom and with what effect: A study of rumor. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* 6, 473-478.

Jaeger, M.E., Skelder, A.A., Rind, B. & Rosnow, R. (1994). In R.F. Goodman & A. Ben-Ze'ev (Eds.). *Good Gossip.* University of Kansas Press.

Keiller, G. (1993). *Lake Wobegon Days.* Faber and Faber.

Keise, C. (1992). *Sugar and Spice? Bullying in Single-Sex Schools.* Trentham Books.

Kelley, G. A. (1955). *The Psychology of Personal Constructs.* Vol 1 New York:Norton.

Kennedy, J. H. (1990). Determinants of peer social status: Contributions of physical appearance, reputation, and behavior. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence,* 19, 233-244.

Kenny, M.E., Moilanen, D.L., Lomax, R. & Brabeck, M.M. (1993). Contributions of parental attachments to view of self and depressive symptoms among early adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 13: 408-430.

Klein, M. (1946). *Writings, vol 3: Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms*. London: Hogarth Press.

Klein, M. (1960). *Our Adult World and Its Roots in Infancy*. London: Tavistock Pamphlet no. 2

Knoff, H.M. (1983). Personality assessment in the schools: Issues and procedures for school psychologists. *School Psychology Review*, 12. 391-198.

Knopf, T.A. (1975). *Rumors, Race and Riots*. New Brunswick, NJ:Transaction Books.

Kochman, T. (1983). The boundary between play and non-play in black verbal duelling. *Language in Society*, 12, 329-337.

Kupersmidt, J.B., Patterson, C. & Eickholt, C. (1989). *Socially rejected children: Bullies, victims or both?* Paper presented at the meeting for Research in Child Development, Kansas City, MO.

Labov, W. (1972a). Rules of Ritual Insults. In D. Sudnow (Ed.), *Studies in Social Interaction*. 120-169. New York:The Free Press.

Labov, W. (1972b). *Language in the Inner City: Studies in Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia:University of Philadelphia Press.

Ladd, G. W. & Kochendorfer, B.J. (1996). Linkages between friendship and adjustment during early school transitions. In W. M. Bukowski, A. Newcomb & W.W. Hartup (Eds.). *The Company They Keep*. Cambridge University Press.

Lagerspetz, K.M.J. Bjorqvist, K. & Peltonen, T. (1988). Is indirect aggression typical of females? Gender differences in aggressiveness in 11-12 -year -old children. *Aggressive Behaviour*, 14, 403-414, 357

Lancellotta, G.X. & Vaughn, S. (1989). Relation between types of aggression and sociometric status: Peer and teacher perceptions. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 81 (1) 86-90.

Laursen, B. (1996). Closeness and conflict in adolescent peer relationships: Interdependence with friends and romantic partners. In W.M. Bukowski, A. F. Newcomb and W.W. Hartup (Eds). *The Company They Keep*. Cambridge University Press.

Leaper, C. (1991). Influence and involvement in children's discourse: Age, gender and partner effects. *Child Development, 62*, 797-811.

Leaper, C., Anderson, K. J., & Sanders, P. (In press). Moderators of gender effects on parents' talk to their children: A meta-analysis. *Developmental Psychology*.

Leary, M.R., Tambor. E.S., Terdal, K. and Downs, D.L. (1995). Self esteem as an interpersonal monitor: The sociometer hypothesis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 68: 518-530.

Lees, S. (1986). *Losing out*. London:Hutchinson Education.

Lees, S. (1993). *Sugar and Spice. Sexuality and Adolescent Girls*. Penguin Books.

Lein, L. & Brenneis, D. (1978). Children's Disputes in Three Speech Communities. *Language in Society*, 7, 299-323.

Lemert, E. (1972). *Human Deviance: Social Problems and Social Control*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:Prentice Hall.

Lever, J. (1976). Sex differences in the games children play. *Social Problems*, 23, 478-487. 316, 318

Levin, J. & Arlukle, A. (1985). An explanatory analysis of sex differences in gossip. *Sex Roles*, 12, 281-286.

Levy, G.D.& Fivush, R. (1993). Scripts and gender: A new approach for examining gender role development. *Developmental Review* 13, 126-146.

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. London: Sage Publications

Lytton, H. & Romney, D. M. (1991). Parents' differential socialization of boys and girls: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*. 109 (2) 267-296.

Maccoby, E.E. (1988). Gender as a social category. *Developmental Psychology*, 24, 755-765.

Maccoby, E.E. (1990). Gender and relationships: A developmental account. *American Psychologist*, 45, 513-520.
Maccoby, E.E. (1999). *The Two Sexes: Growing Up Apart, Coming Together*. Harvard University Press.

Maccoby, E.E. & Jacklin, C.N. (1974b). *The psychology of sex differences*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Maccoby, E.E. & Jacklin, C.N. (1987). Gender segregation in childhood. In H.W. Reese (Ed.). *Advances in child development and behaviour* (vol.20). 313-316 New York:Academic Press.

McClelland, D. (1975). *Power: The Inner Experience*. New York:John Wiley.

McGuire, W.J., & McGuire, C.V. (1982). Significant others in self space: Sex differences and developmental trends in social self. In J Suls (Ed.). *PsychologicalPperspectives on the Self*. vol, 71-96. Hillsdale, NJ:Erlbaum.

McLloyd, V.C. (1983). The effects of the structure of play objects on the pretend play of low-income preschool children. *Child Development*, 54, (3), 626-635.

McRobbie, A. & Garber, J. (1976). Girls and subcultures: An exploration. In S. Hall & T. Jefferson (Eds.) *Resistance Through Ritual*. Hutchinson.

Magnusson, D. Stattin, H. & Allen, V. (1986). Differential maturation among girls and its relation to social adjustment in a longitudinal perspective. In P. Baltes, D. Featherman, & R. Learner (Eds.). *Life Span Development and Behaviour*, Vol.7. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Mahoney, P. (1983). *Schools for the Boys? Co-education Reassessed*. London: Hutchinson.

Malinowski, B. (1923). The meaning of meaning. In C.K. Ogden & I.A. Richards (Eds.). The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages. London:Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Malone, M. J. (1997). Worlds of Talk. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Conversation*. Oxford:Polity Press and Blackwell.

Maltz, D. & Borker, R. (1982). A cultural approach to male-female miscommunication. In J. Gumperz (Ed.) *Language and Social Identitiy* 196-216. New York:Cambridge University Press.

Manning, M. Heron, J. & Marshall, T. (1978). Styles of hostility and social interactions at nursery, at home and at school: An extended study of children. In L. A. Hersov., M. Berger, & D. Shaffer (Eds.). *Aggression and Anti-Social behaviour in Childhood and Adoescence*. Oxford:Pergamon.

Manning, M. & Sucklin, A .M. (1984). The function of aggression in the pre-school and primary years. In N. Frude & H. Gault (Eds.). *Disruptive Behaviour in Schools*. Chichester:Wiley.

Markus, H.R. & Cross, S. E. (1990). The interpersonal self. In L.A. Pervin (Ed.). *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*. New York:Guilford Press.
Markus, H.R. & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review, 98*, 224-253.

Maynard, W. D. (1985). How children start arguments. *Language and Society, 14*, 001-030.

Maynard, D. (1985). On the functions of social conflict among children. *American Sociological Review, 50*, 207-223.

Marsh, P & Paton, R. (1984) Unpublished manuscript cited in Campbell (1995) A few good men: Evolutionary psychology and female adolescent aggression. *Ethnology and Sociobiology* 16, 99-123.

Marsh, P. and Paton, R. (1986). Gender, social class and conceptual schemas of aggression. In *Violent Transactions: The limits of personality*. In A. Campbell and J. Gibbs (Eds.). Oxford:Basil Blackwell.

Medini, G. & Rosenberg, E.H. (1976). Gossip and psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy, 30*, 452-462.

Menesini, E. (1997). Behavioural correlates of friendship status among Italian schoolchildren. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* vol. 14 (1);109-121.

Menesini, E. (1998). *Bullying Among Italian School Children.* Paper given for the E.C. Conference, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear.1998.

Menesini, E. Eslea, M. Smith, P.K., Genta, M.L. Gianetti, E. Fonzi, A. & Costabile, A. (1997). Cross-national comparison of children's attitudes towards bully/victim problems in school. *Aggressive Behaviour,* 23: 243-257.

Metattal, G.W. (1982). *The conversations of friends at three ages: The importance of fantasy, gossip, and self-disclosure.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, Champaign.

Meyer Spack, P. M. (1985). *Gossip.* New York:Knopf.

Meyer, D. Leventhal, H and & Gutmann. (1985). Common sense models of illness: The example of hypertension. *Health Psychology,* 4, 115-35.

Miller, P.M., Danaher, D.L., and Forbes, D. (1986). Sex-related strategies for coping with interpersonal conflict in children aged five and seven. *Developmental Psychology,* 22, (4), 543-548.

Minuchin, S. (1974). *Families and Family Therapy.* London:Tavistock.

Moran, P.B. and Eckenrode, J. (1991). Gender differences in the costs and benefits of peer relationships during adolescence. *Journal of Adolescent Research,* 6, 396-409.

Moreno, J.L. (1934). *Who Shall Survive?* New York:Beacon House.

Mueller, E. & Brenner, J (1977). The origins of social skills and interaction among playgroup toddlers. *Child Development,* 48:854-861.
Mueller, E. & Brenner, J. (1980). Social networks: A promising direction for research on the relationship of the social environment to psychiatric disorder. *Social Science and Medicine,* 14, 147-161.

Munthe, E. (1989). Bullying in Scandinavia. In E. Roland & E. Munthe (Eds.). *Bullying: An International Perspective.* London:David Fulton Publishers.

Nevo, O., Nevo B., & Derech-Zehavi, A. (1994) In R. F. Goodman and A. Ben-Ze'ev (Eds.). *Good Gossip.* University of Kansas Press.

Nicolopoulau, A. (1997). Worldmaking and identity formation in children's narrative play-acting. In B. Cox & C. Lightfoot, (Eds.). *Sociogenic perspectives in internalization,* 157-187. Hillsdale, NJ:Lawrence Erlbaum.

Nilan, P. (1991). Exclusion, inclusion and moral ordering in two girls' friendship groups. *Gender and Education,* 3, (1).

Nilan, P. (1992). Kazzies, DBT's and Tryhards: Categorisations of style in adolescent girls' talk. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* vol 1 (2), 201-213.

Nilan, P. (1999). Gangland: Cultural elites and the new generationalism. *Journal of Sociology*. vol 35, March.

Northway, M.L. & Weld, L. (1957). *Sociometric Testing: A Guide for Teachers*, Oxford:Oxford University Press.

Olson, D. (1986). Intelligence and literacy: The relationships between intelligence and the techniques of representation and communication. In R. Sternberg (Ed.). *Practical Intelligence*. 338-360. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys*. Washington, D.C.:Hemisphere.

Olweus, D. (1980a). The consistency issue in personality psychology revisited with special reference to aggression. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 19*, 377-390. 356, 357

Olweus, D. (1991). Bully/victim problems among schoolchildren: Basic facts and effects of a school based intervention program. In D. Pepler & K. Rubin (Eds.), *The development and treatment of childhood aggression*. Hillsdale, NJ:Erlbaum.

Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at School: What we know and what we can do*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Olweus, D. & Endresen, I.M. (1998). The importance of sex-of-stimulus object: Age trends and sex differences in empathic responsiveness. *Social Development*, 3:370-388.

Omark, D.R., Omark,M., and Endelman, M. (1973). Formation of dominance hierachies in young children. In T.R. Williams, (Ed.). *Psychological Anthropology*. The Hague:Mouton.

Omark, D.R. & Endelman, M.S. (1975). A comparison of status hierarchies in young children: An ethological approach. *Social Science Information, 14*, 87-107. 316, 348

Opie, I. & Opie, P. (1959). *The Lore and Language of School* Children. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Orwell, G. (1995). *1984*. Penguin Books.

Owens, L. D. (1996). Sticks and stones and sugar and spice: Girls' and boys' aggression in schools. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling* vol 6, Special Edition.

Owens, L. D. (1999). *Physical, verbal and indirect aggression amongst South Australian school students*. Unpublished PhD thesis. (personal communication).

Owens, L.D., Shute, R & Slee, P. (2000). Guess what I just heard! Indirect aggression among teenage girls in Australia. *Aggressive Behaviour*. vol 6: 67-83.

Parker, J.G. & Gottman, J.M. (1989). Social and emotional development in a relational context: Friendship interaction from early childhood to adolescence. In T.J. Berndt & G. Ladd (Eds.). *Peer Relationships in Child Development*, 95-132. New York:Wiley.

Parker, J.G.& Asher, S.R. (1993a). Beyond group acceptance: Friendship adjustment and friendship quality as distinct dimensions of children's peer adjustment. In D.

Perlman & W.H. Jones (Eds.). *Advances in Personal Relationships,* vol 4. London: Kingsley.

Patterson, G.R. (1982). *Coercive Family Processes.* Eugene, OR:Castalia Publishing.

Patterson, C.J., Griesler, P.C., Vaden, N.A., & Kupersmidt, J.B. (1992). Family economic circumstances, life transitions and children's peer relations. In R.D. Parker & G.W. Ladd (Eds.) *Family-peer Relationships, Modes of Linkage.* Hillsdale, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Peligrini, A.D. (1988). Elementary-school children's rough and tumble play and social competence. *Developmental Psychology,* 24, 802-806.

Pepler, D. (1996). *A peek behind the fence: What we have learned about bullying.* Paper presented at the conference Putting the Brakes on Violence,York University, Toronto, August, 1996.
Perner, J. Ruffman, T. & Leekam, S.R. (1994). Theory of mind is contagious;You catch it from your sibs. *Child Development,* 65, 1228-1238.

Petit, G.S., Bakshi, A., Dodge, K.A. & Coie, J.D. (1990). The emergence of social dominance in young boy's play groups: Developmental differences and behavioural correlates. *Developmental Psychology,* 26:1017-1025.

Plummer, K. (1983). *Documents of Life.* London:Allen & Unwin.

Post, R. (1994). The legal regulation of gossip:backyard chatter and the mass media. In R.F. Goodman and A. Ben-Ze'ev (Eds.). *Good Gossip.* University of Kansas Press.
Proctor, C.H. & Lomis, C.P. (1957). Analysis of Sociometric Data. In M. Jahoda et al., (Eds.). *Research Methods in Social Relations.* New York:The Dryden Press.

Putallaz, M. & Gottman, J.M. (1984). Social skills and group acceptance. In S.R.Asher & J.M. Gottman (Eds.). *The Development of Children's Friendships.* Cambridge University Press.

Ravetz, J.R. (1971). *Scientific Knowledge and its Social Problems.* Oxford:Clarendon Press.

Reicher, S. and Potter, J. (1985). Psychological theory as intergroup perspective: A comparative analysis of 'scientific' and 'lay' accounts of crowd events. *Human Relations,* 38, 167-89.

Ribeiro, V. E. and Blakeley, J. A. (1995). The proactive management of rumor and gossip. *Journal of Nursing Administration,* part 25 (6) 43-50.

Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln. (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* London:Sage.

Rigby, K. (1997). *Bullying in Schools: And what to do about it.* London:Jessica Kingsley.

Rivers, I. & Smith, P.K. (1994). Types of bullying behaviour and their correlates. *Aggressive Behavior*, 20, 359-368.

Roberts, T. & Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (1989). Sex differences in reactions to evaluative feedback. *Sex Roles*, 21: 725-747.

Rogers, C. (1961). *On becoming a person*. Boston:Houghton Mifflin.

Roland, E. (1988). (personal communication).

Roland, E. cited in Besag, V.E. (1989). *Bullies and Victims in Schools: A Guide to Understanding and Management*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Roland, E. & Idsoe, D. (2000). (in press).

Rosenberg, M. (1981). The self-concept: Social product and social force. In M. Rosenberg & R.H. Turner (Eds.). *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives*. 593-624. New York:Basic Books.

Rosenberg, F.R. & Simmons, R.G. (1975). Sex differences in the self concept of adolescence. *Sex roles, 1*, 147-159.

Rosnow, R.L., & Fine, G.A. (1976a). Inside rumours. *Human Behavior,3*, (8) 64-68.

Rosnow, R.L., & Fine, G.A. (1996). *Rumour and Gossip: The Social Psychology of Hearsay*. New York:Elsevier.

Rosnow, R. L. Eposito, J. L. & Gibney, L. (1988). Factors influencing rumour spreading. *Language and Communication*, 8, (1) 29-42.
Ross, E. (1997). Talking about gossip. *History Workshop Journal*. vol/part issue 44, 278-281.

Ross, H. S. and den Bak-Lammers. I.M. (1990). Consistency and change in children's tattling on their siblings: Children's perspectives on the moral rules and procedures of family life, *Social Development, 7*, 3.

Rowe, D.C. (1994). *The limits of family influence: Genes, experience, and behaviour*. New York:Guilford Press.

Rubin, Z. (1980). *Children's Friendships*. London:Fontana.

Rysman, A. (1977). How gossip became a woman. *Journal of Communication, 27*, 176-180.

Sachs, J. (1987). Preschool boys' and girls' language use in pretend play. In S.U. Phillips. S. Steele & C. Tanz. (Eds.), *Language, Gender, and Sex in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A. & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation. In J.N. Schenkein (Ed.). *Studies in the Organisation of Conversational Interaction*. New York:Academic Press.

Salmivalli, C. Lagerspetz, K.M.J., Bjorkqvist, K., Osterman, K. & Kaukiainen, A. (1996). Bullying as a group process: participant roles and their relations to social status within the group. *Aggressive Behaviour, 22,* 1-15.

Sanford, S. & Eder, D. (1984). Adolescent humour during peer interaction. *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 47, 235-243.

Savin-Williams, R.C. (1976). An ethological study of dominance formation and maintenance in a group of human adolescents. *Child Development,* 47, 972-979.

Savin-Williams, R. (1977). Dominance in a human adolescence group. *Animal Behaviour,* 25, 400-406.

Savin-Williams, R.C. (1979). Dominance hierarchies in groups of early adolescents. *Child Development,* 50, 923-935.

Savin-Williams, R.C. (1980). Social interactions of adolescent females in natural groups. In H.C. Foot. A.J.Chapman & J.R. Smith (Eds.). *Friendship and Social Relations in Children.* Chichester: John Wiley.

Savin-Williams, R. C. (1987). *Adolescence: An Ethological Perspective.* New York: Springer-Verlag.

Savin-Williams, R & Weisfeld, G. (1989). An ethological perspective on adolescence. In . G. Adams, R. Montemayor & T. Gullotta (Eds.). *Biology of Adolescent behaviour and Development.* Newbury Park:Sage.

Savin-Williams, R. C. & Berndt, T. J. (1990). Friendship and peer relations. In S.S. Feldman & G.R. Elliot (Eds.) *At The Threshold: The Developing Adolescent.* Cambridge:Harvard University Press.

Savin-Williams, R.C. & Rodriguez, R.C. (1993). A developmental, clinical perspective on lesbian, gay male and bisexual youths. In T. Gullotta, G. Adams & R. Montemayor (Eds.). *Adolescent Sexuality.* London:Sage.

Scanlon, T.J. (1977). Post-disaster rumor chains: a case study. *Mass Emergencies, 2,* 121-126.

Schaefer, E.S. (1965). A configurational analysis of children's reports of parent behaviour. *Journal of Counselling Psychology,* 29, 552-557.

Schegloff, E. A. (1968). Sequencing in conversational openings. *American Anthropologist* 70, 1075-1095.

Schegloff, E. A. (1988). Goffman and the analysis of conversation. In P. Drew & A. Wooton (Eds.). *Erving Goffman: Exploring the Interaction Order.* Cambridge:Polity Press.

Schoeman, F. (1994). Gossip and privacy. In R.F. Goodman and A. Ben-Ze'ev (Eds.). *Good Gossip.* University of Kansas Press.

Schofield, V. W. (1981). Complimentary and conflicting identities: Images of interaction in an interracial school. In S.A. Asher and J.M. Gottman, (Eds.). *The Development of Children's Friendships.* New York:Cambridge University Press.

Schofield, J. (1982) *Black and White in School Trust, Tension or Tolerance?* New York: Praeger Publishers.

Schwartz, D., Coie, J.D. & Dodge, K.A. (1990). *A behavioural analysis of victims of peer aggression in boys' play groups.* Paper presented at the Southeastern Conference on Human Development, Richmond, VA.

Schwartz, D., Dodge, K.A., Pettit, G.S. and Bates, J.E. (1997). The early socialisation of victims of bullying. *Child Development,* 68, 665-675.

Seligman, M.E.P. & Peterson, C. (1986). A learned helplessness perspective on childhood depression: theory and research. In M. Rutter, C.E. Izard & P.B. Read (Eds.). *Depression in Young people.* New York:Guilford.

Shakespeare, W. (1911). Romeo and Juliette and Comedy of Errors. In *The Complete Works of Shakespeare.* Harper Collins.

Sharp, S. (1995a). 'How much does bullying hurt? The effects of bullying on the personal well-being and educational progress of secondary aged students', *Educational and Child Psychology,* 12 (2), 81-88.
Sharp, S. & Cowie, H. (1998). *Counselling and Supporting Children in Distress.* London:Sage.

Sheldon, A. (1992b). Preschool girls' discourse competence: managing conflict and negotiating power. In M. Bucholtz, K. Hall, and B. Moonwomon, (Eds.). *Locating Power,* vol.2 of the proceedings of the 1992 Berkeley Women and Language Conference, 528-539. Berkeley:Berkerley Linguistic Society.

Shibutani, T. (1966). *Improvised news: A sociological study of rumor.* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

Silverman, D.(1983). *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction.* London:Sage.

Simmons, R.G. Rosenberg, F.R. and Rosenberg, M. (1973). Disturbance in the self image at adolescence. *American Sociological Review,* 38, 553-568.

Simmel, G. (1964). *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliation.* London:Collier-Macmillan.

Simmons, R, G., & Rosenberg, F. (1975). Sex, sex roles, and self-image. *Journal of Young and Adolescence,* 4, 229-258. 282

Smith, P.K. & Boulton, M (1990). Rough and tumble play, aggression, and dominance: perception and behaviour in children's encounters. *Human Development,* 33, 271-282.

Smith, P.K. & Myron-Wilson, R. (1998). Parenting and school bullying. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry,* 3, 405-417.

Smith P. K., Madsen, K. & Moody, J. (1999). What causes the age decline in reports of being bullied at school? Towards a developmental analysis of risks of being bullied. *Education and Research,* 41, 267-285.

Smith, P.K., Morita, Y., Junger-Tas, J., Olweus, D., Catalano, R. & Slee, P. (Eds.). (1999). *The Nature of School Bullying: A Cross-national Perspective.* New York and London:Routledge.

Smuts, B. (1985). Sisterhood is powerful: Aggression, Competition and Cooperation in Nonhuman Primate Societies. In *The Aggressive Female.* D.Benton, M. Haug, & P. Brain (Eds.). Montreal:Eden Press.

Smuts, B.B. (1987). Gender, aggression and influence. In B. B. Smuts, D.L. Cheney, R.M. Seyfarth, R.W. Wrangham & T.T. Struhsaker (Eds.) *Primate Societies.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: grounded theory procedures and techniques.* London:Sage Publications.

Strauss, A.L. & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded Theory Methodology : An Overview. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* London: Sage.

Strayer, F. F., & Trudel, M. (1984). Developmental changes in the nature and function of social dominance among young children. *Ethology & Sociobiology,* 5, 279-295.

Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry.* New York:Norton.
Suls, J.M. & Goodkin, F. (1994). In R.F. Goodman & A. Ben-Ze'ev (Eds.). *Good Gossip.* University of Kansas Press.

Sutton, J. Smith, P. K. & Swetenham, J. (1999). Bullying and theory of mind: A critique of the 'social skills deficit' view of anti-social behaviour. *Social Development,* 8, 117-127.

Symons, D. (1979). *The Evolution of Human Sexuality.* New York:Oxford University Press.

Szasz, T. S. (1961). *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct.* New York:Hoeber-Harper.

Tajfel, H. (1982). *Differentiation Between Social Groups.* London:Academic Press.

Tajfel, H., Flament, C, Billig, M.G. & Bundy, R.F. (1971). Social categorization and intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 1, 149-177.

Tannen, D. (1990). Gender differences in topical coherence: Creating involvement in best friends' talk. *Discourse Processes,* 13, 73-90.

Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation.* New York:William Morrow.

Tannen, D. (1994). *Talking From Nine to Five.* London:Virago.

Tebbutt, M. (1995). *Womens's Talk? A Social History of 'Gossip' in Working Class Neighbourhoods, 1880-1960.* Aldershot Hants: Scolar Press and Ashgate Publishing.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary, Fowler, H.W. and Fowler, F.G. (1951). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Thomas, K.C. (1979). *Sociometric Techniques.* Nottingham University School of Education.

Thomas, L. (1994). The logic of gossip. In R.F. Goodman.& A. Ben-Ze'ev (Eds.). *Good Gossip.* University of Kansas.

Thorne, B. Kramarae, C., & Henley, N. (Eds.). (1983) *Language, Gender and Society.* New York:Newbury House.

Thorne, B. (1986). Girls and boys together but mostly apart: gender arrangements in elementary schools. In W.W.Hartup & Z. Rubin (Eds.). *Relationships and Development.* Hillsdale, NJ:Erlbaum. 303, 313, 315

Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School.* Open University Press:Milton Keynes.
Thorne, B. (1994). *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Thorne, B. & Luria, Z. (1986). 'Sexuality and gender in children's daily worlds.' *Social Problems, 33,* 176-190.
Tobin- Richards, M. Boxer, A. & Peterson, A. (1983). The psychological significance of pubertal change: Sex differences in perception of self during early adolescence. In *Girls at Puberty: Biological and Psychosocial Perspectives,* J. Brooks-Gunn & A Peterson (Eds.). New York: Plenum.

Toth, S.A. (1978). *Blooming: A Small-Town Girlhood.* Boston:Little Brown.

Trad, P.V. (1987). *Infant and Childhood Depression: Developmental Factors.* New York:John Wiley.

Vandell, D & Mueller, E. (1980). Peer play and friendship during the first two years. In H.C. Foot, A.J.Chapman & J.R. Smith (Eds.) *Friendship and Social Relations in Childhood.* New York:Wiley.

de Waal, F.B.M. (1982). Chimpanzee Politics. London:Jonathan Cape.

Wachtel, P.L. (1973). Psychodynamics, behaviour therapy and the implacable experimenter: An inquiry into the consistency of personality. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 83,* 324-334.

Wachtel, P.L. (1973). Psychodynamics, behaviour therapy and the implacable experimenter: An inquiry into the consistency of personality. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology,* 83, 324-334.

Walkerdine, V. (1990). *Schoolgirl Fictions.* New York:Verso.

Walkerdine, V. (1992). *Girlhood Through the Looking Glass*, plenary paper at the Alice in Wonderland Conference, Amsterdam, June 1992.

Warden, D., Chrisie, D. & Stevens, C. (1994). Differential perceptions of bullying and prosocial behaviour. *Proceedings of the British Psychological Society, 3*, (1), 48.

Warm, T.R. (1997). The role of teasing in development and vice versa. *Journal of Developmental and Behavioural Pediatrics, 18*, 97-101.

Weisfeld, G.E. (1987). Stability of boys' social success among peers over an eleven-year period. In J.A. Meacham (Ed.). *Interpersonal Relations: Family, Peers, Friends.* Basel, Switzerland:Karger.

Weisfeld, G. E. (1999). *Evolutionary Principles of Human Adolescence.* New York: Basic Books.

Weisfeld, G. E., & Billings, R.L. (1988). Observations on adolescence. In K. B. MacDonald (Ed.). *Sociobiological Perpectives on Human Development.* New York: Springer-Verlag.

Whiting, B.B., & Edwards, C. (1973). A cross-cultural analysis of sex differences in the behaviour of children aged three months through 11. *Journal of Social Psychology, 91*, 171-188.

Whiting, B.B. & Edwards, C. (1988). *Children of Different Worlds.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Whitney, I. & Smith, P.K. (1993). A survey of the nature and extent of bullying in junior/middle and secondary schools. *Educational Research,* 35, 3-25.

Whyte, W.F. (1943). *Street Corner Society,* 2nd ed. Chicago:University of Chicago Press.

Williams, J. and Best, D. (1990). *Sex and the psyche: Gender roles and self concepts viewed cross culturally.* Beverly Hills, CA:Sage.

Wilson, M.I., & Daly, M. (1985). Competitiveness, risk taking, and violence: The young male syndrome. *Ethology and Sociobiology, 6*, 59-73, 301, 351

Wulff, H. (1988). 20 Girls: Growing up, ethnicity and excitement in a small London microculture. *Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology,* no. 21. Stockholm, Sweden: University of Stockholm.

Zeman, J. & Garber, J. (1996). Display rules for anger, sadness, and pain: It depends on who is watching. *Child Development,* 67, 057-973.

Zimmerman, D, & West, C. (1975). Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversations. In B. Thorne & N. Henley (Eds.), *Language and sex: Difference and dominance* 105-129. Rowley, M.A:Newbury House.

Zuckerman, M. (1994). *Behavioural Expressions and Biosocial Bases of Sensation Seeking.* Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX 1

Profile of Each Girl

PROFILES OF INDIVIDUAL GIRLS

The profiles have been compiled from information gained from the sociograms and the individual interviews held with the girls. Comments relating to each girl were collected from the class teacher and the teachers who accompanied the girls on the residential field trip referred to as the 'camp'.

The Family System Test (F.A.S.T. Gerhing & Wyler, 1986) was carried out with each girl but this information was not analysed in relation to the findings presented in the main text. However, the results of the F.A.S.T. offer additional information about each girl and give insights regarding their perceptions of themselves in relation to their families. For this reason the findings have been included in the Appendix.

As for the other findings, the nominations for 'best friend' were taken from the sociometric questionnaires for the first three terms and the individual interviews for the fourth term.

Incidents concerning more than one girl are reported in each profile so that they may be read independently.

A

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive - Negative Constructs

A received 6 positive comments: best friend (2) friend (1) plays with you (1) shares things (1) makes me laugh (1) keeps secrets (1)

3 negative comments: cheeky (1) aggressive (1) suspected of stealing (1) sneaks your friends away (1)

2 additional Comments: (1) not popular (1) people call her names.

One nomination for best friend.

Summer Term 1993   A chose Cl

          Li chose A

Autumn Term 1993   not in school

Spring Term 1994   not in school

Summer Term 1994   A chose Sh

          Sh chose N

A transferred to another school for part of the year due to family circumstances.

Self Perception- Information from the Individual Interviews

   A said that all the girls picked on her. She was not afraid of them. She claimed to be hard but not the hardest. She admitted to being sad and lonely at times. She said that she was not jealous of anyone. Sh was her best friend and they went to S. Club together once a week (local community club).

Comments from the Class Teacher

A is weak and vulnerable. She is isolated with no friends but she is not threatened. She is considered annoying by the others. They call her names such as 'dirty'. She is not dirty but her clothes are well worn and she is often untidy. (A often wore wellingtons in winter instead of shoes). They tell tales about her that are not true. She feels hard -done -by.

Comments from Teachers at the Camp

R   A was out of the scene as she is not a 'peacock'. She didn't fuss with her hair, she just tied it back. The others said it was tatty. This was not true, she just brushed it and then left it. There was immense peer pressure regarding appearance. A didn't seem to be very upset by this but she must have been. There was some money missing and suspicion fell on her as she had not taken much money away with her, hardly any at all, but she did have plenty to spend.

Violence

A's family has a reputation for violence in the neighbourhood. (The researcher had known the extended family in the past when there were strong suspicions of abuse).

F.A.S.T.

A put all the figures in one corner of the grid (indicative of bully or bully/victim). A put herself and her sisters (11 years old and 5 years) all on the same block. This was unusual and could indicate the high cohesion characteristic of the family of a victim. A and her siblings were placed apart from their parents. This may have indicated that all the children were victims in the family. A put her mother nearer to her than her father, whereas parents would be expected to be placed equidistant from her. She put in several members of the extended family although they were placed apart from the main group. This may show the influence of the extended family.

A gave her father a large power block and her mother a middle size one. A was

402

thought to be powerless at home by the teachers, yet she gave herself a small power block. She did not give any to her siblings although one sister was older than her. The patriarchal family pattern seems evident in the power structure displayed.

<u>Cl</u>

<u>Results from the Semi-Structured Interview</u>

<u>Positive - Negative Constructs</u>

Cl received 3 positive comments: best friend (2) friend (3) leader (1)

11 negative comments: aggressive (4) quarrelsome (5) frightening (1) tells your

secrets (1) stirrer (3) bossy (1) name calling (2) tells tales (2) unreliable (1) shows

off (1) takes your friends (1)

<u>One nomination for best friend.</u>

Summer Term 1993   A   chose   Cl

                    Cl   chose   Ce (reciprocals for each term)

Autumn 1993   Cl   chose   Ce

Spring 1994   Cl   chose   Ce

                    Cm   chose   Ce

Summer Term 1994 Cl   chose   Ce

              Km   chose   Cl

Cl and Ce form the only stable dyad over the whole time of the study.

<u>Self Perception- Information from the Individual Interviews</u>

Cl felt that Col, Km and S were jealous of her.

<u>Comments of Class Teacher</u>

Cl is difficult to understand. She always completes her homework. Her mother

gives her help as she is not always able to do it herself. Cl is not very interested in her

schoolwork and it is often done in a careless manner. She is less intelligent than some of her friends. Her mother is very supportive and Cl is always clean and well dressed and well looked after in every way. Her mother attends all meetings in school. Cl is very much on her own. She is loud and gives orders but no one takes any notice of her. She chatters on but is ignored. Cl is largely unaware of the nuances of the social interactions and so misses a lot of what is transpiring among the others. She is always very visible if there is an argument or trouble.

Comments from the Teachers at the Camp

R   Cl was covertly uncooperative in that she would quietly wait when asked to do something, weighing up whether it was in her interests to comply. She was inclined to answer back to the non-teaching or inexperienced staff. She would mutter and then state her own case again more aggressively. Her sister, a year younger than her, was also at the camp. Cl was considered to be quite 'hard' by some members of staff.

J   Cl was always at the front if there was trouble but she was not active in any of it, more a passenger. She had no influence over the others. Although she was loud everyone ignored her.

Violence

At one time Cl was being ostracised by others who had previously been her close friends. As Cl was walking past a telephone box, the phone rang. She picked up the receiver as this is the normal pattern of behaviour in the neighbourhood. The voice on the phone said that it was well known that she had had sex with every male on the estate. Cl was extremely upset. None of the girls she suspected of making the call lived nearby. No-one could have seen her or been expecting her to approach the telephone box. Her particular 'enemy' at the time, Km, lived some distance away and so was not considered a suspect. However, although the mystery was never fully resolved, Km's sister had a boyfriend who was discovered to have a flat overlooking the telephone box. The voice was said to sound identical to that of Km's sister. (The teachers took the

incident seriously and did all they could to resolve the situation).

Sh's mother said Cl is too much trouble to be bothered with. However, Cl's mother says there is too much trouble among the girls. Cl has been accepted for the same secondary school as Km but neither mother wants the girls to go as there as Col is to attend that school. There is such a lot of trouble with Col and her cousin Patrick who already attends the school. The parents of the other girls think that Col will get her cousin Patrick to 'jump' them. A said Cl threatened to 'jump' her and Ky.

F.A.S.T.

Cl placed her father centrally on the grid. L said on the video material that Cl's father was not living at home but this was challenged by Cl. Cl placed her father closer to her than her mother on the grid. It would be expected that both parents would be placed equidistant from her. Cl put her siblings nearer to her on the grid than her mother which is the expected finding, but her father was placed nearer to her than her siblings which was unusual. Cl did not use any power blocks.

Cm

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive-Negative Constructs

Cm received 2 positive comments: friend (2)

Negative comments: none

Additional Comment: brightest girl.

One nomination for best friend.

Summer Term 1993	Cm	chose	Ce
Autumn Term 1993	Cm	chose	N
Spring Term 1994	Cm	chose	Ce
Summer Term 1994	Cm	chose	S
	Cl	chose	Cm

Cm is not unpopular but she stays on the fringe of the group as she prefers to play football with the boys.

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

Cm described herself as not being frightened of the others and not jealous. She said that she had no friends but that she felt 'alright' about this.

Comments From the Class Teacher

Cm is not part of the group. She has very masculine interests. She is the archetypical tomboy and so she enjoys playing with the boys. She is a good footballer. She doesn't seem to be unhappy as she wants to be with the boys and doesn't take much interest in 'girly' things.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

R   Cm's mother stayed at the camp for four days. Cm was happy while her mother was there. The night before her mother left to return home she was devastated and slept with her. She appeared somewhat enmeshed with her mother and remained extremely upset when her mother left. She preferred playing football with the lads to being with the girls. Km and M called her 'lesser' (lesbian) and this upset her. She was not in any group or gang.

Violence

None recorded.

F.A.S.T.

Cm put her father closer to her on the grid than her mother whereas it would be expected that both would be placed equidistant from her. She put her mother distanced from her which could be indicative of a bully-victim although other aspects of this profile were not present. Cm put herself distanced from her family members. Cm put her father and grandfather nearer to her on the grid than her siblings and her mother. It would be expected that her siblings would be placed nearer than her parents who would be placed equidistant from her. Her mother was given a large power block whereas her father was given a small one. It was Cm's mother who had seen the researcher administering the F.A.S.T. and had told other mothers that she had been sent to spy on the families by Social Services. Although Cm placed her mother at a distance from her on the grid she had great difficulty in separating from her mother at the camp.

Ce

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive - Negative Constructs

Ce received 10 positive comments: best friend (2) friend (3) you can tell her things (3) not frightening (1) helps you (1) kind (2) doesn't quarrel (1) shares secrets (1) complimentary (1) loyal (1)

Negative comments 7: name calling (1) member of a gang (4) quarrelsome (4) frightening (1) bossy (1) aggressive (3) bully

Additional comments: most popular, cleverest, bonny face.

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	Ce	chose	Cl reciprocals for each term
	Cm	chose	Ce
Autumn Term 1993	Cl	chose	Ce
Spring Term 1994	Cl	chose	Ce
	Cm	chose	Ce
Summer Term 1994	Cl	chose	Ce
	Km	chose	Cl

Ce and Cl formed the only dyad sustained over the 4 terms of the study. Two other dyads were sustained over 3 terms

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

Ce stated that she was not afraid of anyone and did not feel sorry for anyone. She had friends and was not jealous of anyone.

Comments of Class Teacher

Ce is a 'bit out of it' as she is not in a gang. She is in the group of Col, Cl, Km and L. She does support them if there is trouble and joins in the gang in the neighbourhood.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

J   Got on alright. An abusive note calling Km 'a fat cow' was left on her bed at camp. It was never discovered whether Col or Ce had written it as they accused each other.

Violence

None recorded.

F.A.S.T.

Ce placed her father centrally on the grid even though he did not live at home. Ce put herself and her sister Helen (15 years old) on the same square which is unusual. Her mother's boyfriend was allocated a medium power block although no blocks were allocated to her mother or father. Ce said that her sister did not like this boyfriend which may have been her own view. He was put nearer to her than her father. Ce placed her grandfather as near to her as her mother and her mother's boyfriend which may have indicated an emotional enmeshment. The power block given to her mother's boyfriend could reflect the patriarchal ethos of the community.

CS

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive - Negative Constructs

CS received 3 positive comments: best friend (1) friend (2) protects G (1)

5 negative comments: name calling (1) shows off (1) plays strange games (1) quarrels with her friends (1) takes your friends (1)

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	CS	chose	L
Autumn Term 1993	CS	chose	Ky (reciprocals)
Spring Term 1994	CS	chose	Ky (reciprocals)
	Ky	chose	CWh
Summer Term	CS	chose	Ky (reciprocals)

CS is one of the girls in the group known as the 'baby' group. This is a fractious group with frequent jealousies about friendships and about their impending transfer to secondary schools.

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

CS spoke about the family that lived upstairs from her. She was afraid of them, especially so as some of the children attended the secondary school she was to attend in the near future.

CS was jealous of S because she was good at making things and good at games and gym. CS admitted that she felt jealous if she was playing with Ky and So came along. She said the she had defended Km in a recent fracas when Km was wrongly accused of an unprovoked attack on Col and knocking out her front teeth.

Comments of the Class Teacher

CS is a cause for concern as she recently put her head in her hands and stated that *'my life is a nightmare'* but would give no further comment. CS is a girl who is trying with her work but she is of rather limited intellectual ability. She sometimes refuses to attempt the work given to her. She tries to put her work right but others in the class help her complete her assignments. CS is very quiet in class but sometimes stubborn. She responds to praise. She is quarrelsome in class.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

J   CS spent most of the time with CWh. No problems were reported.

Violence

None recorded.

F.A.S.T.

CS placed her father in the furthest corner of the grid. This is unusual and would seem to indicate emotional distance. CS placed herself, her brothers Colin 13 years, Paul 3 years, and her mother all on the same square on the grid which was unusual. Her grandparents were also placed on a proximate block. Such high cohesion, indicating enmeshment, could suggest a victimised family and was possibly related to the threateningly aggressive family living upstairs. No power blocks were allocated.

CWh

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive -Negative Constructs

Cl received 3 positive comments : best friend (1) friend (2) plays good games (1)

She received 2 negative comments: mean (1) sneaks your friends away (2)

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	CWh	chose	Ky
	Ky	chose	La (reciprocals)
Autumn Term 1993	CWh	chose	Ky
	Ky	chose	CS (reciprocals)
Spring Term 1994	CWh	chose	Ky (reciprocals)
Summer Term 1994	CS	chose	Ky (reciprocals)

This is a fractious group with no long standing dyads although only rarely are others included in the group. The girls nominate each other for unpopular, depending on the internal structure of the group at the time. Some of the members are collectively known as the 'baby' group.

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

CWh said that she liked having a friend around and that she became upset if she had none. She said that it was more important to play with your friend than to play a specific game. She got upset when others called her by her surname when they quarrelled with her. She liked sharing secrets.

<u>Comments of the Class teacher</u> - None

<u>Comments From The Teachers at the Camp</u>

CWh was described as being loud, but not a problem.

<u>Violence</u>

None recorded.

<u>F.A.S.T.</u>

CWh placed her parents and siblings equidistant from her whereas it would be expected that her siblings would be placed nearer. She included her extended family but only at a distance. CWh gave herself a small power block but it was doubtful that she had any power at home. She allocated a medium block to her mother, none to her siblings, but a large one to her father. This may reflect the patriarchal dominance in the home.

Col

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive-Negative Constructs

Col received 7 positive comments: best friend (2) friend (4) supports you in fights (1) kind (1) not a fighter (1) like her (2) keeps secrets (1)

10 negative comments: aggressive (9) starts rows (3) frightening (11) quarrelsome (8) threatening (2) stirrer (3) jealous (2) thinks you are talking about her (2) lies (1) shows off (2)

Additional comment: the most popular girl.

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	Col	chose	Km (reciprocals)
	L	chose	Col
Autumn Term 1993	L	chose	Col (reciprocals)
Spring Term 1994	L	chose	Col (reciprocals)
	Km and J both chose L		
Summer term 1994	Col	chose	M (reciprocals)
	L	chose	Col

Comments are made on the video material between Col, Cl, Ce and Km about who is to be invited to sleep at whose house. This is at the root of many quarrels.

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

Col stated that she had loads of friends. She said that she was not frightened of anyone. She said, *'I haven't got the fright in me'*. She did admit to being jealous of Ce whom she described as 'having a bonny face'.

Comments of the Class Teacher

Col, Km and Cl all aggravate each other. L stirs it all up. It usually starts about something unimportant and then it's blown up out of all proportion. The episode when Km threw the chair at Col, and the incident about Cl receiving anonymous phone calls were given as examples of how quickly the violence and antagonism erupted- see below.

Comments From the Teachers at the Camp

R   Col would deliberately make a noise late at night to annoy the other girls and taunt the teachers. She was fanatical about her appearance before going out. She had her fringe permed and she'd stand for ages in front of the mirror. (Episode about the letter found on Km's bed was given, as was the incident of Col picking on a younger girl - see below).

S   Col was always doing her hair. She was forever fiddling with her fringe and wetting it. When she was out she would be looking in the shop windows at her reflection or in car mirrors. As a result she wouldn't walk on quickly with the others. She'd be lagging behind. She was always in front of a mirror.

J   Col was the most vain. Km was vain but Col was more so.

Violence

Col was a girl who had a reputation for aggression, as did her family and extended family. Cl mother and Col's mother were fighting in the street. Cl said *'Col's mother was going to bash my mother'*.

Several girls refer to a classroom incident on the video material that occurred at this time. Km was being taunted by Col. She became so angry that she threw her chair at Col and knocked out two of Col's front teeth. As a result of this Km was excluded from school for one week. The rest of the girls knew that this action was in response to severe provocation but they would not 'grass' on Col due to fear. Although Km was not a popular girl, most of the girls recognised that she was not at fault in this case and tacitly sympathised with her.

Km said that most of the girls were genuinely frightened of Col. *'She says she's gonna hit you and she would. Her dad and them do it. They all go weight lifting. They're always involved with the police for stealing and that'.*

Col dared Cl to call her a *'daft cow'* to her face. Cl recognised this as 'throwing down the gauntlet'. She knew that, no matter what, she would get hit. She braved it out and duly got thumped. Col had a cousin, Patrick, in school. Two other boys, Gary and Shaun, were sometimes involved in the fights and arguments between the girls because Patrick, their friend, insisted that they support Col and her friends. There was some confusion as to what part these boys played in the fights but it was assumed that they were instrumental in some of the violence out of fear or wariness of Patrick.

There was competition between Col and some of the girls to claim these two boys, Gary and Shaun, as boyfriends, as both were high status being athletic, clever and good looking. Many of the arguments between Col and her friends stemmed, directly or indirectly, from issues to do with these two boys. Both boys were afraid of Col, and her extended family, and so they tended to do what she suggested.

In a further incident, Km and Cl were standing in a doorway when Ce shouted down to them *'Km, Shaun says you're an ugly cow'*. Shaun and Gary were there at the time. Col marched down and punched Cl in her sore eye. The rationale Col gave was that Km and Cl had been talking about her. They claimed that they had not, that they had been discussing Cl sleeping at Km's house that night. Jealousy over such arrangements would have been cause enough to anger Col. No teacher was on duty

when this happened. Km said 'more goes on than the teachers know about' as arguments are started on the housing estate out of school hours. The girls frequently get permission from their parents to spend the night at each others' houses, especially at weekend. There are many references to who is sleeping where on the video- taped conversations. These arrangements gave rise to a great deal of jealousy and are triggers for many of the arguments.

There was considerable confusion and denial of any fear of Col. Comments made by some girls show this; *'Col's not really that hard'. 'She'll run away if people threaten her. Sh, Cl and A tried it and she ran off.'* Km denies that she is afraid of Col. She says she is afraid of her only if she is with her gang. However, at one point, Km was so frightened of Col and her gang that she was taxied to and from school by another girl's father in the car.

An abusive note calling Km *'a fat cow'* was left on her bed at the camp. It was never discovered whether Col or Ce had written it as each accused the other. On the bus back from camp, Col told Li to tell A that she was going to 'jump' her. Col said that she would 'bash' Li if she didn't do this. Li did as she was told. So said that Col had hit her. She poked her in the face. *'She hit me once and it was sore because I called her a nasty name (fat) and so she slapped me.'* So said that Col was the most aggressive, that the others just 'mumble up' but Col hits. La described Col as paranoid as Col was always suspicious that people were talking about her and so would start a fight. La said all were afraid of her. On one occasion, G was in the park and Col came along and hit her little brother. Col volunteered the information that she was aggressive. She described this as *'I just haven't got the fright in me'*. She described one incident when she hit Cl as, *'My fist just came* out'.

Cl and Km were accepted for the same secondary school as Col but neither mother wanted the girls to go because there would be too much trouble with Col. The girls said that she would get Patrick (her cousin) to 'jump' them as Patrick stirs up trouble if in a mood. (Some years later the researcher was called in to the school as a

specialist to run a mediation session with Col and other girls in Year 10 as Patrick had been stirring up trouble as predicted). Throughout the secondary stage of education Col has been regarded as the 'hardest' in the secondary school, male or female, since the age of fourteen. She regards it her duty to uphold the family tradition of being the 'hardest ' in any community or gathering).

Several of the girls in the group studied were wary of gossiping or telling tales about Col. When they did discuss Col during the semi-structured interviews, they gave any negative judgements in whispers or hushed tones. She was not in the same building at the time, but her influence was powerful enough to prohibit them from using the natural conversational mode of communication.

Positive Attributes

It is possible that Col was not perceived as a bully in that she was amusing, gregarious and a leader. Several of the girls spoke of her in positive terms in the semi-structured interviews although admitting to being wary of her temper and aggression. Some spoke of the amount of money she received from her mother and admitted to being envious of her fashionable clothing and other expensive material goods she possessed. Several of the girls who were wary of Col found her an amusing and interesting classmate. They spoke of her sense of fun and her ideas for games and activities. The profile studies of Olweus, (1978) show that the bully is often perceived as being more popular than the victim.

F.A.S.T.

Col placed all her figures in a straight line (unusual). Col placed her father closer to her than her mother on the grid although it would be expected that they would be equidistant. Col placed herself between her father and her grandfather with her mother further away. As with Km and Cm, this may have reflected emotional distance or rejection.

Col placed her mother and father nearer to her on the grid than her siblings. This was unusual and may be indicative of a bully. Col gave her father a large power

block and her mother a small one. She gave no other power blocks. The power allocated to her father, his close placement to her, the proximity of her grandfather to her and the distancing of her mother and grandmother, may all combine to indicate a powerful patriarchal family grouping. This would reflect the reputation the family had in the neighbourhood.

D

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive -Negative Constructs

D received 2 positive comments: friend (3) amusing (1)

Negative comments : none.

Additional Comment: she is a go-between for the girls and the boys.

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	D	chose	Li
	Li	chose	A
Autumn Term 1993	D	chose	Li (reciprocals)
Spring Term 1994	D	chose	Li (reciprocals)
Summer Term 1994	D	chose	Li (reciprocals)

D and Li retain their dyad relationship for 3 of the 4 terms in the study.

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

D stated that she was jealous of Col whom she saw as having lots of money and friends. She said 'Col wouldn't hang around with me'. However, she described Col as 'hard'.

Comments of the Class Teacher

D's family split up and she has been brought up by her grandmother.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

No comment.

Violence

None recorded.

F.A.S.T.

D placed her family in three separate groups on the grid. She put her father in the furthest corner with a group of extended family members of aunts, uncles and cousins. She placed her mother, step father and step siblings in another area distanced from herself. She placed herself with her grandparents and siblings in another corner. D placed her grandparents and sibling equidistant from her on the grid. It would be expected that her sibling would be placed nearer to her than her 'parents'.

D gave a large power block to an uncle, placed with her father, who she said she was afraid of, one to her step father, and a large power block to her grandfather. Her grandmother was allocated a medium block. The pattern would suggest patriarchal dominance, even from members of the extended family.

<u>G</u>

<u>Results from the Semi-Structured Interview</u>

<u>Positive - Negative Constructs</u>

G received 5 positive comments : best friend (1) shares ideas (1) clever (1) powerful (1) protects Km (1)

She received 3 negative comments : selfish (1) tells secrets (1) jealous when in a group of 3

Additional Comments: bullied by Ce. Others take things off her, such as scissors, in class. La said that she was worried about G and would defend her if necessary.

Additional comment: very clever

<u>One nomination for best friend allowed.</u>

Summer Term 1993	G	chose	La
	La	chose	Ky (reciprocals)
Autumn Term 1993	G	chose	La
	La	chose	Ky
Spring Term 1994	G	chose	J
	M	chose	G
Summer Term 1994	G	chose	La (reciprocals)

La helped her to settle when G was relatively new to the school. She had a querulous relationship with So who was on the periphery of the group. The conflict spilled over into the families.

<u>Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews</u>

G said that no one liked playing with her but that it did not upset her. She often played with La's little sister and that she herself would like to have a younger sister. She reported that she was frightened of most of the others and kept away from them when she could. She said that she got hysterical in fights. She worried about her family being split up. She said that she wasn't jealous if someone else came to join in when she was playing with La. G said that she talks to La if there is trouble at home. Her mother and father, brothers and sisters all live apart. *'There's my 3 step brothers, 2 real brothers, 2 half sisters. Me and Kenneth and ma live together. The rest are split up'.* G's uncle repeatedly tells her mother to 'get rid of them' and put them all into care.

<u>Comments From the Class Teacher</u>

<u>Violence</u>

G's mother and So's mother had a big row. G was said to be calling So names because she was small. So's mother went round to G's house. G said that So's mother 'barged' into her house. Both mothers fought physically. On another occasion, Sonia was irritating G and a fight started. So was said to be knocking against G on purpose. This resulted in another fight between the mothers. G's mother pulled So's mother's hair so that she pleaded to be released. G was attacked by several others in the group when in the street out of school hours. Her mother went to intervene. Later, Col's mother went to G's home, dragged her mother into the street and attacked her physically. So and G were playing in the park when So's step-dad came and just lifted G's brother up to frighten him. So was playing in Sunderland Road with S and N. G's brother came and told So to go away. So scratched him on the face so S and N chased her back home. Col and her brother were kicking G and her brother - *'belting and kicking us when we were playing in the park'.* G was also threatened by Ce. G's family is scapegoated on the estate (as is So's). La said that she worries about her and her brother. La walks home with them to offer some protection.

<u>F.A.S.T.</u>

G's split family was reflected in her putting out three separate family groupings. She put herself, her mother, her two siblings and her grandfather in one group in the centre of the grid. She placed her step-father and three step-brothers all in a line along the edge of the grid. They lived ten miles away and there was little contact between them. Closer to her mother she placed the uncle who urged her mother to put her children in a home. G gave this uncle a small power block, her mother a large one and herself a small one. G placed her youngest sibling nearest to her on the grid and her twin further away from her than her mother. It would be expected that the siblings would be the nearer than a parent.

It may be that G gave her mother a large power block as she thought of her as defender of the family. G proudly related tales of her mother fighting other mothers who attacked or challenged the family.

Ky

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive - Negative Constructs

Kelly received 15 positive comments: best friend (3) friend (3) joins in (1) kind (4) mediator if in a threesome (1) makes up quarrels fast (2) helpful (1) can talk about problems with her (1) protects Km and So - runs for help (2) not bossy (1) not cheeky to teachers (1) like her (3) plays with you (3) plays good games (1) can stick up for herself (2)

She received 9 negative comments: plays strange games (1) stirrer (2) bossy (1) annoying (2) copies work (1) argues (1) tells secrets (2) has a temper (1) name calling (1)

Additional Comments: called names, picked on because she's little.

So described Ky as supportive. So said that she can talk to Ky, her best friend. If her parents are quarrelling and angry it helps to talk to Ky.

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	Ky	chose	La (reciprocals)
	M and CWh both chose Ky		
Autumn Term 1993	Ky	chose	CS (reciprocals)
	CWh and La both chose -Ky		
Spring Term 1994	Ky	chose	CS (reciprocals)
	La	chose	Ky
Summer Term 1994	Ky	chose	CS (reciprocals)

Ky has a secure position in her friendship group in that she has more than one nomination for friend throughout the study. She is adept at playing one friend off against another but she retains her popularity with her bubbly, entertaining and generous nature. In the final term Ky and So continued the friendship they had at the camp. They chose each other as reciprocals although CS remained Ky's closest friend. This was the first time So had been chosen as friend.

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

Ky admitted to starting quarrels.

Comments From the Class Teacher

Ky is not picked on as she is so tiny. She is not threatened by the others, in fact, she is protected. She is 'mouthy' and tells tales. She is certainly not shy. She has a temper that she shows. When she is crossed she screws up her face and folds her arms and can be very stubborn.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

J   Ky enjoyed it more this year than last. She was kind, lending out her tapes, her stereo and other things.

Violence

Sh said that she was going to 'jump' me. She and her brother did. She wouldn't 'jump' me on her own. She was cheeking me so I cheeked her back and she 'jumped' me. Cl threatened to 'jump' me and A as well.

Ky was told by her mother to 'do your own fights' (fight back physically).

F.A.S.T.

Ky placed all the figures in one straight line (unusual). Ky put herself and her two siblings on the same square, each with a small power block. Her father had a large

power block, her mother and grandparents had a medium one. The pattern showed a cohesive, patriarchal family.

<u>Semi-Structured Interview</u>

<u>Positive - Negative Constructs</u>

Km received 2 positive comments: friend (2) can boss people (1). (This was favourable presumably meaning leadership).

She received 14 negative comments: aggressive (8) frightening (3) quarrelsome (9) bossy (4) tells tales (2) shows off (3) lies (2) calls you and then denies it (4) stirrer (2) in gang (1) cheeky to teachers (1) powerful (1) tart (3) talks about boys (1)

Additional Comments: 4 to do with boys (likes the lads, called a tart by the lads, likes Gy) and 1 other (she is scared of Col). Others say she is mature (1) she does most, the most out -of -school activities(1)

<u>One nomination for best friend allowed.</u>

Summer Term 1993	Km	chose	Col (reciprocals)
Autumn Term 1993	Km	chose	S
	S	chose	N (reciprocals)
Spring Term 1994	Km	chose	L
	L	chose	Col (reciprocals)
Summer Term 1994	Km	chose	Cl
	Cl	chose	Ce (reciprocals)

Km was unpopular and found it difficult to enter into, or sustain, relationships in any group. When she invited friends home she treated them 'as slaves' so that she lost their friendship. She gained the highest scores for unpopularity, having high levels over the four terms. She thought that her unpopularity was solely due to the

envy of the others as she was attractive to the boys.

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

Km said that she was jealous of others taking her friends. She would attack anyone taking her friend and she would not like it if a new girl came into the class. She added that others picked on her because she had been popular (with the boys) and that *'it doesn't do to be popular'*.

Comments of the Class Teacher

Km works hard to be the focus of attention. I regarded her as a victim, always being picked on and called names such as 'tramp' but now I regard her as 'no innocent'. Others have made serious complaints about her calling them names. She threatens So. She gets worried about the threats made to her by Col and the others, but they are unrealistic threats. At the moment she is getting a lift to and from school because of these threats and she is enjoying this and making the most of it. Her reputation for causing trouble has spread to the secondary school that she will be attending next year. The quarrels are always over the boys. She looks four years older than her age when she is dressed up. She is precocious about other matters, for example, she goes out of school at lunch time and goes to the chip shop. These girls won't leave the quarrels alone. Their quarrels can last for weeks.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

<u>R</u>   Km was more popular than M. She wasn't interested in the disco and didn't get changed for it. Seemed to think she'd outgrown that sort of thing. She acted in a more mature manner than the others. She had started her periods but didn't get embarrassed or giggle or anything. She just got on with it.

<u>Sh</u>   Km was more mature than the other girls. She was genuinely felling ill, perhaps because of her periods. M and Km got on at first but then just drifted apart, there was no quarrel. Km became friendly with Sh.

<u>J</u>   Km appeared genuinely unwell. This may have been homesickness. She was in tears in the dormitory. She lay on the bed in the foetal position with her thumb in her mouth. She missed her mother (Km was referred to the School Psychology Service as a school refuser/phobic when she first started school at 5 years old as she was unable to separate from her mother). She took a lot of ' gear' with her such as hairdryer and gel. Km was very vain but not as vain as Col. Km took a great deal of time to get ready for anything. She found it very difficult to put on 'a show' (personal appearance) for 24 hours a day.

<u>Violence</u>

At one point at camp an abusive note calling Km 'a fat cow' was left on her bed. It was never discovered whether Col or Ce had written it as each accused the other. One evening Cl, who had quarrelled with Km, was walking past a phone booth when it rang. Cl answered the phone as this is the normal pattern of behaviour in the neighbourhood. The caller accused her of sleeping with all the males on the estate. Cl was extremely upset by this. She had passed no one on the way that she knew and none of the girls she knew lived in that locality. She couldn't understand how anyone would have known that she would pass the phone box at that time. The call was anonymous but it later transpired that Km's sister's boyfriend had a flat above the telephone booth and so it was assumed that she had made the call when she saw Cl approaching the booth. The teachers assumed that this is what had happened and they took the matter seriously.

In one classroom quarrel that the girls refer to in several of the video taped sessions, Km became so angry at taunts that she threw a chair at her tormentor, Col, and knocked out two of her front teeth. The rest of the girls knew that this was a response to severe provocation but would not 'grass' on Col due to fear of reprisals. Km was excluded from school for a week. Although she was not a popular girl, most of the class recognised that she was not at fault, and tacitly sympathised with her.

At one point Km was so afraid of Col, Cl, L and Ce that she was taxied to and from school by another girl's father in the car. Km liked the car ride and the special

treatment. The class teacher said that she 'milked it' for as long as she could. This went on for some time before school could get a resolution. If Col and others were threatening Km, La walked home with her. This was so that they could act as witnesses but La said that she could beat off Col if necessary.

Km threatened S on occasions. Evidence of this is on the video- taped material.

La said that Km goes to the Metro (station) to meet boys. She looks 15 when out of school.

F.A.S.T.

Km placed her father and even her grandmother nearer to her than her mother on the grid. It would be expected that both parents would be placed equidistant from her. Km placed her mother far away from her on the grid. This may relate to her separation problems and a possible fear of rejection? (Cm, who also had difficulties in separating from her mother, did a similar thing - see F.A.S T. results for Cm). Km placed her father and sibling equidistant from her although siblings are usually placed nearer than parents.

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive - Negative Constructs

La received 6 positive comments ; best friend (2) not jealous (1) kind (1) helpful (1)

not bossy (1) can talk to her about your problems (1)

Negative comments : none.

Additional comments: brightest girl, ideal girl.

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	La	chose	Ky (reciprocals)
	G	chose	La
Autumn Term 1993	La	chose	Ky
	Ky	chose	CS
	CWh	chose	La
Spring Term 1994	La	chose	Ky
	Ky	chose	CS (reciprocals).
Summer Term 1994	La	chose	G (reciprocals)

La did not like playing the 'baby games' this group sometimes played. At such times she would play with others or find her younger sister. La applied to go to the C. T. C for the secondary stage of her education. She boasted about this with the result that it caused a lot of jealousy between her and CS. CS nominated her as unpopular.

<u>Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews</u>

La's main concern was her anxiety about G. She considered her vulnerable in the group and tried to defend her. La admitted that she feels jealous when G tells her secrets to L who inevitably tells Col. La said that she does not like the strange games So plays such as *'witches and weird things'* and so she goes away to play with others when So comes to play with G.

<u>Comments of the Class Teacher</u>

La is a very good actress, in fact she is talented. She has plenty of 'spark'. La is appreciative of anything you do for her. She thoroughly enjoyed the week at camp, in fact she didn't want to return to school. Her mother does not support her. When asked for money for a lovely school photograph of La she said that she was *'sick of giving money to that school'*. There are family problems. La feels rejected by her mother compared to her little sister. La and S's mothers went to school together and therefore the girls are friendly

<u>Comments From Teachers at the Camp</u>

<u>R</u> La loved bird watching. She knew a lot about the birds and talked to the teachers in a mature and appropriate manner. Her father is the warden of a nature reserve. She would sit by the river for her lunch and really appreciate everything around her. She was very popular. She is a good dancer and everyone likes her. She is a good mimic and pulls faces to make them all laugh. They find her amusing.

Sh La is a nice girl. You can talk to her in an appropriate manner. She would always stay with someone if they were upset as in the case of Cm who was upset when her mother left. La is articulate. She was also tactful and kind. She bought gifts for her friends but, if they had no money, she gave them out later when they had returned home. She bought nice gifts for everyone at home.

<u>J</u> La had a great time. She was very bouncy and loved the camp.

Violence

La acts as mediator and defender if there is trouble. All respect her. La walks home with G and her little brother to offer them protection. La also walks home with Km if she is afraid of Col. La says could beat them if there was trouble.

F.A.S.T.

La placed her step-father closer to her than her mother on the grid. This was unusual but presumably reflected the emotional distance she felt between herself and her mother. La placed her real father in the furthest corner but gave him a small power block. Although he did not live nearby they remained emotionally close.

La placed her step-father and sibling equidistant from her on the grid. Usually siblings are placed nearer than parents but there was rivalry between La and her sister. La appeared to like her step-father and placed him close to her but she did not give him a power block. She gave her grandfather a large power block. There would seem to be some patriarchal influence in the family and extended family.

Li

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive and Negative Constructs

Li received 4 positive comments: best friend (1) friend (1) doesn't argue (1) doesn't copy your work (1)

Li did not receive any negative comments.

Additional comment: possibly stealing (1)

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	Li	chose	A
	D	chose	Li
Autumn Term 1993	Li	chose	D (reciprocals)
Spring Term 1994	Li	chose	D (reciprocals)
Summer Term 1994	Li	chose	D (reciprocals)

Li and D sustained their dyad relationship over 3 of the 4 terms of the study. A was not a student in the school for the two middle terms

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

Li said she was happy as she had a friend. She was unhappy when she had no one. She said that she did not feel jealous if she was with her friend and another friend came to join them.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

-- Li was described as being very quiet at the camp.

<u>Violence</u>

None recorded.

<u>F.A.S.T.</u>

Li placed her figures in three separate family groups, one of her immediate family and two of the extended family. Li placed her mother, father and siblings equidistant from her on the grid which was unusual. The family has a cohesive structure which may reflect vulnerability.

Li gave herself and her brother medium power blocks. She gave her mother and father large power blocks. She gave her grandparents medium power blocks and her aunt and two cousins small power blocks.

L

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive and Negative Constructs

L received 2 positive comments: best friend (1) friend (3)

She received 6 negative comments: aggressive (2) quarrelsome (5) bossy (1) in a gang (2) tells tales (2) tells secrets (2)

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	L	chose	Col
	Col	chose	Km (reciprocals)
Autumn Term 1993	L	chose	Col (reciprocals)
	So	chose	L
Spring Term 1994	L	chose	Col (reciprocals)
	Km	chose	L
	J	chose	L
Summer Term 1994	L	chose	Col
	Col	chose	M (reciprocals).

L was always included in, or on the periphery of, Col's friends. Col and L quarrelled in the first term of the study. Col nominated L as unpopular. L was a provocateur and caused many conflicts to escalate, but most girls did not realise this. She was known to tell tales and she was not fully trusted but, perhaps as she was not often physically aggressive, she was not unpopular.

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

L said that she was not a fighter. She said that she had friends in the class.

Comments of the Class Teacher.

L is a stirrer. She can be the cause of the trouble.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

Violence

L was a covert provocateur and, as such, her role in the group could easily be overlooked. Her influence was pervasive and powerful, yet she was not identified as a girl who caused much disruption; by any of the adult staff, the teachers in school, those adults who accompanied the girls on the week of camp in the last term of the study, or even by the other girls.

F.A.S.T.

L placed herself, her mother and father all on the same square on the grid which was unusual. The pattern would appear to indicate the enmeshment structure of a victim although L did not appear to be bullied in school. L placed her mother and father nearer to her on the grid than her siblings which is the reverse of the expected pattern.

Louise gave her mother a large power block and her father a small one.

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive - Negative Constructs

M received 2 positive comments: friends (3) amusing (1)

She received 15 negative comments: aggression (15) negative morality (6) poor social skills 4 (not liked, cries, sits under the table, moody).

Types of Aggression (15)

aggressive (6) covert aggression (1) quarrelsome (10) stirrer (10) name calling (3) baby (2) lies (1) bossy (3) moody (1) challenges teachers (4) mocks people (1) unkind (1) selfish (1) thinks you're talking about her (1) bullies So (1)

Additional comments: cleverest, suffers from asthma.

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	M	chose	Ky
	Ky	chose	La (reciprocals)
Autumn Term 1993	no return		
Spring Term 1994	M	chose	G
	So	chose	M
Summer Term 1994	M	chose	Col (reciprocals)

M did not find it easy to fit into any group although she managed to be on the periphery of one or other most of the time. G said of her *'She tried to get into our group but she couldn't'*.

<u>Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews</u>

M admitted to having a bad temper. She described herself as quarrelsome. She said, *'I have an attitude problem.' 'I have a temper like my Dad.'* She likes to have friends. She said that she is jealous of her brother. She gets upset when she is called copy-cat in school.

<u>Comments of the Class Teacher</u>

M is not popular, mainly because she finds other people's misfortunes funny.

<u>Comments From Teachers at the Camp</u>

<u>R</u>   M was often very difficult to handle. She would get 'stroppy' and defiant. Her body language said it all, even if she didn't speak. She would put her hands on her hips and pout. Her moods were not to do with the work. They were all to do with her being asked to do something. She wouldn't get ready in a morning but would sit and read. When she was chastised she would pack her bag to leave, but she soon came back. She wouldn't get ready on her own and so everyone had to wait for her. She whinged all the time. She answered back to the staff and she deliberately provoked the other girls. For example, she called So names such as 'stick insect'. She and So spent a long time provoking each other. M was with Km at first but they soon went their own ways. There was no actual quarrel, they just parted. They sat together on the bus, as arranged, but they were not together around the pool or in the shower. M quarrelled with a younger girl in Year 5. When the girl's mother left, M had a go at her. M was not popular and not included in anything. She could work independently and she could show some interest in the work.

<u>Sh</u>   M caused a few upsets with several of the girls. She was challenging, sulky and petulant. She was huffy towards the teachers as she didn't like being told what to do. She could be chatty and friendly and told us about her granddad. She was fond of him. She enjoyed collecting rocks and she did this well. She packed up and set off for home several times when things were not going her way. She worked hard and she was good

at her work but not as good as she thought she was. She was only as good as the others but not as good as La. She was a bit isolated and on her own.

_J_   M wanted to go home during the week. She was troublesome in that she lost things. She was stubborn and had bad moods if she couldn't get her own way. She was by far the hardest work for all the teachers.

Violence

She laughed at the misfortunes of others as when So fell and hurt herself.

F.A.S.T.

M put herself and her brother (8 years old) on the same square which was unusual. She also put both her parents on one square and her grandparents on another. This high cohesion or enmeshment could indicate a victim but there were no other relevant features present.

M gave her father a large power block. This could indicate a patriarchal influence.

<u>Semi-Structured Interview</u>

<u>Positive - Negative Constructs</u>

N received 8 positive comments: best friend (2) friends (1) doesn't get into trouble (2) doesn't tell tales (1) helps you (1) doesn't argue (1) plays with you (1) not bossy (1)

She received 1 negative comment: quarrels when in a threesome

<u>One nomination for best friend allowed.</u>

Summer Term 1993	N	chose S (reciprocals)
	Sh	chose N (reciprocal second choice)
Autumn Term 1993	N	chose S (reciprocals)
	Cm	chose N
Spring Term 1994	N	chose S (reciprocals)
Summer Term 1994	N	chose CWh

N and S were cousins and sustained their dyad over 3 of the 4 terms. S was considered to be the more powerful by the staff, but N was the one who always had another friend in addition to S. This gave her more power in her relationships.

<u>Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews</u>

N described herself as being unafraid. She said that she had a best friend and was happy.

<u>Comments of the Class Teacher</u>

N is quiet, very much in S's shadow and basking in her reflected glory. She copies S's work and shares S's friends. She is nowhere near as bright or capable as S.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

N was described as being very quiet.

Violence

None recorded.

F.A.S.T.

N placed her parents and siblings equidistant on the grid although usually the siblings are placed nearer. N gave her mother a large power block but none was allocated to her father or herself. Her older sister was given a small power bock.

Positive - Negative Constructs

S received 6 positive comments: best friend (1) friend (3) not in gang (1) kind (1)

helps you with your work (1) like her (1)

She received 4 negative comments: aggressive (1) name calling (1) takes your friends

(1) and fights if there is a threesome (1)

Additional Comments: she gets asked to take sides.

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993   Sh   chose N

                          N   chose S (reciprocals)

Autumn Term 1993   Played with someone from another class

Spring Term 1994   Sh   chose CWh

                          CWh   chose Ky (reciprocals)

Summer Term 1994   Sh   chose N

                          A   chose Sh

      Sh was new to the school. She wanted to be friends with Km but was rejected as

Km wanted to be friendly with La. S was jealous of Sh's friendship with N and this

caused a dispute between N and S in the final term.

Results from the Individual Interviews

      Sh said that she had no problem mixing with the other girls even though she had

only entered the school in the last year. She said that she played with them 'alright' and

that she was not jealous when someone came to join in when she was playing with a friend.

Comments of the Class Teacher

Sh enjoys attention. She seems to like it when others get into trouble. She was vulnerable when she arrived, but she is now confident and she can be aggressive if she gets picked on. Maybe this was because the others were always picking on her. If she is afraid of the others she gets the bus home instead of walking. She does tell tales.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

<u>Sh</u>   Sh was quiet but she was not the quietest. She was friendly with Km. She seemed to be in the background most of the time.

Violence

Ky said that Sh had threatened to 'jump' her. Sh and her brother did attack Ky. Ky said that *'she was cheeking me so I cheeked her back. She wouldn't jump me on her own, without her brother'*. A said that Sh's brother was a fighter.

F.A.S.T.

Sh placed her mother nearer to her on the grid than her siblings which was the reverse of the expected pattern. Sh put her brother furthest away from her with an aunt. Her father was given a large power block and her mother a medium one. This may have reflected a patriarchal influence.

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive -Negative Constructs

S received 12 positive comments: best friend (1) friend (6) trust her (1) doesn't call you (1) doesn't show off (1) doesn't get into trouble (1) doesn't tell tales (1) plays with you (1) doesn't quarrel (1) not bossy (1) kind (1) powerful (1)

She received 4 negative comments: suspected of stealing (1) name calling (1) gossips (1) quarrelsome when in threesome.

Additional comment: cleverest. Others are jealous of her as she is chosen to help the teacher, she is a good gymnast, she can sort things out.

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993   Sa   chose N (reciprocals)

Autumn Term 1993   Sa   chose N (reciprocals)

Spring Term 1994   Sa   chose N (reciprocals)

Summer Term 1994   Sa   chose N

                      N   chose CWh

Sa and N were cousins and very close. They retained their dyad for 3 of the 4 terms. N was more secure in that she always had other friends as well as Sa. N was very friendly with Sh. Sa nominated Sh as unpopular in the interviews.

Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews

Sa said that she wasn't frightened of the others but that she got upset if the other girls turned against her.

Comments of the Class Teacher

Sa keeps out of the trouble and squabbles. She can stand up for herself. She can be very nasty and say some horrible things. At times she can be aggressive and quarrelsome. She doesn't complain to the teachers, even when Km is mouthing at her. Km, Col and L can turn on her as they are jealous of her.

Comments From Teachers at the Camp

J   Sa was described as being very quiet at the camp. Her family was splitting up and her father had threatened to commit suicide if her mother left home. There was an episode of stealing at the camp and Sa was suspected. It was thought that this may have been connected to the family upset.

Violence

None recorded.

F.A.S.T.

Sa placed herself slightly away from her family, her father being placed furthest away. Her parents were in the process of separating and Sa was very upset by this (see notes on stealing). Her siblings, as expected, were placed nearest to her. No power blocks were used.

Results from the Semi-Structured Interview

Positive - Negative Constructs

So received 4 positive comments: best friend (1) friend (3) protects her brother (1) kind (1)

She received 10 negative comments: stirrer (3) tells lies (1) shows off (1) tells tales (2) doesn't trust you (1) shouts and swears (2) accuses people (1) mean (2) tells secrets (1) fights if in threesome (3)

Additional Comments: 10 (wears 'different' clothes, gets picked on, skinny, little, feel sorry for her, can't run, called names, only one friend, never joins in, her hair is unbrushed).

One nomination for best friend allowed.

Summer Term 1993	So	chose	CWh
	CWh	chose	Ky
Autumn Term 1993	So	chose	L
	L	chose	Col (reciprocals)
Spring Term 1994	So	chose	M
	M	chose	G
Summer Term 1994	So	chose	Ky (reciprocals although Ky also nominated CS as her best friend)

So was not included in any friendship choices until after the field trip when she teamed up with Ky. G and So were always in dispute. If one came to play in the group the other would leave. This caused a lot of conflict in the group.

<u>Self Perception- from the Individual Interviews</u>

So felt that she was out of the friendships as she wasn't interested in talking about boys. She admitted to feeling sad and lonely. She was jealous of CS and Ky being friends. She didn't like the witch games CS played. She admitted to being a mischief maker and quarrelsome. She said she would defend Ky if there was trouble. So said that she wasn't a fighter but she soon learnt that she had to change. She said that Col talks to her when Ky is away. (Ky said that she and So are best friends). She can talk to Ky about her family. If her mother and father are quarrelling and angry it helps to talk to Ky.

<u>Comments of the Class Teacher</u>

So appears to be very lonely. She is not threatened by the others. She threatens them but they ignore her. She does upset the others as she can be sly, sneaky and devious. There are always upsets between her, Ky, A, CWh and CS. She is quiet in class but subversive in that she just ignores class rules if it suits her. She is often out of her place and somewhere where she shouldn't be. The other girls mock her, especially about her clothes. She starts it by criticising them. Her mother buys them from charity shops but they are not appropriate as they are like party dresses. It's not really a matter of money, it's that they are not appropriate for school.

<u>Comments From Teachers at the Camp</u>

<u>Sh</u>   So was called names as she was thin and small. She was happy with Ky and they had a good relationship. They formed a friendship with a girl from another school for protection.

<u>J</u>   So and Ky wanted to be together. They did this last year but they dragged behind and kept everyone waiting so they were split up this year. They were put separately with Km and M but they were soon back together again. So wasn't put down or picked on by the others. She enjoyed camp more this year.

<u>Violence</u>

So said that she walks her little brother home from school in an effort to protect him. So's family is scapegoated on the estate. G and So's mother had a big row. G was calling So names because she was small. So was playing in Sunderland Road with S and N. G's brother told So to go away. So scratched him on face so S and N chased her back. So's mother went round to G's house. Both mothers had a physical fight.

So and G were fighting because So was irritating G. So was knocking her on purpose. There was a big row and the mothers hit each other. G's mother pulled So's mother hair. So's mother pleaded to be released. So and G were playing in the park. So's step-dad lifted K up to frighten him. (G's brother)

F.A.S.T.

So placed her father and step-father equidistant on the grid. Although So's step-father lived with the family, she placed her mother closer to her natural father than her step-father. So placed herself and her brother (7 years old) on the same square which was unusual. Her brother was placed nearer to her than her mother which is the predicted placement for siblings. Her grandparents were placed close to the family. The placement of the figures showed a high cohesion or enmeshment. This is one of several factors indicating a victim. No power blocks were used.

APPENDIX 2

The following spreadsheet shows the structure of gossip identified in the study.

<u>KEY</u>

Tape 1 indicates that this element of the structure of gossip can be found on the audio-visual tape 1. This is a recording of all the activity sessions in the first term. (4) represents the 4th activity session in that term.

(1) identifies the first instance of the structure being used by a girl participant.

Initial letters such as K identify individual girls.

Full name given for identification if not referring to a member of the class.

? identifies an indistinct utterance or a difficulty in identifying the speaker.

2x identifies 2 separate utterances.

C+ indicates further requests for clarification.

N indicates that no formal closure procedure was used in the gossip sequence. The ending may have been brought about by an interruption, a distraction, an abrupt change of topic or other means.

		Summary Sheet of the Structure of Gossip						
		Target		Context	Attention Grabbers	Permission	Factual	Expansion
Tape 1 (4)								
1		S			Y	Y	Y	Y
2		S			Y	Y	Y	Y
Tape 1 (6)								
1		LE			Y	Y	Y	Y
2		N			Y	Y	Y	Y
Tape 1 (7)								
1		K			Y	Y	Y	Y
2 a)		K			Y	Y	Y	Y
2 b)		K			Y	Y	Y	Y
3		Col/K			Y	Y	Y	Y
4		K			Y	Y	Y	Y
5		K			Y	Y	Y	Y
6		K			Y	Y	Y	Y
7		Mr E			Y	Y	Y	Y
8		GJ+K			Y	Y	Y	Y
9		CB			Y	Y	Y	Y
Tape 2 (3)								
1		DT			Y	Y	Y	Y
2		Mrs B			Y	Y	Y	Y
3		K			Y	Y	Y	Y
4		Linda			Y	Y	Y	Y
5		Lee			Y	Y	Y	Y
6		Julie			Y	Y	Y	Y
7		K			Y	Y	Y	Y
8		K			Y	Y	Y	Y
Tape 2 (4)								
1		?			Y	Y	Y	Y
2		HT			Y	Y	Y	Y
					Y??	Y	Y	Y
Tape 2 (5)								
1 a)		Boys			Y	Y	Y	Y
1 b)		Lee			Y	-	Y	Y
2		Lee?			Y	Y	Y	Y
3		M			Y	Y?	Y	Y
Tape 3 (1)								
1		Mrs B			Y	Y	Y	Y
2		HT			Y	Y	Y	-
3		Laura			Y	Y	Y	Y
Tape 3 (2)								
1		Mrs B			Y	-	Y	-
2		Mrs B			Y	Y	Y	Y
3		Mrs B			Y	Y	Y	Y

Repair	Expansion 2	Challenge	Parrot -Provocateur	Clarification	Seeking Clarification	Closure
	Y	Y	Y			N
	Y			C+G	Y	N
	Y				Y	
	Y					N
			Y			
			Y			N
			Y			
			Y	C+ C+	Y	N
	Y	YY	Y			N
	Y		Y			N
	Y		YY			N
	Y	Y	Y	C+	Y	N
			Y		Y	N
				C+ C+ C+	Y	N
		Y	Y			
	Y	?	Y			
			Y			
	Y		Y			
	Y			C+	Y	
	Y	YY	Y	C+ C+		
			Y			
	Y	YY	Y	C+	Y	
			Y			N
			Y	C+	Y	N
				C+ C+ C+		N
				C+	Y	
		Y		C+ C+	Y	
	Y	Y				
		YY	Y	C+ C+	Y	N
				C+		N
						N
			Y	C+		
	Y		????	C+		
		YYY	Y	C+		N