

## **Violence in a Rural School – Policing the Playground**

**There are a number of key themes which make up the research topics of my PhD:**

- ❖ The Role of Community – A Rural Context**
- ❖ Class**
- ❖ The School as an Institution**
- ❖ Bullying**
- ❖ The Adolescent as a Victim**
- ❖ Men and Boys as Victims**
- ❖ The Limits of Moral Conduct and the Regulation of Violence – The Rituals of the Fight**
- ❖ The Social Organisation of Adolescent Groups – The Importance of Rank, Status and Hierarchy**
- ❖ The Importance of Peers**
- ❖ The Significance of Gender**

## When was the last time you saw a fight?

## Is a fight ever right?

Name	Year	Last Time You Saw A Fight	Do You Think A Fight is Ever Right
Sarah	9	7/8 weeks	Don't think anyone should fight
Zoe	8	4 weeks	Fights are never right
Chad	7	Long time ago	Not right to fight but it depends what is done to you
Jim	11	5 weeks	Sometimes a fight is right – should sit down and talk
Brian	11	Everyday if its pretend	Fights are right if they are necessary as there is no other alternative
Rachel	11	Last year	Fights are never right.
Rosie	11	Last year	Hate violence, should talk instead
Raj	10	When I was away	Depends if you can talk your way out of it
Katie	10	Couple of months ago	No, can't stand it.
Jessica	8	Week and a half	No, argue obviously but not fight.
Izzy	8	This morning	No, silly way to sort things out
Jamie	7	Never seen one in school	No
Mike	10	Last year	No arguing is better
Demelza	10	I don't think I have	No not really
Stephanie	9	Couple of weeks ago	Not really
Louise	9	Last year	I don't know really
Kerry	11	September	You should be able to defend yourself.

## **Boundaries of Play**

“No but there are accidents. Like play fighting and people get hurt.... A boy called James Bell he hurt a kid dunno he um made all the muscles in his neck like dislocate, I can't remember what it was but he nearly broke his neck and he had to go to hospital and um about a month ago this kid fell on these bushes and he really hurt his back cos it was like sticking out and he couldn't see and he got pushed onto it, but they've been taken away now...they (teachers) said that um, we shouldn't play fight after what happened with James Bell they said um none of you should play fight cos James Bell was only play fighting and he nearly broke the kids neck so you shouldn't play fight and if they see anyone play fighting then they tell them off.” (Chad, 11 years old)

“Um.. it was probably...um...it wasn't a serious fight it wasn't really what I'd call a fight, it was someone, it was about probably a couple of months ago it was this boy who thought that this girl had um, this other boy had been chatting up his girlfriend or something and he punched him. And I hate fights; they make me feel sick watching them.... and he hit him and he went to the ground and then he kicked and he hit him again and I just couldn't stand watching it. And then um the head boy took him in to see if he was alright and everything and he was fine, it wasn't that bad he had a bit of a bruising and everything but I can't stand watching fights. I was listening to music at the time and I didn't realise and I could just see it like it was like slow motion. But I can't stand any fights, it was probably the last one I've seen.” (“Katie”, 15 years old)

“Well, a couple of weeks ago one girl was walking down the road and a girl who has been expelled from our school stopped in the car that she was being driven in, got out, punched the girl, was kicking her and the girl came back into school and she had two black eyes. That's like out of school it happened. So the school can't do anything about it cos the girl has been expelled and I think girls can be just as bad as boys.” (“Rachel”, 16 years old)

“Well, I mean because when you're play fighting and even if you are just running around, you could get hurt but play fighting is a bit more...a bit more riskyish like, its one of those things that you are not allowed to do really. But you know, its just mucking around with your mates, I think its taken a bit too seriously.” (Raj, 15 years old)

## **Issues of Space and Territory**

### **“Year Nine Land”**



## **Importance of Peers**

### **Code of Silence**

#### **Bystanders – The Importance of Their Role**

“No I think if its between two people they should just like its an issue between them when more people get involved then it just gets more complicated and more people get into trouble and it just goes on and on and its stupid. Especially if its nothing to do with them they don’t even know the people and stuff.” (“Rachel”, 16 years old)

## **Violence as a Consequence of Bullying**

“No, not unless they are strictly necessary sort of thing, because um I know it sometimes gets to a point you know where you’ve tried everything to avoid it and it just happens, you know, like in the past when I was bullied I tried everything to stop it you know. You try to ignore them, you try to get the school to do something but that doesn’t help and in the end it came down to a fight and then suddenly it stopped. Suddenly the school realised it was getting serious and they actually did something to put their foot down and whatever and I was the one that came worse off from it, but cos like normally I wouldn’t want to fight, just like the thought of hurting someone else just makes me cringe really. But um...I think you’ve just got to learn that its got to be there, you’ve got to be able to do it like if necessary because you’ve got to be able to defend your rights physically as well as mentally and verbally, whatever.” (“Brian”, 15 years old)

## **Differences Between Male and Female Views of Violence**

“No but there are, there are girls who seem to be, how can I put it, a bit rough.

Yeah.

Rough and tumble, they’re the ones who you know think a girl fighting is acceptable.

Not really sure, I don’t really think its acceptable myself.

What for girls to fight?

Not really.” (“Raj”, 15 years old)

“Hand bags at dawn type thing? (laughs) err, no I don’t think so they’re more likely to swear at each other and spit and hiss you know type of thing.” (“Brain”, 15 years old)

## **Grown Ups know Better than to Fight**

“I think adults should be even better at it because they should know to respect people. Like our age we don’t understand the meaning of respect sometimes and we just have to like fight it out but adults should understand that they are not supposed to fight. They should learn by their mistakes.” (“Sarah”, 13 years old)

“Cos I don’t think adults get that violent, children will just fight for the sake of something else to do.” (Zoë, 13 years old)

## **Prefects = The Police of the Playground**

“Err normally prefects don’t tend to get involved so leave that to the teachers, erm, even if there are real fights we are told to just like get the teachers so really we don’t take responsibility for that side of things, which is just as well really. (laughs)”  
 (“Mike”, 15 years old)

“No do people ever tell?

Prefects.

They tell?

Yeah I’m a prefect myself so I have to, you know you have to.

Its part of your job is it?

Yeah. Whether you want to or not, you have to cos they’re the rules. You’re not allowed to have a full on fight, its not right.”

(“Raj” 15 years old)

## **Emerging Rules of the Fight?**

⇒ **Play Vs Real**

⇒ **Designated Territory**

⇒ **Importance of Peers**

⇒ **Role of Gender**

⇒ **The Code of Silence**