

AN EXAMINATION OF BULLYING IN DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONAL  
CONTEXTS: UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT NOTIONS OF BULLYING IN  
SCHOOL, THE WORKPLACE AND UNIVERSITY.

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## Abstract

This project investigated the views of 49 university undergraduate students regarding the phenomenon of bullying in three distinct settings: their memories of compulsory education (primary and secondary), their personal workplace experience (or workplace study placement), and their life at one post-1992 university. The research design used 'active interviews' comprised of phases of interviewing individually and in groups, in which progressively deeper layers of interrogation sought to question their initial constructions of bullying. The study addressed two main research questions: how did students construct the concept of bullying in different contexts or settings, and how did the students explain differences in these constructions. The findings indicated that participants tended to view school-based bullying as being precipitated by within-person traits and personalities, but workplace bullying was thought to be driven by organisational structure or institutional ethos. Bullying at university was more difficult for them to discuss as most claimed little or no experience, directly or indirectly, of bullying while in higher education. As the study progressed, the participants expressed their understanding of bullying firstly through stereotyped and clichéd terms, but became much more critical and analytical when they were presented again with some of the contradictions and anomalies inherent in their earlier descriptions and explanations. Another important contribution to knowledge is the finding that participants viewed the higher education context as having several features that were protective against bullying behaviour, reducing their experience of bullying in HE to almost nil. These features: porosity, value of the learner to the institution, and voluntarism, were shown to hold important implications for understanding bullying in organisations or institutions; they develop and extend existing models found in adjacent fields of study.

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## Introduction

My reasons for undertaking this study are born out of wide-ranging experience and long-standing interest in the phenomenon of bullying. During my compulsory schooling, I have participated in perpetrator, target, and bystander roles. I then observed a great deal of bullying during my years spent as a teaching assistant in mainstream schools, and again while I supported children and young adults with emotional and behavioural difficulties in a range of special education facilities. Those experiences gave me a professional insight into bullying within differing educational contexts, each with uniquely individual cultures and climates, and with a variety of policies and approaches to anti-bullying strategies/programs.

Employment in a range of workplace environments has provided me with further opportunity to reflect upon bullying in the workplace. I also undertook a programme of study at university undergraduate level that caused me to reflect upon this environment in relation to bullying; but for me, bullying was not a personal experience in higher education. After graduation, I spent time teaching in further and higher education. This brought me into contact with an opportunity to assist a HE colleague with commissioned bullying research, and also to teach on a particularly innovative bullying module that offered a whole new perspective on the subject.

My interest was given added impetus when, as a mother, I experienced two daughters navigating the tumultuous seas of secondary education, with adolescent social and relational difficulties observed in the literature; this was now experienced first-hand. These multiple influences caused me to reflect on the differing environments in relation to bullying, and consequently motivated this inquiry.

The literature on the phenomenon of bullying is vast and has been studied in great depth in relation to schooling and the workplace. Between school and workplace lies higher education; but there is a marked absence of published work regarding undergraduate student-to-student bullying within this setting.

Bullying research has mainly focused on contexts where bullying is reported to be an especially problematic characteristic of the setting, but has been overlooked in those contexts where incidence of bullying has yet to be reported in any great numbers.

On discovering this puzzling omission another curiosity emerged. In schools, the research emphasis is predominantly psychological, and heavily invested in the personality and behavioural deficiencies of pupils: it could be described as an 'individual pathology' paradigm. These established approaches to the research continue supreme amongst the bullying research community. With regard to research on bullying in the workplace however, the emphasis is much more weighted on organisational ethos: a 'systems' paradigm. Here, the research is more concerned with structural variables, though it is still largely presented within an organisational psychology perspective.

The mainstream bullying literature has a dearth of sociological perspectives applied to any settings, and those that do exist do not enjoy the same level of esteem as the mainstream psychological work, despite offering compelling arguments and theories that resonate with my own ideas surrounding bullying.

On exploring the literature relating to undergraduate-to-undergraduate bullying, it became immediately apparent that there was very little relevant literature and certainly none that took a cross-contextual stance. In other words, I could not find any work that considered, for example, bullying in schools as compared with colleges, or bullying in prisons compared with bullying in military units. These puzzling discrepancies and omissions further encouraged me to find out more about this issue for myself.

The review of literature discusses areas of research relating to bullying in different contexts: school, workplace and the undergraduate experience. However, in addition to the heavily researched areas of school and workplace bullying, I have also explored the interesting work on prison bullying. It has a comparatively smaller research base and literary presence, but it offered unique promise for intellectual tools to consider structural and environmental

factors that may create a climate ripe for bullying in other settings. The nursing environment also more readily acknowledges organisational and structural features characteristic in a bullying environment, and therefore was worthy of exploration.

Chapter one explores the phenomenon of bullying in relation to these five contexts and is grouped under two distinct areas: school-aged bullying and post-school age bullying (to include workplace, nursing, prison and higher education environments).

Chapter two describes the research design of this qualitative study set in a post-1992 university. The study explores how undergraduates conceptualised bullying in different contexts, and how they explained any links between the differing personal characteristics of bullying with institutional organisation and structure. For that purpose, this study adopts an interpretivist approach to the sociological tradition. Semi-structured interviews with both individuals and groups of undergraduates were carried out using Holstein and Gubrium's (1995) Active Interview Approach.

There were two phases to the interview process. Firstly there was the descriptive phase where participants described and discussed bullying in school, the workplace and lastly the university. Then there was the analytical phase. This second phase allowed for a more critical and interactive discussion in which I was able to challenge their expression of ideas that appeared contradictory and explored with participants why they conceptualised bullying very differently depending on the setting in which it was being discussed. The conversations produced rich data which were then analysed thematically with the use of NVIVO.

Chapter three presents the data from the descriptive phase of interviews, and chapter four presents the data from the critical phase. In chapter five, the research questions are addressed in the light of the data provided:

1. How do students construct bullying in different contexts?

2. How do students explain differing constructions of bullying in different contexts?

The findings are discussed in relation to a number of theoretical views from fields of study adjacent to my own. Chapter six concludes the study with a review of the implications of the findings, their contribution to knowledge, and some thoughts on future directions for research in the area.

## Chapter1: Literature review.

Background and origins of bullying: school age bullying.

There has been a plethora of research on school bullying over the last thirty years; initially emerging from Scandinavia by Heinemann (1969) whose observations of behaviour in school playgrounds identified what he termed as 'mobbing' where groups of children behave aggressively towards an individual. However, the Scandinavian research of Olweus (1978) beginning in the late 1970s is universally regarded as the first systematic examination of the nature and prevalence of bullying (Smith et al., 2004); this was followed by numerous other notable researchers in the field (for example, Pikas, 1978; Roland, 1980; Bjorkqvist et al., 1982). This work was stimulated by the suicide of three Norwegian pupils thought to be as a consequence of subjection to bullying (Hart, 1993). These developments inspired interest in the United Kingdom and work by Tattum and Lane (1988) and Besag (1989) raised the profile of school bullying in hand with the Elton report (1989), investigating school discipline, which identified bullying as an issue. In the same year, a study by Yates and Smith (1989) reported findings to suggest that the prevalence of bullying appeared to be twice that reported in studies from Scandinavian countries and the UK media dubbed Britain 'the bullying capital of Europe' (Smith et al., 2004). Such reports raised public and political concern and consequently led to the 'Sheffield Project', considered one of the most substantive, monitored bullying intervention projects in the United Kingdom (Smith et al., 1994) and a range of intervention projects across the UK.

So too on a global level, school bullying has been considered the subject of educational concern and academic study; at a cross-National level (see Smith et al., 1999 for example), in Europe (Smith, 2003), and other countries around the globe such as South Korea (Kim et al., 2004), Japan (Morita, 2001) and North America (Espelage and Swearer, 2004). Extending bullying beyond school grounds has provided new directions for bullying research with young people (Mishna et al., 2009). In recent years, the arrival of Web technologies has seen the emergence of new forms of bullying through the use of social networking sites and Internet phone applications. The area of cyber-bullying is a growing field of bullying research (for example: Berson et al., 2002; Mitchell et al., 2003; Lenhart, 2007; Tokunaga, 2010; Wang et al., 2012).

### 1.1 Post-school age bullying.

Workplace bullying is a comparatively less developed field of research, yet it has also attracted increasing attention. Again, Scandinavian researchers have been at the forefront of developments in this field (for example: Leymann, 1990; Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996; Vartia, 1996; Olafsson and Johannsdottir., 2004; Salin, 2003). Broadcaster and journalist Andrea Adams (1992) is often credited with stimulating discourse and research in workplace bullying in the UK (Bennett, 1997) and provided the impetus for further research, continuing in the UK (Rayner and Hoel, 1997; Lewis, 2004) and in America (for example: Namie and Namie, 1999).

Various stakeholder interests have continued to provide the impetus for further research into bullying in the workplace where such behaviours carry litigious threat and can also impact upon productivity and absenteeism, all of

which have cost implications to industry and raise concerns with trade unions. In a work-place context, it is therefore in the interests of stakeholders to fund bullying research in order to drive forward legislative protection of both employees and the corporations themselves. The following contributors represent the breadth of contexts in which bullying has and continues to be a research focus: adulthood (Randall, 2002), prisons (Ireland, 2000), midwifery and nursing (Lewis, 2008; Edwards and O'Connell, 2007), academia (Twale and Luca, 2008; McKay et al., 2008), student-training settings (Ferris and Kilne, 2009) and the hotel, catering and tourism industry (Hoel and Einarsen, 2003).

As illustrated above, the literature on bullying has focused on multiple contexts and this social phenomenon has been studied in particular depth in relation to schooling and the workplace. Between school and workplace lies higher education (HE), but there appears to be an absence of published work regarding undergraduate student-to-student bullying in this setting. There is a significant body of research relating to bullying across academic staff, which is seen to be rife (Lewis, 2004; Lipsett, 2005) and the increasing prevalence of students' expressions of dissatisfaction and even aggression towards academic staff (Lee and Hopkins-Burke, 2007), yet it seems that attempts to apply bullying theory to student-to-student bullying in the university context have, as yet, not been afforded any significant level of attention.

Literature relating to student experience in HE is replete with assertions that social relationships are pivotal influences in a student's decision to remain at university (see for example, Martinez and Munday 1998; Yorke, 2004; Beard,

2005). Student retention and persistence rate as influencing factors continue to be an area of concern for institutions, and continues to attract research inquiry. Therefore, studies that explore the existence of bullying on campus, even if superficially very low incidence, seem to be warranted. Indeed, a survey of students' experience (NUS 2008) reported that 7% of students had experienced bullying; 79% of these students stated that this involved a fellow student but had not been reported to the institution.

This low reportage is a common difficulty associated with any attempt to investigate bullying, which depends to a certain extent on self-reporting. Statistics may be further skewed by the difficulties associated with the variability of definitions or attributes of bullying used in surveys (Kelly, 2006). Therefore the percentage of students experiencing bullying at university may, in reality, be higher and necessitate further investigation. Alternatively it suggests that our institutions can be regarded 'perhaps not as bully-free but as 'bully-lite' (Duncan, 2009a) whereby bullying is comparatively less prevalent than in other contexts. If this is the case, we may have much to learn in terms of the ways in which the university environment structurally and operationally encourages a climate where bullying is unable to thrive.

The above examples are context specific and few studies attempt to cross-contextually examine bullying or explore bullying across life-course phases. The more recent study of Monks et al. (2009) is perhaps indicative of this apparent absence; this being the first attempt to draw together research on bullying in diverse settings and different relationships across its lifespan in order to examine the commonalities and differences between them.

Some studies examine the causal effects of experiencing bullying in school upon adulthood and later functioning (Smith, 2001; Smith et al, 2003; Schaffer et al., 2004). Such studies raise important discussion relating to the reliability and validity of retrospective reports of bullying; a topic covered in studies elsewhere (for example: Rivers, 2001; Crozier and Skiliopidou, 2002). Studies have also examined workplace bullying on a cross-national level such as that of Morita (2001) across Japan, England, Netherlands and Norway, and a comparison between children's experiences of bullying in America and those in the UK (Borntreger et al., 2009). Similarly, a substantial study conducted by Smith et al. (2002) represents a rare, cross-national exploration of age and gender differences in pupil understanding of the term 'bullying' across fourteen countries. What appears to be a common thread not uniquely concluded in this study, but also across bullying research, is that constructs of bullying vary considerably yet often share commonalities, which shall be discussed in more detail.

Constructions of bullying seem to vary across the bullying research community and many studies have highlighted the complex ways in which bullying is conceived by differing stakeholders. Not only does it appear that variations in conceptions occur amongst the bullying research community, but differ significantly to notions held by non-researchers, which is also discussed in the next section.

## 1.2 Researcher constructions of bullying.

Within the bullying literature, researchers have conceptualised bullying as a distinctive sub-category of aggression (Olweus, 1993; Smith et al., 2002). However, the range of such behaviours and how these are nuanced vary across disciplines (Kelly, 2006) yet describe essentially the same phenomenon but place differing emphasis upon particular characteristics and nature of the behaviour at hand. As Randall (2002) observes, such variance is influenced by constructs of bullying that are aligned with a researcher's particular theoretical and/or professional standpoints and also driven by predominant schools of thought and experimental design. Workplace bullying researchers Hoel et al. (1999) suggest that whether in educational or workplace contexts, constructions of bullying appear to share similar facets of interpersonal humiliation, aggression and destructive psychological manipulation.

A number of researchers have sought to identify bullying in terms of attributes of perpetrators and targets, whilst others have explored characteristics of perpetrators, targets and bullying behaviours. Social ecological models, that recognise that bullying involves many factors and contexts and the complex interplay between them, can also contribute to the bullying discourse (for example: Espelage, 2004). This is particularly so within the context of the workplace where the move away from the traditional medical and individualistic constructs of bullying has seen a significant shift towards consideration of organisational climate (Kelly, 2006). Hoel and Beale (2006) add that psychology-orientated constructs have dominated studies of bullying

across the board, but that studies in the context of the workplace have a relatively wider focus by considering micro-organisational factors. However, they also hold that the absence of definitional clarity remains problematic.

In exploring constructs of bullying it is becoming clear that different terms are used to describe essentially the same phenomena, further adding to the difficulties in reaching an agreed definition. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) coined the term 'relational aggression' to explain behavior that is more subtle and intentionally harms another individual through the manipulation of social relationships. Twale and Luca (2008) refer to workplace incivility, however Baron and Neumann (1998) also place incivility at one end of a spectrum of negative workplace behaviours where bullying is positioned part way and workplace violence at the opposite pole. Harris (2009) offers further terminology used to describe similar aggressive behaviours such as peer victimisation and mobbing which represent more direct forms of bullying, or more indirect forms such as interpersonal rejection, harassment and cyber-bullying.

According to Arora (1996), semantic nuances and different connotations are characteristic across English-speaking countries and cultural variability has also been identified on a cross-national level (Smith et al., 2002). A particular barrier in use of the term 'bullying' in studies within the workplace is that it has connotations of the school playground (Rayner, 1997; Randall, 2001) and may in fact deter participants from identifying themselves as being bullied in order to avoid being labeled as a victim. School connotations of the term bullying were raised in Ireland's (2005) study of bullying in prisons where a quarter of inmates within the overall sample (30) considered the term 'childish'. In industries such as leisure and catering, giving and receiving abuse is an expected practice, as discussed by Bloisi and Hoel (2008) in their review of literature relating to abusive work practices amongst chefs and therefore much aggressive behaviour may not be deemed to be bullying. Such views appear to support a more socio-cultural perspective of bullying that sees that differing contexts operate within varying social climates, ethos and expectations thereby influencing behaviour in more competitive and 'macho' environments (Duncan, 1999).

### 1.3 Non-researcher conceptions of bullying.

Moving away from researcher notions of bullying, Colorroso (2005) considers that the conceptions of bullying held by children themselves are of greater concern and relevance than those of researchers and other adults. Findings from a study by Vaillancourt et al. (2008a) revealed that participant children and young people use different definitional criteria than those used by researchers and instead refer to a range of negative actions; yet the three key criteria often cited in the school bullying literature of repetition, intentionality and power asymmetry were rarely mentioned. Other studies have compared teacher and pupil views as to what constitutes bullying behaviours with findings showing significant discrepancy: for example pupils did not see social exclusion as a form of bullying (Naylor et al., 2006). Other studies have also found differing conceptions of bullying populations within the same setting (Maunder, 2010). This has implications for reported prevalence rates of bullying if teachers and/or pupils recognise some behaviours that constitute bullying and not others. It also implies that the concept of bullying has been dissociated from children's perspectives and redefined by 'experts', which is then imposed upon the children. Acceptance of the widely used Olweus definition by young research participants seems to now define how children themselves construct bullying.

A study by Saunders et al. (2007) sought to determine whether definitional criteria of workplace bullying used across the research community differed from those used by laypersons. A sample of 1095 participants was recruited from a range of contexts within Britain and across Europe: universities (students), organisations, unions and via an online advertisement, and was asked to define workplace bullying. Participants had not been offered explanation or definition elsewhere in the survey. Findings revealed that whilst common criteria emerged, conceptions also varied in some respects.

Laypersons notions of bullying reflected common definitional criteria, which are current across the literature in relation to workplace bullying (Saunders et al., 2007); those of negative behaviour (98.3%), negative effects of bullying (86.3%) and a further 21.4% offering the definitional component of intent. A significantly smaller number of layperson related the common criterion of the presence of a power imbalance (15%), and where it was mentioned it was described in terms of formal power where person/s perpetrated against those in less senior positions. With regard to the criterion of persistence, though common in researcher definitions, only 14.5% of laypersons made this specification.

The study also reveals an interesting theme not often reflected in operational definitions: that of unprofessional conduct. A significant number (25.5%) defined bullying as a violation of expected treatment within a professional workplace with some participants explicitly defining bullying behaviours as 'disrespectful' and 'unprofessional'. The implications of which, Saunders et al. (2007) offer, is not only possible underreporting of bullying incidences due to discrepancy between employee and organisational definitions, but also violation of employee/employer psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1989) where employees hold expectations of standards of professional behaviour and expectations of appropriate organisational response at times of bullying incidence.

#### 1.4 Problems with a definition.

In reviewing definitions in the bullying literature, it appears customary to offer the definition provided by Olweus (1999). Perhaps unsurprisingly, due to prominence and proliferation of his work, the following definition appears to be common across much of the school bullying literature and is also used as a basis for defining bullying in other contexts:

←

← A person is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. It is a negative action when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another.

←

← This definition offers three key elements that are recurrent across much of the bullying literature and across differing contexts: those of the intention to cause harm, repetition of the bullying behaviour over time and the presence of a power imbalance which restricts the targets ability to defend themselves effectively (Cowie and Jennifer, 2008). Early pioneer Besag's (1989) definition offers more detail and also identifies a sense of gain or fulfillment by the perpetrator/s when 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 socially defined, on those who are powerless to resist, with the intention of causing distress for their own gain or gratification.

However, the research also conveys disagreement in regard to the presence or significance of the three common criteria above. Most definitions contain one or more of the three elements, endorsing some whilst omitting others. Olweus, (1993), Arora (1996) and Randall (1996) for example support the notion that a one-off incident may be considered bullying. In the workplace context, this can be particularly so as the nature of the 'job' may be transient such as in the hotel and catering industry (Bloisi and Hoel, 2008). This is also characteristic in the context of prisons where, Ireland (2002) adds; 'taxing' and 'initiation ceremonies' are common one-off incidences of aggression towards a newcomer to the environment. Similarly, Ostvik and Rudmin, (2001) consider one-off incidents of 'hazing' in the armed forces to be bullying. Ireland (2002) offers the following definition for prison bullying:

An individual is being bullied when they are the victim of direct and/or indirect aggression happening on a weekly basis by the same or different perpetrators. Single incidences of aggression can be viewed as bullying, particularly when they are severe and when the individual either believes or fears that they are at risk of future victimisation by the same perpetrator or others.

Thus, for some researchers, the fear of being subjected to bullying behaviours is in fact bullying in itself (Randall, 1997).

Some researchers do not recognise the power asymmetry (for example: Kochenderfer and Ladd, 1996; Perry et al., 1988) preferring the broader notion that bullying is a form of abuse where children are repeatedly the recipients of aggressive behaviour from peers. Harris (2009) adds that the power imbalance to which Olweus (1994) refers: where a perpetrator is in a position of greater physical or psychological strength than the target, it is a difficult criterion to operationalise and question how one identifies psychological strength.

For Roland (1989, p.21) the definition of bullying is 'longstanding violence, be it physical or psychological, conducted by an individual or a group and directed against an individual who is not able to defend himself in the actual situation'. This draws on the two critical elements of repetition and power imbalance but omits intentionality. In the workplace context, Rayner (2002) argues that intentionality is not necessarily key to defining bullying. Indeed, Einarsen and Raknes (1997) state in their definition that bullying acts can be carried out deliberately or unconsciously. This notion is supported by the work of clinical psychologist Egan (2005) who positions bullying behaviours upon a continuum; where at the one end, 'accidental bullying' is seen to be unintentional and occurs when individuals are in pursuit of organisational aims and/or standards, competition, financial and other primary business goals. Similarly, Namie (2010) perceives workplace bullying as a political act driven by competition for power and control, involving deceitful acts. Here, bullying behaviours are intentional and are aligned with Egan's (2005) typology of narcissistic bullying which are "destructive, self-absorbed attitudes and behaviours showing a lack of any form of empathy, blaming, nitpicking, devaluing others, lies, boasting and taking credit for others' work" (seen in: Kelly, 2005, p.29).

Definitions offered in the context of the workplace appear to indicate greater recognition of more operational and/or environmental aspects of bullying. To illustrate, notable writers in the field define workplace bullying as repeated, negative actions and practices of an unwanted nature directed at one or more employees (Baron and Neuman, 1996; Einarsen and Raknes, 1997). Lyons et al., (1995) include in their definition the use of unfair penal sanctions (seen in: Parkins et al., 2006). The inclusion of 'practices' and organisational structures in these definitions appear to indicate greater recognition of external criterion than those relating to a school context and would seem to suggest the notion that systems and practices can be tools by which to perpetrate bullying behaviours.

### 1.5 Conclusion

As highlighted in the discussion, this research inquiry has sought to understand and explain the phenomenon of bullying in a range of contexts. Constructions of bullying seem orientated by particular theoretical and professional standpoints and predominant schools of thought but also differ across perspectives of researcher, non-researcher, pupils and teachers. Such variance is also evident in definitions of bullying. The implications of such imprecision are as Espelage and Swearer (2003) state: "fundamentally related to accurate assessment of bullying and to conclusions researchers make about this complex dynamic" (p. 369).

Definitions of school age bullying place a narrow focus upon pupil-to-pupil relationships and rely heavily on established definitions used across the literature. Duncan (2009b) offers a somewhat skeptical view stating “such definitions are now embedded in the national psyche, and neatly deflect any reference to parts adults might play in bullying”. However, definitions relating to workplace bullying see a shift in emphasis to include the use of work practices and penal sanctions by which to perpetrate bullying, and also recognise that workplace bullying can be unintentional in the pursuit of organisational aims. The importance of school organisation and ethos appear neglected within the literature. Organisational psychology and sociology may have a crucial role in re-conceptualising bullying in schools.

## 2. School aged bullying.

The bullying literature relating to school-age children and adolescents has and continues to examine prevalence, consequences, causes and prevention. Findings are often contradictory, which can generate continued interest from scholars and professionals (Berger, 2006). Concerns surrounding a perceived decline of teacher authority, ‘irresponsible parenting’ and children’s ‘deteriorating behaviour’ (Furedi, 2009) and the detrimental effects bullying can have upon school effectiveness (Ma, 2002) fuel such concerns. A report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) identified that bullying is a key reason why young people disengage from learning and leave formal education, and can also influence their views of continuing education. Such concerns about the adverse effects of bullying on educational attainment provide fertile ground for public, professional and political debate, including responsive action from policy makers (Brown and Taylor, 2007).

An area where there is greater consensus is the negative consequences for those involved in bullying. Both short and long term consequences of bullying are widely reported and subject to less inconsistency than findings related to issues mentioned above. Bullying is a destructive phenomenon causing a range of psychological and social difficulties for all individuals' involved (Hugh-Jones and Smith, 1999), physical distress (Besag, 1989) and for some children, a higher degree of suicidal ideation (Rigby and Slee, 2001).

Hawker and Boulton (2000) conducted a meta-analysis over twenty years of research, concluding that subjection to bullying is strongly associated with depression. The effects of bullying leave lasting effects into adulthood (Boulton and Underwood, 1992; Olweus, 1993) However, depending on theoretical perspective, studies reported differing effects. The following discussion explores the literature relating to the prevalence and distribution of bullying, exploring the nature of bullying and causative factors and interventions offered in the literature. The term "school-aged bullying" is used to represent wider contexts that children come into contact with and are not necessarily restricted to the bullying within a school environment. Bullying research encompasses a range of contexts such as family and community environments as well as through the use of electronic media.

## 2.1 Prevalence.

On viewing prevalence rates of bullying across the literature, it becomes apparent that reporting rates are inconsistent. The design and methods for the implementation of data collection tools seem to determine particular results. In

the first instance as discussed above, variable definitions of bullying have significant implications for validation of any conclusive evidence of prevalence rates. In his review of the literature presenting diverse statistics gained from studies around the world, Ma (2001) reminds us that such variation of statistics on the prevalence of bullying reflects the variation in definition on a global scale. Issues around the appropriateness of disclosing a definition of bullying in data collection methods and tools are concurrent throughout the literature. Researchers often state that differing notions of bullying across pupils will give varying answers and therefore to merely ask if they have been bullied will invalidate responses (Arora & Thompson, 1987; Smith & Levan, 1995; Arora, 1996).

Several scales have been identified as measures of bullying that have been developed without definitional criteria (Bosworth et al., 1999). Often bullying goes unreported, or sometimes incidents are not recognised as bullying. Studies report that perpetrators are less likely to self-report bullying than targets are and girls particularly underreport bullying behaviour (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Rivers & Smith, 1994). Other studies show that exaggeration or careless reporting by just a few pupils can significantly distort measures of bullying in surveys (Cornell, 2006; Cross & Newman-Gonchar, 2004; Furlong et al., 2004). Some surveys stipulate a time frame within which participants are asked if they have been involved in or witnessed bullying incidence. Mooji (1993) found that when pupils reported bullying others, results differed significantly between those that were given a time frame of 'now and then' and those given 'once a week or more often'.

A frequently used method to investigate the prevalence of bullying is to identify the number or percentage of individuals who can be categorised as "bullies", "victims" or both. However Lee and Cornell (2010) state that self-report surveys, whilst popular, are usually anonymous and therefore it may not be possible to determine if they offer an accurate picture of prevalence rates. Reports of bullying may be influenced by other factors such as students being familiar with the concept of bullying or student attitudes towards completing the survey (Lee and Cornell, 2010).

Studies have also shown reluctance on the part of both perpetrators and targets to identify themselves as being such (Pepler et al., 1998; Tapper and Boulton, 2005). The reliance of self-report and peer nominations for bullying others has also been brought into question. A comparison of the two in a sample of 355 students showed low to moderate correspondence (Branson and Cornell, 2009). Teacher nominations may also cause difficulties in that they may be unaware of the extent of bullying and who perpetrates it. A study by Frisen et al. (2008) reported that pupils who reported being bullied in the previous week had not told an adult about the incident. Regardless of such difficulties, anonymous self-report questionnaires seem to be the popular choice of data collection tool.

The OVBQ (Olweus, 1999) is the most widely used self-report survey and has been used in studies around the world (Nansel et al., 2001). However, Lee and Cornell (2010) make an interesting observation that there exists minimal evidence that the [Revised] BVQ offers construct validity, and whilst Olweus (2002) himself acknowledges this, Olweus claims that the publication of

psychometric information resulting from extensive analysis (of a representative sample of over 5000 students) has not been forthcoming due to time constraints. Olweus reports that such analysis has shown results to be 'quite good' in terms of internal consistency (reliability), the test-retest reliability and the validity of the RBVQ. In more recent personal communication with Olweus (2007), enquiring about such psychometric information, Lee and Cornell (2010) report much the same response as to why the information has not been made readily available.

The issues discussed here may have implications upon the validity and trustworthiness of statistics offered in surveys. However, available statistics can give some indication of the prevalence of school bullying and also reveal the variance in reported rates across teachers, parents, adults, pupils and studies in general. An Australian survey of over 38,000 children (Peterson and Rigby, 1999) found that approximately one child in six is bullied at school at least once a week. An American study released in 2001 from the National Institute of Health reports that almost a third of 6th to 10th graders from a sample of 15,000 (an estimated 5.7 million children nationwide) have experienced some form of bullying (Nansel et al., 2001). More recently, in the UK, The National Bullying Survey (2006) carried out by the charity Bullying UK, surveyed 8,574 children, parents, teachers and adults. Of 4,772 pupils who completed the Pupil National Bullying Survey (2006) 69% complained they had been bullied and 85% had witnessed someone else being bullied. A total of 2,160 parents completed the survey, 87% of which said their child had been bullied in the last 12 months. Of the 1,323 further adults surveyed, 78% said they had been bullied more than five times when they were at school. Of

the sample of 323 teachers who completed the survey, 83% said they had not seen bullying at their school.

Also in the UK, a study by Katz et al. (2001) reported that over half of the 7,000 young people that took part in the survey reported having been bullied, one in ten considered the bullying to be severe and a quarter stating that bullying was the principle source of stress in their lives. Such discrepancies between reported levels of bullying between teachers and pupils have been found in numerous studies (for example Olweus, 1984; Pepler et al, 1994; Craig and Pepler, 1998). The measurement of bullying has always been problematic (Smith and Levan, 1995) and whilst we may be able to generalise about prevalence rates, Sullivan et al. (2004, p.6) state that though useful in providing trends in bullying, statistical results are limited in how much they actually tell us about bullying. It appears that the bullying literature relating to prevalence rates cannot offer definitive statistics on the prevalence of bullying in schools. Such rates seem to be elusive and due in part to the lack of a common language and universal constructs and varying reporting measures and timeframes; perhaps also because the topic is emotive, subjective and rated highly socially reprehensible.

## 2.2 Distribution of bullying.

Literature examining the distribution of bullying reports occurrence in developmental as well as environmental contexts. Studies that show physical, more direct bullying are much more common in primary school aged children (Woods and Wolke, 2004) and that which is identified as bullying gradually becomes less and less apparent as children become older (Smith & Sharp

1994). Age progression determines more sophisticated and indirect bullying (Rivers & Smith, 1994). Over time, the types of behaviours that are generally labeled as "bullying" become relatively rare (Rigby, 2003).

Despite reports that most bullying occurs within schools (Olweus, 1993), the bullying literature also conceptualises bullying in terms of family pathology (Bansel, 2009). Studies examine the family as a factor in the occurrence of bullying and how such influences can determine a child's perpetration of subjection to bullying during their school years (Smith and Myron-Wilson, 1998). Holmes and Holmes-Lonergan (2004) state that a multitude of factors contribute to producing bullying, most of which have their origins within the family. Children and adolescents from families adopting an authoritarian style who may exert physical forms of discipline are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour (Espelage et al., 2000). Olweus (1993) suggests that parents lack warmth or affection towards their child results in the child adopting bullying behaviours. Such behaviours it is claimed directly shape the behaviour of children by modeling that aggression; it is the means by which to achieve status and therefore is a natural consequence arising from a particular set of family influences (Holmes and Holmes-Lonergan, 2004). Such views lend themselves to an ecological perspective that sees bullying arising from an individual's interaction with the different environments they experience (Bacchini et al., 2009) such as the community and neighbourhood.

Studies report that bullying is significantly associated with the way individuals perceive their exposure to dangerous and violent situations within the neighbourhood (Bacchini et al., 2009; Chaux et al, 2009). Individuals who are

exposed to community violence are more likely to believe that aggression such as bullying is a legitimate means by which to achieve personal goals (Espelage et al., 2000). Ma (2001) refers this area of research as a 'macro-political' issue that considers effects upon bullying beyond the school environment. However, the political element that she refers to is limited to characteristics within the community such as poverty, unemployment and residential segregation and how bullying research in these areas may inform social policy and practice.

The use of the Internet and social media as a medium for bullying has been gaining increasing attention over recent years. As technology advances bullying has become an unfortunate by-product (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009); this is termed 'cyber bullying'. The phenomenon poses significant difficulties in determining prevalence. Slonje and Smith (2008) posit that teachers and parents may be unaware of bullying incidence as it can occur beyond the realm of the school. Cyber bullying is much more intrusive than traditional bullying as it differs in its reach of the offender. Perpetrators are able to extend the bullying beyond school boundaries and follow targets into the home (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006) and unlike traditional bullying, targets cannot seek refuge and relative safety in their own homes (Slonje and Smith, 2008).

Cyber bullying also differs in that bullying by anonymous means is a typical occurrence (Tokunga, 2010). Of the studies available, many examine cyber bullying in relation to traditional bullying (Ozgur, 2010), profiling 'bullies' and 'victims' (Vandebosch and Cleemputa, 2009), a gender perspective (Chisholm, 2006) age and gender differences (Smith et al., 2008) the

relationship between cyber bullying and suicidal ideation (Hinduja and Patchin, 2010) and the legal situation faced by educators (Hinduja and Patchin, (2011). Diamanduros et al. (2008, p.703) promote the 'vital role' of school psychologists as 'change agents' in addressing cyber bullying in schools by providing guidelines of awareness promotion, assessment, prevention, intervention, and policy-making development. However, the authors discuss this within the context of the school.

As Strom and Strom (2005) assert, cyber bullying is a unique form of bullying as it poses difficulties for school administrators as it raises concerns about the boundaries of their jurisdiction. The emerging literature in this area is particularly interesting. It appears that published work is predominantly by authors not associated within the traditional bullying literature. However like traditional bullying literature, cyber bullying is positioned within an individualistic theoretical perspective though seems more cautious in describing causation in relation to particular human traits, and refers more to socio-demographic data.

The literature that focuses on distribution of school aged bullying, covers a range of contexts yet appears to mostly focus on where bullying is characteristic as opposed to where it is not; this is highly pertinent to my present study. Literature that explores high and low rates of bullying in different contexts and the associations with school characteristics is also pertinent to my study. One such study is that of Roland and Galloway (2004) who explored schools with differing professional cultures and whether there was any link with high and low rates of bullying. Findings from a study by

Chaux et al. (2009) found that bullying is more prevalent in private than state schools and so too in urban compared with rural schools. Literature appears to be limited which explores environments where bullying is thought to be comparatively nominal. The following discussion explores the legislative and policy context of school bullying.

### 2.3 Legislative and policy context.

The act of bullying is not a specific criminal offence in the United Kingdom (UK), though since 1999 there has been a legal requirement for schools to act in light of bullying incidence and actively implement anti-bullying measures and policies. A study of 15 European Union member states (Ananiadou and Smith, 2002) found eight countries to have some level of legal requirements to address bullying, though only six of these relate specifically to bullying; the remaining number tend to legislate against school violence. Schools in the UK have a statutory obligation with regard to behaviour that establishes clear responsibilities to respond to bullying. The Education and Inspections Act (2006) reaffirms that all school behaviour policies must communicate to pupils, staff and parents intentions to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. In 2012, the new Ofsted framework included 'behaviour and safety' as one of its key criteria for inspections where schools should be able to demonstrate the impact of anti-bullying policies.

Despite many governments around the world signing up to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Leach (2003) asserts that they have done little to protect their rights in schools. Since the introduction of 'Bullying: Don't Suffer in Silence' (DfES, 1994) a nationally distributed anti-bullying pack, the

then Labour Government periodically revised the document (2000, 2002) and distributed this or other guidance documentation on developing and implementing effective anti-bullying programmes and policies. The guidance on school behaviour under the coalition Government released in July 2011 aims to 'unequivocally restore adult authority to the classroom' (DfE, 2011) giving legal power for teachers to use 'reasonable force' and search pupils whilst strengthening protection of teachers against 'malicious' allegations.

The guidance takes the default position that assumes the teacher has behaved reasonably unless it can be shown by the complainant that a teacher has behaved otherwise. Such anti-bullying measures and policy appear to shore up teacher abnegation of responsibility for 'deviant behaviour' and place responsibility with the child. Whilst recommendations are made to implement strategies that create a positive school ethos, the principal message appears to be prevention and remedy targeted at pupil level. Osler (2006) examines other legislative tensions stating that education policy promoting inclusion and social justice is at odds with the legislative framework that promotes individualism and those quasi-markets that encourage competition between schools are fuelled by publication of league tables. On the one hand, Osler (2006) argues that the emphasis is on reducing social exclusion and the other is a need to firmly address unruly students often through permanent exclusion. Sheerman (2007) notes that government policy on bullying has focused on pupil exclusion as a means to address the problem. A recommendation from Ananiado and Smith's (2002) study is that policies may be more effective if they cover all bullying relationships within schools

including teacher to pupil and teacher to teacher. In light of current policy discourse and more recent policy implementation, this seems less likely.

#### 2.4 Intervention.

Rigby (2003) states that attribution of bullying will determine particular approaches employed in schools, giving the example that individualistic views of bullying encourage interventions directed at individual pupils such as social skills training for those pupils identified as 'vulnerable'. It can be argued that perhaps having low self-esteem and lacking assertiveness, and thereby being prone to being targets of bullying or anger management approaches for those children displaying aggression and likely to perpetrate bullying. Interventions aligned with a socio-cultural view of bullying Rigby (2003) offers focus on curriculum as a means by which to encourage emotional understanding and positive interpersonal relations in preference to strategies that aim to manage undesirable behaviour through the use of counselling or punitive sanctions that necessitate authoritarian solutions to the problem of bullying. Strategies of assertiveness training for potential targets of bullying and other peer support methods are used (Naylor and Cowie, 1999; Smith and Sharp, 1994). It seems that whichever theoretically informed approach is implemented, the focus is essentially child centered.

Wider socio-cultural views of bullying include the view that bullying is a group phenomenon. Salmivalli (1999) has contributed much to understanding peer group behaviour and the different roles that are adopted by peer group members and advocates through the use of such 'peer group power' in school-based interventions. Maines and Robinson's (1997) 'Support Group

Method' (previously known as the 'no blame approach') has been used to address this which involves a trained teacher or counsellor meeting with the group of pupils; some identified as engaging in bullying, others from the wider pupil population. The teacher explains to the group how the target has been affected by the bullying and seeks proposals as to how the situation can be addressed. In this way, responsibility is passed to the group, though outcomes are monitored (seen in: Smith et al., 2004). Interestingly, the report to the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2006-07) states that this approach is now considered 'discredited' despite findings to suggest otherwise. The report states that DfES has led attempts to discredit this approach despite previously recommending it as an anti-bullying programme.

The Support Group Method is based on Pikas 'Shared Concern Method' and has received harsh criticism from the Director of the charity 'Kidscape' Michelle Elliot who states: "the system that No Blame is based on, developed by Anatole Pikas, 'was bastardised [...] to the point that it became totally ineffective.' Other criticisms of SGM are that it is too complex, requiring thoroughly trained practitioners and it remains controversial (Smith et al., 2004) or is considered a 'soft-option' (Bray and Lee, 2007). Despite Pikas approach receiving positive response in the early 1980's, more prescriptive and punitive approaches took the fore; none more so than zero tolerance approaches.

Bray and Lee (2007) state that zero tolerance approaches can leave a pupil feeling bullied as a result of their own bullying, as power and authority are exerted by the teacher and the 'punishment' or 'sanction' is the personal

choice of that teacher. Such approaches, the authors state: “are part of a more formal, predictable and consistent management policy. Power and authority come from the policy and system it supports”, which create resentment and pupils feeling that the system is against them. Zero tolerance approaches are largely seen to be ineffective (Skiba, 2000) yet viewed as a last resort (Smith et al., 2004). Yet Rigby et al. (2004) posit that schools implement a mixture of both punitive and non-punitive approaches, while it is widely accepted that what is needed is a ‘whole-school’ approach. Plans by the new coalition Government to re-introduce zero tolerance approaches to bullying in schools (Tipett et al., 2011) may therefore seem like a step backwards.

The Olweus Bully Intervention Programme (1978; 1993) has been significantly influential. This approach stresses the importance of intervening at all levels, both at individual and system-wide levels. This is achieved by encouraging commitment of teachers, pupils and parents and communicating a clear message that bullying will be identified and not tolerated; encouraging attitudinal change via bullying-focused curriculum activities, key staff trained in conflict resolution skills and individualised interventions for both perpetrators and targets of bullying (Smith et al., 2004). Though a range of anti-bullying programmes exists, they tend to adopt key features of Olweus’ programme (Harris, 2009). Despite minimal to moderate reductions in reported bullying rates (Hamarus and Kaikkonen, 2008) whole school policies are considered the most effective style of intervention programme (Salmivalli, 2001). However, it is apparent across the bullying literature that studies produce varying results of intervention research across different countries (Pepler et

al., 2004; Smith and Ananidou, 2003), with some intervention approaches enjoying success and experiencing failure in equal measures (Rigby et al., 2004). Indeed, the success of a 50% reduction in bullying in a study carried out by Olweus (1999), using his own Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme (OBPP) in Bergen, has yet to be replicated (seen in: Rigby et al., 2004). As previously mentioned (p.20), Olweus (2002) himself recognises that there is minimal evidence that his widely used RBVQ offers construct validity. However, that does not stop his branding of a commercially successful operation across Norway, the United States and other countries, which offers support to school boards at a substantial profit. Olweus' esteemed contribution to the field of bullying research is without any doubt, but through stakeholders' interest in seeking resolution to the problem of bullying, Olweus' and other researchers' more positivist approaches offer much appeal. It seems bullying has become big business and may explain the continued domination of the bullying research orthodoxy. Rose (1998) refers to the 'psy' industries, whose curative discourses also offer much appeal. Any challenge to the established bullying research arena may "threaten the market position, professional status and stronghold of the psychology-dominated research field" (Coleyshaw, 2010, p.380).

## 2.5 Nature of bullying.

School-aged bullying can manifest in many ways and can be physical, verbal, psychological or a combination of these (Cowie and Jennifer, 2008). Indirect and direct bullying are described as the modes of attack (Berger, 2007) and many studies report a move from more overt 'direct' forms of bullying across primary school and children towards less explicit and more 'indirect' forms by

secondary school aged pupils (Cowie and Jennifer, 2008). These forms of bullying are reported to be the most pernicious (Sharp, 1995), and are characterised by activities such as rumour-spreading or excluding someone from social groups (Smith & Sharp, 1994), which Crick and Grotpeter (1995) refer to as relational aggression, which is the disruption and manipulation of social relationships between peers.

Bullying is reported to occur for reasons of individual difference: such as sexual orientation, culture, race, religion, disability and gender (Cowie and Jennifer, 2008). An alternative view is that most bullying is indiscriminate and is not caused by, or as the result of, obvious differences between pupils (Robinson and Maines, 1997). Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) study explores bullying in the context of the school community and pupil culture stating that:

Bullying is a way of creating and renewing culturally accepted and appreciated values and ideas. Difference is no longer an issue of individual difference, because the difference of the bullied pupil represents features, which are opposite to what the community appreciates culturally.

Such cultural identifiers may be a failure to keep up with fashion trends (Attree, 2006), which Chaux et al. (2009) relate to power differentials that exist between different socio-economic groups and inequitable access to resources.

The literature explores an array of terms to describe and distinguish between differing 'types' of perpetrators and targets of bullying behaviours; terms such

as 'pure' bullies, 'pure' victims, 'bully/victims' (Olweus, 1978; Olweus, 2001), Regarding targets of bullying, here too the literature discusses 'types' by which targets are referred. Olweus' (1978) makes the distinction of 'passive' and 'provocative' victims where particular characteristics are attributable to each one: provocative victims show hyperactivity, insensitivity and are likely to annoy other children, whereas passive victims show characteristics of insecurity, helplessness, sensitivity and nervousness (Cowie and Jennifer, 2008). The categorisation and the assignment of labels, Hargeaves (1976) posits, may become difficult to escape and in the case of perpetrators, to "pathologise wrongdoers may lock them into those pathologised identities" (seen in: Bacchini et al., 2009, p.59).

In terms of perpetrator and target roles, results of studies indicate the occurrence of dual roles where perpetrators can at times be targets and vice versa (Sanders and Phye, 2004). The role of bully/victim is well discussed in the literature (Olweus, 1978). As Yoneyama (2003) argues, the profile of the 'bully' is not fixed and different students perpetrate bullying behaviours at different times. Similarly Bacchini et al. (2009) assert, bullying incidence does not occur in isolation from other moments and acts and that such acts "are not autonomous acts, free-floating from their histories and contexts that can be accounted for through the character of one faulty individual". Other roles are discussed in relation to bullying as a social event often involving witnesses, accomplices and bystanders (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Sutton and Smith, 1999).

A study by Huitsings et al. (2011) examined participants' roles in bullying; they advocate a 'social network perspective' in order that teachers can accurately

'classify' participant roles and inform of group processes. Misclassification, the authors state:

Can have serious consequences for interventions. For example, when an anti-bullying intervention is being planned in a school class, it is essential that children be seen in a participant role that fits their behavior. It makes a crucial difference whether a child is seen, for example, as a bully or a defender.

The reliability of Huitsings et al. (2011) social network questionnaire and subsequent analysis is not challenged here; what may give cause for concern are the perils of labeling a child. As Becker (1963) explains: where such labels have been assigned and established, it is difficult for a child to change; the labels attributed to him/her may determine the individual's self-identity and behaviour. Labels may also influence teacher's expectations of particular individuals and how they respond to them (Burns et al., 2008). The literature sometimes conveys a sense of inevitability that particular children's behaviour is attributed to certain innate traits on which assumptions about the child's future are made. As Randall (2002, p.73) asserts:

It is a sad fact that some small children carry with them characteristics sometimes indefinable, which cause experienced teachers and social workers to predict that they will become aggressive perpetrators who are likely to cause harm to their peers or others in some way.

Such a prophetic view is supported in the literature, which views innate characteristics that orientate an individual's behaviour throughout childhood

and beyond to determine adolescent and adult behaviour and outcomes. Studies have been conducted which report that individuals who bully are more likely to subsequently engage in criminal activity (Smith et al., 2004; Olweus, 2011; Ttofi et al., 2011); have an increased likelihood of taking up smoking (Morris et al., 2006); engage in theft, violent behaviour and binge drinking (Hemphill et al., 2011) and experience other general delinquency and antisocial behaviour in adulthood (Bender and Losel, 2011).

These references in particular illustrate that contemporary bullying research continues to offer such pathological explanations of behaviour. Perhaps the recent assertion offered by Olweus (2011) may illuminate the appeal:

Bullies and victims are 'over-users' of society's health, support and control systems (but for very different reasons), it is obvious that society can save large amounts of money by effective prevention of such problems in school.

Such a view suggests that diagnostic and remedial interventions may be regarded as necessary cost-cutting approaches and warrants remedial interventions. The following section discusses anti bullying interventions in more detail.

## 2.6 Attribution of bullying.

A significant amount of research reports on the individual characteristics of perpetrators and targets of bullying as causative factor in bullying. This individualistic model of bullying seems most prevalent across the bullying literature. Where social and other external influences are considered, these

are typically examined within an essentially psychological framework and how the individual interacts with and responds to such influences. The phenomenon of school-aged bullying has been examined by various disciplines and from differing theoretical perspectives. Pathology-based perspectives of bullying traditionally tend to dominate the bullying literature (Bansel et al., 2009). This view sees bullying behaviour as a personal phenomena which Duncan (2009b) describes as an individual deficit model where the 'problem' lies within the individual. The more clinical of views see that adoption of perpetrator; target or bystander roles can be determined by preexisting psychopathological conditions (Tremlow, 1996), social psychological determinants or personality traits. Zapf and Einarsen (2003) argue that since bullying comes in a variety forms and evolves in a range of different situations it is highly unlikely that a single personality profile would be common to all bullies. Sheerman (2007, p.207) goes further in his report to the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee stating that commentators, media and organisations who explain targets of bullying as having a 'victim complex' or 'weak personality' is "abjectly preposterous and without evidence or merit". A rare study by Coyne et al. (2003), which aimed to identify personality characteristics through peer and self-nomination of perpetrators, found that perpetrators were a diverse group sharing few personality characteristics.

Moving away from personality theory and clinical explanations of bullying toward a more social-cognitive perspective (Arora, 1996; Madsen, 1996; Maines & Robinson, 1998; Schuster, 1996; Sutton et al., 1999), this theory posits that social contexts and cognitions, unlike personality traits, can be

modified as a result of the observation of other's behaviours. Commonly associated with social cognitive theory is the work of Bandura (1977), though in the context of bullying, such theory has been influential in furthering bullying theory towards inclusion of the social context in which bullying occurs. As Ostvik and Rudmin (2001) assert, this theory avoids "stigmatising presumptions of psychopathology" and goes further in claiming that confining bullying to personality dynamics is itself an act of bias in social cognition known as Fundamental Error of Attribution (Ross, 1977), which is the tendency to overestimate the importance of personality traits and underestimation of the role of situational aspects in explaining behaviour.

Some studies report bullying as determined by levels of social competence such as the social skills deficit model of aggression (Crick & Dodge, 1994). However Sutton et al. (1999) view perpetrators as being highly skilled and manipulative in social situations: possessing 'Machiavellian' traits. Similarly, Bjorkqvist et al. (2000) have found that social intelligence is strongly related to indirect aggression. Olweus (1993) moves further towards a social-interactionist perspective by theorising that students and teachers who bully act as role models, further promoting student bullying, suggesting that "violence begets violence" (p. 40). Confusingly, this appears to move some distance away from Olweus traditional individualistic perspective where personality traits determine an individual's capacity to become a perpetrator or target. Whilst reviewing the literature discussed here, a further anomaly emerged.

The literature often conveys that bullying research has moved away from more individualistic perspective of bullying to a position that includes greater recognition of social influences (Allison and Ireland, 2010). However, contemporary studies following individualistic and more clinical models continue research that analyses bullying through a neuroscience perspective (Vaillancourt et al., 2008b) whereby the focus is identifying those areas and pathways of the brain that are involved in specific traits or behaviours (Harris, 2009). Indeed, Harris (2009) advocates a move towards a new model for analysing human behaviour; particularly bullying, of 'evolutionary social cognitive neuroscience'. This model draws on evolutionary psychology that sees aggression as an adaptive trait; social cognition that examines the cognitive processes used to decode and encode the social world and the neuroscience perspective as described above.

Harris (2009) refers to Cacioppo et al. (2000) who advocate the removal of the 'abyss' that traditionally exists between social and biological approaches to further our knowledge of human social behaviour. Similarly, Olweus (2011) recently defended an individual difference approach; recognising that it has been subject to denigration, but warning that understanding may be lost should the individual difference approach be neglected. It would therefore seem that bullying discourse has either not progressed as much as the literature conveys, is subject to researcher/professional agenda, or still has its roots in the psychopathology field.

The literature also explores bullying through a micro-systems approach (Bacchini et al., 2009) looking at the school environment as a whole; the ways

in which school characteristics and climate operate, aspects of the social milieu and teaching and learning environment as possible contributory factors in facilitating or inhibiting bullying behaviour (Kasen et al., 2004). Particular characteristics of schools have received examination. School and class size is reported as having no correlation with levels of bullying (Whitney and Smith, 1993; Olweus, 1994). In contrast, Stephenson and Smith (1989) found larger class sizes to impact upon levels of bullying; this supports Osler's (2006) findings where participant girls felt that smaller class sizes would enable better relationships with the teachers. Osler's (2006) study also reports pupils' difficulties in accessing the curriculum causing disaffection and encouraging particular behaviours. Similarly, Duncan (2009b) offers the possibility that the expectation for pupils to conform to 'norms' benchmarked by testing encourages those pupils that do not meet these 'norms' to seek alternative ways in which to achieve power and recognition which may take the form of bullying.

There is a considerable body of bullying literature that examines the school climate in relation to bullying (for example: Nansel, 2001; Espelage and Swearer, 2004) and essentially sits within a social ecological perspective of bullying where the child is at the centre of interrelated social networks. There seems to be an implied logic that if their environment influences individuals, then interventions need to be targeted at an environmental level. Research reports the benefits of addressing the social ecology of school (Espelage and Swearer, 2004) and many studies have examined particular elements of the school operation such as how schools and particularly teachers respond to bullying is widely discussed. A study by Smith and Shu (2000) for example,

reported that despite teachers being aware of particular bullying incidence, nothing happened as a result of them knowing. Correspondingly, participant pupils in Carter's (2002) study reported that teachers choose whether to intervene or ignore conflict and that teachers can condone explicit bullying through their absence in school spaces and times of the day where risk of bullying incidence is known to be significantly higher.

This is congruent with McEvoy's (2005) findings where there was "perceived collusion through inaction when bullying incidents are known" and that this seriously undermines a positive school climate and morale. McEvoy's (2005) study examines teachers who bully students, positing that despite narrative evidence from the students, former students, parents and non-abusive teachers; this phenomenon has largely been ignored. Findings from this study overwhelming point to a student perception that teachers bully with impunity and are not held accountable even where incidences are made known to senior management. This seems at odds with the school as a social institution that mediates the dominant values, ideals and rewards or punishes pupils through the degree to which they conform to these and rules and regulations (Besag and Nelson, 1984).

Furthermore Bansel et al. (2009, p.66) state: "school communities are regulated, both officially through pedagogical practices and unofficially through social groupings, through normative category membership and category maintenance". Such literature may be important in understanding the sense of resentment and unjustness expressed by pupils about aspects of school and their criticisms of disrespectful and unfair treatment imposed upon

them by staff, including the inconsistent application of rules (Thornberg, 2006; 2007; 2008). A bullying culture thrives where bullying is accepted and students feel powerless to stop it (Hamarus and Kaikkonen, 2008). Students in Awartani et al.'s (2008) study, which perceived the school environment to be unsafe and teachers were reported to be the main psychological abusers of students. Yoneyama (2008, p.3) asserts that in such environments bullying is used as a form of classroom management, pupils learn to 'read the vibes' for what is acceptable in a particular point in time, thus "reading the atmosphere', 'sniffing the air' or 'reading the mood' becomes the method of survival in the norm-less space of the classroom".

The literature on the micro-systems approach and school climate in relation to bullying may not go far enough. The focus seems to be on how teachers and other school staff may be able to influence the school and classroom climate in order to help students take action to reduce bullying (Raskaukas et al., 2010); positioning the pupils as essentially responsible, given appropriate support, in changing their behaviour and reducing bullying. Less evident in the literature is how wider structures and processes within the school impact upon the prevalence of bullying.

Roland and Galloway (2004) examine differing levels of bullying in relation to aspects of professional culture within schools. Findings suggest that those schools with higher levels of bullying show poor leadership, low levels of professional co-operation and low consensus regarding professional matters. It seems that such a study represents literature receiving significantly less profile than the more traditional perspective. The literature discussed here has

some resonance with Duncan's (2009b) conceptual framework that extends critique of compulsory schooling systems and how such systems use compulsion, compression, competition and control over pupils. In this way, bullying is an inevitable feature of our 'bullying schools', which are fixed upon economic competitiveness and a social control at the expense of child welfare. This seemingly more political element is largely absent from mainstream bullying literature along with other areas of research that may develop bullying discourse and offer further insight. What follows is an exploration of wider literature that, as yet, appears to have failed to make any impact upon dominant discourse of bullying.

## 2.7 Wider literature.

Considering that the destructive social phenomenon of bullying continues to cause concern, it is perhaps contentious that mainstream bullying literature which focuses on the school seems to fail to acknowledge wider work undertaken that may provide useful insight into causation of bullying. Bullying literature that explores more structural and environmental aspects of bullying has been discussed. Therefore it may follow that bullying discourse that is separate from wider discourse, pertaining to aspects of the school systems, may hinder progress in developing our understanding; particularly as the reality is that children experience school in a much more holistic way (Lleras, 2008). In reviewing the bullying literature, it may be as important to consider what research and/or literature is missing or has failed to influence bullying research and discourse as much as that which exists.

Erling and Roland (2004) observe that empirical research with a focus of wider social processes within schools that may influence bullying is almost entirely absent. The authors posit that there is a wealth of literature that explores school effectiveness and school improvement but is rarely explored in relation to bullying yet such work may offer valuable insights into how school operations and systems influence children's learning and behaviour at both the school and classroom level. Similarly, the International body of literature on children's well-being leans towards a more structural perspective of how schools' physical environment affects children's' well-being and may also offer insight; however it has not yet been synthesised within the bullying research. In their review of International literature, Awartani et al. (2008) state that children's emotional well-being is a predictor of effective social behaviour and that schools need to examine their physical and social environments, curricula, teaching and learning practices, and make appropriate changes in order to foster emotional well-being in children.

A particularly interesting body of literature is that which relates to 'school violence' (for example: Harber, 2004; Li, 2008; Johnson, 2009). There appears to be considerable overlap between this body of research and bullying research; often, the former acknowledging links with bullying but the latter failing to afford acknowledgement of the relevance of school violence studies. Given that a great deal of school violence, particularly during adolescence, involves pupils bullying their peers (Boulton, 1999), it may seem incongruous that bullying research is considered in the main, a distinct and separate area of research.

The literature on school violence relates aspects of school climate, social environment and the physical arrangement of schools as contributory factors in encouraging or negating school violence (Johnson, 2009). Like studies and interventions associated with bullying, school violence research considers school and classroom ethos, school culture, teacher-pupil relationships and curricula. The areas offered here of children's well-being, school violence and school climate research supply promising contribution to current bullying discourse. These and other areas in the same vein are not totally absent but where they are present, seem to attract rather scathing views. Galloway and Roland (2004, p.41) refer to 'school climate' as a "slippery concept" and describe the "equally nebulous concept of the hidden curriculum".

Harber's (2002) work offers an additional element that is often missing from mainstream bullying literature and considers the political context in which school systems are situated and how schooling is harmful to children through systems that reproduce and perpetuate violence. Similarly, Ross-Epp (2006) talks of systemic violence, which is perpetuated through the structures, policies and practices of education and other social systems. A publication by Leach (2003) also offers compelling arguments regarding the role of the school as a socialising agent that creates and perpetuates violence while drawing on a wealth of longstanding established literature relating to the sociology of education. Such a political strand seems particularly rare in mainstream bullying literature and may beg the question as to why there is an apparent omission.

Curiously, much bullying literature of a sociological affiliation acknowledges that publications allied to the pathological paradigm neglect to consider structural and environmental factors that may encourage or negate a climate that may sustain a climate of bullying. Yet literature emanating from the psychology paradigm seems to fail to embrace these arguments. Sociological explanations of bullying are largely ignored (Bansel, 2009): a common scholarly phenomenon that Duncan (2009b) attributes to purposeful neglect on the part of the researcher. Much literature appears to communicate the implicit understanding that bullying is framed within a psychology paradigm. Take for example Smith and Brain's (2000,p.7) reflections of school bullying research over the last 20 years:

Our knowledge of characteristics of children involved in bully-victim relationships, and their social networks, should continue to inform us more deeply of possibilities and difficulties of school-based interventions.

Such a view appears to continue the encouragement of research that locates the 'problem' within the individual and convey a need for remedial action. The authors omit to mention the contributions of a more sociological nature, despite discussing research developments regarding *ijime* [similar concept to bullying] in Japan. The authors refer to sociologist Morita (1999) but only to briefly set the historical context of bullying research in Japan. Sociologist Morita (1984) is noted for initiating bullying research in Japan, and has worked collaboratively with researchers adhering to contrasting paradigms (for example: Smith, Olweus, Slee). Indeed, searching for publications by Morita returns studies situated within an essentially psychology paradigm

where she has made a contribution, yet Morita's works on the sociological perspective are difficult to uncover suggesting this established body of research has yet to be synthesised into the mainstream bullying discourse. A rare article by Samnani (2013) explores the workplace bullying literature through different paradigmatic perspectives. The author calls for "a broadening of ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches to the study, and an analysis of workplace bullying" (p.27). This warns that a single paradigm approach restricts enrichment of the literature with a more comprehensive and powerful understanding of the phenomenon.

Olweus (1994) in a paper examining school-based intervention programmes, draws on findings from a selection of his own studies (Olweus, 1978; 1991; 1993) and declares a purposeful omission of early Scandinavian research as he asserts that they were carried out by undergraduate students with little supervision from more experienced researchers. In a recent paper by Olweus (2011), nine citations are included with seven of which being his own work. Whilst Olweus' esteemed contribution to the bullying research is unquestionable, one might question the self-promotion and dismissal of lesser-established researchers. If as Olweus (1999, p.21) states: "It is a fundamental democratic right for a child to feel safe in school and to be spared the oppression and repeated, intentional humiliation implied in bullying", then the bullying research community may have a moral responsibility to explore all possible causative factors of bullying regardless of disciplinary perspective.

## 2.8 Conclusion.

It is widely acknowledged that school age bullying continues to be a significant concern despite the literature, which seems unable to offer accurate prevalence rates of school age bullying. This is due to lack of a common and universal constructs and the variance of reporting measures and timeframe. Olweus' endorsement of his survey tool appears to be sufficient persuasion for it to take the lead in its application around the world. He also reaffirms his position and importance of philosophical position, warning of the dangers of neglecting an individualistic perspective. Yet Olweus' position, at times, seems to also align with a wider social interactionist perspective. Endorsement of one's field of expertise may strengthen professional legitimisation, creating a sustained need for professional interventions (Coleyshaw, 2010) and by offering an all-encompassing approach to theorisation of bullying may indeed strengthen researcher appeal or authoritative opinion. As Stephens (2011) asserts, Olweus's reputation as 'the "father" of bullying research' adds weight to the argument that his anti-bullying programme meets the most rigorous tests of effectiveness in the field. Harris's (2009) encouragement of a new paradigm which fuses social psychology with evolutionary and neuroscience disciplines seems to further demonstrate researcher maintenance and propagation of traditional bullying research perspectives. This would suggest that the move away from more individualistic perspectives is not as progressive as the literature would suggest, and inquiry into bullying remains within an essentially psychopathological paradigm.

The literature that suggests bullying is a pre-cursor to criminal and/or other anti-social or deviant behaviour as an adolescent or adult may need to be viewed with caution. The labelling of individuals may determine behaviour and set expectations of surrounding adults and peers making such labels inescapable. Typologies of perpetrators and targets of bullying are widespread in the literature. However, numerous authors make reference to dual role of bully/victim but do not seem to attempt to explain how this may challenge individualistic views of bullying. If, as the literature conveys, perpetrators and targets possess particular innate traits, then one would assume that such individuals would later appear in other contexts such as university. It may seem unreasonable to suggest that students who may possess 'perpetrator characteristics' (Zapf and Einarsen, 2003, seen in: Monks et al., 2009), Machiavellian traits (Sutton and Keogh, 2000) or victim characteristics (Olweus, 1978) simply do not attend university thereby negating the need for scholarly inquiry. It also brings into questions why some schools have comparatively higher concentration of such individuals. The literature on cyber bullying may offer some suggestions to this conundrum. Numerous studies report a strong overlap between perpetration and also being a target of cyber bullying (for example: Li, 2007). It seems more of a cultural activity that children within a school community engage in. The literature relates to an individualistic perspective, but only as far as socio-demographic information and for the most part avoids exploring the phenomenon in terms of profiling individuals and identifying particular personality characteristics. The literature on aspects of the school environment in terms of causation of bullying seems to receive a considerably lower profile than the apolitical perspective emanating from the field of

psychology. Classroom size, curriculum and pupil measurement and testing as influencing factors raise interesting arguments, which appear to fail to penetrate mainstream bullying literature and the comparatively more radical and political notions of 'bullying schools' (Duncan, 2009); institutions that reproduce and perpetuate violence (Haber, 2004) appear to be even further from mainstream bullying discourse. Perhaps it is as Reynolds (1976) argues: the lack of research into school regimes is because it is deemed a threat by educationalists and causes concern for teachers' unions, with only research of a generally unquestioning approach of the organisation of schooling being permitted.

The discussion of other fields of established research representing some of the wider literature that for the most part seem to run parallel to bullying research and literature and little synthesis or cross-fertilisation is evident. The literature appears dominated by the field of psychology. As Duncan (2009, p.4) contends: "any 'sociology' that enters the mainstream debate is limited to further pathologisation, but of the family or community, and is still of a conservative and positivist nature". Where more sociological concepts are referred to, they are maligned as 'slippery' and 'nebulous' and perhaps do not offer the tangibility that psychological constructs afford where interventions and remedial action can be imposed. An exploration of wider political dimensions of compulsory education systems and agenda relating to scholarly inquiry may illuminate drivers and influences upon bullying discourse. The next section discusses bullying research and literature relating to post-school age bullying.

### 3. Post school age bullying.

The literature relating to post school age bullying seems to present variation that is dependent on type of environment and therefore the following discussion will examine bullying literature in four specific contexts. The areas selected for examination are based on a need to explore literature relating workplace bullying in general and a specific focus on the areas of nursing, higher education and prison bullying. There is a wealth of established literature on bullying within the health sector that leads to intrigue as to why this environment has attracted such high levels of bullying research inquiry; literature relating to prisons was selected due to initial review, which suggested a marked contrast with other bullying literature. Bullying in post-compulsory education environments appears to have attracted little research inquiry particularly with regard to undergraduate students in university and, therefore, has stimulated curiosity. Also, as the central focus of this study is undergraduate student reflections of bullying over the life-course, the university context is pertinent to the literature review. The term post-school age bullying is used here to encompass those contexts not associated with workplace such as prisons and higher education though the term workplace bullying will be used where appropriate. The term nursing profession is used to encompass health work across a variety of clinical settings such as midwifery. Discussion looks at literature relating to prevalence rates, distribution and intervention of bullying and the legislative and policy context across the four areas. The discussion of the nature and attribution of bullying is separated by context to offer a deeper examination of literature pertaining to the four areas.

### 3.1 Prevalence of post school age bullying.

Workplace bullying is a widespread issue in organisations around the world (Einarsen et al., 2003). To illustrate the scale of the problem, in 2007 it was estimated that 33.5 million days were lost due to bullying within UK organisations; turnover and productivity was also being affected, costing the economy approximately £13.75 billion (Giga et al., 2008). A significant study by Fevre et al (2012) conducted 4000 interviews and four organisational case studies and estimate that half of the British workforce experience ill treatment at work, 40% of employees are subjected to incivility and over one million experience violence or injury. In the U.S. a national survey conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute (2010) reported 35% of the U.S. workforce (an estimated 53.5 million Americans) report being bullied at work and an additional 15% witness it. Grave (2002) estimates that a single perpetrator who inflicts bullying upon four employees will cost the organisation £46,000 in one year. Regarding bullying in the health sector, Hoban (2004) suggests that 85% of nurses either witness or are subjected to bullying. A survey conducted by the Royal College of Midwifery (1996) reports that 51% of midwives were bullied by a senior colleague and a report commissioned by the Department of Health (2005) states that bullying costs the NHS a minimum of £325 million pounds per year. Indeed, the cost to organisations and industry is consistently reiterated throughout the literature and seems to afford position of central concern in its justification of research inquiry. Koonin and Green (2004) state that costs to organisations can include: recruitment and training of replacement workers, overtime, healthcare expense (medical and psychiatric), legal fees and compensation, administrative costs for investigating complaints and decreased public image and trust. The authors assert that organisational

response to bullying is not only in the interests of the protection of workers, but also the organisations financial interests. The prevalence rates offered here are by no means exhaustive, more so rather a flavour of reported prevalence rates across the workplace bullying literature. The breadth of this area of inquiry returns innumerable studies, each drawing on a wealth of reported statistics around the world. Perhaps of more significance are areas of bullying research inquiry that have not attracted the same level of focus.

According to Ireland and Ireland (2000), research into bullying in prisons has been neglected by comparison to other contexts despite those studies undertaken reporting high levels of bullying and continuing to be one of the most significant 'pains of imprisonment' (Hampton, 2012). Ireland has been at the forefront of this area of inquiry though often collaborating with others (for example: Ireland and Ireland, 2002; Ireland and Snowden, 2002; Ireland et al., 2007; Ireland and Southall, 2009; Ireland and Turner, 2010). A more recent study by Hampton (2012) systematically reviewed fourteen studies that provide prevalence rates of bullying amongst prisoners concluding that an average of 54% of prisoners reported bullying perpetration and 63% reported bullying victimisation. However, there were significant ranges in figures across these studies ranging between 29-74% for bullying and 40-87% for victimisation. A few of the available statistics from earlier studies are presented here. Ireland's (2002) study of young offenders across five young offenders' institutions reported that 81% of participants believed bullying between young offenders was a problem in any institution, and 67% believed it was a problem in their institution. Regarding adult prisons, Ireland (2002) found that overall estimates range from 0–67% for prisoners who report

bullying others, and 5–57% for prisoners who report being a target. However, when prisoners were presented with a list of distinct bullying behaviours, estimates ranged from 40–70% for perpetrators and 41–55% for being targeted. When asked about witnessing bullying, 15–66% of prisoners report having seen an incident of bullying, and 13–66% report having heard about an incident. A study by South and Wood (2006) reported that of 132 prisoners, 84 (63.6%) perpetrated bullying whilst 106 (80.3%) reported being targeted in the last six months. As with any statistical evidence, it should be treated with caution but particularly so in the prison context due to stigma attached in reporting being bullied and prison subculture of not being seen as an informant (Hampton, 2012).

Prevalence rates in non-compulsory education sector even more limited. Literature relating to the university context reports bullying across academic staff, which is also seen to be rife (Lewis 2004; Lipsett 2005; McKay et al., 2008; Luca, 2008) and the increasing prevalence of students' expressions of dissatisfaction and aggression sometimes deemed bullying, towards academic staff (Lee et al., 2007). But literature with a focus on student-to-student bullying is particularly lacking and therefore prevalence rates are also scarce. An exception is a study in the USA by Chapell et al. (2004) which found that university students experience bullying by both peers and teachers. The sample of 1,025 undergraduates indicated that over 60% of the students reported having observed a student being bullied by another student, and over 44% had seen a teacher bully a student. More than 6% of the students reported having been bullied by another student occasionally or very frequently, and almost 5% reported being bullied by a teacher occasionally or

very frequently. Over 5% of the students stated that they bullied students occasionally or very frequently. Student bullying was predicted by having seen other students bully, and by having been bullied by both students and teachers. Such findings appear to conflict with literature that follows a developmental perspective whereby bullying decreases with age and is congruent with the theoretical stance of modelling as influencing bullying behaviour (Lewis, 2001).

Only a few other sources have reported prevalence rates. One such source is the National Student Survey (NUS, 2008), which reported that 7% of university students had experienced bullying; 79% of these students stated that this involved a fellow student but had not been reported to the institution. A survey by the Equality Challenge Unit (2009), reporting on the experiences of 4205 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students, found that 20% had experienced bullying and 28.5% of transgender students taking time out of their courses as a result. A National Student Health survey across Finnish universities sampled 4969 university students, 5.6% of which reported being bullied by fellow students (Myers and Cowie, 2014). Similarly, a sample of 2805 students in another Finnish study, 5% reported being bullied by a fellow student or member of staff (Sinkkonen et al., 2014).

As is characteristic of bullying prevalence statistics in any context, caution is required in view of the variable definitional and measurement criteria (Coyne et al., 2003; Einarsen, 2000) but nonetheless illustrate the regularity with which bullying occurs (Meglich et al., 2008). Conversely, the comparative dearth of reported prevalence rates of university in terms of student-to-student

bullying raises questions as to why this context has seemingly escaped any significant level of inquiry. If the bullying research community supposes that bullying is not a significant feature of the undergraduate university experience or as Duncan (2009a) describes as a “bully-lite” environment, then it would seem reasonable that bullying research and discourse would benefit from inquiry that seeks to explore why this may be. The common difficulties of reliance upon self-reporting and variation in definitions and methodologies are as likely to be characteristic in this context as any other. One such example is a study by Curwen et al. (2011), which represents a rare contribution in exploring undergraduate experience of bullying.

Curwen et al. (2011) examined the progression of bullying from school to university. The study used “a retrospective design to investigate the history of bullying behaviour of 186 young adult bullies”. Participants were 196 undergraduate students who – “had reported having bullied at least once since attending university” (p.48). The questionnaire used a pre-defined definition of bullying drawing on Olweus’ (1995) criteria of behaviour that is repeated, intentional and characterised by an imbalance of power where the victims cannot defend themselves. Reported results showed that “almost all university students who bullied had a history of bullying or “bullying careers,” suggesting that “adult bullying may be entrenched and thus difficult to change” (p.51). Investigation into those students within the sample who self-identified: “revealed that the majority self-reported not being a bully, even though they engaged in multiple bullying behaviours” (p.51). Such a study demonstrates issues discussed earlier where study design influences outcomes particularly where a definition of bullying is offered. Such studies maintain the view of

bullying through a developmental lens and omit to explore the features within these differing environments that might be contributory.

### 3.2 Distribution of bullying.

Workplace bullying is present, though not evenly distributed, across industry (Omari, 2007) and has been identified as being a problem especially for employees in social, health, public administration, and education sectors (Zapf et al., 2003), but is also prevalent in the private sector (Kelly, 2006). At the workplace level, a number of studies have examined workplace bullying in terms of perpetrator and victim organisational status (Rayner, 1997; Hoel et al., 2001; Salin, 2001). Hierarchical or vertical modes of bullying dominate the literature. However, the dominant pattern is reported to vary from country to country (Beale and Hoel, 2011). In Nordic countries, co-worker bullying predominates (Hoel and Einarsen, 2010). In the UK, managers are usually perpetrators of bullying upon employees (Rayner et al., 2002; Kelly, 2006). A UK study found that of 59% of nurses who experienced being bullied were targeted by a manager (Quine, 2001). Meglich et al. (2008) describe the archetypical “bully” as the tyrannical supervisor that wields power over employees or as Tepper (2000) describes, operates ‘abusive supervision’.

The post school-age bullying literature is replete with the contentions around relations of power and how these relations create the conditions for bullying. Meglich et al. (2008) state that the misuse of power occurs at all levels of the organisation, both vertically and horizontally. They discuss vertical bullying in the workplace where managers and supervisors, by virtue of their position in the workforce structure, have a position of power over employees. Yet co-

workers may hold informal power such as controlling access to resources, information or social connections. Horizontal bullying is particularly common where teamwork and cooperation are needed within the workplace (Hoel and Einarsen; 2003; Salin, 2003). In prisons social status can represent power. South and Woods (2006) study explored prisoner social status as a determinant of bullying and report that those prisoners who place a higher importance upon social status are more likely to engage in bullying. It is interesting that the relationship between bullying and power is one of the primary foci in bullying research irrespective of context, yet it is markedly different with regard to school bullying. In the school bullying literature, power relations are largely discussed at pupils' interpersonal level and rarely consider the abuse of power in a vertical direction from teachers upon pupils. Mainstream school bullying literature that considers the organisation of school systems and how they may feed into the conditions that create a climate of bullying is even less prominent.

Some studies report the effects of gender and bullying. A study by Zapf (1999) reported that male perpetrators bullied 26% of targets, 11% were by females and 63% were harassed by both male and female perpetrators. These findings are congruent with those of Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) that report 49%, 30% and 21% respectively. The authors highlight that male perpetrators harass targets of both genders while female perpetrators tend to harass only female targets. Meglich et al. (2008) point to specific bullying actions taken against the target that seem to be determined by gender. Females tend to use more relational tactics of affecting social relationships, using attacks on an individual's reputation while male perpetrators tend to use

strategies that sabotage the target's work in some way. Such findings are also reported in other studies and resonate with the school bullying literature in terms of the relationship between gender and bullying. However, Aquino and Bradfield (2000) question to what extent gender effects are dependent upon organisational contexts. Fevre et al (2012) study revealed that certain employees are more at risk of being targeted such as those people with long-term illness or disabilities or LGBT employees but also environmental features such as larger workplaces particularly the public sector. Indeed, environments permissive of bullying are a particular feature of certain industries. Bullying and abusive behaviour is reported to be an accepted aspect of employment in commercial kitchens (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008). Archer (1999) reports that group culture within the fire service operates indoctrination into the team through bullying, serving to bond team members. Fire fighter teams have a strong group culture, Archer explains, and spend large amounts of time working and socialising together and those that do not fit the group norm and do not conform are isolated. The differences in organisational ethos are wide ranging, so too the effects these differing ethos have upon the members within each setting (Rivers et al., 2007).

Physical characteristics of organisations are reported to be indicative of levels of bullying. Hearn and Parkin (2001) found that large workforces provide anonymity for perpetrators, reducing the risk and potential costs to themselves. A study by Nagi et al. (2006) reports particular locations within the prison where bullying is perpetrated; the areas of work, exercise and recess/showers. Ireland (2002) asserts that particular elements of the social and physical environment promote aggression in secure settings. Increased

social and spatial density, limited and predictable supervision, rationing of material goods, lack of stimulation and subcultures that promote aggression can all serve to encourage bullying (Ireland, 2005). One might apply such characteristics to the school environment. Indeed, as has been discussed, these elements have been explored in the bullying literature pertaining to the school context (for example: Carter, 2002; Duncan, 2009b; Horton, 2009), yet such features of schools and how they may contribute to conditions for bullying to thrive are not afforded the same level of scrutiny in mainstream school bullying literature.

### 3.3 Legislative and policy context.

Encompassed within the human rights act (1998) is the right to protection from harassment and bullying, which is applicable to prisoners and well as the general population. Protection of prisoners is also legislated in the Prison Act (2000) and the mandatory National Instruction on violence reduction in prisons. In terms of workplace bullying, there has been a wealth of legislation to protect employees and legal obligations put upon employers to protect employees. Few acts or mandatory obligations specifically pertain to bullying and it appears that bullying is most often encompassed within related legislation and employment law. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005) stipulates employer responsibilities in 'managing and conducting work activities in such a way as to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, any improper conduct or behaviour likely to put the safety, health and welfare at work of his or her employees at risk'. It also applies to employees in relation to their duties to 'not engage in improper conduct or behaviour that is likely to endanger his or her safety, health and welfare at work or that of any other

person'. A supporting Code of Practice (2007) provides practical guidance for employers on identifying and preventing bullying at work arising from their duties under the act.

Definition of workplace bullying is influenced by the legal context often incorporating sexual and racial harassment (Rayner and Hoel., 1997). For this reason, it may be necessary to briefly return to terms used to describe workplace bullying. Early works by Brodsky (1976) introduced the term 'workplace harassment' and scholarly contributions since then have included a range of terms such as emotional abuse (Keashly and Harvey, 2006), workplace aggression (Baron and Neuman, 1996), workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 1994) and mobbing (Leymann, 1990) but also interpersonal workplace harassment (Keashly and Jagatic, 2003) or interpersonal mistreatment (Lim and Cortina, 2005). Fevre et al (2012) raise that it is important to consider that the concept of bullying is mired amongst a range of labels and constructs and their work positions bullying with the concept of ill-treatment in the workplace. However, the core dimensions seem to be repetition and enduring negative acts, with some highlighting the negative effects upon the victim. The literature that discusses the use of the term 'harassment' may raise particularly interesting legal implications. Einarsen (2000) raises that though the terms 'bullying' and 'harassment' imply different actual or perceived power differential between perpetrator and target, there is in fact no difference in terms of power differentials that exist between perpetrators and victims of either bullying or harassment. Lim and Cortina's (2005) findings seem to further blur the legal responsibility of employers. The majority of female participants who reported being subjected to gender or

sexualised harassment also reported experiencing general workplace mistreatment but not vice versa, suggesting that sexual harassment often takes place against a backdrop of generalised deviant workplace behaviours. However, harassment is governed by equality legislation and is predicated on the individual being a member of one of the categories specified within the anti-harassment legislation: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. The legal position perceives bullying as distinct from harassment as bullying behaviour is not predicated on membership of any distinct group (CoP, 2007). However, as discussed earlier, the bullying research community identifies bullying of specific groups such as some of those mentioned here while also framing bullying as interpersonal workplace harassment. If legislation protects employees against harassment it may seem reasonable to expect equality legislation to encompass workplace bullying.

#### 3.4 Intervention.

Interventions into bullying in adulthood predominantly take a preventative approach in the form of legislation that aims to protect both employers and employees. The following discussion examines interventions discussed in the literature focusing on workplace to include the nursing profession and comparatively limited literature on prison and higher education bullying intervention.

### 3.4.1 Workplace bullying intervention.

In 2004 the UK government invested £1 million in the largest research study on workplace bullying undertaken to date, and was carried out by trade union Amicus. The report was published in 2005. Key findings and recommendations which continue to be promoted as part of the Dignity at Work Partnership include; zero tolerance as the most effective approach; clear policy, early and informal action to resolve complaints and mandatory training. The report is cautious in attributing individual perpetrator/target characteristics and makes clear the contribution of organisational factors. The report also puts forward a business case approach to recognise the cost that bullying and harassment can cost organisations and the benefits of a zero tolerance approach. However, Cleary et al. (2009) posit that zero tolerance policies are only effective when applied to all levels of the organisation with no exceptions to adherence. In her discussion of bullying in nursing, Olender-Russo (2009) raises that managers and senior staff must model behaviours that demonstrate regard for others and promote a culture of regard. In the literature relating to the nursing profession, there is a strong focus on the need for effective training of management in recognising and addressing workplace bullying and adequate reporting mechanisms and support services (McKenna et al., 2003). The relevant Code of Practice (2007) takes a preventative stance recommending measures such as having a bullying prevention policy in place; provision of appropriate training and development at all levels, but particularly for line manager roles. The code recommends ensuring the clarity of individual and departmental goals, roles and accountabilities and ensuring access to relevant supportive structures both internal and external.

#### 3.4.2 Prisons bullying intervention.

Bullying and intimidation was found to be associated with 20% of self-inflicted deaths in custody, as investigated by the Prison and Probation Ombudsman (2011) and is of significant concern in policy guidelines. As laid out in local and national violence reduction strategies, each prison must have a clear strategy to addressing bullying. The strategy should promote the safety of prisoners and staff. Recommendations include the use of conflict resolution, behaviour management of particular individuals and addressing organisational and environmental factors. Interventions seem predominantly individualistic in approach though some organisational/structural factors in addressing bullying are also recommended such as a focus on policy and a need to assess the impact that any changes of policy may have on prisoner behaviour and further policy development to reduce conflict. The Measuring Quality of Prison Life report (Liebling et al., 2011) encourages prisons to consider environmental and physical features such as visibility and layout when addressing bullying. While such policy guidelines advocate interventions largely aimed at groups and individuals, there is a common thread that recognises more structural factors that may contribute to bullying.

#### 3.4.3 Higher Education

Any research into intervention strategies at university is “totally lacking” (Merilainen et al., 2014) but this is likely due to a lack of bullying research inquiry in this area as a whole. However, guidelines exist by which HE institutions should demonstrate due regard and addressing bullying are subsumed within these. The Equality Challenge Unit’s guidelines ‘Promoting

good campus relations: dealing with hate crimes and intolerance' (2005) recommends that higher education institutions are to have a range of policies as part of their equality and diversity strategy to demonstrate the institution's commitment to equality and diversity principles and practice. They must indicate how these are embedded in institutional practices and demonstrate what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the institution. Universities are required to have clear policy statements on bullying and harassment, and how to recognise it. Policy must set out manager, staff and student responsibilities and duties in preventing and responding to bullying incidence (UCU, 2008).

### 3.5 Nature of post school age bullying.

There are a wealth of empirical studies that have documented the effects of bullying upon adults which range from common, simple direct effects of psychosomatic stress symptoms (Randall, 2002); can frequently cause depression, anxiety and other cognitive dysfunction (Hoel et al., 1999), feelings of shame (Lewis, 2004); and has been linked to post traumatic stress disorder (Leymann and Gustafsson, 1996) and dissatisfaction and wishing to or actually leaving the job/profession in question (Lindy and Schaefer, 2010). Randall (2002) also reports suicidal ideation as being frequently reported by participants in his studies. The following discussion explores the nature of bullying in each of the contexts under focus.

#### 3.5.1 Workplace bullying.

Workplace bullying can take the form of more direct acts such as verbal abuse, accusations and public degradation, but it can also be of a more subtle

and indirect in nature such as gossiping, rumour spreading and social exclusion (Einarsen et al., 2009). More comprehensively, Rayner and Hoel (1997, p. 183) have suggested that five categories of bullying behaviour are to be found in the workplace: threat to professional status (e.g. belittling opinion, public professional degradation, accusation of work avoidance); threat to personal standing (e.g. gossiping about an individual, name-calling, insults, mockery); isolation (e.g. controlling access to holiday entitlement or training opportunities, physical or social isolation, withholding of information required to fulfill employment duties); overwork (e.g. unjustified pressure to produce work, unfeasible deadlines, purposeful disruptions to task completion); and destabilisation (e.g. failure to give positive acknowledgment but repeated reminders of error, meaningless tasks, erosion of responsibility, shifting of goalposts, setting up to fail).

Clinical psychologist Egan (2005) suggests a typology of workplace bullying behaviours that move along a continuum, which reflects the severity of the behaviours, the degree of self-interest and also the level of intent to cause damage to a colleague. Egan outlines three types of bullying behaviours: accidental bullying where aggressive, demanding behaviours are imposed upon employees in the pursuit of wider organisational aims and perpetrators are often unaware of the effects of their behaviour. Narcissistic bullying is more severe where perpetrators show a lack of empathy and show destructive, self-absorbed attitudes and behaviours, blaming, fault-finding, devalues others, is deceitful and may take credit for others' work. Thirdly, the psychopathic bullying behaviour intentionally seeks to harm others in pursuit of self-interests, denies any accountability and resists efforts to modify

behaviour. Aside from 'accidental bullying', the typologies offered by Egan are pathological in nature and further studies also take on a more individualistic perspective that attribute bullying to particular personality traits and characteristics (Coyne et al., 2000; Maththiesen and Einarsen, 2007; Moreno-Jimenez et al., 2009). The literature suggests that the identification of such traits can predict individuals' behaviour and necessitate appropriate programs (Parkin et al., 2006). In contrast, Moreno-Jimenez et al. (2009) posit that there has been researcher avoidance of such an individualistic perspective and a move to focus on wider workplace predictors of bullying. This, the authors claim is due to researchers wanting to avoid using approaches that blame the target. The authors do however concede that several studies continue to suggest that a victim's personality traits and other individual factors can be associated with bullying. There are some parallels with school-aged bullying literature whereby such individualistic perspectives with typologies of traits and characteristics of bullying are shared. So too regarding 'bullying roles' in the school bullying literature (see p.40). Participant roles are discussed in terms of perpetrator, target, witness, and bystander roles with some author's describing dual roles or fluidity between multiple roles. The essential focus remains upon the pupil and how interventions can remedy situations. Similarly, Tehrani's (2012) work in a workplace context explores these roles but in slight contrast to the bullying literature within the school context, the 'rescuer' or counsellor is encouraged to consider their role within the bully - victim – rescuer drama triangle. However like the school based literature, essentially, the responsibility for the occurrence of bullying behaviour remains within the individual and requires remedial intervention. Where there is divergence in the school and workplace bullying literature is the greater

acknowledgement of more structural influences in bullying across the mainstream workplace bullying research. For example, Baillien et al (2011) study reveals the role of job characteristics in the emergence of workplace bullying. Increased work load and reduced job autonomy were found to be antecedents of bullying as oppose to a consequence of bullying which would seem to support a more structural perspective. However, such works are still presented primarily within an organisational psychology perspective.

### 3.5.2 Nursing profession.

Newly qualified nurses appear to be particularly susceptible to experiencing bullying (Laschinger et al., 2010) and those still in training (Hinchberger, 2009). Workplace bullying threatens new graduates' adjustment to their roles, their health and wellbeing, and sometimes contributes to nurses leaving their profession (Laschinger et al., 2010). McKenna et al. (2003) study reports that many new graduate nurses are exposed to bullying in their first year and a high proportion of which consider leaving the profession as a result of being targeted. Similarly, Houshmand et al. (2012) study of a sample of 41 hospital units and 357 nurses revealed that working in an environment where bullying is characteristic, creates a climate which has significant effects upon increased employee turnover intentions, not just for those directly experiencing bullying but those who indirectly experiencing it. Returning to Mckenna et a. (2012) study, report that registered nurses in their first year are frequently subjected to horizontal bullying. Indeed, horizontal bullying is associated with a significant proportion of the bullying literature relating to the nursing profession (Hinchberger, 2009). Horizontal bullying, also termed as horizontal violence, most commonly takes the form of psychological

harassment as opposed to physical aggression across workers of similar status. This creates hostility and involves verbal abuse, threats, coercion, degradation, excessive criticism, exclusion, denial of access to opportunity, and the withholding of information and resources (Quine, 1999; McKenna et al., 2003). Fear of reprisals and a cynicism of the effectiveness of reporting processes particularly if the identified person to report to is the very person who is perpetrating the bullying behaviour, results in a general trend of underreporting by nurses (McKenna et al., 2003). Other researchers report that bullying is fostered through inaction on the part of management (Speedy, 2006), and a lack of appropriate intervention to stop reoccurrence (Farrell, 1996).

### 3.5.3 Prisons.

Regarding bullying in prisons, studies report that indirect forms of verbal and psychological bullying are found to be the most widely experienced and witnessed and more direct forms such as physical abuse, theft or extortion are less frequently experienced and witnessed (Ireland, 2002; Nagi et al., 2006). Power et al.'s (1997) study of young offenders found taking (threatening individuals for material gain) to be most prevalent. Ireland (2002) believes that less direct forms of bullying are preferred in a prison environment since they are harder to detect thereby reducing the likelihood that the perpetrator will be caught and punished which may result in loss of privileges. Fear of bullying is strongly associated with the prison environment (Allison and Ireland, 2010). Ireland (2005) offers an 'Applied Fear Response Model' where fear influences a prisoner's response to and anticipation of bullying and such fear can exist with no prior experience of bullying. This, Ireland argues, suggests a causal

link between the environments as bullying. Studies report that the highest group of perpetrators are those that engage in both perpetrator and target roles (Ireland, 1999., Ireland and Archer, 2002; South and wood, 2006). Inmate culture values dominance (Ireland, 2000) and respect is gained through bullying perpetration (Ireland and Archer, 2002).

#### 3.5.4 Higher Education.

Literature regarding undergraduate student-to-student bullying in higher education remains almost absent (Lester, 2009) and yet the unique character of this environment is the space between compulsory schooling and the workplace may offer useful insight and further bullying discourse. Lewis (1999, 2001, 2003, 2004) has undertaken significant work with a focus on bullying in FE/HE but at employment level and offers a rare sociological perspective. Keashly and Neuman (2010) also focus on faculty experiences of bullying and similarly, in Thomas' (2005) work the emphasis is on bullying amongst support-staff in HE. However the undergraduate experience remains neglected. This is despite the massification of higher education and market orientation, including resultant competition across institutions, which is changing the climate within the university to a more user-led service where an expectation of value for money is altering the behaviour of students (Naidoo 2003). These tensions, coupled with the political drive to widen participation and encourage an increasingly diverse student body, warrant investigation into the effects upon the student experience and the extent to which bullying may be a feature of the modern day university experience. If as the literature suggests that enforced team or group work encourages horizontal bullying (Zapf et al., 1996) and aspects of the teaching and learning environment

(Yoneyama, 2008; Thornberg, 2008) and psychosocial environment of the workplace (Hoel and Salin, 2003) can encourage or negate a climate where bullying can thrive then such theory may apply to the university student experience.

A positive aspect of university environment reported in a study of lesbian, gay and transgender university students and staff (Equality Challenge Unit, 2009) reported that higher education provided a safe space where they could “be themselves’. As supported by Scaffer and Korn (2001) who raise that for previously bullied students, the more open-structured nature of university offers some degree of recovery from previous negative educational experience (Schaffer et al., 2004) whereas restrictive and oligarchic environments encourage and sustain a climate where bullying can thrive (Carter, 2002).

A focus on bullying within a university context is emerging in American bullying literature. Here, bullying research and literature has been driven by the incidence of school shootings and studies that report findings regarding subjection to school bullying as a precursor to the perpetration of violence at university (Capell et al., 2004). Capell et al. (2004) study represents a rare report on the prevalence of student bullying in university, but unfortunately does not discuss the nature of behaviours. For the most part, any available literature discusses bullying at academic staff level. An American study by Lester (2009) examines the nature of bullying across faculty and the importance of contextual factors in the prevalence of bullying and reports that enabling structures within the university facilitate bullying. Such structures and

bullying acts are consistent with those reported in wider workplace bullying literature elsewhere such as culture, power relations, policies and practices, all of which may possibly create an environment permissive of bullying (Lester, 2009).

### 3.6 Attribution of post school age bullying.

It appears that the level to which attributions of bullying receive attention in the literature varies upon the context in which it is discussed. The following discussion examines bullying literature pertaining to the selected contexts in more detail.

#### 3.6.1. Workplace bullying.

The literature relating to workplace bullying typically reflects three main approaches: firstly, an individualistic approach, which focuses on personality characteristics and propensity for an individual to perpetrate bullying or their vulnerability in becoming a target. Secondly, inherent characteristics of interactions between individuals and organisations documenting the prevalence of workplace bullying, age and gender differences, types of bullying behaviours experienced, who it is reported to and how it is responded to. Thirdly, an organisational psychology approach, which focuses on the interaction between the individual and the organisation: looking at the effects of aspects of the organisational structure and climate which encourage or inhibit bullying (Quine, 2001; Hoel and Salin, 2003).

However, the extents to which these three perspectives are presented in the literature to explain workplace bullying seem to vary considerably. Hoel and

Cooper (2001) assert that most research on workplace bullying has rejected pathological explanations and state that the dominant discourse has been the individual and group dynamics, the effects of bullying and therapeutic responses. Leifooage and Davey (2001) posit that the pathologisation of perpetrators and targets serves to avoid acknowledgement of organisational practices that encourage bullying. Whereas Lewis (2004) asserts that individual personality has a role to play, bullying is predominantly contextually situated. Meglich et al. (2008) state that whilst research has not identified a particular 'bully personality', certain attributes of personality are likely to influence the emergence of a perpetrator though recognise that there is no empirical evidence for this.

Other sources of literature support notions of personality traits as determinants of bullying such as neuroticism (Vartia, 1996) and low self-esteem (Parkins et al., 2006) and have psychopathic characteristics (Hare and Babiak, 2006). However, Rayner and Hoel (1997) state that the 'psychopathic bully' is extremely rare and only account for a small part of bullying. Risk factors to being targeted reported in studies can be individuals' poor social skills and inability to resolve problems with other employees are at increased risk of being targeted (Zapf, 1999; Coyne et al., 2000). Targets of bullying are reported to have lower levels of emotional stability and dominance, as well as higher levels of anxiety, apprehension and sensitivity (O'Moore et al., 1998) and likely to show symptoms of anxiety and depression even before the onset of bullying (Zapf, 1999). Moving away from individualistic perspectives, findings from a study by Lewis (2006) have

concluded that rather than bullying being attributed as a psychological deficit within the individual, it arises through learned behaviour within the workplace.

Beale and Hoel (2010) state that some workplace bullying literature takes an alternative perspective of 'impersonal bullying', identifying the organisation as the bully and acknowledge this shift towards more sociological explanations that consider organisational climate, work environment and socialisation processes. But in the main, these are presented through an organisational psychology lens. Studies emanating from this perspective focus on the links between the qualities of the work environment and how employers and employees interaction with these may explain the occurrence of bullying behaviour. Avergold (2009) examines the relationship between organisational factors and the incidence of bullying by comparing departments that were reported to have widespread bullying with departments with little actual bullying being reported. The results suggest that departments with a poorer psychosocial work environment have increased levels of bullying. Organisational factors such as changes in an individual's position, the pressure of work and performance demands, oppressive management, role conflict and lack of role clarity contributed towards organisational climate of bullying.

Types of leadership as causation of bullying are another central tenet of the workplace bullying literature. Here too, the literature presents a mixed perspective regarding the relationship between particular styles of management and bullying perpetration. Boddy's (2011) study links the presence of corporate psychopaths in the workplace with higher levels of

bullying and unfair supervision. Authoritarian and laissez-faire approaches are reported to encourage a climate where bullying can thrive (Hoel and Salin, 2003); aggressive and exploitative leadership styles (Ishmael and Alemoru, 1999) or weak or ineffective leadership (Strandmark and Hallberg, 2007); abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) or destructive leadership (Einarsen et al., 2007). Soylu (2010, p.219) states that bullying is “triggered by exploitatively paternalistic managers who seek loyalty in exchange for care or aim to sustain authority at work”.

Issues of power and powerlessness pervade the literature and how abuses of relational power are facilitated or inhibited by particular organisational contexts (Hodson et al., 2006., Strandmark and Hallberg, 2007). Sheenan (1999) attributes the constantly changing market and increasing competitiveness that companies and organisations are faced with. These in turn, can create organisational problems that in turn create conflict between employees. Organisational distrust and employment insecurity is reported as significant causation in encouraging a climate where bullying can thrive (Hearn and Parkin, 2001). Such insecurity diminishes workers' power and creates a 'pressure-cooker environment', as management use intimidation and blame towards employees in response to their own anxieties regarding job security (Salin, 2003). Similarly, Liefoghe and Davey (2001) regard organisational restructuring to influence workplace-bullying behaviour as it raises insecurity with regard to redundancies and puts extra demands upon remaining employees. Interestingly, the contributory factors offered here relating to more structural and operational facets appear to be prevalent across the literature; yet for the most part, the literature remains within the

boundary of the field of organisational psychology. Any overtly sociological perspectives remain outside of the mainstream bullying research literature or are subjected to further pathologisation (Duncan, 2009b).

Other macro-political factors relating to the wider industrial financial climate are also discussed. A focus on excellence and quality in an increasingly globalised and competitive market place is reported by Lewis (1999) to have increased pressure upon workers and managers creating an environment ripe for bullying. McCarthy and Mayhew (2004, p.24) describe this as systemic violence that “arises and is sustained where global market capitalism and post-modern culture combine and are translated internally into a violence-conducive organisational culture”. The authors state that it is the perpetrators who become ‘conduits’ passing external pressures onto employees/colleagues. Similarly, Beale and Hoel (2011) state that workplace bullying is better understood as “an endemic feature of the capitalist employment relationship”. Transferring a macro-political perspective towards the school context might reveal potential influences that also create a pressurised environment ripe for bullying. Yet such a perspective is missing from dominant discourses of the school bullying research literature. External demands of government standards, school inspection and the pressures placed upon teachers to meet assessment-related targets continue to be under-explored as contributory in creating a climate where bullying is fostered and maintained (Rivers et al., 2007; Horton, 2009). Furedi (2009) talks of the corrosive impact of education policy in its continually changing forms, eroding teachers’ professional status and teacher-pupil relationships. The author talks of government ministers, social commentators and parents obsessing about

problems with current education and a perceived deterioration of pupil behaviour and a 'crisis of education', which then stimulates yet further governmental interference. Similarly, Duncan (2013, p.31) refers to "incessant bureaucratic tinkering". This macro-political view represents an area of inquiry that has had little synthesis into the mainstream bullying research literature.

### 3.6.2. Nursing profession.

The literature on bullying in nursing appears to be dominated by a structural causation of bullying and takes on an organisational perspective. Scant regard seems to be made to individualistic notions of bullying in this context. A significant amount of literature pertaining to this context discusses a perceived acceptance of bullying within the profession. Lewis (2001) reports that people in high-level positions within the nursing profession regard psychologically violent behaviours in the workplace to be characteristic of both their position within the hierarchical structure and overall professional practice. Bullying can become so normalised within an organisation that it becomes invisible (Clegg, 1993) or used as a means of maintaining order (Hutchinson et al., 2006) and becomes learned behaviour (Lewis, 2006).

The literature offers causal explanations as to why bullying is particularly characteristic of the nursing profession. Raynor (2000) suggests that the National Health Service is complex in its profile and size, representing multiple groups and cultures, which lead to differing groups being treated differently. Hutchinson et al. (2006) offer that bullying in nursing has long been understood in terms of 'oppressed group behaviour' where nurses are doubly oppressed by both gender and medical dominance. As a result, nurses are

socialised into power structures and unequal relations that can translate to horizontal bullying across colleagues.

Hutchinson et al.'s (2009) study offers an interesting glimpse into the nurse experience and analyse the bullying experiences of nurses through the lens of organisational corruption. The authors refer to Lindgreen (2004,p.215) who describes corruption as:

A form of behaviour which involves the individual or institutional misuse of public resources or entrusted power, for private power, profit or political gain through conduct that deviates from normal rules

Such behaviours, the authors state, include acts that may be considered bullying. Participants reported a 'forced silence' regarding deviant practices and behaviours. Such bullying occurred against a backdrop of institutionalised silence and censorship, valorising bullying behaviour and becoming embedded throughout the institution. Hutchinson et al. (2009) also describe 'predatory alliances' where stable networks of perpetrators targeted multiple individuals over a sustained period of time. Participants described these groups as 'cliques', 'cults' and an 'old girls club' and were characterised by a hierarchy where junior staff supported higher ranking staff. Participants also reported that loyalty to alliances often supported career progression. There was increased promotion and reward in the network of alliances, which encouraged members of the alliances to engage in further bullying. Institutional authority structures and systems indeed protected the perpetrators in the alliances. Fear of reprisal deterred nurses from reporting incidents and anti-bullying policy was felt to be meaningless. The authors

conclude that corrupt systems are self-perpetuating and self-protecting and organisational sub-cultures are supportive of bullying conduct.

### 3.6.3. Prisons.

Bullying in prisons is an emerging body of literature, which is to date comparatively minimal, and as has already been alluded to, this area of inquiry has been largely driven by the work of psychologist, Jane Ireland. To illustrate her contribution to the field, a basic search of the database 'Swetswise' using the search criteria 'prison bullying' and not restricted by date, returned 29 papers, 25 of which Ireland is sole or co-author. Ireland's (2005) 'Interaction Model of Prison Bullying' explains bullying as arising from the interaction between prisoners and their environment, which both influences and reinforces bullying in individuals predisposed to such behaviours. Literature that explores bullying in the context of personality characteristics is less prevalent than more environmental-based causation. Regarding targets of bullying, a study by Nagi et al., (2006) suggests that there are no explicit personality types of inmates who are bullied. However, some categories of prisoner have been identified as susceptible to being targeted such as sex offenders and those serving a first-time sentence (Willmott, 1997). Other factors such as length of time in prison are reported as predicting bullying behaviour (Ireland, 1997; Power et al., 1997).

Cultural aspects of prison bullying are a strong theme in the prison bullying literature. South and Wood (2006) refer to Clemmer (1940, p.270) who puts forward the notion of 'prisonisation'; "the adoption of the folkways, mores, customs and general culture of the inmate subculture". Prisonisation, the

authors argue, influences the relationships and behaviour between inmates. They accept the social hierarchy of the prison culture and strongly identify with inmate norms. Those inmates who fall outside of this subculture have an increased risk of being targeted. This subculture is vital to explaining bullying behaviour (Ireland, 2000). Allison and Ireland's (2010) study explores the relationship between social and physical environmental factors supportive of bullying. Their study explores the physical environment as a determinant of bullying. Increased population, spatial and social densities are reported to be factors supportive of bullying and the competition to control material goods; so too a culture which supports bullying which is not confined to inmates. Indeed, Power et al. (1997) study reports that staff members bullied 33% of young offenders. Such work represents a rare exploration of more sociological causative factors despite being undertaken by researchers whose work emanates from the discipline of psychology.

#### 3.6.4. Higher Education.

Much of the literature relating to higher education discusses bullying in terms of occurrence at academic and other staffing levels (Lewis, 2004; Lipsett, 2005; Twale and Luca, 2008). Twale and Luca (2008) describe corporate culture, tightening budgets, increasing tensions and establishment and pursuit of a research culture in the face of resistance. These precipitating structures coupled with competition for status, rank, merit, resources and space in academic journals, all serve to create a culture of bullying. Lewis (2004) adds that the marketisation of public sector organisation has seen bullying become synonymous with tough managerial styles. It appears that scant research to date has explored how such changes in the organisation of higher education

impacts upon the student experience in terms of the potential to encourage bullying. Unacceptable student conduct has been gaining attention in academic fields (Lee, 2006). McKinne's (2008) study explored classroom incivility within higher education and whilst this may be argued to encompass behaviours not classed as bullying, the study nonetheless offers insight into how the higher education environment may encourage particular behaviours. Both academic staff and students felt that a teacher's behaviour, interpersonal skills and pedagogical skills had a significant impact on classroom incivility. Qualitative results also indicated that both students and staff felt that university policies addressing classroom behaviour were ineffective.

In terms of student-to-student bullying, whilst there is a marked absence of research (Lester, 2009), studies are emerging that explore cyber bullying in the context of the undergraduate experience (Bennett et al., 2011; Myers and Cowie, 2013) and a few that have explored wider issues of bullying in the university student context as have been referenced already (Curwen et al., 2011; Merilainen et al., 2014; Sinkkonen et al., 2014). One might assume there are issues of access to this particular group. However, a few studies exist that have sampled undergraduate student populations but not to investigate bullying in relation to the university experience. Rayner (1997) explored undergraduate experiences of workplace bullying; Parkins et al. (2006) utilized a sample of undergraduate students to explore whether personality traits underlying workplace bullying and prejudiced-based discrimination in non-workplace settings is identical or different. Meglich et al. (2008) sampled university students in order to compare their perceptions of interpersonal workplace harassment with perceptions of the wider adult

population. These and other studies suggest that this particular group is accessible to researchers through participating in bullying research, yet inquiry into undergraduate experiences of bullying in a university context continues to escape any real scrutiny. Alternatively, as these studies' focus was undergraduate perceptions of bullying off-campus, such research may have been more easily sanctioned. Potential negative publicity regarding student experience may have implications upon student recruitment and retention (Coleyshaw, 2010).

#### 3.6.5. Media portrayal of bullying.

The media has played a powerful part in driving forward bullying research (Smith, 1998), either by raising public concern or at times evoking public fear (Coleyshaw, 2010). In response to allegations of bullying at the heart of the UK Government, a university student magazine laments at the 'trend' in people claiming to be bullied and reports that Downing Street staff 'cry like a small child' upon being subjected to 'heated personal confrontation' from the prime minister stating "if individuals are robust, adaptable characters who can take criticism and respond accordingly, bullying should never come into the equation" (Whitelaw, 2010). On being asked if the [then] Prime Minister is a 'bully', Lord Mandelson stated that Brown demonstrates passion and strong leadership in his work which is preferable to a 'shrinking violet' and that when such 'behaviours' had been directed at Mandelson, he reflects that "I took my medicine like a man" (Andrew Marr show: BBC Transcripts). This is congruent with Lewis's (2004) assertion that bullying is now synonymous with a tough managerial style. Such media portrayal may demean the serious phenomenon of bullying and possibly propagate the view that it is acceptable

in the pursuit of organisational aims and/or there is a shame in the admission of being a target (Lewis, 1999). As Lee (2006, p.103) asserts, “a concept with connotations of children in the playground may be insufficiently powerful to disrupt this entrenched and unhelpful way of thinking”. Randall (2002) takes a theoretical stance and draws on social learning theory to explain the perceived reinforcement of such behaviour where such media portrayal seemingly sanctions such behaviour.

### 3.7 A discursive perspective.

The ways in which the phenomenon of bullying is discursively constructed is of prime importance to this study and therefore warrants further examination of literature pertaining to this area. The concept of bullying discourse reaches beyond constructions of bullying already discussed. Viewing bullying as a discursively constructed phenomenon offers an interesting perspective, though the literature in this area is scant in contrast to wider bullying literature. This may seem unsurprising given that a discursive perspective moves away from individualistic conceptions of bullying which tend to dominate the field of bullying research. The following discussion focuses on literature that specifically explores aspects of bullying discourse. In the first instance, it may be helpful to explore definitions of ‘discourse’ followed by the exploration of fundamental debate relating to institutional discourse: the extent to which different groups (micro level) and systems (macro level) compete and interact to produce social reality. Following this is a focus on Foucault’s important contribution to the field of discourse, knowledge and power, drawing upon related social theory and an exploration of works in the field of bullying that specifically use a Foucauldian lens. Other works specifically focusing on

bullying discourse follows this. Lastly, Goffman's theory of Total Institutions offers another pertinent dimension to this review in terms of exploring the more day-to-day characteristics of institutions and their influence on the populations within them. Following this is an exploration of works that explore the relationship between Total Institutions and bullying.

### 3.7.1. Discourse.

In its most crude sense, writers explain discourse as a culturally and socially organised way of speaking (Mayr, 2008). However, Chalaby (1996) advocates a move away from the focus of linguistics. As Jaccobson (2009) explains, discourse is shaped by social context, and through social interaction. Ryan (2006,p.23) goes further to detail the implicit nature of discourse and states:

Discourses are regimes of knowledge constructed over time. They include the common-sense assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas, belief systems and myths that groups of people share and through which they understand each other. Discourse articulates and conveys formal and informal knowledge and ideologies.

Mitchell (2004) details further by referring to a range of behaviours beliefs and artefacts to include choice of clothing and hair style and colour, the manner in which one addresses a colleague, the academic degree a person holds, an area of interest, all of which can identify an individual as a member of a discourse community or an outsider. Phillips et al. (2004, p.635) state that "discourses provide the socially constituted, self-regulating mechanisms that

enact institutions and shape individual behaviour”, while they ‘rule in’ and ‘rule out’ certain texts or ways of conducting oneself. The term ‘text’ here refers to any kind of symbolic expression that is spoken, written or depicted in some way. What appears to be congruent across literary explanations of discourse is the inherently mutually reinforcing relationship seen between discourse and members of its particular community.

### 3.7.2. Institutional discourse.

The literature in this area offers various theoretical positions and explores numerous characteristics of institutional discourse that perhaps cannot be sufficiently reviewed here. However, the following selected works represents a brief exploration of underpinning theory that continues to influence and characterise other work in the area of institutional discourse. A theme concurrent across the literature is the extent to which the relationships between language, power and institutions is shaped by discourse and/or have the capacity to shape and impose discourses.

A commonly cited contributor in this field is sociologist and critical theorist Habermas (1984; 1987), who distinguishes between ‘communicative’ discourse aimed at speakers engaging in the production of understanding and cooperation and ‘strategic’ discourse, which orientates members’ actions in order to pursue particular institutional goals and exercises of power. Habermas sees the latter displacing the former and sees this as an indication of the ‘colonisation’ of the ‘life-world’ (ordinary conversation, informality) where the ‘systems’ (institutions, the state, formality) colonise each other and come to share any common discourse practices (Mayr, 2008); “the life-world

loses power at the expense of powerful forces or "systems" (Bolton, 2005). Some of the criticisms raised against such theory include the absence of acknowledgement to the power and inequality manifest in communicative discourse; however Habermass' distinction of these two types of discourse is still considered an important contribution (Thornborrow, 2002).

Work by Giddens (1981) proposes that social actors are not entirely influenced by institutional power and dominance. His theory of structuration sees a more equal relationship between human agency and social structure. Both "continuously feed into each other. The social structure is reproduced through the repetition of acts by individual people" (Gauntlett, 2008, p.94) and can therefore change. It is this concept of institutional discourse as 'productive' that is explored in other works such as Iedema (1998), which sees such discourse as encoding and interpreting 'complicity', and 'reciprocal power' relations that underpin institutional hierarchical power. Institutions are shaped by discourse and in turn, have the power to construct and impose discourses. Mayr (2008) asserts, in doing so, that institutions have significant influence in the ways in which we experience and classify the world and can exert power in fostering particular identities that serve their own interests. Institutionalisation occurs as people interact and come to accept shared definitions of reality (Phillips et al, 2004). Mayr (2008) states that institutions' power and politics are exercised through the discourse of its members, not only through oppressive means, but also through the persuasion, consent and complicity of the people within them. The wealth of literature pertaining to the relationship between discourse, ideology and power is vast and cannot be done justice here (see for example: Drew and Heritage, 1992; Mumby, 2001;

Mumby, 2008). However, it would perhaps be considered an oversight if when discussing institutional discourse and discursive practices, one did not explore Foucault's influential work on discourse, knowledge and power.

### 3.7.3. A Foucauldian lens.

For Foucault, institutions are sites of disciplinary power but such power is not solely exercised in a hierarchically 'downward' fashion, coercive acts and through the repression and ideology of sovereign institutions (Mayr, 2008). More rather, it is dispersed. Power pervades institutions and wider society and is in a constant state of instability and negotiation (Mills, 2008). Power is embodied in discourse, knowledge and 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1991). These regimes of truth for Foucault are transmitted and sustained through particular discourses that exert normalisation (Clarke, 2008). This involves the construction of an idealised form of conduct to which subscription is rewarded and deviation is punished; thus it becomes a means to exert social control. Discipline then for Foucault is therefore a "particular set of strategies, procedures and ways of behaving which are associated with certain institutional contexts and which then permeate ways of thinking and behaving in general" (Mills, 2008,p.44). But how might one analyse a particular discourse that changes according to institutional context in which it occupies? Foucault offers a framework for this analysis. McNicol Jardin (2008) discusses Foucault's archeology of knowledge where: "the substitution of one discursive formation for another takes place" (Foucault, 2001, p.172) but as the author states, Foucault did not document what causes such transitions however he does in later work. Foucault's genealogies provide a technique for analysing how particular parties attach power to some knowledge and not to others and

how the rise of certain conceptions, principles and practice extends power to certain groups and not others (McNicol Jardin, 2010). This notion of exclusion is an important aspect of Foucault's views on discourse, which sees "a complex set of practices which try to keep them [discourses] in circulation and other practices which try to fence them off and keep those other statements out of circulation" (Mills, 2008, p.54). This may explain the elevation of dominant psychology orientated discourse of bullying at the expense of more sociological explanations. Where the latter is synthesised into mainstream bullying literature, such perspectives are subjected to further pathologisation (Duncan, 2009). Viewing bullying as discursively constructed challenges the exclusionary practices that Foucault mentions. This perspective challenges more positivist approaches that maintain the problem of bullying "by continually reproducing it as a naturalised, individualised phenomenon" (Ryan and Morgan, 2011, p.3). The following discussion explores literature where a Foucauldian lens has been applied specifically in the context of bullying.

#### 3.7.4. Bullying: a Foucauldian lens.

The following is a review of selected works that have applied a Foucauldian approach to the phenomenon of bullying. Whilst it seems that there is little by way of such research literature as compared to mainstream bullying research literature, it is interesting that what does exist is fairly current, which indicates that this is a comparatively new area of exploration in the bullying research community. Researchers are beginning to meet the challenge of finding new answers in light of the persistent problem of bullying and re-theorise the bullying research field through a discursive lens (Ellwood and Davies, 2014).

Walton (2005b) applies a Foucauldian analysis of discourse as a site of relations of power. The author views bullying as a concept with historical and political antecedents or as Foucault would term, 'discursive practice'. Walton (1997, p.200) explains discursive practices, which are "practices of technical and methodological purpose and process, disseminated by institutions that have interest in imposing and maintaining them". In further work, Walton (2005b, p.2) asserts that technical processes investigate bullying as individual behaviour, which generates individualistic intervention strategies whilst "institutional complicity at reinforcing negative associations with difference remains unchallenged". Similarly, Shaw's (2012) study uses Foucauldian discourse analysis to illuminate the ways in which organisational discourses problematise bullying as an individual pathology and serve to produce bullying in the workplace.

Johnson (2013) explores how organisational discourse in nursing institutions use what Foucault describes as the process of exclusion in order to protect themselves against perceived threats to the organisation's legitimacy. The author cites scholars who speculate that organisations may exclude discussions of workplace bullying because it is seen as a legitimate management strategy. Johnson's findings suggest that by delimiting what is thought of or said, such as removing or avoiding any bullying discourse, this shapes wider organisational discourse which influences the ways in which not only how bullying is conceptualised by how it is responded (or not) to.

Lausten (2014) explores Foucault's later work, which explores the interconnections of dispositifs, which as Raffensoe and Gudmand-Hoyer (2005; seen in: Lausten, 2014,p.101) explain are:

The apparatus which exist in numerous parts arranged in certain ways in relation to one another so that they work together to determine the field of action that the apparatus is processing.

Apparatus for Foucault include discourse, institutions, regulatory decisions, laws and policy, administrative processes, philosophical, moral or philanthropic propositions (Lausten, 2014). Thus, Lausten explains the dispositifs of bullying are complex forces that work to influence the conceptualisation of bullying solutions; management of it and the power relations at work in schools. Lausten puts forward a five-part classification of bullying dispositifs that cannot be done justice here, but is important work in the application of dispositif analysis.

Horton's (2011) use of Foucault's theorisation of power in the context of bullying in schools in Vietnam, challenges the dominant theories of power held by bullying researchers that see power as something held by a more powerful individual or group which for Horton, who ignores the multiplicity of power relations. The author explores disciplinary power in the context of schools and the processes by which these relations are exercised including student-teacher opposition, classroom organisation both in terms of physical space and the organisation of teaching and learning, classroom cultures are encouraged or resisted, and through 'techniques of control'. It is clear from

the literature explored here that discourse is an important consideration in the study of bullying. As Rogers (2008) asserts, discourses play a particularly primary role in education, but also in the workplace (Liefoghe and Davey, 2010). The following discussion reviews bullying discourse literature that is focused on wider bullying discourse.

### 3.7.5. Bullying discourse.

Horton (2006) discusses the implications of traditional bullying discourses and how they negatively position those involved: both perpetrators and targets, but also serve to negate the possibility that environmental factors may be contributory. Drawing on research, Horton (2006) explores factors such as stress, boredom or bullying as being subject-related and suggests that individualised notions of bullying should be questioned. He goes on to say that a discourse based on a dichotomy of 'bullies' and the 'bullied' serves to position those involved in a negative way and feeds into a discourse of blame where individuals are seen as at fault. Horton also adds that such discourse also has implications for the ways in which bullying research is carried out. If the terminology used in quantitative surveys dichotomises 'bullies' and 'bullied', participants are confined to the view of bullying being imposed. Walton (2005a) also discusses the relationship between discourse and school bullying stating that dominant bullying discourse rooted in individual pathology and reinforced through media and educational literature and policy, fuel discourses of fear. This in turn drives the need for 'safe schools'; a discourse of deviance warranting preventative and/or curative strategies both of which can feed into a discourse of moral panic.

Ringrose (2008) examines the effects of bully discourses operating within schools in relation to conflicts between girls and the ways in which parents and schools respond to such bullying discourse. The study revealed complex ways in which girls discussed (hetero)sexualised, classed, racialised and culture-bound conflict. Such complexities were obscured by wider bully discourses operating in the school, which served to heighten parental anxieties resulting in wide-ranging effects within the practices and processes of schooling. Ringrose (2008) concludes that dominant psychological discourses of aggression and bullying are limited in explaining the complex micro-politics of girls' friendships and aggression. Work by Ringrose and Reynold (2010) explores gendered and sexualised violence in schools and how 'bully discourses' are arranged around the binaries of bully and victim, which sanction rigid gender norms and maintain hetero-normative power relations. The authors argue that bullying discourse perpetuates 'normative cruelties'; the ways in which "performing normative gender subject positions invoke exclusionary and injurious practices" and that such dominant discourses employed in order to address conflict, are ineffectual in tackling normative aggression and violence in schools.

Hepburn's (1997) analysis of accounts of bullying from secondary school teachers concluded that patterns of conformity/exclusion, normality/abnormality and dominance/subordination evident in bullying relationships were also manifest in teachers' discourses related to bullying. Teachers felt that these discourses had an important function in the daily routine of the school and also the everyday ecology of teaching. Hepburn argues that this demonstrates how wider bullying discourses may contribute

to the problem of bullying. Further work by Hepburn (2000) explores the ways in which teachers respond to an implied accusation that they have been bullying, concluding that teachers used discourses of discipline, agency and blame in minimising their own accountability.

Terashajo and Salmivalli (2003) examine how children interpret and construct bullying, with relation to the discourse in which interpretations are situated. They state: “the world of children is not separated from the discursive world surrounding the class” (p.152). The children in this study talked of bullying as justified through an ‘odd student repertoire’. The authors acknowledge that whilst adults may not construct bullying in this way, being ‘different’ is commonly used as a factor in bullying by both children and adults alike; particularly through media and bullying research community. This, the authors argue, is the central notion of a discourse of homogeneity where the ideal society should be as uniform as possible and as such demands conformity. Similarly, research by Walton et al. (2009) explores 364 narratives in which children described their own conflicts that revealed the ways in which children construct aggression and gender. Findings revealed a social constructivist model of how narrative discourse may gender aggression. In their stories, both girls and boys neglected to evaluate and explain boys’ aggression despite both genders being able to adequately articulate psychological and moral evaluations of a girl’s relational aggression. This omission, the authors suggest, is culturally situated in a ‘boys will be boys’ discourse where particular behaviours are expected and are culturally normative. In the same vein, where there was an expectation of violence in the neighbourhood, pupils

adopted a 'fatalistic discourse' where violence is seen to be inevitable: as one pupil expressed "that's "just the way things are".

Interesting research by Jaccobson (2009) investigates the prevalence of discursive constructions of bullying prevention in two schools. Jaccobson identifies four types of discourse from the literature: authoritarian, liberal, democratic and the boundary setting discourse that can influence bullying prevention strategies and warrants closer examination. Drawing on Law (2007), Jaccobson explains that for the authoritarian tradition, the emphasis is on an almost uncritical deference to a higher order that determines what is right and wrong for children, whereas the liberal view emphasises independent, critical thought. Children have the responsibility in making up their own minds about issues of morality and therefore the role of education should be to "equip the young with the necessary skills to face this responsibility properly" (Law 2007, p.1-2). For the democratic tradition, Sigsgaard (2004) explains that reprimanding and other sanctioning behaviours, which are seen by adults as natural behaviours towards children, support an unequal relationship where adults hold the power to define how children experience themselves "through how they react to communication from children, how they label their experiences and actions and what they react to and not" (Jaccobson, 2009). Sigsgaard argues that the school environment is conducive to bullying as punishment, and other sanctioning behaviours are modeled by adults and adopted by pupils. "Bullying prevention is, thus, constructed as best pursued through a democratic strategy with encouragement, appreciation and equal relationships at the fore" (Jaccobson, 2009). In opposition to the democratic tradition is the 'boundary setting'

perspective (Grandelius, 2006). This view argues that contemporary approaches have become too lenient with rules being imposed in response to children's demands and adults' resort to bribery and violence (Grandelius, 2006). Jaccobson explains that if the intentions are good, adults can still exercise power over children and this need not be experienced as violating. This tradition sees the need to set boundaries and for adults to model appropriate behaviours. By setting boundaries unwanted behaviour is curtailed thus preventing bullying. Jaccobson (2009, p.41) concludes that whilst all four discourses were present in both schools, the boundary setting discourse predominated. This he argues is an "indication of this trend, as more disciplinarian ideas, directives, policies and laws regarding education are injected into the educational system". The degree and order to which these discourses were exercised, impacted on the discursive order of bullying prevention, which Jaccobson (p.40) states "is hardly unified or stable, but is instead fragmented and embattled by different explanations attempting dominance".

Similarly, research by Walton (2010) examines policy across five school districts in Canada, concluding that there was variability regarding content and detail but essentially following the same discourse of 'conduct and discipline'. In a climate of moral panic regarding bullying and youth violence, Walton suggests, such policies appeal and therefore hold political power referring to Scheurich (1994, p.144) who states "'safety is hegemonically conceptualised as physical and behavioural. A number of references to 'suspension', 'consequences', and 'misbehaviours' are evident in these safe schools policies". Walton describes bullying discourse as shaping the parameters

within which the problem and problem group are identified and in turn inform policy which largely turn out to be ineffectual. Walton describes this as the 'problem trap' where common conceptions of bullying restrict an understanding of the problem but also place limitations on the practices of policies intended to address bullying. As Pillow (2004, p.9) asserts "educational policy does not develop in a vacuum, but is affected by beliefs, values, and attitudes, situated in discourses, which in turn affect school policy by creating or limiting educational policy options". In further work, Walton (2011, p.131) uses the metaphor of 'wheel spinning' to describe ineffectual anti-bullying policy and programs where: "plenty of energy is consumed, power is leveraged and released, and a lot of noise results", yet little success is achieved in addressing bullying. Again, Walton attributes this to the dominant discourse of bullying, which has been normalised, and which anti-bullying policy and programs are shaped. As Walton (2011, p.134) asserts:

The theoretical foundations upon which practices and policies (and practices of policy) are built are fundamentally flawed. We do not know what the problem is in the first place, yet we develop with aplomb programs and policies to address it. It leaves little wonder that bullying continues to thrive in schools.

Walton also points to an absence of theorising the power of social difference, which further propagates the dominant discourse on bullying. Such discourse and resultant policy-making, practice and programs ignore difference and instead homogenises students, which encourages bullying. Walton states that the term 'celebrating diversity', commonly expressed in education policy, and

only explains human variation and conceals the ways in which social difference is expressed as bullying:

It fails to grapple with how social privilege is supported necessarily through social marginalisation. Diversity discourse maintains the status quo of inequality in society. It is akin to enjoying a cup of tea in the middle of a battlefield (p.183).

Walton argues that 'difference' on the other hand, considers social dynamics and how power bestows privilege (being a member of the 'in' crowd) or marginalisation (being excluded from the 'in crowd'). Walton acknowledges mainstream bullying literature that discusses issues of difference but argues that this does not go far enough. Any deeper exploration is avoided, as it requires exploring inequality and prejudice, and how "bullying often reflects larger social and political battles, moral panics, and collective anxieties" (p.140).

In a workplace context, Liefoghe and Davey (2010) assert that by securing a dominant, individualising discourse, employees are produced and reproduced to fit a dominant discourse. The authors challenge the institutionalisation of a narrow definition of bullying which in itself: "has the power to bully by constructing legitimacy and morality of behaviour in institutions" (p.72). Liefoghe and Davey (2010) draw on a range of literature, which they say is resisted in the mainstream bullying literature as it shifts the focus from the individual to organisational discourse and wider conceptualisations of resistance and power within organisations. With regard to bullying, it is characteristic in particular of structural settings dependent on the degree to

which the populations within these settings are cut off from the outside world. Thus, “they are closed reputational systems where social identities are known by all and prestige hierarchy is inescapable and pervasive in the activities of daily life” (Collins, 2008, p.165). With this in mind, it is here that Goffman’s work on Total Institutions is a worthy inclusion in the literature review and seen to be complimentary to Foucault’s work. Where Foucault offers a more top-down, systemic perspective, Goffman’s more bottom-up approach of interpersonal sociology in the context of his theory of Total Institutions are complimentary (Hacking, 2004).

### 3.7.6 Goffman’s Total Institutions.

Where Foucault’s work offers insight into the power relations operating within institutions, Goffman’s work affords a closer inspection of how such relations play out on a day-to-day basis; a more micro-interactional level (Collins, 2008). Goffman’s concept of total institutions outlines distinctive organisations:

A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.

Goffman (1961, p.11)

Goffman described institutions with varying degrees of closure or a separation from the outside world and the degree to which particular institutions are coercive, non-consultative and non-negotiable and can be placed on a

continuum (Ritzer, 2013). Typically at one end of this spectrum would be prisons, which have the highest totalising effect with less totalising institutions such as hospitals and (non-boarding) schools.

Total Institutions are characterised by the bureaucratic control of the human needs of a group of people, and it operates through the mechanism of the 'mortification of self' (Goffman, 1957). The person initially entering the institution has with them a 'self' and attachments to supports that would have allowed this self to survive. The totalising nature of institutions begins by removing those supports and the self is systematically, (often unintentionally) mortified. Goodman (2012) describes the ways in which a person is self-mortified through a process of seven stages. This typology is useful in determining the degree to which an institution may be regarded as being totalising.

#### 3.7.7. Total Institutions and bullying.

Most of the bullying literature that applies the concept of total institutions does so across a range of contexts discussing differing environments, and the degree to which they have a totalising effect. An example of this is Collins' (2008) work on micro-sociological theory of violence which explores particular environments where bullying is rife and asserts – "bullying thrives in distinctive structural settings: total institutions" (p.165). The author explains the ways in which totalising environments are conducive to bullying. They are characterised by the intense proximity of its members and a physical environment affording no escape or little room to avoid being targeted. This intense proximity allows for perceived weaknesses to become widely

broadcast and “high ritual density and therefore reification of membership symbols and emotionally compelling ritual punishments for violation of group standards” (Collins, 2008, p.166). There is a distinct division between teachers/students; managers/employee and staff may encourage a hierarchy amongst its members. Collins goes on to explore the varying totalising effects of a range of institutions. Other literature focuses on one specific context such as prisons (for example: Homel and Thomson, 2005), the workplace (Lucas et al., 2012) and nursing homes (Richard, 1986). Literature applying the concept of total institutions specifically to the school context appears limited by comparison to traditional bullying literature, and further supports the view that sociological inquiry has been seriously overlooked in the school bullying research community (Yoneyama and Naito, 2003).

An article by Scott (2010) warns that the concept of Total Institutions has been (mis)interpreted as rendering the members within the closed community as powerless where, “the agency of the actor is compromised by the institutional structures” (p.215). However, Scott (2010) reminds us that Goffman recognised the knowable actor consciously engaging in performances. Members of a particular enclosed community can to some extent resist the power structure and strive to maintain a sense of self-control and independence. This resonates with Hope’s (2013) warning against an over focus on institutional exercise of power, and advocates a focus on students’ resistance to surveillance. With reference to school surveillance and panoptic mechanisms, the author asserts that panoptic technologies are thwarted by fake conformity and a desire for students to flaunt acts of resistance. Particular spaces in schools are well-known non-surveillance

areas and provide opportunities to avoid surveillance in school; “surveillance is not just concerned with discipline and control but also with performance, entertainment and play” (Hope, 2013, p.47). Duncan (2013) asserts that pupils become enmeshed in oppressive institutional arrangements that actively produce hostility where the destruction of identity (mortification of the self) is something to be resisted; bullying offers a release to this sense of loss of control.

### 3.7.8. A discursive lens: conclusion.

The discussion has explored literature pertaining to discourses, the functions they serve and what might influence their construction. Such works are important in exploring the discursive constructions that underpin the field of bullying inquiry and expose “limitations of inherent problems in the conceptual configuration of the field” (Ellwood and Davies, 2014). Foucault’s work on discourse and those studies that draw on Foucault’s work particularly in relation to bullying discourse offer interesting insight into the discourse, knowledge and power relations at work. So too Goffman’s concept of total institutions allows for a closer inspection of the structural and operational environment and its influence on power relations; and in turn upon its members. How this concept applies to bullying in particular institutions appears underrepresented in the mainstream bullying research literature.

Literature with a specific focus on bullying discourse is also minimal in contrast to the wealth of literature relating to bullying in general. This may seem unsurprising given that viewing bullying as a discursively constructed phenomenon conflicts with more pathological conceptions of bullying that

dominate the mainstream bullying literature. The implications of such bullying discourse have been explored. The way in which bullying research is carried out and the construction and implementation of bullying policy, both in practice and anti-bullying strategies and programs are orientated by the dominant discourse. As McKinlay et al. (2012) state, “there is a culturally embedded mismatch between the language about bullying and the actual activity of bullying”. The literature conveys a sense that individualistic conceptions of bullying are difficult to escape given the discourses of ‘blame’, ‘school safety’ ‘conduct and discipline’ and ‘homogeneity’ that are presented as normative. Such discourse is reinforced through media and feeds into a sense of moral panic and discourses of fear and propagates pathological perspectives of bullying whilst obscuring the complex issues. A genealogical lens shows how some discourses are elevated as truth where other discourses are excluded in order to serve particular institutional or professional interests that are in accordance with particular models of expertise. These dominant discourses normalise bullying and shape the parameters within which the problem is conceptualised and responded to, further giving credence to Walton’s (2010) ‘problem trap’ where such parameters restrict understanding and place limitations on policy and practice. Hence the proliferation of bullying in our institutions remains.

### 3.8. Conclusion.

It appears that post-school age bullying pervades many areas of contemporary society. Prevalence rates are as imprecise as they are in any context in which bullying is measured for the same reasons of lack of definitional clarity and differing measuring instruments. The level of

intervention appears to differ by context, which may be indicative of levels of concern given to bullying in particular contexts, reflecting the interests of particular stakeholders. Endemic across the literature is the recognition of the costs to industry, and this may explain why employment law goes further in protecting both employers and employees than it appears to within prison institutions. As discussed, definitions are influenced by legal context, which may be indicative of stakeholder protection of more valued systems and populations. Harassment (e.g. racial; sexual) is given full recognition in UK law, yet bullying is not. Perhaps the term 'interpersonal harassment' would serve as an appropriate term that could be positioned within the legislative framework of harassment and would move away from the seemingly stigmatised term of 'bullying' with childish connotations (Twale and Luca, 2008).

The literature explores post school age bullying from multiple perspectives: as a learned behaviour, a product of culture and/or a culturally conditioned expression of innate behavior. Perspectives seem to be nuanced towards the discipline from which they emanate and whilst each of the contexts have aspects of theory that are distinct in nature, there also appear to be parallels which Randall (2002) asserts are overlooked due to bullying discourse being context-specific. Whilst some researchers use typologies of bullying behaviours, which seem rather prescriptive and pathologise the individual, such literature that espouses individual difference approaches, identifying psychological deficits take a relatively minor position. Such views seem incongruent with the predominant workplace bullying discourse that is situated within a structural/organisation perspective.

It appears that post-school age bullying is investigated largely in terms of external variables that create a hostile environment, which facilitate and encourage bullying behaviour. Organisational psychology places emphasis on the individual's interaction with the physical, structural and organisational environment and bullying, which is born out of such interactions, whereas a more sociological perspective sees these external variables as determining interactions. As Hodson et al. (2006, p.390) state, "workplace interactions are embedded in organisational structures, which are then enabled and constrained by these structures". Wider macro-organisational views of bullying involve the culture, policies, and power distribution that define interpersonal communications and relations. This view sees the forces that impact upon the organisation from a global perspective, which may hinder or facilitate the manifestation of behaviours within that context (Zapf, 1999; Hoel et al., 2003). At a micro-organisational level, it is the often-intimate daily environment in which adults interact that is separate to the macro-organisational level, and considers established group norms and culture as propagating or negating bullying behaviours.

An overwhelming theme across contexts is the influence of organisational culture within these environments and how they can be permissive and even produce bullying. Attribution is linked with physical characteristics such as the size of organisations or institutions and spatial density and diverse populations and the exchange or abuse of power across these relationships. How power is abused is differentiated in the literature by context where different organisation/institutional hierarchies operate. In the workplace,

formal power is predominantly vertical; managers bullying employees of lower status and informal power operates across employees to a lesser degree; in nursing, horizontal bullying predominates and for prisons, the pursuit of social status influences bullying.

The literature pertaining to nursing largely refers to organisational determinants of bullying, citing 'corrupt organisations' (Hutchinson et al., 2009) and nurses as a traditionally oppressed group. Institutional authority, structures and systems protect the perpetrators and ineffective organisational response mechanisms further support a culture of bullying. Hutchinson et al. (2009) conclude that such corrupt systems are self-perpetuating and self-protecting, while organisational sub-cultures are supportive of bullying conduct.

The literature relating to the university context does not offer much insight into undergraduate student-to-student bullying, as it appears to be limited. However, positive aspects of higher education raised in the discussion offer a promising way forward. Higher education is reported to provide a safe space where previously bullied LGBT students can be themselves and therefore warrants exploration of how this particular environment promotes or restricts self-identity and affords 'recovery' from previous bullying experience. However, there is a growing body of literature that explore LGBT student experiences in HE. The Equality Challenge unit (ECU, 2009) in their study state that whilst this environment affords a positive space for LGBT students and staff, there remains a need to review provision of support and address discrimination for LGBT staff and students with bullying specifically mentioned

as an area for review. A large-scale study of 4000 by National Union of Students (NUS, 2014) report that one in five LGB and one in three transgender respondents have experienced bullying on campus.

The literature exploring the discourse of bullying offers an interesting perspective. Bullying as a discursively constructed phenomenon offers an alternative viewpoint, which considers the power relationships operating in institutions and how “communication functions simultaneously as both an expression and a creation of organisational structure” (Mumby, 1984, p.181). The work of Foucault and Goffman further add to this debate in exploring how institutions, through the power relationships and forces operating within them, propagate and sustain bullying environments. As stated by Fairclough (1999), discourse is a social practice that exposes how social and political domination, or power relations, are reproduced. Research on bullying rarely investigates the conditions by which the discourse on bullying has emerged. Doing so would enhance our collective understandings about bullying beyond those on the surface level of behaviour and developmental models (Walton, 2005, p.138). It would also explain why the problem of bullying remains and also why essential changes in social and institutional structures have yet to be addressed (McKinlay et al., 2012).

## Chapter 2: Research design.

### 2.1. Research objectives.

As discussed in the literature review, studies with a focus on bullying are context specific, which often determines definition, methodological approach and theoretical standpoint. Moreover, the bullying research inquiry has predominantly focused on contexts where bullying is assumed or reported to be characteristic of the environment, as opposed to those contexts where bullying has either yet to be identified, assumed not to occur, or is perhaps comparatively 'bully-lite' (Duncan, 2009). This study seeks to explore a range of spaces and times where bullying may or may not be reported issues and then investigate the variations within them.

Research has sought to compare commonalities and difference of bullying in different contexts (Monks et al., 2009), however studies that specifically seek to compare undergraduate student-to-student bullying and how their experience at university compares to perceptions and/or experience of bullying whilst at school and/or in the workplace have yet to be identified, despite thorough literature searching. Therefore the principal objectives of this research are:

1. to explore undergraduate student constructions of bullying over time (e.g. primary school to HE);
2. to identify institutional features that might encourage or negate a climate of bullying in differing contexts.

These objectives generated the following research questions:

1. How do students construct bullying in different contexts?
2. How do students explain differing constructions of bullying in different contexts?

An inquiry of this type requires participant reflections on past and current experience and therefore requires use of inductive methodologies that explore and interpret the intangible nature of participants' meanings, beliefs, ideas and values, taking into account of given phenomena and the contexts in which they are set (Cohen et al., 2007). The study explores how students experience and perceive bullying in different contexts, and especially how they explain any links between the varying characteristics of bullying and institutional organisation and structure. For that purpose, this study adopts an interpretivist approach to the sociological tradition, rather than the more usual psychology paradigm associated with research on bullying.

## 2.2. Research paradigm.

This inquiry is positioned within an interpretivist paradigm. As explored in the literature review, the dominant discourse of the bullying research community traditionally resides within the positivist paradigm (Thornberg, 2004). Positivist research sees the world as measurable and deductive using quantitative methods to collect replicable data to ensure methods employed are reliable for future use (Wisker, 2006). This is particularly characteristic in bullying, as most funding is aimed at the reduction and prevention of bullying, therefore designs that purport to generate predictive findings tend to dominate. Where the positivist conception of knowledge explains relations between

independent and dependent variables, the qualitative researcher looks to understand human experiences and purposes (Snow, 1990).

On reading the methodology literature, it is clear that the dichotomous relationship concerning quantitative and qualitative methods fluctuates in intensity, with assertions that such debates are politically and philosophically driven (Alexander, 2006). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) declare that we have arrived at the 'age of emancipation', where researchers are released from the limitations of a single regime of truth. Such debates are now considered 'immature' (Cousin, 2009) in the sense that the debate is not as clear-cut or divided as it may have been historically. However, it may be that such fundamental debates still have resonance within the contemporary bullying research inquiry. It is suggested that paradigmatic dominance can be used to secure prestige within particular research communities, which in turn reap benefits in terms of legitimising particular professions and sustaining the need for their services (Coleyshaw, 2010). Scholarly research can contribute to knowledge that informs political activity and/or everyday practice within educational and wider institutions. If such dominance prevails, then the essence of the positivist/interpretivist debate may still be applicable and would appear particularly pertinent in terms of the bullying research community. Thornberg (2010) acknowledges the contribution that quantitative research has made to our knowledge of bullying, and advocates qualitative and mixed methods research in order to study bullying and peer-harassment through social processes and interactions in the context of particular settings. However, this study does not lend itself to quantitative approaches for the following reasons.

The contentions around the use of surveys and the difficulties inherent with definitional criteria of bullying have been discussed in the literature review. Variability of definitions or attributes of bullying used in surveys can determine very different results and even where particular surveys have been repeated; here too, the results have been shown to differ. The implications of such imprecision are fundamental to the conclusions that researchers make relating to bullying (Espelage and Swearer, 2003). Bullying is a complex social phenomenon and the aim of the study is to gather a range of subjectivities. Positivist epistemologies would not uncover the complexity of social phenomena (Ryan, 2006) such as bullying. This study aims to illuminate and understand personal experience. We are uncertain as to how people's perception and attitudes towards bullying may change over time, how they experience it in differing environments and the attributions of bullying. Our understanding of individual experience and constructs of bullying are embedded within a discourse in which the individual is situated and informed by prior experience as described by Ryan (2006,p.23):

Discourses are regimes of knowledge constructed over time. They include the common-sense assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas, belief systems and myths that groups of people share and through which they understand each other. Discourses articulate and convey formal and informal knowledge and ideologies. They are constantly being reproduced and constituted, and can change and evolve in the process of communication.

It is this notion of the process of communication and the context in which regimes of knowledge are explored that has caused me to reflect upon my epistemological position.

### 2.3. Philosophical reflections.

Throughout this chapter, justification is made relating to selection of approaches and methods employed in this study. However in the following section, personal philosophies are explored, the importance of which are described by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995):

Ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; these in turn, give rise to methodological considerations; and these in turn give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection (in Cohen et al, 2009, p.5).

It is therefore essential to explore our beliefs about the nature of reality and our understanding of phenomena that the world presents. I take the ontological position that social reality is an outcome of people's interactions with their environment, and is constructed by the way in which they experience and interpret their lives (Mason, 1996). As discussed (see 2.2) this inquiry is positioned within an interpretivist paradigm, which recognises the "shared and constructed nature of social reality" (Scott and Usher, 2011, p.29) and shares insights with both constructivist and constructionist epistemologies. The two are closely connected and can be considered complimentary. What unifies them is their phenomenological base, which sees that a person and the world are inextricably linked through lived experience of the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). There is considerable

fluidity between the two (Talja et al., 2004) and such epistemological hybridisation is particularly pertinent for this study, the reason for which is discussed here.

A constructivist approach sees “discourse as the vehicle through which the self and the world are articulated, and on the way different discourses enable different versions of selves and reality to be built” (Tuominen et al., 2002, p. 273). Of primary importance to the constructivist is the notion that “the things we hold as facts are materially, rhetorically, and discursively crafted within institutionalised social practices” (p. 278). Therefore participant narratives allow for the exploration of an understanding of the constraining or enabling features of particular social environments, and how individuals or groups construct bullying within these environments. Constructivism stresses the dual character of the social and material world. Social constructions, in this conceptualisation, must refer back to and build on pre-existing materiality; therefore the material world shapes human interaction and vice versa (Adler, 1997).

The social constructionist is principally concerned with elucidating the processes by which people come to explain and describe the world (Gergen, 2003). For the constructionist, meaning making is a relational activity and therefore knowledge and understanding are not just within the person, but also in the ‘performance’ (McNamee, 2004). As Ryan and Morgan (2011, p.3) explain: “language not only constructs our world but who we are as a person, because the categories available to us in language are the categories through which we come to understand ourselves and our world”. In interviews,

narratives surfaced that showing a process of joint discovery. Different discourse emerged: new ways of constructing and understanding bullying. Participants negotiated understanding together during the interview. In this sense, not only is the interview itself a site for interactive knowledge construction, the participants' varied discourse is dependent upon the context in which the discourse is situated, further supporting the view that discourse may be contextually and institutionally defined (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001). A constructionist approach supports the exploration of these socially shared linguistic resources drawn upon to construct bullying and as Khun (2003) describes, allows for a reorientation of understanding.

#### 2.4. Methodological design.

The two main approaches I was initially drawn to were a life-course approach and a narrative inquiry; at first sight, these ideas seemed to offer a means by which to explore and analyse how people make meaning of their lives. A life-course approach is more concerned with sequential aspects of chronological age, relationships, common life transitions and events and how these shape people's lives; it also considers biological, psychological, social and spiritual aspects (Hutchinson, 2007). Where the term 'life-course' is used within this study relates to the chronology of participants' movement from compulsory education contexts to post compulsory institutions and the workplace. The focus is on participant exploration of the constructions of bullying in these different environments, rather than how participants personally experienced bullying nor how this 'journey' has shaped the individual.

For similar reasons, narrative inquiry is not suited to this study. Narrative inquiry is concerned with the 'stories' that participants tell; the purpose of which is to "interpret both the form and the content of the stories gathered in order to generate understandings of how personal histories influence the narrators' values, decisions and actions" (Cousin, 2009, p.94). This study does not aim to understand personal conditions; that is "the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p.480) of participants. Also, for the researcher, the emphasis in narrative inquiry is 'listening' to narrators telling their story (Cousin, 2009), whereas my approach plays a more active role in exploring retrospective and contemporaneous narrative accounts. Therefore this study required an approach that utilises the interview as an interactive site of knowledge construction in order to reflect upon different environments in relation to the phenomenon of bullying and also explore the structural and operational contexts in which it occurs.

Exploration of further approaches did continue through the pilot stage of the study while supporting the view that in a qualitative study, "research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of the project" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 24). Indeed, it was my reflection upon the application and outcomes of the pilot study and engagement with literature relating to research methodology that revealed the technique I employed was that of 'active interviewing'. This supports the assertion made earlier that the orientation of methodological considerations is driven by personal philosophies and associated ontological and epistemological assumptions (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). This study therefore takes Holstein and Gubrium's (1995)

'Active Interviewing' as a primary source and research approach that is discussed more fully in the following section.

#### 2.4.1. Active Interviewing.

Holstein and Gubrium (1995) reject the more conventional idea that the interview is a neutral means by which to extract information where potential problems of bias, error, misunderstanding or misdirection are persistent issues that need to be minimised. The Active Interview approach avoids the potential 'problems' of interviews, and instead utilises opportunities to explore embedded discourses which may remain uncovered using more traditional interview technique (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) and can produce rich data about individuals' perspectives (Cousin, 2009). Participants are more than "repositories of knowledge – treasuries of information awaiting excavation" (p4). Rather, the Active Interview is a social encounter; a collaborative effort between interviewer/interviewees, where reality construction and meaning-making take place: "a productive site of reportable knowledge itself" (p.3). Holstein and Gubrium (1995, p37) explain:

Treating the interview as active allows the interviewer to encourage the respondent to shift positions in the interview so as to explore alternate perspectives and stocks of knowledge. Rather than searching for the best or most authentic answer, the aim is to systematically activate applicable ways of knowing – the possible answers – that participants can reveal, as diverse and contradictory as they might be.

This methodological attention to meaning-making has led some critics to charge the active interview with having an emphasis on process rather than

content (Marvasti, 2004). However Active Interviewing pays attention to the 'whats' and 'hows' of an interview which takes account of both the content of the interview and the ways in which such content is assembled, as Holstein and Gubrium (2005, p.484) explain:

Interpretive practice is centered in both how people methodologically construct their experiences and their worlds, and in the configurations of meaning and institutional life that inform and shape their reality-constructing activity.

The next section will look how the interviews were conducted in more detail.

#### 2.4.2. Conducting the interviews.

As previously stated, at pilot stage it emerged that some students underwent a conceptual shift when reflecting on their constructions of bullying in different contexts. The use of a specific interview guide was not needed. Other than the initial 'touring question' of "when did you first hear the term 'bullying' and what did you understand by it at that time?" any further questions were determined by the unfolding 'conversation'. The only determinable pattern applied was the chronological movement from primary education through to present day contexts to include workplace environments and then a return to explore what was said. The principal goal of Active Interviewing is the cultivation of participants' narrative activity and therefore participants' linkages and positional shifts; the collaborative nature of the interview orientates the interview in ways that may render particular questions necessary or suitable as leading frames of reference. Holstein and Gubrium, (1995, p.77) declare,

“[this] lends rather an improvisational, yet focused, quality to the interview – precisely the image we have of the meaning making process more generally”.

In the first instance participants discussed bullying in relation to the different contexts and then discussion returned to a deeper exploration and any seemingly conflicting views and contradictions. In this sense, there were two phases to the interview process; a descriptive phase where students described and discussed bullying in separate contexts of school, workplace and university and then an analytical phase. This second phase allows for knowledge construction. During this phase, students were encouraged to explore again why they viewed the phenomenon and causation of bullying differently depending on the environment in which it is being discussed. This gives rise to what Holstein and Gubrium (1995, p.58) refer to as ‘horizons of meaning’, where “coherent, meaningful configurations emerge through patterned narrative linkages”. I was able to expand on interviewees’ understandings, explore contradictions, affirm my own and interviewee understanding and gently probe and challenge. As Holstein and Gubrium (1997, p.125) describe:

The active interviewer sets the general parameters for responses, constraining as well as provoking answers that are germane to the researcher’s interest. He or she does not tell the participants what to say, but offers them pertinent ways of conceptualising issues and making connections – that is, suggests possible horizons of meaning and narrative linkages that coalesce into emerging responses.

The interview approach drew on a range of techniques that were favourable to the 'active interview' such as theorising with the interviewee. Here, the interviewer formulates and shares an explanation of a particular event or conceptual understanding of the subject under discussion with the interviewee to provoke further exploration, as illustrated in the following "so from what you're saying, you see bullying as more of a cultural phenomenon? Would you agree?" Critics sometimes argue that such techniques can be over-directional and biased, however as Holstein and Gubrium (1995, p.18) argue, such a conventional view: "only holds if one assumes a vastly restricted view of interpretive practice". Socially constructed meaning is inescapably collaborative (Gergen and Gergen, 2003) and all interview participants are implicated in constructing meaning (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995).

Another approach adhering to the Active Interview is 'drawing on scholarship'. Here, the interviewer utilises opportunities to relate literature to something raised by the interviewee. For example reflecting on interviewees' constructs of school bullying, some were asked to consider the three most commonly used components to define bullying in the mainstream bullying literature; those of power imbalance, repetition and intentionality. This raised interesting responses that did not always align with the dominant definition. I continued to use techniques to explore, extend or challenge students' responses whilst raising discussion of contradictions that emerged. By exploring with students why they, for example, explained causation for bullying in very different ways according to particular environments, I was able to prompt exploration of alternative perspectives. A prime example here is discussion relating to the absence of bullying in the university context. A typical response was that 'you

are more mature when you get to uni'. I would follow this with "but we know of bullying in the workplace, as you've said yourself, so how does this fit with what you've just said?" A deeper discussion would then emerge where students considered other features of the university environment that may influence or negate the occurrence of bullying.

The rich narratives offered an understanding of how students articulate constructs of bullying during specific phases of their life-course reflecting on how such constructs change and to what they attribute bullying. The narratives exposed the interactive dynamics between the individual's reflections of experience and understandings of bullying within educational and workplace contexts, as well as the wider social historical contexts. As Harnett (2010, p.165) asserts: "people are products of times in which they are living; lives moulded by policies, structures, prevailing beliefs and attitudes". The influence of discursive environments is of particular relevance to this study. How discursive environments shape individual identity is described by Gubrium and Holstein (2001, p.13) who state:

These distinctive milieus for self-construction comprise institutional discourses that characterise particular settings but they also encompass the practical contingencies of interaction as well as the material features of the environments, as they are interpretively brought to bear on self-construction.

Such a view particularly appeals as it supports my own interest regarding how certain environments through structural and operational systems and

practices may create climates that influence the behaviour of populations within those environments. This is applicable to the differing contexts under focus in this study.

#### 2.4.3. Group and individual interviews.

Students acting in a participatory role at the second stage of the elicitation study reported the benefits of both individual and group interviews. Therefore both were offered, although only four participants (of 49) undertook an individual interview due to their availability rather than as a preference. The pattern of the interviews were the same for both individual and group in terms of moving through the three contexts and then a return to explore any contradictions or discrepancies. The use of both approaches also served as a means by which to corroborate or contradict areas of discussion and clarify its perspective. Group interviews “provide tremendous potential for deeper probing and a reciprocally educative encounter” (Lather, 2005, p. 299) and also offer opportunities to follow up on areas from individual interviews that may need clarification or expansion.

Both approaches have their merits. Interviewees sometimes respond to the interviewer through the use of “familiar narrative constructs” as opposed to providing meaningful understandings of their subjective view (Miller and Glassner, 2009). However, the use of group interviews can counteract this (Rubin and Rubin, 2012) and as described, particularly through the use of Active Interviewing. Individual interviews afford opportunities to explore an individual’s experience and also offer a means by which to avoid the drawback of group interviews where ‘symbolic convergence’ occurs; group

interviewees share a common experience and develop into a 'rhetorical community', which produces a shared narrative which is centered around a commonly felt 'wound' (Foss, 1996).

#### 2.4.4. Phased pilot study.

The phenomenon of bullying is a sensitive subject characterised by variable personal constructs. The university environment is a context, which is comparatively underexplored and therefore warranted the implementation of a staged pilot study. Research literature relating specifically to undergraduate student-to-student bullying and how this compares to bullying in other contexts is scant. Therefore, I needed to find out if, and/or what current discourse of bullying was operating within the university. The pilot study involved the following phases in application and related objectives:

- Phase 1: Elite interviews with key personnel across university;  
Objective: to gain insight into current discourses of bullying across the university.
- Phase 2: Participatory interviews with undergraduate students acting in an advisory role;  
Objective: to gain understanding of student constructs of bullying in differing environments and students to advise on appropriateness of data collection tool design and researcher technique.
- Phase 3: Interviews with undergraduates;  
Objective: to trial interview/schedule for final reflection/refinement.

The elite interviews with university personnel and students (phase 1 & 2) provided a useful source of information. The undergraduate university experience in relation to bullying has been neglected within the bullying

research community, and so gaining insight into current chatter (if any) about possible bullying occurrence was invaluable. Elite interviews were conducted across key personnel within the university and were chosen in relation to the role that they undertake in supporting undergraduate students. These participants (5) were members of: University's Chaplaincy (1), student counseling services (1), student conduct and appeals office (1) and two key staff members from the Student Union (SU). An additional two personnel approached declined to be interviewed. For Dexter (1970) an 'elite' interview is one in which the interviewer is looking for instruction from key people within an organisation whose can offer knowledge and understanding regarding the phenomenon under investigation and context in which it is explored. Therefore the interview is framed with reference to the interviewee's knowledge of bullying in a HE context in the capacity in which they are employed within the university. No attempt is made here to disclose demographic information for personnel in the interests of securing anonymity.

For phase two, undergraduate students (9) were recruited from a level three taught module upon a programme within the School of Education. The module's focus is a critical approach to bullying in schools. Therefore the students were not natural constituents of a general sample. However, at this stage of the pilot study, representation of sample was not a priority as I was specifically seeking opportunity to trial the sensitivity of issues, appropriateness of language and interview structure and for participant students to advise of the next stage of data collection design. I had collaborated with a colleague on a taught module that critically examines school bullying which gave me opportunity to invite students to support

participatory research in terms of advising and guiding data collection tool design and implementation. Whilst my involvement in teaching on the module afforded access to participants, the primary aim was to seek students that are representative of experience of bullying where student perspective is sensitised to themes and ideas raised in the literature review. These students are not taught a definition or a deficit model of bullying and critically explore these issues therefore the discourse on bullying would be discretely different to a more general sample of students and would offer 'expert' view of data collection tool design and implementation. Two individual interviews and two group interviews (3 and 4 participants respectively) were carried out. All students were female, ranging from 20 to 50 years of age with 8 participants identified as White British and 1 participant as Black African.

Phase one and two helped to orientate the direction of phase 3; the pre-pilot interviews, by raising areas for discussion such as considerations in sampling e.g. campus residential spaces where bullying is reported to be characteristic necessitating sampling to reflect this group of students. The participatory interviews provided opportunities to develop non-invasive questions and reflect alongside participants as to how they responded to questions and the interview overall and take advice on participant suggestions for development and/or refinement. Students appeared quite robust in terms of their response to interviews and information and reflections gained here, informed phase three of the pilot study, which provided opportunities for final refinement. It is important to note that the term participatory approach in this study does not follow a traditional application, but is guided by participatory principles.

In its truest sense, this approach seeks to actively involve participants in some or all aspects of the research process by “determining research questions, developing technical solutions and approaches to obtain information, and deciding what the research means and how it should be used to benefit the community” (Lija and Bellon, 2008, p.479). Participatory inquiry carries with it intentions of emancipation, democracy and community empowerment (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The levels of participation of students in this study may therefore be considered ‘in the spirit of’ participatory research in the sense that the participatory method was applied at phase two of the pilot study. In view of the complexities associated with constructs of bullying as highlighted in the literature review in hand with limited published qualitative studies of bullying across undergraduates, involving the students in a participatory capacity seemed warranted. This allowed for the testing of the appropriateness of language used in interview questions, issues covered and how participants felt about the interview in terms of design. In this way, participant students act in advisory and advocacy roles, which offered me opportunities to reflect upon the experience and develop the data collection tools and techniques.

#### 2.4.5. Participants.

For the main study, participants comprised of undergraduate students undertaking programmes of study at four different schools across the university: education, health, sport and business schools. A range of factors informed school selection. The large body of literature relating to bullying in health and nursing and also education prompted interest in hand with my own experience as an undergraduate student of education, and recalled a positive

ethos and was personally unaware of any bullying incidence. Selection of the School of Sport was driven by the elicitation exercise where university staff reported bullying to be characteristic of students in this school. Selection of the business school was driven in part by the utilisation of researcher contacts but also by location. The business school is situated on a different campus from the School of Sport and the School of Education and is a significantly larger campus, affording opportunities to explore aspects of campus organisation and climate alongside how this may/may not encourage an environment where bullying can thrive.

A total of 49 undergraduate students (see appendix 1, p.279) were comprised of both residential though mostly non-residential students and was typical of the diverse student cohorts in terms of age and ethnicity and stage of programme. Accessing large groups of students by which to appeal in person was determined by presentations to students attending core module sessions; facilitated by those tutors responding to directives given by the Dean of the Business school. In the School of Sport, selection was orientated by individual tutor's identification of potential participants. For the School of Education and the School of Health, tutors permitted access to lectures and seminars to appeal to students as an overall group.

During the face-to-face appeal, an outline of the research was explained and the purposes of the interviews. As mentioned earlier, it was stressed that I was not seeking personal experience of bullying but more rather how bullying was constructed in the differing environments. This last point warrants a particular mention here. Whilst participants were at times emotive in their

responses, findings in this study are not discussed with this specific focus in mind. There may have been some differences between the attitudes and positions of the participants relating to their experiences as perpetrators or targets of bullying. However, it was my intention not to attempt to categorise them according to these constructs, but to enable more fluid identities within the study. As I did not ask if they had been bullied/bullied others, most did not volunteer that information, so conclusions about links between perpetration and attitudes would have had no foundation.

Anonymity and secure data storage were assured and consent forms (see appendix 2, p.281) distributed at interviews reinforced these assurance.

## 2.5. Data analysis.

At the data analysis stage, I used an immersion technique; a process where iterative engagement with the data ensures an intimacy with the material that is invaluable (Marshall and Rossman, 2010) and can be applied in multiple ways. The following strategies were used and are not sequential; by their nature they share considerable inter-relational activity. However, they crudely adhere to this arrangement:

- iterative engagement with audio files;
- iterative reading of interview transcriptions;
- concept mapping;
- coding the data;
- language extraction;
- thematic analysis.

Initial and on-going data analysis required an immersion into the data. Sound recordings were repeatedly listened to in order that I could absorb the

conversations. As Wagner (2005, p.2) states “audio recordings provide a distinctive way of depicting the interplay of voice, meaning and situation.... [and] allow us to feel that we’re listening to another person, for example, not just ‘encountering a text’”. Just relying on textual data removes the interactional nature of the conversations, which is central to the Active Interview approach. Listening to the recordings offered additional insight into the participants’ interactions alongside my own, and how horizons of meaning were reached and different realities assembled. As Holstein and Gubrium (2004, p.126) remind us, “analysing active interview data requires disciplined sensitivity to both process and substance”. At the analysis stage the authors state:

The goal is to show how interview responses are produced in the interaction between interviewer and respondent without losing sight of the meaning produced or the circumstances that condition the meaning-making process (p.127).

Close attention was paid to how the participants constructed narratives in collaboration with the interviewer and where interactions prompted or led to the development of alternative or contradictory narratives, silences and moments of cognitive dissonance. Reflecting on the different discourses participants engaged in when discussing bullying in specific contexts prompted the construction of a concept map to guide analysis. Overarching themes of systems, environment and individualistic discourses enabled a grouping of related categories and whilst the map was not developed any further at this stage, it continued to guide analysis. I kept in mind the different

discourses in use and considered the social and historical contexts that influenced participant conceptions of bullying. Furthermore, specific language was examined in order to further explore the different discourses used in relation to bullying in the different contexts of school, workplace and university (see fig 1, p.210). This illuminated the ways in which participants contextually defined and constructed bullying according to particular environments.

Studying interview transcripts generated a rudimentary set of codes that were then refined on entry into Nvivo. From experience in the use of Nvivo, if initial coding is undertaken after transcripts are loaded into the programme, there is a risk of unnecessary or excessive codes where one code and sub codes can overlap others, resulting in a cumbersome electronic data set. At the point of uploading the transcripts onto the analysis software programme, coding required minimal refinement. Thematic analysis continued the identification of groupings, patterns, relationships and outliers in the data. Analysis of data in Nvivo then generated a tabulated document to not only give an overall index of codes, sub-codes, numbers of sources and references, location of sources and related themes with examples, but also to add notes detailing concepts and themes emerging from the data (see appendix 3, p.282). Whilst the same annotation facility is useful in Nvivo, a view of analytical notes in their entirety not only offered an added layer of immersion and familiarity with the data but also provided a view of the 'bigger picture' prompting further theories and concepts.

As stated earlier, research design is shaped by reflexivity operating through every stage of the project (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) and it was in

tandem with this process that particular theorists and concepts began to resonate; this orientated the design of the analytical framework for the study, which is discussed in the following section.

## 2.6. Analytical framework.

Analytic tools were required for two areas of focus, (though these areas are interrelated) one approach was more aligned with analysis of the descriptive phase of the interviews addressing RQ1: How do students construct bullying in different contexts? The other was more aligned with the critical phase in addressing RQ2: How do students explain differing constructions of bullying in different contexts? The focus in this second phase was on the narratives that participants used, not only at the time of interview but those discourses embedded within the particular environments under discussion.

Initial analysis revealed the degree to which particular institutions were coercive, non-consultative and non-negotiable. Participants described the physical and operational features of school, workplace and university that contributed to the degree to which bullying was present. A spectrum of totalising institutions was emerging while describing the varying degree to which populations within particular institutions are separated from the outside world and controlled in regimented and pressurised environments. Drawing on Goffman's theory in relation to bullying, Hacking (2004, p.165) states that "bullying thrives in distinctive structural settings: total institutions". Total Institutions are characterised by the bureaucratic control of the human needs of a group of people, and it operates through the mechanism of the 'mortification of self' (Goodman, 2012). The person initially entering the

institution has with them a 'self' and attachments to supports that allows this self to survive. The totalising nature of institutions starts by disconnecting those supports and the self is systematically, (frequently unintentionally) mortified (Goffman, 1957). The process by which an individual becomes mortified is discussed in more detail elsewhere (see p.210). In addition to Goffman's theory, Duncan's 4C (2009; 2011) model also held some explanatory appeal.

The 4C model attempts an additional perspective as to viewing compulsory schooling and how such schools are operationally and structurally set up in ways that create a climate that breeds aggression. Where Goffman's theory focuses on the more day-to-day aspects of institutions, Duncan's 4C model takes a wider macro-political perspective looks at the four features of compulsion, compression, competition and control and how they interact to produce 'bullying schools' (Duncan, 2011). However, similar themes emerged from discussions regarding the workplace environment, yet there was a distinct absence of these features when discussing the university context and the porosity that this environment offered that was seen as a protective factor against the occurrence of bullying. The feature of competition was significant and is not specifically addressed by Goffman's theory of total institutions. For these reasons, the findings are also discussed against the backdrop of the 4C model.

I also needed to consider analysis in relation to the emerging variable discourses. On reading the discourse analysis methodology literature, the myriad of approaches became apparent. However, approaches did not seem

to resonate with theory and concepts emerging at this analytic stage. An approach was required that would explore the embedded discourses within institutions, their origins and historical and continuing stability and influence over the populations within them. The literature discussing discourse, in relation to bullying was invaluable and findings were analysed in relation to a selection of these works, a few of which draw on the works of Foucault. Such works are “useful in uncovering how bullying activities are perpetuated by the educational discourses within schools” (Jacobson, 2010) and the workplace (Lenstead et al., 2014). Thus the focus is on the power relationships in an institution as expressed through language, practices and analysis encompasses efforts to understand how individuals view the world, studies of categorisations, personal and institutional relationships, ideology, and the wider political context. It acknowledges the political dimension and implications of discourse.

These works in hand with Goffman are seen to be complimentary particularly within a discourse of disciplinary power. Goffman offers analysis of power relations at a micro-physical level, in this case interaction between school staff and pupils; employer/management and employees, works applying a discursive lens offer a more macro-level analyses. Duncan’s 4C model bridges the two and offers an additional layer of analysis. However, Duncan’s model is limited to a critique of the 4Cs in relation to compulsory schooling and at first glance one might assume this model is not suited to critiquing the HE context. However, Duncan’s model is limited to the critique of the 4Cs in relation to compulsory schooling and at first glance one might assume this model is not suited to critiquing the HE context, as one can immediately see

that these four features are not overtly characteristic of the HE context. However, just as the level or spectrum of totalising practice or degree to which a person is self-mortified may determine the possibilities of a bullying climate, so too the 4C model can be used in the same way. The absence or lower intensity of the four features may be decisive factors in explaining a comparatively bully-lite HE environment. For the reasons discussed here, this study's analytic framework draws upon this model, works with a focus on bullying discourse and Goffman's Total Institutions to explore different environments and the ways in which they propagate and maintain (or not) a climate where bullying can thrive.

## 2.7. Positional reflexivity.

This study has at times caused me to question the very motives behind bullying research and research agenda in general. I have been aware of feelings of cynicism, which if left unchecked may disrupt intentions of avoiding judgmental influences at every stage of the study. I have been struck by the power of the dominant bullying discourse, which it has been suggested, hides its own contradictions (Coleyshaw, 2012), while at the same time seeming to obscure a more critical sociopolitical analysis. Differential approach determined by research context seems paradoxical just as disciplinary realignment seems determined by the context under scrutiny. The disciplinary parameters seem to operate across varying levels of fluidity in order to encompass theory that explains particular bullying phenomena in specific environments.

In addition to these personal reflections, I am particularly aware of the potential for my own experience having some influence upon my inquiry design and methodological implementation. Indeed, it is such experience that motivated the pursuit of this study, and in that sense is influential. Alexander (2009) asserts that no inquiry is value-free and any attempt to provide an objective account of reality is futile. Pillay (2009) points to the ways in which our biological, social, cultural and political selves influence how we understand and explain experience. My political and philosophical standpoint is aligned with a sociological perspective born out of personal and professional experience. Many years spent assisting teachers in mainstream and special schools at primary and secondary level have presented differing educational contexts, each with uniquely individual cultures and climates alongside differing policy and approaches to behaviour management and anti-bullying strategies/programs. Time spent teaching in further and higher education and working in a range of workplace environments has provided me with further insight and opportunity to reflect upon bullying in both non-compulsory educational environments and the workplace. I have also undertaken a programme of study at undergraduate level at university. My intention here is not to claim 'master status' and 'positional piety' (Cousin, 2009) in that the experience outlined here gives me an authoritative voice. However they are important sources of influence. It is through these experiences, social process and institutions that my positionality has come to be shaped and I feel it necessary as Cousin (2010) encourages, to openly engage with researcher subjectivity and apply a reflexive approach. I feel it also conveys a sense of transparency to the reader. Maxwell (2005) posits that personal experience plays an important part in many research studies

and need not be considered hazardous as long as the researcher is mindful of the possible consequences for the validity of the research conclusions. However this study uses Lincoln and Guba's (1985) credibility as opposed to validity and a range of strategies were implemented to bolster credibility, which supports the issue of avoiding bias (see 2.8.1, p.137).

## 2.8. Trustworthiness.

As this study is in the interpretivist domain, no quantitative measures are applied. The aim of qualitative research is to "discover meaning and understanding, rather than to verify truth or predict outcomes" (Dzakiria, 2006). However, the extent to which knowledge produced using interpretive approaches is justified has been a long-standing area of criticism and debate (Sandberg, 2005), as many researchers within the interpretivist paradigm prefer to use different terminology to distance themselves from the positivist paradigm (Shenton, 2004). Therefore I am drawn to the notion of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and demonstrating credibility and transferability in the research.

### 2.8.1. Credibility.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that credibility (as opposed to validity) is a key criterion in establishing trustworthiness. Strategies employed in this study to demonstrate credibility are: a) prolonged engagement, b) triangulation, c) peer debriefing, d) member checks, e) Interpersonal communication strategies and are discussed in more detail here.

#### a) Prolonged engagement

Prolonged engagement entails spending sufficient time in the field to learn or understand the culture, social setting, or phenomenon of interest. Lincoln and Guba (1985) urge for a prolonged engagement to commence before the data collection stage. The three-phased pilot study afforded opportunities to explore the phenomenon of bullying with a range of staff and students across the university providing insight into if and how bullying is regarded in this context. This gave me a starting point in considering the phenomenon of bullying in this context that, as stated previously, is a significantly under researched area of bullying inquiry and yielded limited literature. Prolonged engagement continued through the second stage of the pilot study where students acted in a participatory role. The third stage of trialing the interview allowed for necessary refinements before continuing through sufficient interviews to reach saturation point in data collection, which also reinforces the credibility of the research study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

#### b) Triangulation

Methodological triangulation is a technique that attempts to tease out the complexities of human behaviour, with one approach being to studying it from multiple data collection approaches (Cohen et al., 2009). It is not, as Olsen (2004) asserts, aimed merely at credibility but at broadening one's understanding and showing confidence that the phenomenon under scrutiny is accurately recorded. The use of different approaches of triangulation is important in bolstering the credibility of a study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The phased pilot study mentioned above facilitated a range of perspectives that informed design and data collection and therefore adds further triangulation to the data collection method. Through studying and comparing

data sources against others, I was able to corroborate participant accounts across individual and group interviews. At the design stage, getting participants from particular disciplines was important for reasons discussed (see p.127) however, access and availability hampered recruitment of students from some disciplines and those from a larger campus. However as stated, participants were typical across age, gender, and year of study, disciplines, ethnicity, residential and non-residential status. Therefore the profile of students was varied, and this afforded opportunities to explore as many congruent and disparate views as possible thereby achieving multi-perspective triangulation.

#### c) Member checking

Member checking further reinforces the credibility of the study and full transcripts were emailed to those participants who agreed to be contacted post-interview. In the accompanying email, participants were invited to correct any errors and add further information and also agree or disagree with a summary of my inferences (see appendix 4 ,p.283). As has been discussed, in interviews participants found it difficult to explain why they conceptualised bullying differently depending on the context under discussion. Allowing time for reflection afforded participants to comment on this. Debriefing sessions further strengthened credibility through the sharing of data and my interpretations on repeated occasions with different colleagues, each offering particular expertise in bullying research, research methodology and the active interview approach in turn. These meetings encouraged fresh perspective and afforded testing of my developing ideas and interpretations. They are also

important in encouraging the researcher to recognise their biases and preferences (Shenton, 2004).

#### e) Interpersonal communication strategies

An additional way to bolster credibility is by using tactics to help encourage honesty in participants when contributing data (Shenton, 2004). As Cousin (2009) asserts, rapport needs to be established at the outset. Strategies to establish commonality were responsive to individuals and implemented only where it was intuitively appropriate to do so. As an experienced interviewer, having conducted numerous interviews to support a wide range of commissioned studies, I am adept at implementing the particular strategies that were applied in this study. Strategies include use of humour and a relaxed sociable demeanor or sensitivity where appropriate. Specific to this study, disclosing that I too was once a student at the university or that I have been both a perpetrator and target of bullying behaviours in the past was also shared if I felt it appropriate to do so. In doing this, I aimed to convey assurance that participants will not be judged on the information they offer should they choose to share it, and this served to reduce problematic effects arising from the authorisation of the 'expert' and the subordination of the researched (Wray-Bliss, 2009). Such strategies are deliberate in building trusting relationships and reducing the distance between the researcher and the researched and further support credibility.

#### 2.8.2. Transferability.

My intention is that the findings from this study will have some relevance beyond the research site and therefore will offer 'transferability' (Lincoln and

Guba, 1985) where the reader makes a judgment as to how far the findings could be comparable to other instances as opposed to what extent findings are likely to exist in other instances (Denscombe, 2010). As mentioned, the profile of students was varied, yet they represent typical student cohorts in post-1992 higher education institutions. So too the university in this study is typical of other post 1992 higher education institutions. Dzakiria (2006, p.11) asserts that as the researcher “our primary task is to do the research well by describing the persons, places, happenings of the research in sufficient detail so that the readers can reason or intuit the applicability of the vicarious experience to the population they individually have already experienced”.

## 2.9. Ethical considerations.

For research to be ethically grounded, the researcher needs to evaluate research activities and plans in light of accepted ethical standards (Ruane, 2005). Therefore ethical considerations were aligned with those of the British Education Research Association (BERA, 2011). Participants were recruited for the elicitation phase via access to a taught module on a degree programme and were briefed on the purposes and benefits of the research. In order that participants at the second and third phase of piloting fully comprehended the intentions of the research, the duration of a week passed from recruitment to actual participation where the information was reiterated. This allowed for participants to perhaps consult with each other or individually consider the information received before making the decision to participate (Ruane, 2005).

In line with ethical guidelines, informed signed consent was sought from participants of each pilot stage and was also applied to the main study and appropriate assurances of anonymity were stated and information relating to data storage and usage (see appendix 2, p.281). It was in the interests of the researchers to ensure they do not do physical or psychological harm to participants (Whisker, 2008); in a study of this nature, there is the potential for students' psychological well-being to be disturbed if evoking memories of emotionally painful experience as was highlighted in the elicitation exercise. One student revealed that she had experienced sexual bullying and it was evident in her non-verbal communication that talking about this caused her some discomfort. The student confided that she was able to share her experience of physical and relational bullying experienced at school within the wider group of the bullying module undertaken as part of her programme of study, but would not discuss the sexual bullying. This highlights the need for what Simons and Usher (2000) refer to as situated ethics (in Cohen et al., 2005) where ethics are not merely a set of general principles applied to all situations, researchers are required to make complex and sensitive decisions based on the socio-political contexts in which they occur. This was illustrated in a further example during the main data collection stage where a member of a group interview (of three friends) revealed the trauma that one respondent still experienced relating to childhood bullying and family abuse. The participant became very emotional, and particular sensitivity was needed in acknowledging the participants distress in a sensitive and non-judgmental way whilst orientating a return to the focus of the interview. I had prepared for the possibilities of people expressing more extreme emotions as they recalled injustices or hurt, but in this latter case this was moderated in some measure

by the group situation. Also, in both of the cases mentioned here, discreet offering/directing participants to relevant support services was offered but declined.

## 2.10 Limitations.

The following discussion identifies and explores limitations arising from this study and defense of those aspects of the study that might be deemed as limitations.

### 2.10.1. The phased pilot approach.

One might be doubtful as to the reasons and merits of using a staged pilot approach and whilst I have made defense of this elsewhere (see p.125), further justification is discussed here. Each stage of the phased pilot study added particular value in shaping the next stage of the research design. From experience, I have conducted pilot interviews and addressed any refinements or other considerations arising only to encounter further issues at data collection stage. Therefore by implementing the elicitation exercise, participatory interviews with 'experts' in the study of bullying and final implementation of pilot interviews, this consequently secured a confidence in knowing I could move into data collection stage with an understanding of the 'chatter' (or lack of it) about bullying at university and also the phased nature of the interviews; moving through the descriptive to the critical phase. As discussed earlier, reflection during and after the phased pilot study and engagement with methodological literature identified the technique of Active Interviewing. Thus, I was able to develop my understanding of the interactional character of this approach and refine techniques to take forward

to data collection stage. Had I implemented a traditional single stage pilot interview, I may not have been as informed until well into the data collection interviews impacting on the quality and credibility of the data collected.

#### 2.10.2. Participant recruitment.

The phased pilot study informed a number of particular recruitment considerations. Staff and students identified particular academic schools and spaces where bullying was thought to occur. However, the intentions to ensure a particular group of participants at the main data collection stage was not met, yet were still typical of undergraduate cohorts. In terms of recruiting participants from a larger, main site campus and business school, general difficulties arose inherent with participant recruitment of willingness to participate and resultant low take up. Recruitment was also hampered due to difficulties seeking permissions to access. However, the range of participants is still typical of post-1992 higher education cohorts (see appendix 1, p.279) in terms of age, gender and ethnicity, mode of study and pathway, non-residential and residential students. It is debatable whether achieving the original sampling intentions would have made any difference or not.

#### 2.10.3. Member checks.

Of the 49 participants, 32 gave permissions to be contacted again via email. Of these, eight emails were returned as incorrect email address. Of the remaining 24, only two responded to my follow-up email attaching full transcripts and asking question for reflection on the interview. Participants may well have read transcripts and not felt a need to raise any points whilst at the same time may have been reluctant or unwilling to answer the additional

questions for reflection. Only one of these two responses had any value and has been included in the findings. Whilst this may be viewed as a low response rate, it is how the interview unfolded that is of significance. I wanted to uncover the embedded constructions of bullying that participants held regarding the different environments. However, time for participants to reflect on how they came to explain bullying differently according to the context would have proved useful, and certainly any follow-up face-to-face interviews would have been preferable but time did not permit.

### Chapter 3. Part 1: presentation of findings.

The discussion of findings presented here is in two parts. The Active Interview process comprised of two phases; a descriptive phase where participants explored their understanding of bullying in the contexts of school, the workplace and higher education and then a second, more critical phase. In the second phase the conversations turned to investigating the variations within participants' accounts. It examined how their experience at university compares to perceptions and experiences of bullying whilst at school and/or in the workplace, and how they came to explain bullying differently in the interviews depending on the context to which it relates. In this way, the results and discussion are aligned with the principle objectives of this study:

1. to explore undergraduate student constructions of bullying within specific phases of their lives (e.g. primary school to HE);
2. to consider the institutional features that might encourage or discourage a climate of bullying in differing contexts.

These objectives generated the following research questions:

1. how do undergraduate students construct bullying in different contexts?
2. how do undergraduate students explain differing constructions of bullying?

The participating students discussed conceptions of bullying across the three contexts of school, workplace and university. The key finding for RQ 1 is that

students tended to construct bullying according to the constructs they held at those particular times. For RQ2, students used a deeper level of conceptual thinking to dig more analytically in order to explain the inconsistencies in their accounts. In other words, their recall of incidents and climates took them back to the ways they thought about bullying at those times, rather than reflect objectively with hindsight, applying their current knowledge and understanding. Earlier conceptions did not predate school, and it was through school anti-bullying strategies, and other more implicit school and teacher influences that bullying came to be a normalised phenomenon explained in very clichéd ways. Conceptions were set within a predominantly individualistic perspective, yet moving to discussions of bullying in a workplace context, key differences in conceptualisations emerged. Students talked of cliques operating in hierarchical organisational structures, narratives relating to an abuse of power and official narratives regarding organisational practice, rights and grievances.

The language shifted again when bullying was discussed within the context of university. Here, students reported little or no bullying, and offered simplistic explanations resonating with conceptions formed during school of why this was a relatively bully-lite environment, for example, perpetrators being particularly stereotyped individuals that would not enter university for varying reasons. Some attempt was made to offer weak examples of bullying at university but in the main, students attributed maturity as the reason for an absence of bullying. Interesting data emerged from discussions relating to the nursing environment and students in halls of residence, both of which are

distinct sub-groups that reported bullying. This overview of findings shall now be discussed in more detail.

### 3.1. The school context.

In addressing RQ1, participants were asked when they first heard the term 'bullying' and what they understood by it at that time. There emerged a strong consensus of bullying as a concept related to the schooling experience. For 38 of 49 participants, school was the context in which the term bullying was first heard (or remembered) and that such understanding was driven by teachers' explanations of what had constituted bullying. Alternatives such as family, friends, community, media, were hardly mentioned in any of the interviews. In primary school:

It was the teachers talking to you about it that it's not nice to bully and you are a bully (Barry)

It was explained as people not liking people who are different in any way (Angelica).

Leon was clear in his understanding at that time, it was:

Someone who was being picked on then the person picking on them was a bully. Straightforward.

Participants described how their early conceptions of bullying at that time were consistently reinforced during their time at school as Bill explains:

(...) the continuity of it throughout my education. I was always conscious of it.

In another interview, Angelica remarked:

I have known about bullying since my early days in primary school.

Only four participants reported the home as shaping any understanding, such as parents intervening in older siblings fighting with younger siblings and deeming this to be bullying. Significantly, the earliest memories of bullying did not predate school in any of the interviews. What was salient across these conversations was the way in which students talked about school bullying as an accepted phenomenon, Leona's contribution being typical:

It was just them [bullies] having fun and targeting different people, those that were weaker, teasing. There were occasions when it would be one person being bullied all the time, but generally, they just made people look small.

For many students such behaviours were a customary part of school life that was a culturally embedded feature of the school environment. Constructions at this point centred on the ubiquitous nature of bullying; an uncomfortable tolerance of bullying as a normalised phenomenon during their time at school:

It's just one of those things. You've always known what it is from an early age, probably six or seven (John);

It was just the norm of the class (Kevin);

It was the done thing (Leona).

The pervasive nature of school bullying meant that for some participants there was an ever-present anxiety about their own potential to be targeted. Leona voiced this worry:

I wasn't actually bullied at school. It was just the fear of it.

For Adam, however, bullying as an inevitable feature of school life had its positives:

I do think there are certain elements that are actually good for kids. You take some shit and you learn to deal with it and it makes you a tougher person. Just part of life.

Most participants stated that introduction to the concept of bullying occurred in primary school. However the preponderance of discussion that ensued in all of the groups was weighted heavily towards secondary school. This may have been because participants were drawing on more recent memory, but may also have been because secondary school is a more difficult social terrain for young people to navigate, with the issue of bullying receiving a higher profile.

Participants began to theorise bullying according to the constructs they held at the time of experience. Participants discussed memories of bullying in two ways. Firstly, bullying was an interpersonal phenomenon: an individualistic view in terms of the three principal roles of perpetrator, target and bystander.

Secondly, as official narratives of how school policy and practice proactively and reactively have addressed bullying behaviours.

### 3.1.1. An interpersonal phenomenon: who does what?

From an interpersonal perspective, the majority of students explained bullying in terms of 'banter' and 'joking'. For some of these students such banter was not felt to be particularly harmful bullying, whilst others felt it was. Many students felt that banter and joking were a form of accidental bullying as Amanda describes:

If someone is bullying you, you might be able to laugh it off if everyone else is laughing at you but they might go home and cry about it so I think you could bully someone by accident.

Others felt it only became bullying if deemed so by the target:

It all depends on how they [target] take it (Tony).

Discussion then shifted towards bullying relating to individual characteristics. Fifteen students explained bullying in terms of being 'picked on' for reasons of difference such as being 'fat', 'spotty', 'geeky', seen as 'weaker', being especially clever or talented; physically bigger pupils picking on smaller pupils, friendship groups targeting a pupil, girls targeted for being popular with the boys, or girls being more advanced in their physical development:

If someone is different, they are likely to be bullied (Ollie).

Individual characteristics as an explanation of bullying continued with students mentioning developmental aspects such as bigger pupils picking on smaller, as Royston explains:

It changes as you grow for example you're in year 7 and you grow to six foot and grow more intimidating and bigger, in later years you would give it back.

Other students raised academic ability as a factor, suggesting those less academically able were more likely to perpetrate bullying behaviours, and some spoke in terms of a family pathology where pupils:

Had problems at home (Simon) or;

Parents aren't strict and let you do whatever you want, you are more likely [to bully] (Amanda).

Several participants felt pupils who bully do it in response to being a target at home, or were perpetrators trying to live up to older siblings' reputations. Participants often pathologised bullying, seeing it as a within person trait; for example, bullying behaviour being innate: 'it's just something within them' (Barry); 'it's natural' (Ardash), or a particularly introvert pupil being a target or a dominant personality leading others or that perpetrators who:

(...) give off this façade and bully for a reason to combat something for their insecurities (Chris).

Mosi offered the following medicalised interpretation:

They do it instinctively because their brain is trained... they are like a predator. The urge... he cannot stop him[self]. He tries to stop but feels like something is missing in his body. It's like an addiction.

Similarly, Wali indicated a more pathological perspective but in this instance, with reference to the target stating:

If his personality is weird he'll get picked on.

Leon also discussed a known target stating:

He wasn't very stable. I think he has something wrong like a learning difficulty. He wouldn't stick up for himself.

Other students were also specific about targets' behaviour attracting perpetrators attention:

You would see them [targets] walking around, looking at the floor (Royston).

The people being bullied didn't help themselves. They didn't seek help, they just let it carry on (Desmond).

As the interviews progressed, the discussion of bullying as an interpersonal phenomenon continued, but participants began to consider more cultural elements. It appeared that students had exhausted their stock of explanations, found them unsatisfactory and so began mining new seams. Students raised cultural identifiers as being contributory in fostering bullying behaviours such

as those pupils having different interests, clothes or particular social behaviours. As one respondent recalled:

If they're the first ones to dabble with smoke and drink, they'll exclude anyone who doesn't (Bill).

Other participants also raised such perceived deviancy as a marker of those pupils more likely to 'bully' such as girls defiant of uniform rules as Sarah described:

Wearing really short skirts, orange faces, big hoop earrings. These girls were horrible. Really nasty and had a reputation.

This view of bullying as being more of a cultural aspect of school life did not always resonate across responses. In exploring whether perpetrator/target roles were static or shifting, participants were asked: was it always the same pupils who were perpetrators or targets, or did the roles change? Responses varied with some students, with some stating it was always the same pupils known to be the perpetrators. Other students stated that there were the same known perpetrators for the most part but that it could on occasions change and this was also applicable for targets.

One respondent stated that the same people perpetrated the physical bullying, but emotional bullying was common across numerous pupils. Six students discussed how the roles of perpetrator and target could be interchangeable as the following responses demonstrate:

It was always the same sorts of social groups that were doing the bullying or being bullied; whichever way round it went (Ian).

Ollie offered the following insightful response:

I don't think it was the same kid. It was similar friendship groups, but even still I think it was like you sort of had a hierarchy of who would do the most bullying all the way down and the one at the bottom would always get picked on at some point by pretty much everyone in that hierarchy.

One student spoke of a pupil who was marked out as a target by the other pupils and was:

Consistently bullied throughout those years and was systematically targeted by the entire class (Bill).

Similarly, Leon discussed a target who was singled out, but because:

He was easy to wind up. There was like a trigger with him.

So too with regard to issues of gender, results varied with some participants reporting boys being involved in more physical bullying and girls more relational bullying. However an equal number of participants reported it being the same for both boys and girls: "I don't think it was either male or female. It was across the board" (Adrian) and girls could be as, if not at times, more physical than boys.

Other more socio-demographic factors were offered, such as perpetrators who were from more economically deprived or 'rough areas'; they were:

Kids from the bad estate (Leona)

It was always the rough girls (Sarah).

Sammy offered the following comment:

The ones that were bullies at our school all basically had kids when they were 18, 19. Probably got 6 or 7 now living in a shitty council house living on benefits, smoking 40 a day.

Barry also shared a damning stereotypical perspective:

In my experience it was low intelligence. They leave school at 16 .....they go straight into low intelligence, manual labour job which is nothing to look down on and they'll enter the workforce like van drivers and you can still see it – the bullying in them.

Type of school was also raised as a factor:

At a posh school you might get called names but in a rough school, you'd get beaten up (Alpish).

There was some reported difference between primary and secondary schools where bullying at primary age tended to be more emotional and at secondary, mostly physical. As Gaby describes:

By the time I got to secondary school, it got more violent: more physical.

As can be seen from the findings so far, the discussion initially generated was superficial, and stereotypical formulae to describe bullies, victims, bystanders and bullying activity: such views are consonant with much of the mainstream bullying literature. But once this was aired, it seemed to activate an additional layer of analysis that spoke of a more cultural context to bullying. Discussions moved away from trite notions and without interrogation or challenge some of them developed conceptualisations of a more cultural form, though still clichéd in expression. Conversations then moved on to reveal more official narratives in participants' conceptualisations of school-aged bullying.

### 3.1.2. Official narratives: what is the school's response?

Students' understanding of school bullying (at that time) was mainly driven by teachers. These understandings were shaped by the ways in which schools actively combated bullying both proactively and reactively. This section discusses participant recollections of both teacher strategy and whole school anti-bullying activity.

The implementation of anti-bullying initiatives in primary schools such as 'bullying awareness week' was concurrent across participants, the effectiveness of which was in doubt and, in one case, felt to be counterproductive. This student was reflecting on anti-bullying initiatives in the primary school that she currently worked in as a learning support assistant. Whilst this may seem to stray from this study's objective of seeking students' recollections of bullying in school by exploring how bullying comes to be

defined and understood, Leona's comments are worthy of inclusion. Leona commented that when they implement an anti-bullying week, the numbers of children reporting being bullied increased and drove the need to examine what constitutes bullying and reinforce definitions of bullying to pupils:

So we say 'you are not being bullied if it's a one-off'. We wouldn't say it's not bullying, so we would say 'well what is happening? Has it happened a couple of times? Do you think they are doing it on purpose?' A lot of our kids wind each other up so it's a case of telling them that actually, that isn't bullying.

This is perhaps contradictory in that school definitions of bullying were transmitted to pupils via specific criteria, which resulted in increased reportage. The schools response was to suggest to pupils that their assessment of identifying bullying behaviour was mistaken. Another strategy was the use of peer mediation, as Barry described:

They were quite heavy on it but they would get the children involved together and get them to resolve it. I don't know whether it always worked.

In secondary school too, participants described how anti-bullying was a common theme throughout secondary school and was periodically addressed through various anti-bullying strategies such as themed Citizenship or Personal, Social, Health and Emotional (PSHE) lessons, or through themed assemblies. All participants were able to recall bullying from their compulsory school days both at length and in detail and, as has been stated, whilst the

objective of this study was not to uncover personal stories, they often emerged and were expressed with clarity, in some cases lasting emotional trauma.

Participants discussed a range of strategies, yet they also discussed the ineffectiveness or perceived unfairness of such approaches. Desmond described an initiative called 'the friendship stop':

It was a bit like a bus stop where you have someone sitting there and you could talk to them about it rather than go to the teacher and you could speak to someone your age and they could help you deal with it but the problem with that is they could see you go up to them.

Rose described a "bully box" where you could post anonymous information relating to bullying incidence "but I don't think anyone used them". Steve described a mentoring scheme whereby a pupil identified as a perpetrator would be allocated a personal mentor that would accompany them during break times and monitor their behaviour. The pupil would present a card at each lesson and receive a stamp if they had behaved properly. Accumulation of stamps earned rewards. Perpetrators in receipt of perceived special treatment was a significant theme. Ten participants reported the use of rewards as an anti-bullying strategy with all of them expressing the resentment felt by other pupils as Barry explains:

There were four or five lads in my year who were the bullies and they got taken to Man United games. It just turned everyone else against them and made that separation more abundantly clear that they were, as we saw it, rewarded.

Participants described how certain pupils were taken out to lunch by teachers or had the freedom to use the computer rooms while other pupils' time was restricted. Particular pupils that were known to perpetrate bullying would always be picked in certain subjects such as physical education (P.E) due to their sporting prowess.

Other responses by teachers were to "ignore" bullying or "let it carry on" (Leon). This was a recurring theme across 25 participants, reporting that teachers knew such behaviours were occurring yet did little to resolve them. Sometimes teachers would only intervene if a particular incidence reached a certain level, as stated by Jessica:

There were lots of fights out of and in school. Teachers were aware but I can't remember any specific things – suspensions, exclusions – it was only when it got to a high level when people got severely injured that they took action.

One respondent described how teachers were fearful of certain groups and so would avoid addressing any bullying behaviours because those that did were met with derision by perpetrators, which, the respondent reported, sent a powerful message to pupils:

As a child, you see that the teachers haven't got control of the situation, so what chance have you [pupil] got of being in control of the situation? (Leona).

Other more explicit strategies included teachers instructing pupils how to respond to bullying. As one student recalled, the advice given to pupils was to

avoid retaliation in order to circumvent the situation escalating (Leon). Many participants (28) described various ways in which the teachers placed the onus on addressing, avoiding, reporting or responding to bullying upon the pupils with many of these participants stating that such approaches were ineffective. Barry discussed how teachers avoided acknowledgement and deflected any responsibility in addressing bullying incidence:

It was a case of 'we don't have tittle-tattlers in this school'. The people who were getting bullied were – it was as if it was a prison and you weren't allowed to grass as they say.....it's like having someone tell them they are being bullied would create more work.

In contrast to this, Sarah described how the responsibility to monitor and report bullying incidence was placed with pupils, and if they did not report, they were complicit:

I remember they taught us if you are not the bully but you know someone who is being bullied you are just the same as the bully. If you just stand by a watch it you are just a bad as the bully.

The use of public shame was another strategy where perpetrators would be exposed to the rest of the school as described in the following comment:

I think there was an incidence in Year 1 and the teachers used this as an example to the rest of us – saying what it was and we shouldn't do it (Bill)

And more directly:

Making a spectacle of them [and] getting them [perpetrators] out on stage (Rose).

One respondent described how she was aware that bullying may impact upon her social relationship with her peers:

The teacher said that some people get experienced at bullying and they lose friends from doing it: that you usually lose friends or someone decides not to speak to you (Olivia).

Another participant described how his year group was encouraged by teachers to monitor and control a particularly 'troublesome' lower year group in an effort to curb bullying behaviour and recalled how the teachers were concerned upon the older year group leaving school as it would mean they could no longer rely on them for that function: "he [teacher] actually said 'we don't know what we are going to do or how to control them'" (Sammy).

Participants often discussed their own strategies in coping with bullying. For some, just the fear of bullying was a lasting memory of their school days. Others used avoidance strategies either by evading areas at school known to attract perpetrators, or anticipating perpetrators' routes around school and selecting a different route. For one participant this was a daily part of school life:

In secondary school it was quite rough. I spent most of my time avoiding the bullying groups. I would plan my escape route. I never got bullied. I was good at avoiding situations that would get you bullied..... I was so busy planning my exit strategy

that that was what school was all about in a way – avoiding situations rather than learning (Leona).

These were significant concerns of Leona's to the point that she felt were to the detriment of her education.

### 3.2. The workplace: a different type of bullying?

The findings reported here relate to those students having been in employment or who were employed at the time of interview, and if and how bullying presents itself within a workplace context. Conversations continued to address research question one: how do students construct bullying in different contexts?

Of the 49 participants, 40 had been or were currently employed. Some of these students were in work placements associated with their programme of university education and, for the purposes of this study, have been classed as employed. Of these participants, 30 had experienced bullying in the workplace whilst the remaining 10 reported to have never known or experienced bullying whilst in employment. In discussing bullying in the context of workplace, new themes emerged. Where previously conceptions in a school context were set within predominantly individualistic perspective, these discussions now exposed key differences in the conceptualisation of workplace bullying. There was a strong tendency to refer to the social nature of cliques and how they operated within an obvious hierarchical organisational structure. The participants' stories related to the abuse of power, and official narratives

relating to organisational practice alongside also to individuals' rights and grievances.

### 3.2.1. Cliques, power and organisational hierarchy.

Of the 40 participants who had experienced employment, 15 participants reported bullying in terms of cliques where purposeful exclusion from such groups was seen to be bullying:

You always get those cliques of people that get on more than some. If you're in a group, you are more likely to pick on an individual. There's always that one person left out and the focus of the bullying (Ollie).

Or an employee not subscribing to a clique would result in being targeted as Barry explained:

I had a boss who wanted to be friends with employees and in the office they were very clique and if you weren't, you were made to feel not part of the team, so it's not really bullying but it's exclusion and that links into a type of bullying.

Participants discussed the use of email to discredit colleagues to ensure they were not accepted into the group or defamatory emails being sent to managers and many talked about a range of tactics used to exclude or target an individual such as not being invited on work outings, whispering or silence when entering a staff room.

The hierarchical organisational structure was felt to be a significant risk factor in the presence of bullying and cliques provided a means by which management could manipulate and bully individuals. Lenny talked of a manager who would consistently pass over his allocated work tasks to particular employees. Another manager would manipulate the allocation of work hours to ensure particular employees had sufficient, but others were reduced to their disadvantage: “and you can’t complain because the bullying is from the management” (Sarah).

Bullying as an abuse of power was the second strongest theme. Managers used such power to secure their position and authority as the following students described:

People abuse their power (Georgina);

That sort of power of authority (Jessica);

If you give some people power, it goes to their head (Barry).

Barry went on to describe:

If you’re in a position of power, especially as a manager of people, you need to keep that, the distance between yourself [and employees].

Barry felt that the extra remuneration and level of responsibility associated with managerial positions necessitated an authoritarian relationship with employees in order to maintain a position of power. The hopelessness in reacting against such treatment was salient across these participants as Gaby explained:

I think they will find a way out of it if it was taken to a higher level they will use the power thing like if a supervisor was to bully someone lower than them, they would say 'well I'm their supervisor and I am here to tell them what they need to do'. It's kind of an excuse.

Conversely, Mosi felt that an abuse of power at work might stem from home life:

Some people come to work to bully because they find this imbalance of power at the workplace that they find at home. Maybe they, themselves are being bullied at home.

Whilst this aligns with a more individual perspective, there appears more of an appreciation of structural aspects of an organisation and how the organisation affects human relations as expressed through accordance of the majority of participants.

### 3.2.2. Organisational practice

Participants described how bullying occurred as a result of a pursuit of organisational aims. Lenny described a time working for a canvassing company stating:

There was definitely some [bullying] there, mainly from the boss. If someone came in and they didn't have any leads he would say 'what's going on?' 'Adam's gone to the same place as you and he's got 5 leads', 'Are you doing your pitch right?' 'Are you crap at doing this?'

Similarly, the pressure of being accountable for organisational aims was reported to encourage a climate where bullying was permissible. Olivia

discussed the strict application of company regulations and the requirement to conform to the ways in which such regulations are applied as being contributory in encouraging a climate of bullying:

Managers enforce the rules on you; but how they go about it, sometimes people will say it's like bullying.

Participants discussed bullying in relation to particular work practices such as the unfair allocation of work and responsibility, which not only caused the person being allocated excessive loads or menial tasks to feel targeted but also caused jealousy and resentment from those employees who felt certain individuals or teams were receiving favourable treatment, as Bill explained:

I spent 18 months as an administrative assistant for a county council. I'd roam between 5 teams. It was very much a clique especially in an office, very confined in teams of four or five people with a team manager/leader. There was a head of department and he had his favorite team and there'd be resentment between the different groups.

Participants also talked about a perceived threat to an individual's skill set driving that person to target those individuals they felt intimidated by as Violet and Chris agreed:

If you are a challenge to them they will bully you (Violet)

Because you are a threat to them (Chris).

### 3.2.3. Rights and grievances.

In contrast to the school context, participants made direct links with any incidence of mistreatment and misconduct as residing within the structure and

practices of the organisation itself. Participants automatically expressed an awareness of employment rights and grievance procedures, though these were largely felt to be inaccessible or unrealistic. For many participants, pursuing any disciplinary procedures was not an action they wished to take, believing it would result in loss of employment which would have significant impacts: “no job, no home” (Greta). Others described the staff structure and relationships as inhibiting action stating that any such act would be futile, as either nothing would come of it, colleagues would not support them, or that the perpetrator had a close relationship with management.

For Belinda being the target of bullying whilst employed in a bank was merely seen as a continuation of bullying experienced through school and had come to accept such treatment:

I didn't even consider it. I didn't consider what was happening was something that I should seek discipline over. I think because it had happened all my life it just became the norm like it was my fault I was being bullied.

Belinda became ill as a result, and sought counselling. Her employment was terminated because of long periods of sick leave. Three students emphasised this shift to a perspective of “rights” as they spoke about workplace bullying in distinction from ‘discrimination’, stating that bullying was more related to school whereas:

When you get older you see it more as discrimination (Lydia).

Liz described an older, long-established member of staff who consistently targeted younger employees. While she named it as bullying she also related it to reverse age discrimination.

#### 3.2.4. The pressurised nursing environment.

Bullying in the workplace as reported above was a pervasive issue but was perhaps most evident in discussions amongst nurse trainees. The clarity, with which they described the organisation of the setting, and their attribution of bullying to it, were emphatic. An ethos of a target-setting performance culture with expectations of high standards, and robust policing of professional behaviour and competencies were all reported to aggravate a bullying climate.

Nurses were very clear about how these impacted upon personal relationships related to bullying behaviour. Regarding professional competencies, Jessica offered an explanation for the nursing environment attracting high levels of bullying:

I think it's the competition. Who cares the most? Who does the most?

The threat felt by updated or more advanced skills was common across the four nursing students. One student explained:

If you have an older nurse, they are very set in their ways. When you go in with your new training and you try (not just tell them they are doing it wrong) but just say: 'this is the way we've been taught' they can become very defensive" (Jessica).

Similarly, Leona described being targeted but in this instance for reasons of lesser skills:

I am a learning disability student, which is slightly different to generally. The general nurses don't always look at you in the same way and they put you at the bottom of the pile. The ward manager was awful. I cried every day.

Issues arose where a student's training over their programme of study led them from a starting point of working alongside Health Care Assistants (HCAs) to instructing and supervising them in the third year of study. This raised problems for the workers:

The resentment is quite obvious on most wards (Olivia).

Such resentment was also the cause of gender:

Male staff can't work with women service users, so it's likely that they are put down and given silly jobs to do (Jessica).

This also impacted upon the bullying that was experienced by female Health Care Assistants, as they were expected to undertake all aspects of personal care of service users.

Jessica speculated whether staffing levels contributed to the tense atmosphere and bullying behaviours experienced on hospital wards:

Staffing levels can sometimes affect the way you interact with people in placements. Staffing levels have been really poor and

everyone is on a short string. You are busy and thinking you have to get everything done and sometimes you do lose your temper and you do wonder if staffing levels contribute to it.

A target-driven culture was seen as a significant risk factor. For example Olivia attributed negative media reports and a heightened sense of accountability on the part of health professionals aggressively implementing Primary Care Trust policies and Care Audits:

Managers or ward managers, managers of care, they really enforce things. I'm sure people take this as bullying. Sometimes it takes away the job that you're actually there to do. It gets overwhelming.

In the current era of high profile litigation cases brought against the NHS, it is perhaps unsurprising that target and audits are aggressively implemented and professional practice measured against litigation risk-management guidelines.

As with wider workplace settings, submitting a grievance was not an option as:

If you take a grievance forward you may be unpopular with the ward area. A lot of people don't do that because of that. You still have to work on the ward (Olivia).

For Leona the act of undertaking a formal grievance procedure itself can result in feelings of being bullied:

When you have a grievance, actually that can be classed as bullying and I feel a bit on that side.

However, Mosi, a 47 year old having worked in the care sector for seven years before embarking on a nursing degree, confidently took forward a formal grievance procedure against the manager of a care home as Mosi believed the manager targeted him over a period of time. At first, this resulted in Mosi's suspension. On seeking external legal advice, he was reinstated and the manager resigned:

And the big manager resigned too! Everyone was looking at me but I need this job to pay my rent. That was my first bullying but I took a stand!

The area of grievances and disciplinary action was a strong theme across the participants, with many of them discussing the difficulties associated with reporting bullying.

### 3.3. Higher Education.

Conversations continued to address the first research question, as the interviews moved on to discuss the context of higher education and how students conceptualised bullying in this context. However here, the fertile nature of direct experience up to this point suddenly dried up; the significance of which seemingly indicates that the university context is comparatively bully-lite, and undeniably represents a gap relating to student-to-student bullying in HE.

Where there had been a great deal of engagement and anecdote related to other contexts, HE appeared to be a sterile area for participants to discuss with the majority having nothing to offer relating to the topic. Some participants

in the larger group interviews did not directly respond to the question of whether there was bullying at university; however of the 37 participants who did, 25 students reported no bullying at university. They had not witnessed nor experienced bullying in any way and it had not arisen in conversations across student cohorts. This was predominantly explained in terms of maturity, with the typical response being:

Everyone's passed that age and grown up (Wali);

You're an adult and more mature (Darna);

Bullying is seen as a kids' thing (Lucian).

Some students returned to stereotypical explanations in an attempt to explain the comparative lack of bullying in HE. Students typecast school-aged bullying perpetrators as individuals unlikely to enter HE, thus reducing the likelihood of bullying being present at university. Simplistic explanations shaped during their time at school appeared to have an enduring effect and remained with them into adulthood. As discussed in the school context where participants explained perpetrators of bullying being "rough" (Sarah); "of low intelligence" (Barry); and "living in shitty council house", participants returned to these stereotypical assertions to explain the lack of bullying at university. Sarah stated:

I don't think they [the bullies] have got any qualifications.

Physically haven't got here;

They don't make it to uni (Adrian);

They are probably on the dole somewhere, so they wouldn't be in uni educating themselves for a better life. They are probably in the gutter somewhere (Sammy).

A few participants, when pressed harder, began to suggest weaker examples of bullying incidence in the university context. This may be due to the powerful nature of lingering school-aged conceptions of bullying and being anticipated as an assumed phenomenon within institutions. As Greta stated:

I did expect a bit of bullying to happen within uni, because it is another institution where you think somewhere along the line it is always happening - but it *doesn't* seem to be happening.

As participants increased effort in trying to think of bullying incidence in HE, a few set it in the context of social relationships. Of the six participants who stated that there was bullying at university, one felt it was more discreet, stating:

It's behind the scenes at university. Everyone has their own friendship groups and sometimes things are said but you wouldn't necessarily do anything about it. You have to be more mature (Ian).

A more mature student talked about bullying in terms of social isolation and difficulties in working within a group of younger students:

They ignore you and I see that as bullying. It's the age gap: the generational gap (Violet).

Similarly, Jessica talked about the social context of bullying but in relation to seminar attendance: voicing opinions and entering into debate:

There is emotional bullying not like high school when you are scared you are going to get into a fight it is more the fear that if someone dislikes you they are going to have an attitude towards you...some people get very controversial in class and you do think that they have overstepped the mark. The lecturers are good and if there's a niggly problem they sit and talk it out - put a stop to it before it escalates.

Ollie felt bullying occurred more through banter at university and stated that at times this could be quite vicious. Mosi described incidence of what he termed as "intellectual bullying", stating:

The intellectual bully you cannot catch and lecturers do not have to like all students. He has his preferences [for example] an accent he likes but because he is intelligent he does not show it. Don't fool yourself to say that there is no bullying at university. People are very clever. I see a lot of students come out of meeting with a teacher; they are crying. It should not be like that.

The exception to these seemingly sought out examples was found amongst residential students.

### 3.3.1. Halls of residence: a hothouse for bullying?

Of the total number of participants, 11 students were or had been in halls of residence, nine of whom referred to bullying incidence in their time in residence. Talk was very much centred on intense spatiality and density of

residents alongside the effect upon social relations that this had. Residential student Wali knew of a couple of incidences where particular students were targeted. Another student stated that they knew of a specific incidence that was being dealt with by residential services, where one student was targeted both verbally and physically but the university dealt with it promptly and moved the student who was being targeted and attributed bullying in halls offering: “It’s mixing everyone in a pot. You have so many different people crammed into a box really” (Sam).

Students talked about the difficulties in being with numerous people initially unknown to them and having to establish friendships quickly; this involved the tension in avoiding arguments or upsetting anyone: “because I know I have to spend the whole year with them” (Royston). Adrian talked about the pressure put on group dynamics and how allegiances could change, subsequently causing ‘fall outs’. Desmond also talked about the pressure of getting along with housemates, though he had not experienced any bullying in his time in halls stating – “you just try not to get into conflict with anyone”. In contrast, Lydia and Liz lived on campus for three years and reported no bullying incidence whilst in halls of residence.

At the time of interview Ollie, Antony and Adrian were not residential students, but they recalled the time when they used to be in halls. These students reported bullying at university but more in relation to problems sharing accommodation. Adrian explained:

When I started in my first year it was all pretty good like you all got to know each other. But then you settled in and people started to feel too comfy and that's when the little things started. It just takes one little thing to go off between two people.

Adam went further expressing the difficulties arising from forced intimacy and a lack of privacy stating: "I think everyone knows everyone's business in halls. Too much time together".

#### 3.4. Summary of findings.

Before summarising the findings discussed here it is useful as an aide memoire to reiterate the research questions:

1. how do undergraduate students construct bullying in different contexts?
2. how do undergraduate students explain differing constructions of bullying?

The strongest consensus was on bullying being a phenomenon related to the school experience, with no participants relating bullying to a time that pre-dated school. Participants constructed bullying as ubiquitous, received with uncomfortable tolerance both on the part of pupils and teachers. Schools' anti-bullying strategies seemed to reinforce this normalisation of bullying through use of official discourses and how particular processes and practices reinforced the construction of bullying in two particular ways; an interpersonal phenomenon and an individualistic perspective in terms of the three principle roles of perpetrator, target and bystander. Initial discussions ranged from

deeply pathological explanations to characteristics peculiar to individuals. These initial discussions of superficial, stereotypical formulae to describe the perpetrator, target, bystander and bullying activity, seemed to stimulate an added layer of analysis that explored a more cultural context of bullying and further still to more official discourses. At this stage of discussions exploring these seemingly divergent conceptions was left unchallenged as we moved on to discuss the workplace.

In discussing the workplace, participants overwhelmingly constructed bullying in terms of organisational structure, and how the organisation affects human relationships. Discussion predominantly explored hierarchy, cliques and abuses of power; all three working in ways to subjugate or favour particular individuals in ways that were deemed to maintain a culture of bullying. Unlike the discussion of school, this discourse explored hierarchical organisational structure itself to be a significant risk factor, using cliques and competitive environments to maintain the bullying culture. Discussion included legal/political tropes and implications of bullying alongside its links with employment law. Bullying was linked with discrimination and how grievance procedures were felt to be futile, a risky option and/or inaccessible.

Discussion then developed to cover aspects of organisational practice, moving from specific ways in which particular processes encourage bullying cultures to wider pressures from government and management directives as significant risk factors in the presence and maintenance of bullying behaviours. Participants working in nursing environments revealed the structural and operational ways in which the above points relating to the

workplace operate in a highly pressurised environment with a target-driven culture and heightened fears regarding accountability, aggravated by negative media publicity.

The direction then changed again when participants were asked questions regarding bullying within the university context. Participants expressed puzzlement and silence before they ventured that university was an environment where bullying is absent. For the majority of participants, bullying had not been experienced nor thought of as a phenomenon that even could occur in higher education. Many students returned to their deeply entrenched views, shaped during their school years, in an attempt to explain the bully-lite environment. Several offered incongruous stock explanations, and adapted individualistic models embedded during their school years to the university environment.

The few participants who offered examples of bullying at university gave comparatively weak examples in comparison with those they had described in school or workplace contexts, pointing towards the enduring and powerful nature of school-aged conceptions of bullying, and an assumption that bullying is an expected phenomenon within institutions. Discussion regarding bullying in halls of residence offered further interesting insights towards the participants' construction of bullying as a phenomenon, which was aggravated by environmental structures and organisational processes rather than to particular individuals and related stereotypical explanations. The concept of being compressed into small, intimate spaces with a lack of privacy created tensions that could result in bullying.

The next chapter presents the second part of the findings where a more critical phase of the interviews ensued and explored how the participants explained their differing constructions of bullying.

#### Chapter 4. Presentation of findings: Part 2.

This section discusses findings from the second phase of the active interviews. It develops the group interview from a contextualised conversation into a more critical and interactive discussion, in which the interviewer challenged and contested the ideas that appear unformed or contradictory and relates to the second research question:

How do undergraduate students explain differing constructions of bullying in different contexts?

The conversations enabled an exploration of linkages that might otherwise have been subjected to assumption on the part of the interviewer if using more traditional interview techniques (Holsten and Gubrium, 1995). In this study, linkages refer to the ways in which participants linked bullying to the school context and then the workplace, moving towards the university context. Participants could then explore the links between differing conceptualisations to produce horizons of understanding. It is useful here as an aide memoir to revisit the principal aims of Active Interviewing.

One of the primary objectives of Active Interviewing is to encourage the visibility of linkages and horizons (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p.58). To reiterate, horizons of meaning refer to alternative relationships that emerge in

conversations to produce alternative narrative linkages. Capitalising on how participants develop and use these horizons can reveal how experiential meaning is structured. As Holstein and Gubrium (1995, p.95) explain:

By manipulating emergent horizons – suggesting subjective relevancies, orientations and connections – the interviewer interpretively challenges the respondent to make sense of the experience in relation to subjective possibilities.

The manipulative techniques employed to achieve this, such as referring to scholarship and theorising with participants, are discussed more fully elsewhere (see p.121). However, in the following presentation of findings, attention is drawn to those moments in the interview process where contradictions emerged and were challenged with positional shifts occurred, though some students maintained their original position throughout this process.

Participant narratives were narrow and only when participants were encouraged to consider conflicting conceptualisations did they begin to explore alternative relationships. Conversations revealed how the same participants took alternative narrative positions. Thematic analysis of findings shows that there were four clear consensual constructions. By looking at the participants' conversations which address research question one, the ideas fall into the following themes:

1. Individual pathology: bullying discussed in terms of clichés, stereotypes and narratives of common sense where bullying is justified as a normal part of life and 'bullies' are monsterised;

2. Official discourses: school policy development and narratives of authority and institutional normative behaviour;
3. Organisational discourses: structure, ethos, workplace climate and workplace practice;
4. Struggling narratives: lacunae in constructions initially met with contradictory responses.

The first three of these narratives were very clear; however the fourth presented challenges for participants as they struggled to explain their initial narrative position. The discussion of bullying in school was set within an individualistic perspective, yet when it moved to focus on the workplace context it produced narratives about organisational culture, organisational objectives, and their relationship to personal behaviour. Students' conversations about the university environment revealed contradictions that prompted deeper thought.

Probes at this stage of the interview challenged previously held notions and revealed how the same people describing the same issue (bullying), but reflecting on different phases of education/life, constructed bullying in very different ways. The discourse around school bullying appeared so embedded in participants' consciousness that it had remained with them into post-compulsory education and workplace contexts. Participants appeared to repeat the bullying 'scripts' circulating during their time at school, suggesting that the psychology-orientated construct of bullying, delivered through dominant school bullying research activity, had become established in their thinking about the problem.

Participants' conceptions of bullying in university directly contradicted those held by the same participants when discussing bullying in a school context. Participants reasoned very differently and made conscious attributions in reference to what bullying was, why it occurred and who the perpetrators/targets were. These contradictions developed over the course of the interviews. To arrive at this point, students had moved through the descriptive phase, essentially describing notions of school bullying as an individualistic phenomenon, discussing workplace bullying using more systemic or structural notions, then came to the context of university where they reported little or no bullying.

My intention here was not to 'set up' participants by drawing them into simplistic reasoning, as this could then be challenged by a more sophisticated critique. By moving to a critical conversation, where participants reflected on their initial conceptions, the intention was to gain a deeper insight by a two level discussion; one more descriptive to address RQ1 and the other more critical to address RQ2, but the findings were more dramatic than expected. When moving to the critical phase, participants discussed the ways in which the university environment structurally and operationally encourages a climate where bullying is comparatively less likely to thrive than in school or workplace environments, and students began to analyse the features of the different environments. What follows is participants' explanations for a lack, or comparatively reduced level, of bullying in the higher education environment, before arriving at the point where they explored contradictions and the subsequent emergent themes.

#### 4.1. Responding to contradictions

Participants offered maturity as the overriding reason for the absence of bullying at university as Saleem and Wali described:

We all consider ourselves to be mature enough to come to university whereas at secondary school there's none of that (Saleem).

I don't think a lot of bullying happens at university because you're grown up and past that age (Wali).

I would then ask the following question:

Interviewer: Ok, so just playing devil's advocate here, we just talked about bullying in the workplace, so *is it* 'maturity'?

This question invited a reorientation that influenced the students' interpretive focus. Participants began to consider physical and operational features of the respective environments, exploring the rigidity and inflexible nature of school as a risk factor that encourages bullying. They contrasted this with the university environment that affords certain protective factors that discourage bullying behaviours. By challenging participants' conceptualisations, this encouraged them to think why notions of bullying differ by context, and to what they attribute these differences. Active Interviewing allows for such explicit ways to manipulate frames of reference for narrative production (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995).

The participants then began to describe institutional features of the three contexts, but particularly comparing the teaching and learning environments of

university and school, while exploring the features within these environments that may aggravate or ameliorate a climate of bullying. The themes that emerged from this new focus are discussed below.

#### 4.2. The non-compulsory environment.

Overwhelmingly, the first response across participants was the nature of the non-compulsory university environment as a protective factor regarding the manifestation of bullying behaviours. Students thought little or no levels of bullying at university could be attributed to this condition: “we are here because we want to be here” being a common answer, or as Greta more comprehensively explains:

I can't say I've ever seen any [bullying] in my three years.....You have all chosen the course and you are here to get a better position in life and a job you want. I don't think it's a case of I need to put other people down.

Participants contrasted the unintentional consequences of the non-negotiable school environment that alienated pupils which, for Sarah, served to diminish any motivation to learn, resulting in overt displays of particular behaviours:

Kids don't want to be there [school] so are not interested in learning; so they are just gonna cause trouble and play up.

Other students explored a broader socio-political perspective and discussed the school in terms of a coercive environment that operates to serve governmental directives with resultant penalties for non-compliance:

School is definite structures that, yes, you have to go there. If you don't go there my parents will get into trouble. The government says you have to go to school (Olivia).

Some students linked the compulsion to attend school with the frustration pupils experience in conforming to school expectations. At a time when career trajectories have not had time to be fully considered, and children's identities are still in flux, this can lead to a climate of bullying:

Because it is a must, children have to go to school and some children may not want to be there, so yes it would come out as bullying: they don't want to be there; they haven't made their selection in life or path to take (Olivia).

Jessica commented on the challenges associated with physical and emotional development experienced by school-aged pupils as being exacerbated by enforced school attendance:

I think it's because we want to be here whereas at school you have got to go and be there. You are going through a lot of changes at that time in school; your hormones are all over the place.

In terms of workplace, several participants described this too as a compulsory environment, and Darna likened this to school:

You've got to keep your job, just as you've got to go to school.

For Sarah, working in a challenging restaurant atmosphere where the manager would aggressively target individuals, any official redress was avoided; as Sarah and Adam reported:

I need the money (Sarah);

You're more concerned with keeping your job (Adam).

Other students also raised the risks associated with pursuing action through official lines or raising particular treatment as counter to policy guidelines. Because of the necessity to continue working, taking a grievance forward was not an option, and in Sarah's place of employment, staffing structure further compounded this option and rendered the employees powerless:

If you ever report anything or you make a statement in a disciplinary meeting, one of the scribes is the manager's best mate.

Views like this support the general belief that, as compared to school and the workplace, the voluntary nature of the HE environment is much more collegial and dignifying, whereas the *de facto* compulsory nature of school and workplace are power-dominant organisations.

#### 4.3. Shared interests, choice and motivation to learn.

A strong theme concurrent across participants was that university student relationships were founded on a shared pursuit of individual goals. A typical response being, "You are all like-minded people" (Greta). Many students (20) associated the university environment with the opportunity to pursue their own

interests and having shared goals, “You’re all here for the same reason, to get a degree” (Steve). Leona compared the three different contexts, stating:

Here [university] everyone you see is on common ground and you tend to have similar things to talk about whereas at workplace and school, you have to be doing things whether you like it or not and you’ve all got different interests and all in the same place.

Many students associated shared interests with a positive effect on social relationships “People get on more – we have the same interests” (Liz). This was in contrast to the school environment, in which forced intimacy and denial of personal privacy was felt to render pupils captive, as Tony said: “In school, everyone knows each other, there’s no escape”.

Students discussed the link between choice and motivation to learn and talked of restricted choice in a school learning environment where curriculum decisions were made for pupils that encouraged disinterest and resultant behaviour as Tarik explained:

In the first few years in school up to year nine you have set subjects, you have to do whatever they say and some lessons were boring so say R.E (religious education), everybody messed around in that lesson. R.E was dossing about.

Even where pupils are given opportunities to take control and choose curriculum subjects, this was felt to be more tokenistic and largely ineffective in motivating learning but also directly linked with levels of personal satisfaction and happiness:

At school, whether you like that subject or not, you've got to do it until you get to a certain stage where you can start picking some of them but even then there are subjects that you just have to do and are doing a subject they are not interested in and using that time to do other things. And again, in the workplace they might not be enjoying it, and might not be happy (Chris).

Olivia made a direct link between choice and motivation to learn:

Once you get past school, whether college or uni, you can choose which path you want to take, so you really want to be there and that aids your learning.

Students discussed their schools' contradictory demands of, on the one hand, subscribing to a disciplinary and directive learning regime and, on the other hand, being expected to exercise self-regulation and personal autonomy. Wali complained:

In my sixth form they were like 'you are practicing for university now so you have to behave like you're a university student here'.

Students discussed the liberating opportunities that the university environment afforded, and they acknowledged the opportunities to reconstruct personal identities in anticipation within a more liberating institution. Belinda, Helen and Sammy explained:

Belinda: In some respects [at university], people want to forget what they was before.

Helen: I heard a lot at school when I was in the 6th form that it was almost a chance to reinvent yourself and be the person you never were before.

Sammy: They told us that at college, to use it [university] as an opportunity to reinvent yourself. I was shy and so I thought I'd go to university and pretend I'm not shy but it doesn't work like that.

Some of the data here points to a changing relationship between school (at 6th form level) and its pupils at the point of departure for post-compulsory education. Whereas the bullying discourse had been largely disciplinary instilling notions of pupils' individual accountability and individualistic conceptions of who, what and why bullying occurs, teachers were now dismantling these conceptions by preparing sixth form pupils for a very different environment post-school. This perhaps suggests that schools no longer need to circumvent any accountability for bullying and with the imminent relinquishment of power, can reveal the secrets of pupil's education as they are about to enter institutions that operate very differently.

#### 4.4. Teaching and learning environment.

The second most significant theme was the nature of teaching and learning in university compared to school. Students (26) discussed a range of influences that may facilitate a supportive and flexible learning environment characteristic of university as opposed to strict and inflexible nature of school.

Students discussed school as a teaching and learning environment that accentuates differences in academic aptitude, which encourages a competitive

learning environment as a risk factor in the occurrence of bullying; in contrast, learning at university is not founded on competition and as such offers a protective factor, as the following comments demonstrate:

With school you are mixed in with different people and you are in different bands depending on your own educational level of understanding. But here we are all in the same group (Jessica).

No one wants to be better than anyone else. We are all learning. We are all on that level playing field (Steve).

Leon went further when describing how non-competitive teaching and learning climate encourages an appreciation of individual skill and academic competence and the benefits of recognising and sharing such talents, thereby fostering more contractual relationships:

Here, everyone realises they're good at their own thing. It's not like at school where there are always people better at pretty much everything. Here they are good at their own aspect, say sport, whichever academic skill they have got, they are good at it and you realise they can help you.

Other students described the more supportive teaching and learning environment of university:

I think the environment influences you to learn. You have the motivation. You just want to learn. We have our tutors that give us support (Moshida);

I think the lecturers here at university are fantastic and really helpful. Whenever I've had a problem with my work they've been really supportive (Wali).

Leona compared the supportive climate within the university and school classroom describing the differences between pupil contributions in class at school and participating in seminars or lectures at university. Lecturers respond to students' contributions with sensitivity and encouragement whereas at school "you were frightened to say anything because the teacher made it quite clear that you were a bit thick". Leona felt that such an inhibited approach to class contribution was not an issue at university and therefore did not impact upon lecturers' judgment about individual performance as it did at school: "you don't feel as if you are being marked on me rather than my work" (Leona).

Much discussion centered on the content and delivery of the curriculum in the different education environments. Belinda contrasted the prescriptive nature of knowledge transmission at school with a more self-discovery approach of university teaching and learning:

I'm going to give you pointers on how to find out more about it, then you go and find out stuff for yourself and come back and tell me about it and it's a two way process whereas at school it's one way.

Jessica "I think there is more free and independent learning at uni.....at school it is so structured". Tarik also pointed towards the prescriptive nature of school curriculum stating: "at school it's a set thing and you have to listen and do

what is being said”, and “at university a lot of it is self-directed learning. You are here. You want to learn. You are not forced into it” (Leona). Olivia further echoed the comments across participants:

It’s [school] a more structured environment. This is what you will learn. Go away and come back. It’s wider scope at uni. You can go to lectures and just take notes but in order for it to stick in your head, you have to do further reading and that’s down to yourself.

#### 4.5. Cost-benefit as a protective factor.

Students also explored the cost-benefit aspect of university attendance where personal investment and the benefits of pursuing and attaining a degree outweigh the inclination for conflict as described by Lenny:

We’ve chosen to be here so why would we want to come to a place and not get along with people and wreck our own and everyone’s chances?

Students’ financial investment was a recurring theme as the following comments demonstrate: “because of the money you have paid, you want to learn” (Amanda); “everyone wants to be here and we’ve paid a lot of money to be here” (Desmond), and “we’ve paid the money and want to be here and want to learn” (Lenny).

#### 4.6. Coercive and non coercive power relations.

Participants explored the presence of power within different contexts exercised through social and operational mechanisms where in the school environment

were seen to be akin to disciplinary power and at university, a more democratic power where despite the presence of hierarchical structures this did not impede equal social relations. The more autonomous environment did not create the oppressive atmosphere as was evident in schools. The following participant explored the relationship between power being maintained in schools through a sense of constant surveillance and used as a disciplinary mechanism which added to a pressurised school environment:

It may be a power sort of thing. At university you have the lecturer and Dean and we're not really scared or intimidated by them – ya know if ya don't want to come in that week... it's not like a boss. At university you don't feel you have that pressure. At school, someone is over your head all the time so straight away you are tense – you have that pressure – someone down your ear. At uni, it's relaxed (Lana).

Greta alluded to a university environment that fosters dignity and respect, in contrast to power relationships in school that inhibit this stating:

The lecturers [at university] treat you with respect therefore everyone else within the lecture would have that equal respect. With [school] teachers, they feel they have that power and they abuse it. You are younger. You don't know anything. I am here to teach you and I am better than you.

The intentional use of positions of power by teachers over pupils was not expressed in the university environment and some participants went further by describing the abuse of positions of power perpetrated against pupils by teachers that was seen to be bullying. As Belinda explained:

We had teachers who actually did it [bullied] at secondary school.....one teacher had five [pupils] he used to like pick on lesson after lesson.

Belinda went on to describe how bullying in this case was used as a behaviour management tool as once the pupils behaviour escalated in response to being targeted by the teacher, the pupil could then be sent out of the classroom and removed from the lesson:

He used to start them off. The only time he spent the whole lesson with the whole class was when Ofsted came in and he was really nice to us.

Leona followed this with:

The teachers are human, certain kids they will like and certain kids they don't like.

In such a climate, where teachers use their power to punish, coerce, or disrespect pupils beyond what might be thought a reasonable disciplinary procedure, this may set the stage for peer-to-peer bullying.

#### 4.7. Homogeneity versus diversity.

Participants discussed the ways in which the school culture is founded on homogeneity that encourages conformity and this was contrasted with university, where student diversity is an accepted feature of the learning community. Desmond and Tony reflected on pupil conformity to the prevailing culture and cultural identifiers; as Desmond remarked:

It's like you're all in one big group at school. If someone doesn't fit into that mould, they are straight away a target (Desmond).

...whereas at uni we all accept our differences and get on with it (Tony).

Similarly, Lana stated, "we're all in the same boat here. Though we are different, we are the same. We have all chosen to do this".

#### 4.8 Physical and operational environmental features.

Flexibility of programmes of study was raised as a protective feature of university that deterred opportunities for bullying behaviours, as Tarik and Sarah explored. The two students discussed the freedom of university study compared with the restricting nature of school as the following exchange demonstrates:

You can come in to your lecture and just go (Tarik).

Yeh, at school you're with them all day long. Same class. Same lunchtime. Here, if you don't like someone you can just not talk to them (Sarah).

Yeh, if you really had a problem you could change [module/programme] (Tarik).

Similarly Georgina contrasted the flexibility and choice of the university social environment with the constrictive environment characteristic of schools:

I think [that] there are so many people in the uni, you can pick who you want to be around and are more in a social environment. You have the Students Union. At school you

have playtime and 30 pupils in your class. You're kind of stuck with those people. But at uni you might mingle around.

Similarly, with reference to the school context, Tony stated, "Everyone knows each other, there's no escape".

Olivia talked more specifically about the rigidity and inflexibility of the operational arrangements of the school day being in stark contrast to that of university:

At school, you are forced into the situation – two lessons in the morning, two after break, two in the afternoon...[at university] if you miss lectures it's your own fault. Teachers aren't going to give you a detention for not turning up.

Ollie reflected on spatial aspects of university as a protective factor against bullying:

Even if I don't like someone on my course, or they were bullying me, there's enough space and enough people on that course to never speak to them.

The theme of spatiality affording high levels of flexibility was a recurring theme. Students raised the school practice of controlling seating arrangements: "at school, you are forced to be with people. You have to sit by the same person every lesson" (Amanda); "you get children saying I don't want to sit by them but it's compulsory they have no choice" (Angelica)

whereas at university “you can sit somewhere else and move away from them” (Moshida).

Students often discussed the tensions arising from school pupils as being compressed into the small, confined spaces, which for some pupils meant in effect being confined with possible adversaries who could perpetrate bullying against them. Amanda explained:

In the 6<sup>th</sup> form we only had the one small common room so at lunch and breaks everyone would be in there. If you were stuck and all your friends were in lessons and you were there with people you didn't like, you didn't have a choice of anywhere and you had to sit there. At uni you can go to the canteen and there are a number of places you can go.

The only time students raised similar points in relation to university environment being spatially restrictive were in connection to halls of residence as discussed in section one (p.174), where confinement to relatively small space for significant periods of time caused tensions resulting in conflict because “everyone knows everyone else's business. Too much time together” (Adrian). Similarly in the workplace, spatiality was reported as key in fostering a climate where bullying behaviours had the potential to erupt, especially as certain employment selection was driven by necessity in the sense that it was more a means to an end as opposed to vocation. Lana discussed the difficulties associated with the intimate working space at a fast food outlet: “at the workplace you are forced together, no-one wants to work there but you

need the money and are forced together, there are six of you behind the counter.”

#### 4.9. Re-constructions of bullying and stake inoculation.

Significantly, at the close of discussions, participants were asked if their views of bullying had changed in any way during the discussion. Even where those participants who expressed contradictory views of causation of the bullying, and in the same discussions shifted narratives to consider contrasting risk or protective factors; this still maintained a safe position stating they had not changed their perspectives. Only 5 of 49 participants were able to reflect on the interview discussions, four of which were at the close of interviews. These participants' comments are their comments are presented here:

Greta: I don't think there've been any surprises. I suppose I did expect a bit of bullying to happen within uni because it's another institution where you think somewhere along the line it's always happening. But it doesn't seem to be happening.

Liz: I see a lot more behind it now – the pressure – the power thing, not just the kids bullying. It might not be how they are bought up or their personalities.

Desmond: It's more to do with the environment and cultures being diverse. Uni is really diverse. We are in the middle of [town]. Everybody is different which makes us all the same in a way.

Angelica: It's made me think a lot more about it. I never really thought about it before and what we can do as a school. We teach SEAL – social, emotional...all about doing the right thing –

all PSHE. I do a lot of dealing with bullying, but this has made me think and I never thought about it at uni before and that's made me think a lot more.

One further participant responded to an email sent out to those participants who had agreed further contact. Transcriptions were attached for them to view and questions for reflection (see appendix 4, p.283). The following student had time to consider and reflect upon the one-to-one conversation and my analysis of this, and replied with the following:

Yes I agree that I talk differently about bullying depending on the context in which it is being discussed. I believe I have come to understand bullying in these ways through experience within different environments alongside witnessing bullying across the differing levels (Jessica).

Jessica appears to acknowledge that the context circumscribes bullying but she does not go further and explore how or why. For the most part, participants had difficulty in explaining the contradictory explanations of bullying which for many resulted in silence or an honesty in not knowing. Some participants were faced with inconsistency in their beliefs regarding bullying; they then set about finding ways to reduce this conflict.

Students' difficulty in recognising the contradictions in their narratives across the three contexts may point towards the ideological aspects inherent within traditional thought as regarding conceptions of school-aged bullying. For most of these participants an attempt to address such conflict ensued, resulting in the re-conceptualisations discussed above, but some participants were

unable to do this. They explained any seeming contradictions in ways that were locked into individualistic discourses. As an example, the following interview extract follows three participants' assertions in one group interview that had explored conceptualisations of bullying in the three contexts. Whilst the findings have already made reference to Adrian's view of particular students not making it to university, it is included again here to demonstrate the flow of conversation within the group interview.

The students had talked about bullying as individual pathology, yet spoke very passionately about the resentment felt when known perpetrators were rewarded; the lack of teacher intervention in bullying incidence and particular subjects, times and spaces where bullying was prevalent. The students spoke of bullying in the workplace and attributed to an abuse of power by managers and competitive work environments and flexibility of the university environment as an explanation of a comparatively lower level of bullying. At this point, the students were posed the following question:

Interviewer: But if we take the stand point that it's a lot less at uni – lower levels – you could argue that if these kids or as you say 'bullies are made at home' do they just leave their bullying behaviours at the uni gate, or do not make it to uni at all?

Adrian: They don't make it to uni.

Barry: I hate the stereotype especially in terms of poor socio economic background but in my experience it was also in terms of intelligence – again in my experience - was low intelligence and

they don't make university and rarely make it to college. They'll leave school at 16 and I'm not being disrespectful because my dad's working class – they go straight into low intelligence, manual labour job which is nothing to look down on but that's what they'll do and they enter the workforce like van drivers and you can still see it – the bullying in them, the way they speak to people, the way they carry themselves. So I think they're the ones that don't mature and they still are a bully inside them.

Interviewer: But you could argue that there are a lot of people in say high-powered positions, holding degrees that display bullying behaviours in the workplace?

Bill: But they might not necessarily have gone to comprehensives and went to grammar school/private education.

Barry: Maybe that's their position that has turned them into that – that that's part of the structure that they've been given or if you give some people power it goes to their head.

These students' conceptions appear to be entrenched in dominant discourses of individual characteristics; stereotypical views which, despite recognising more structural environmental aspects that may be contributory, as Barry suggests at the close of this extract, they were unable to move to a position to explore and compare such features of the university environment, as other participants were able to. In this way, the students were able to minimise the

discrepancies of any conflicting beliefs. It is useful here to draw on Potter's (1996) notion of stake inoculation: "a discursive practice that routinely works to head off or minimise anticipated criticism (Augoustinos et al., 2002, p.15). It aims to reduce the effects of taking adversarial positions, protecting the subject from feeling foolish or having to concede they may have made a contradiction; this allows them to remain with their initial position or stake. Through stake inoculation such contradictions or challenges are justified, as it may be more palatable to remain with dominant conceptions as opposed to a perspective that might implicate people in ways that until now they had not had to consider. It therefore becomes more comfortable to pathologise bullying or monsterise those engaging in bullying.

#### 4.10. A focus on language.

The findings in this section focus more specifically on the changing and sometimes contradictory narratives that students ascribed to bullying in different environments. A focus on the variation and change in participants' spoken language; the words, terms of phrase used in conversations, may illuminate the hidden ideologies that are reflected, reinforced and constructed through the language used in particular institutions; it may also reflect how supporting and guiding structures and practices within these environments can be enabling as well as constraining. The following table (fig 1, p.203) demonstrates the language used by participants when discussing conceptualisations of bullying in the separate contexts of school, workplace and university and then a return to the school context to see a marked shift in language in light of exposure to the contradictions that students made.

1. School	2. Workplace	3. University	4. School
<p>In a prison, survival, no escape, escape route, conflict, combat, punishment, retaliate, grass, line of fire, fear, avoidance, isolated  'Once you get passed school' (endurance?)</p> <p>Cure,  Treatment,  'Something wrong with him'  'It's just something within them'  'Need to fix them'  'They can't help themselves'  Counselling</p> <p>Different – geeky etc.  Easy target  'Asked for it'  'Attention seeking'  'Made at home'  It's the norm'  Forced, made to  Compulsory  Working class  'From the rough estate'  Rough kids  Naughty kids  Bad reputation  Family reputation  'Probably got 6 or 7 kids by now'  'Smoking 40 a day'  'Shitty council house'</p>	<p>Management  Cliques  Favourites  Resentment  Unfair  Policy, audits  Disciplinary action  Forced  Risk  Abuse of power  Hierarchy  Sexual/age discrimination  No choice  Compulsory  Negative media portrayal (nursing)  Staffing levels</p>	<p>Non-compulsory  Flexibility  Choice  Shared interests  Own interests  We've paid to be here  Like minded people  Motivation to learn  Diff T&amp;L environment  Independent learning  Reinvent yourself  Structures  Respect  Space  No pressure  Relaxed  Level playing field</p>	<p>Definite structures  Compulsory  Outside factors  It's environment  Prescriptive  Teachers bully too  Seating plans  Boring lessons, disinterested  Pressure, tense  'Someone down your neck all the time'  Labelling of kids  Learned behaviour  Set subjects  No choice  Confined  Stuck with same kids  School tolerates bullying  Government says...  It's the law</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Fig 1: A Focus on Language</p>

Looking at fig 1, the initial language used by students to describe conceptions of bullying in school there emerges three distinct narrative registers but all emanating from an individualistic perspective: a metaphor related register, a clinical psychology register and a register of pathology. Regarding the use of and focus on language, I do not wish to enter the complex domain of cognitive linguistics or other disciplines concerned with the study of linguistics. However an exploration of language registers used by students in this study offers further insight into how students construct the notion of bullying and how these constructions are mediated by the institutions in which they are set. The term of register is used in its simplest form to refer to particular varieties of vocabulary applied in relation to particular contexts.

Moving to the context of the workplace, there emerges a move towards more structural/organisational language that indicates the features of organisational hierarchy and practice that create the conditions for bullying. In the university context, structural and organisational features continue to be discussed when explaining the presence or comparative lack of bullying. During the critical phase, the participants returned to view bullying within a school context but as can be seen in fig 1, (column 4) a new register emerged where participants were orientated to consider aspects of their differing conceptualisations. Language emerged that was more aligned with the structural and environmental narratives used for workplace and university contexts.

The metaphor of imprisonment was recurrent when participants' talked of conceptions of school aged bullying. Interestingly, the metaphor of

imprisonment was only used in relation to the school context, which may reflect the uncompromising nature and policing function of the school environment. Through imprisonment metaphors, resistance, compliance, exposure and threat are defined and highlight the discursive production of bullying as an individualistic and interpersonal phenomenon from which there is 'no escape'. Bullying requires personal strategies of survival, avoidance and effort not to be an informer or 'grass'. The production of imprisonment metaphors, when in relation to school bullying, may demonstrate the ways in which such metaphors reaffirm a particular bullying discourse; one which bolsters the belief of bullying as an individualistic and interpersonal phenomenon. This discourse becomes deeply embedded into the consciousness of pupils and conveys the inevitability of bullying within coercive environments.

The register of clinical psychology echoes a deficit model of bullying whereby pre-existing characteristics inherent within the individual create the capacity for a person to perpetrate or be subjected to bullying. In this view, behaviour-regulating approaches are required to remedy the problem individual through clinical-psychology intervention: a 'need to fix them' because 'they can't help themselves'; 'it is just something within them'. Participants talked of such approaches that particular school pupils received, such as counselling or having to 'go and see someone'. By treating the perpetrators, the school is seen to be addressing the problem whilst obscuring more situational factors as a causation of bullying, which are subsequently more difficult to address.

The register of individualism presents bullying through clichéd descriptors where the individual and the family are pathologised and seen as dysfunctional. Bullying is seen as an inevitable and individualistic phenomenon borne out of the tensions that are generated by cultural and social differences, such as 'rough kids' 'from the rough estate' and 'made at home', to other trite descriptors such as 'geeky' and 'naughty'. These common school-based bullying narrative registers reflect the habitual and repetitive discourses of bullying that operate within schools and also the individualisation and pathologisation of bullying that underpins most current working definitions of bullying, anti-bullying approaches and dominant mainstream bullying research.

## Chapter 5. Discussion.

In the following discussion we return to interrogate the findings in relation to a number of theoretical views. The discussion begins with the application of Goffman's theory of Total Institutions and the mortification of the self, before moving to Duncan's 4C framework (2009; 2011). Both of these theoretical models offer an interesting means by which to examine the characteristics of institutions and the ways in which they operate through coercive means in order to control populations within them. Goffman's focus is more on the day-to-day structures and practices, alongside the level to which populations within institutions are separated from the outside world. However, Duncan's model adds an extra layer of analysis that explores compulsory school systems through the four features of compulsion, compression, competition and control. Whilst there is some overlap within aspects of Goffman's theory, the feature of competition and how this operates in tandem with the other elements is not more specifically covered by Goffman's theory.

Following this, the discussion takes a discursive perspective that explores the findings against participants' conceptions of bullying across the differing contexts, using a range of theory relating to institutional and more specifically, bullying discourse as outlined in the literature review. However, in the first instance, we return to look more closely at the operational and structural characteristics of the three contexts and how these influence the behaviour of individuals within these environments.

### 5. 1. Goffman's Total Institutions.

Goffman created the concept of the total institution to describe how social institutions that exercise total control over their population will exhibit certain characteristics where every movement is controlled by the institutions' staff to create an entirely separate social world from within the institution. This defines an individual's social status, relationships and their very identity. Every institution has encompassing tendencies. The encompassing or totalising character is symbolised by the barriers to the outside community and the rigidity of functions operating within the institution (Goffman, 1961). As Goffman (1961, p.317) explains, total institutions:

Create and sustain a particular kind of tension between the home world and the institutional world and use this persistent tension as leverage in the management of men.

Goffman identified a spectrum of institutions which are categorised depending on their level of totality. The contexts in this study of school, workplace and university may be placed upon this continuum of total institutions. Bullying thrives in distinctive structural settings that create a climate conducive to bullying. Schools are situated at the more totalising end of the spectrum and university at the opposite pole. The workplace is situated in between; their positions reflecting the degree to which these environments are coercive, non-consultative and non-negotiable (Ritzer, 2013).

Total Institutions are characterised by the bureaucratic control of the human needs of a group of people, and they operate through the mechanism of the

'mortification of self' (Goodman, 2012). The person initially entering the institution has with them a 'self', and attachments to supports that allowed this self to survive. The totalising nature of institutions begins by gradually removing those supports and the self is systematically, (often unintentionally) mortified (Goffman, 1957). In the school context, Duncan (2013) explains that oppressive institutional arrangements are all encompassing for pupils. These arrangements actively produce hostility where the destruction of identity becomes something to be resisted. Duncan suggests that bullying can be a response to the oppressively hierarchical relationships that are modelled by the institution, and is used as a means of asserting oneself with some degree of control. For Goffman, a person is self-mortified through the following processes giving examples as to how they are linked to the contexts of school and the workplace:

1. Role dispossession – loss of identity on the outside (of institution) and the take up expectations of the role inside e.g. pupil, employee, undergraduate.
2. Programming and identity trimming – the self is reduced to information such as statistical data, identification through classification e.g. streamed and identified according to academic ability, assessments, clocking in systems, job title and rank.
3. Dispossession of property / name/ one's identity kit e.g. pupils referred to by surname, class/year/house group; unknown to management in large organisations; no personal artefacts permitted on site.
4. Imposition of degrading postures, stances, and deference patterns often justified on the grounds of necessity. Manipulative management and use of humiliation, allocation of demeaning tasks.
5. Contaminative exposure – having little or no private space so that private activities are hard to conceal. Physical arrangement of schools/

classrooms, common rooms, staff room and opportunities to use them are carefully managed.

6. The disruption of the usual relationship between the individual and their actions/behaviours. This occurs when there are organisational rules for individual actions which otherwise would be under the individual's control. Toileting, eating, private changing areas, socialising.
7. Restrictions on self-determination, autonomy, and freedom of action. It becomes difficult or impossible to develop and pursue interests, make choices or associate with others of one's own choosing.

(Adapted from Goffman, 1961; seen in: Goodman, 2012)

However these stages of mortification are not as easily identifiable in the university context. This environment has far lower levels of totality. In terms of role dispossession, there is considerable fluidity between the inside and outside as participants have expressed; they could come and go to suit themselves. The non-compulsory nature means movement in and out of the university is at the discretion of students and is not prohibited or sanctioned by authority. HE is an interesting space that affords a significant level of membership permeability and is quite unique. Participants recognised the capacity of university to offer opportunities for personal reinvention as Belinda suggested, or a place of sanctuary as Belinda, Helen and Sammy discussed. As Schafer and Korn (2001) describe, the university offers a refuge for some students where they can escape from any prior negative educational experience. Students have a choice to what degree they experience the curtailment of the self from the outside world to take up the institutional role. This diminishes programme and identity trimming, as students' self-identity remains comparatively unharmed. In the school and workplace, the process of

removal of individuals' self-identity continues through conforming measures for example the requirement to wear uniform, and restriction or removal of personal artifacts. Dispossession of property is not a typical feature of the university.

In school and the workplace, individuals are further mortified through humiliation or indignity caused by teachers and managers as reported by participants in this study. Students talked of teacher manipulation of friendship groups and manipulative classroom and organisational management in hand with the obligation and expectation of respect and compliance to authority. They talked of the distinct divisions between teachers/students, managers/employees whereas the relationships with university academic staff were seen to be equal and founded upon mutual respect and dignity. At university, relationships are more respectful and there is not the highly competitive culture of schools and workplaces, which Simpson and Cohen (2004) argue tend to militate against the development of collegial relationships and can create power differentials that encourage bullying behaviours.

Whilst it is acknowledged here that there exists considerable empirical evidence and literature reporting on bullying across academic staff (for example: McKay et al., 2008; Twale and Luca, 2008), findings here indicate that this is not transferred to the undergraduate student experience; it is removed from the staff/student relationship. Academic institutions now occupy the marketplace and commercialisation drives competition for revenue. Learning has become commodified and the pursuit of income generated by

student tuition fees influences different relations of power than those operating within school or workplace.

In terms of contaminative exposure, the physical environment of the school, workplace and university halls of residence, people are compressed for long periods of the day or night. Students in this study talked of forced relationships, a lack of opportunities to escape and little room to avoid being targeted. Participants reported that the intense proximity of people within schools and many workplaces had an impact upon interpersonal relationships. In this micro social arena, perceived weaknesses or differences become visible and widely broadcast and any violation of group membership opens the possibilities of being targeted (Duncan, 2009). Almost every aspect of physical space is carefully managed and where one might expect a level of privacy, such as changing rooms or staff rooms, staff and management carefully managed these spaces through techniques of discipline and surveillance (Horton, 2011). Such levels of contaminative exposure are in stark contrast to the university environment where students can choose to move freely about campus and different social groups. It is a much more flexible and free environment (Coleyshaw, 2010). Places of privacy can be accessed. Similarly, the disruption to personal routines is minimal in university. Whereas in more totalising institutions individual actions and behaviours that would normally be under the control of the individual are regulated. Activities such as eating or taking comfort breaks are scheduled into the daily routine and are beyond the control of pupils (Duncan, 2011; Horton, 2011); this is also routine in many workplaces.

In terms of self-determination, autonomy, and freedom of action, the university is a more democratic environment where student representation can influence the decisions made concerning their student experience. Whilst it is acknowledged that such representation exists in schools and the workplace, the level to which this is afforded and effectual is lower by comparison. Any representation is mediated carefully in the interests of the school or organisation; ensuring that consultation outcomes do not conflict with institutional aims or disrupt desired systems of operation. Fielding (2001) states that schools pay lip service to student voice and in doing so construct a particular discourse of 'Student Voice' which itself becomes controlling and what Fielding terms: "an additional mechanism of control" (p.100). However, universities need to respond to the needs of the students or paying customers.

Choice was reported as a central feature of university in explaining the comparative lack of bullying. The autonomy to choose programs of study is in contrast to the prescriptive school curriculum (Coleyshaw, 2010), which is described by participants in this study. Undergraduates have significant control over their programme of study such as timetabling and module selection (Ramsden, 2008) and through self-directed learning; this further encourages self-determination, autonomy, and freedom of action.

As the discussion here has illuminated, total institutions serve to fulfill an institutional agenda. They produce the rationalisation of institutional life

through highly regulated and regimented daily activities, formal administration and bureaucratic rules that foster the disciplinary control of the population within the institution (Collins, 2008). People come to accept the institutions' definition of their selves. Tensions are brought to bear upon populations as they strive to reconstruct their social self and attempt to guard themselves from the mortification of self (Goodman, 2012). Thus bullying becomes a by-product of an environment where people are continually coerced to conform to institutional goals and expectations via both operational and structural means. The higher the level of totality, there is a greater likelihood of a culture where bullying is able to thrive (Ritzer, 2013). University is an environment that is positioned at the lower end of the totalising spectrum, which indicates why there are significantly less reported levels of bullying. It is a more porous institution that has protective features that sustain a climate where bullying is less likely to thrive. The discussion now takes a different angle and examines institutions' operational and structural arrangements through application of Duncan's (2008; 2009; 2011) 4C model.

## 5.2. The 4C model

Duncan's (2008; 20013; 2013b) theoretical model of the '4C' framework offers an interesting perspective by which to view bullying in institutions. Duncan's model takes a macro-political lens by which to view the compulsory school context. However, it may be useful to extend this by interrogating the findings against the backdrop of the framework across the wider contexts of this study: school, workplace and university. The presence and intensity of the four features of compulsion, compression, competition and control within these

differing settings may illuminate how they create (or not), environments that encourage a climate of bullying.

#### 5.2.1. Compulsion.

Duncan (2013) explains that the four features of compulsion, compression, competition and control merge and overlap and are not isolated elements. However, in prime position is compulsion. Once compulsion is added to any of the other three features, they become oppressive forces that encourage a climate of bullying. The significance of compulsion is borne out in findings here where compulsion was overwhelmingly reported as the primary reason by participants in explaining the disparity between levels of bullying at school and the workplace, as compared to the bully-lite non-compulsory university environment.

Participants expressed compulsory schooling as wielding Governmental power to penalise those deemed noncompliant with attendance rules. Participants talked of the disengagement that enforced attendance to foster in pupils at a time where they experience many challenges and uncertainties typical of the teenage experience. This was felt to create the conditions for individuals to perpetrate bullying in response to such an oppressive compulsory environment. As Furedi (2009) argues, we are in an age where children are more informed in today's society where media and policy champion a 'rights'-based perspective and "children see the injustice in a system that holds expectations of their behaviour and performance whilst all the time, regulating every aspect of their time at school". Osler's (2006) exposure of legislative contradictions highlights the emphasis on reducing

social exclusion on the one hand and on the other, a need to firmly address disruptive students often through permanent exclusion. Ross-Epp (2006) recognises the irony of a system that blames the individual for being removed, or removing themselves from compulsory education; yet it fails to recognise the institutions part to play in that individual's failure. Duncan (2013) also highlights the contradictions set within the context of compulsory education where both persuasion and coercion are used to ensure attendance. On the one hand, schools welcome pupils offering much promise for the secondary phase of education ahead whilst on the other, threatens penalties if non-compliant and the potential criminalisation of parents for pupils' excessive non-attendance. Duncan states that it is impossible to quantify the numbers of children who regard compulsory attendance as unjust. However, as highlighted in Thornberg's (2007) research, a child or young person's capacity to recognise unjustness or contradictions should not be underestimated and the degree to which the paradoxical nature of compulsory schooling is interpreted by pupils.

Similarly in the workplace, participants likened the working environment to that of school regarding the compulsion to attend determined by financial commitments. Also akin to school, any non-compliance, absenteeism and low or non-productivity in the workplace could also result in disciplinary action. The feelings of powerlessness were evident here too regarding the futility and avoidance of pursuing grievance procedures for fear of losing employment. However, the non-compulsory university environment by contrast negated such feelings of oppression and powerlessness. The non-compulsory learning

environment encourages student self-regulation. As described by participants, university offers a respectful, democratic learning environment founded on the choice to participate and choice regarding many aspects of the university experience thus encouraging engagement and motivation. As Mann (2008) asserts, the significance of the university as a non-compulsory learning environment influences overall student perception that they hold significant control over their learning experience. School pupils and many employees rarely experience such a level of control. Certainly borne out in this study, the compulsion to attend school coupled with the frustration pupils experience in conforming to school demands and expectations resulted in an increased likelihood of the manifestation of bullying. This supports the synergistic nature of the 4C framework where in this instance the features of compulsion and control were expressed as creating an environment ripe for bullying.

#### 5.2.2. Compression.

The effects of architectural spaces upon the behaviour of individuals within those spaces are an established area of inquiry often through the lens of environmental psychology (for example: Dudek, 2000) and less often in relation to school violence (for example Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2011) but rarely specifically in relation to bullying. A report (KPMG, 2009) highlighted the importance of school environment positively impacting upon levels of unauthorised absences and student attainment. Spatial configurations were one of the identified features and whilst the report does not specifically explore any links with levels of bullying, it nevertheless demonstrates the relationship the school environment has with pupils and behaviour commonly overlooked in bullying research literature. However, the 4C model offers this

additional perspective. The feature of compression within the framework allows us to see how the physical and operational arrangements of space impact upon social relationships and can create a climate of bullying and aggression.

Duncan (2013) states that pupils are compressed into small architectural spaces for long periods of the day and the arrangement and management of furniture and space all serve to both monitor and control movement and behaviour but also aggravate bullying behaviour. Every aspect of students' time and space is governed (Horton, 2011). This was clearly emphasised in this study. Strategies such as seating plans were felt to restrict pupils and exposed them to potential bullying incidence. Feelings of constant surveillance and forced intimacy were seen to be contributory factors. The use of imprisonment metaphors further emphasises how the school environment, through its restrictiveness, encourages frustration and resultant bullying behaviour. In these tightly regulated spaces, pupils themselves were used as a surveillance tool with the expectation to report any perceived bullying behaviour with the threat of being complicit should they not do so. This strategy of utilising self-policing and the other strategies mentioned here become what Duncan refers as 'technologies of compression'. Duncan (2013,p.36) explains:

These technologies of compression appear unconnected, but the corralling of multitudes of pupils in a tight architectural space, then further restricting their movements and activities by

perimeter fencing, classroom furniture, video surveillance, and disciplinarian intervention, means that they are bound in ways that exceed anything in the past.

So too in the workplace, compression was raised as a risk factor, though not to the same degree as in the school context. In the workplace, being confined to small spaces with numerous employees created conditions ripe for bullying. The social nature of cliques and how they operated within an obviously hierarchical organisational structure set within sometimes densely populated spaces created much tension. However, compression is negated in the university as participants expressed the virtues of the flexible environment of being able to come and go as they pleased or change modules if they needed to avoid particular individuals. Freedom of choice and adaptability are vital characteristics of the undergraduate experience (Candy, 1995). Significantly, the only incidence of compression regarded as an issue in university was in halls of residence where students experienced the intensity of a smaller confined space shared with multiple members of their student cohort. Proximity was an issue here and the forced intimacy and the resultant interpersonal challenges arising.

### 5.2.3. Control.

The perceived 'crisis in education' (Furedi, 2009) and constant 'bureaucratic tinkering' (Duncan, 2013) with education policy in hand with media driven public fear over the diminishing control in schools (Walton, 2005a), has placed schools under greater pressure than ever before to maintain control over the

pupil population. After all, the deviancy and delinquency 'bullies' take forward into adulthood (Smith et al., 2004; Olweus, 2011; Ttofi et al., 2011; Bender and Losel, 2011) is of great concern and should surely be remedied at school. Control is a key public and political discourse regarding schooling (Duncan, 2013). External demands of government standards, school inspection and teachers' assessment-related targets continue to be under-explored as factors that create a climate where bullying is fostered and maintained (Horton, 2009; Rivers et al., 2007). Just as through a focus on excellence and quality, an increasingly globalised and competitive market place (Lewis, 1999) encourages conditions ripe for bullying. Against this bureaucratic backdrop and global market capitalism (McCarthy and Mayhew, 2004), there is the need to maintain control of pupils and employees in order to achieve institutional aims. Of the school system, Duncan (2013, p.36) asserts that the main aim "is to produce 'docile bodies'; well-informed and highly qualified pupils who are disciplined and compliant with school regulations" and in achieving this, increased hierarchical and authoritarian control is warranted.

Duncan (2013) describes the obvious hierarchy of power across staff from head teachers downwards to non-teaching staff and below them the pupils who can be further differentiated by preferential treatment for those more compliant with school values. Pupils find ways of replicating this power differential amongst themselves. How this hierarchy of power translates to the day-to-day contexts within the different institutions was evident in this study. Pupils differentiated according to socio-demographic characteristics, academic ability, just as nurses with differing skill set and experiences

contributed to tensions. Abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) or tyrannical supervisors (Meglich et al., 2008) wielding power and employees treated more or less favourably by the obvious hierarchical organisational structures all served to reaffirm individuals' positions and were seen to be causative factors.

Teachers adopted a range of proactive or reactive strategies regarding bullying. The teachers' use of bullying as a classroom management strategy (Yoneyama, 2003) was not uncommon or ignoring bullying incidence when they knew it to occur; as McEvoy (2005) describes "collusion through inaction"; the hypocrisy of which did not go unnoticed by participants. Unfair treatment of identified perpetrators in receipt of special treatment and privileges caused much resentment and was a strong theme. This served to almost condone behaviours deemed deviant and conflicted with anti-bullying activity and the casting of perpetrators as monsters to be shunned and avoided. It seems unsurprising that this should evoke such a strong sense of resentment and unjustness in the inconsistent application of rules (Thornberg, 2006; 2007; 2008). Similarly in the workplace, subscribing to particular cliques and alliances offered rewards for loyalty; being targeted for being peripheral to the group often supported by management or in some cases instigated by management. These power structures and unequal relations translate into bullying (Hutchinson et al., 2009). It seems that Hutchinson et al.'s (2009) assertion that corrupt systems are self-perpetuating and self-protecting with organisational sub-cultures supportive of bullying conduct may also be applicable to the school context.

In contrast, the university environment was reported to have no obvious controlling features. Power differentials were recognised as being present such as clear hierarchical structure of academics over students but this did not present an oppressive force as it did in school or workplace. Students control the pursuit of individual goals with choice being a significant determinant of the absence of bullying. Where curriculum choices were afforded in schools, this was felt to be tokenistic, and compulsory curriculum subjects crushed motivation and interest causing deviant behaviours. At university, flexible programme delivery negated any possible disengagement and resultant behaviour that the prescribed school curriculum presented. As Ross-Epp (1996) reminds us: “conformity, routine and intentional exposure to boredom and repetition are typical features of an education system that propagates systemic violence”. The positive links with choice and motivation at university were recurrent. Motivating features of personal interest and personal investment in an environment operating a far less disciplinary and directive learning regime were felt to be protective factors of a bullying climate. Again, this supports the interconnected nature of the 4C framework where in this incidence; the effects of control are negated by the absence of the other three features.

#### 5.2.4. Competition.

“Competitiveness has become woven throughout every layer of schooling by way of target-setting” (Duncan, 2013, p.39). Schools, teachers and pupils are measured against criteria that set the parameters of normality, success and

failure. Similarly, in the workplace, the pressures of external drivers also encourage a competitive climate. Sheenan (1999) attributes the constantly changing market and increasing competitiveness that companies and organisations are faced with. These can create organisational problems that in turn create conflict between employees. Interestingly, HE institutions are placed within an increasingly competitive market. The massification of higher education and market orientation, including resultant competition across institutions, is changing the climate within university to a more user-led service (Naidoo, 2003), but unlike the external pressures that schools and workplace are subjected to, university does not translate to a negative force upon the student experience. The feature of non-compulsion working with the non-competitive environment negates the development of an ethos likely to encourage a bullying climate.

Duncan (2013) points out that the logic of competition is that it produces winners, but mostly losers. It is a logic the author asserts that in a schooling system where the criteria for competitive success is scholastic capability and compliance, there will undoubtedly be losers (Duncan, 2013). Indeed, it was those pupils that fell outside of the perceived norm that were characterised as typical bullies and victims. Participants in this study recognised school as a teaching and learning environment that emphasises difference in academic aptitude in a competitive learning environment as a risk factor in the occurrence of bullying. By contrast, the university learning environment was not founded on competition and was founded more on contractual relationships whereby individual talents were recognised and shared in the

mutual pursuit of goals. “University environments encourage collegiate relationships built on an open and free exchange of ideas, mutual respect and a sense of equality” (Coleyshaw, 2010). Competitive cultures militate against the development of uncompetitive relationships and can create power differentials that encourage bullying behaviours (Simpson and Cohen, 2004). Duncan describes: “In pursuit of competition, the humanistic qualities of collaboration and cooperation are annihilated”; two of the very features described by participants when discussing the comparative lack of bullying university context.

Participants in this study talked of the day-to-day schooling that seemed to not only propagate a competitive ethos that encouraged bullying, but also the competition that was actively used as a strategy to deter bullying. Teachers manipulated pupils’ interpersonal relationships where pupils were pitted against each other, used as informers or actively encouraged to distance themselves from perpetrators to avoid them too, becoming a social outcasts. Regarding the workplace, participants talked of managers using competition as a means to bully often in pursuit of organisational aims and sometimes for interpersonal reasons of favouring or targeting particular individuals. Tactics discussed here and the influence of competition upon institutions confirm Duncan’s (2013) assertion that compulsory competition itself is a form of bullying.

The discussion now takes a discursive view looking at how bullying is constructed through the authoritative discourses operating (or not) within the

spaces of school, the workplace and university and for whose interests such discourses serve.

### 5.3. Bullying as a discursive phenomenon.

Bullying as a discursively constructed phenomenon offers an alternative viewpoint to consider the power relationships operating in institutions. Liefoghe and Davey (2010) note that particular discourses are normalised, holding dominant positions in institutions. Power is exercised through discourse; social boundaries that define what can be said and what cannot be said (Crowley, 2009). For Foucault (1998), institutional priorities drive the need to disseminate these particular 'truths', whilst relegating other discourses. In the present study, participants' discourse was initially uncritically differentiated depending on the setting under discussion, until they began exploring the porosity of the university environment as a protective feature against bullying, as compared to more compressed settings such as compulsory schooling. These different discourses will now be examined more closely in light of bullying research literature, particularly those works with a focus on institutional and more specifically bullying discourse.

#### 5.3.1 The school context: an individualistic discourse.

Overwhelmingly, participants used discourses of personalisation when discussing initial conceptions of school-aged bullying. Their conceptions did not pre-date school, and seemed to be shaped by the bullying discourse operating in schools from that time. These conceptions proved particularly enduring and remained with participants into adulthood despite simultaneously holding different conceptions of bullying in other contexts. The

discourse was very narrow and clichéd, which was consonant with much of the dominant school bullying literature of deviance and demonising of 'bullies'. This dominant bullying discourse is rooted in individual pathology (Walton, 2005a) and indicates the extent to which this field of bullying research has informed education policy and practice and become an embedded discourse operating in schools.

Participants talked of deviant perpetrator characteristics (Olweus, 1978; 2001), such as Ardash and Barry's references to bullying being an innate trait and natural. Participants described provocative or passive victims (Olweus, 1978) where particular individuals attracted the perpetration of bullying against them and numerous references to bullying occurring for reasons of individual difference (Cowie and Jennifer, 2008) such as fat, spotty or geeky. Wali for example described individual pupils targeted for being weird, or as Terashajo and Salmivalli (2003) term, an 'odd student repertoire'. Group dynamics and aspects of pupil-to-pupil relationships was a strong theme, seeing bullying as an essentially interpersonal phenomenon (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Sutton and Smith, 1999). Even where prominent cultural identifiers or socio-demographic factors were associated with the likelihood of perpetration, these were expressed as individualistic, such as Bill's suggestion that perpetrators were more likely to smoke and drink and Sarah's description of rough girls blatantly flouting uniform rules; or Leona's reference to perpetrators being from rough housing estates. Pupils' differences seem to be measured around their view of normality, and those straying from conformity were portrayed as deviant and likely perpetrators. As Baccini et al. (2009)

state: perpetrators become locked into pathologised identities. These individuals were used as examples by staff to deter others from engaging in bullying and becoming social outcasts or misfits (Juvonen and Gross, 2005).

Identified perpetrators were seen to threaten the expected norms of behaviour and were demonised by school staff. As Horton (2014, p.9) posits “extraordinary characteristics are brought to the fore, and school-aged children are portrayed as morally disengaged monsters”. Such monsterisation may be used as a means by which stereotypical views of bullies and bullying are exploited to maintain control and justify pursuit of institutional aims. Sharpe (2007, p.384) refers to Foucault’s works that sees that the category of the monster acts as “a mastery category for understanding contemporary forms of exclusion, erasure, surveillance and control”. The powerful effects of monsterising individuals were salient across participants. The effects of monsterising discourse appeared enduring as these conceptions remained with participants into adulthood. Sammy’s view that on reaching adulthood, perpetrators were likely to be “living in a shitty council house, living on benefits” demonstrates the lasting effects of such monsterisation. The use of such discourses supports systems of domination that construct bullying through a normalising discourse. By continually reproducing bullying as a naturalised and individualised phenomenon (Ryan and Morgan, 2011), it aids the deflection of any accountability on the part of the school (Duncan, 2009). Concerns arising from the media, educationalists and resultant legislation on the need for ‘safe schools’, fuels further discourse of fear and panic requiring preventative and interventionist strategies (Walton, 2005a).

The ways in which schools proactively and reactively combated bullying were presented as requiring regulatory responses and interventions targeted at individuals. Participants described the ineffectiveness and unfairness of school anti-bullying policy and interventions. Official strategies were set within a discourse of conduct and discipline (Walton, 2010) with participants talking of anti-bullying initiatives setting the criteria of what bullying is, pupil responsibilities in relation to bullying and setting the boundaries of expected behaviour and consequences of the deviation from this. Participants' resentment towards particular reward strategies aimed at perpetrators were expressed in agreement with Furedi's (2009) assertion that motivational techniques employed by schools such as rewards to encourage good behaviour convey a sense of desperation, whereby such bribery diminishes pupil respect for and adult position of authority and as expressed by participants, breeds resentment of both teachers and the individual 'bully'. Other strategies further reinforced this resentment such as the use of public shaming strategies that Bill and Rose talked of. Barry talked of teachers actively discouraging pupils or 'tittle tattlers' from reporting bullying, or teachers' deliberate avoidance and blatant disregard of bullying incidence, which conveyed discourses of shame (Horton, 2006) and fear (Walton, 2005a). Findings resonate with Lausten's (2014) work, which draws on Foucault's *dispositifs* (apparatus) that explores the interconnectedness of apparatus that work together to influence conceptualisations of bullying; consequently the solution and management of it. In relation to this study, the apparatus used in schools are the underpinning discourse of individual

pathology, government directives and threats for non-compliance, the range of regulatory practices (both official and unofficial) and administrative attempts to address bullying through anti-bullying policy and strategies. These apparatus influence each other to perform in strategic ways to set norms and regulate behaviour. Walton (2011) thinks if the conceptions of bullying are founded upon the dominant normalising discourse, and that is flawed, then it is of no surprise that anti-bullying policy and practice founded on that same discourse is ineffective.

### 5.3.2. The workplace: an organisational discourse.

With regard to the workplace, participants shifted narratives to conceptualise bullying as being linked with organisational culture and organisational objectives, and how these related to personal behaviour. Here, participants talked of cliques operating in an organisational hierarchy, the abuse of power and a discourse of rights and grievances.

The abuse of power as creating conditions for bullying was concurrent across participants and resonates with the significant body of literature that explores this (for example: Hodson et al., 2006; Strandmark and Hallberg, 2007). Ollie described the exclusion from cliques and Barry's reference to his manager's purposeful manipulation of clique membership as demonstrating the ways in which cliques utilise power differentials both horizontally across colleagues and vertically from management down to employees (Meglich, 2008).

Lenny talked of the competition between employees and teams that created tensions that encouraged bullying. The pressure of work and performance demands has direct links with the presence of bullying (Avergold, 2009). Sheenan (1999) attributes such conflict to the constantly changing markets and increasing competitiveness that companies and organisations are faced with. Claire raised these more macro-political factors. Her conceptions took an even wider perspective and considered organisational systems and policies, as seen through Claire's description of aggressively implemented policies and care audits, which she attributed to governmental directives and response to negative media spotlight. This demand of excellence and quality Lewis (1999) asserts creates an environment conducive to bullying.

Participants working in nursing institutions used discourses of competence and also gendered discourses. They talked of the perceived threat of updated or more advanced professional competencies as impacting upon levels of bullying and also how allocation of particular tasks was determined by gender. These were felt to impact upon personal relationships and resultant bullying behaviour. This supports Hutchinson et al. (2006) work that sees bullying in nursing in terms of 'oppressed group behaviour' where nurses are doubly oppressed by both gender and medical dominance. These unequal power structures and relations can translate to horizontal bullying across colleagues. Horizontal bullying is especially common where teamwork and cooperation are required in the workplace (Hoel and Einarsen, 2003; Salin, 2003).

Johnson's (2013) exploration of organisational discourse in nursing institutions is applicable across other workplace environments. Johnson uses Foucault's process of exclusion to describe the ways in which management remove or prevent specific bullying discourse in order to protect the organisation's legitimacy, thereby securing continued use of bullying as a legitimate management strategy. Participants in this study did not report bullying as a specific discourse commonly being used in the workplace environment as it was in schools. As Walton (2005b) asserts, bullying is a concept with political and historical antecedents. Such discursive practices determine which discourses institutions maintain or circumvent, depending on the agenda by which they operate and seek to protect. Participants described that seeking any course of action in response to being bullied was often made impossible due to the management hierarchy, whereby the management itself was the perpetrator or those on the next tier or management level would deter a course of action. In terms of taking forward an official grievance, this was deemed potentially disastrous for participants who made it clear their job would be under threat if they pursued any action. Organisational distrust and job insecurity is reported as key in encouraging a climate where bullying can thrive (Hearn and Parkin, 2001). Findings also echo Lindgreen's (2004) notion of organisational corruption where individuals misuse their entrusted power and bullying occurs against a backdrop of institutionalised silence and censorship. This valorises bullying behaviour, which then becomes entrenched throughout the institution.

### 5.3.3. The university: a discourse of porosity.

As has been discussed previously, participants explored the physical and operational features of the respective environments and compared the rigid and inflexible nature of schools and to a lesser degree, the workplace moving to discuss the more porous university environment. This discourse of porosity described the absence of boundaries and obvious hierarchies in the HE context that were present in the school and workplace. Participants reported a distinct lack of other techniques of control (Horton, 2011) that are prevalent in the school and workplace, which have been explored through Goffman and Duncan's works. Participants explored the permeability of the non-compulsory university environment and the flexible nature of undergraduate study. Students described the high levels of fluidity that the non-coercive environment affords. Interpersonal relationships set within this non-compulsory, non-coercive environment changed the dynamic across interpersonal and teaching and learning relationships where participants, for example Georgina, reported the flexible social environment affording friendships founded on choice as opposed to forced intimacy, as Tony expressed; everyone knows each other at school, and "there's no escape". School and workplace were described in terms of power-dominant organisations whereas HE is a significantly more collegial and dignifying environment. So too relationships with academic staff were reported to be founded on respect and equality, as alluded to by Greta in supporting the notion that – "University environments encourage collegiate relationships built on an open and free exchange of ideas, mutual respect and a sense of equality" (Coleyshaw, 2010).

In the university, the student is the client or customer that needs to be recruited and retained. This determines the discursive formations that operate in this environment. As demonstrated in this study, the bullying discourse is relatively muted. Non-compulsion to attend and markedly different operational and structural features of the environment as the participants reported resulted in a comparatively bully-lite environment; in turn negate the need for high profile anti-bullying policy or other aspects of bullying related discourse. Where particular regimes of truth that exert normalisation (Clarke, 2008) as has been demonstrated in the discussion so far in relation to school and workplace contexts, the nature of the HE environment does not warrant dissemination of such truths supporting Mayr's (2008) assertion that just as institutions are shaped by discourse, they have the power to construct and impose discourses.

#### 5.4. Summary.

The discussion has interrogated the findings against the backdrop of specific works. Goffman's theory of total institutions has illuminated the ways in which total institutions serve to fulfill institutional agenda. Through highly regulated and regimented daily activities administration and bureaucratic rules, disciplinary control is maintained. The discussion has shown how the process of the mortification of the self operates within the school and the workplace to subjugate members within these environments. The degree to which institutions are "totalising" determines the likelihood of fostering a climate where bullying can thrive. The three contexts under focus can be placed on a

totalising spectrum, with school being the most coercive, non-consultative and non-negotiable; it is at the higher end of the spectrum and university at the opposite pole. The workplace is situated in-between.

Duncan's conceptual 4C framework offers an interesting means by which to critique compulsory schooling systems and how they use compulsion, compression, competition and control over pupils. In this way, Duncan argues: 'bullying is an inevitable feature of our 'bullying schools', which are fixed upon economic competitiveness and social control at the expense of child welfare'. We can see how these four features interact to create conditions that support a climate of bullying. However, by extending the framework to critique workplace and university environments, we can conclude that the presence and intensity of the four features work to encourage or discourage levels of bullying in the different contexts. Where the four features are most pervasive and oppressive (the school and the workplace), the likelihood of bullying presence increases. Thus bullying becomes an inevitable feature of institutions more generally. The features present a combining and multiplying force to encourage or discourage a climate of aggression in schools and other institutions. The absence of the 4C elements in the university context, that by contrast is a non-compulsory, non-competitive, free flowing, and autonomous learning environment, significantly supports an environment not conducive to bullying. Extending Duncan's (2013b, p.260) query that "the real wonder is why there is so much research on bullying children and so little on bullying schooling", one might also interrogate why there is so little research on bullying institutions more generally.

The discussion has illuminated the ways in which institutional discourses operate to produce knowledge and truths that in turn orientate behaviour of populations within those environments. The dominant discourse on bullying informs how people talk and understand bullying and also sets the boundaries of what is or is not acceptable when addressing or discussing bullying (Foucault, 2002). As Derrida (1981) reminds us, discourse itself can represent a form of control.

## Chapter 6. Conclusions and future directions.

The following section concludes this study by outlining the key findings in relation to their implications, and the contributions to knowledge that this study has made.

### 6.1 Bullying as a contextually constructed phenomenon.

In the first instance, the principal aims of this study offer a unique and significant contribution to the field of bullying research inquiry. While bullying research has explored many different areas of inquiry, it typically examines only those contexts where bullying is reported to be characteristic. As the literature review has shown, the topic is well represented in schools, the workplace, nursing and, to a lesser degree, prisons. Bullying inquiry relating to undergraduate student-to-student bullying in HE is by comparison extremely limited, and the rare insights into bullying at universities focus on academic bullying.

Another contribution to knowledge is the design of this study to provide a cross-contextual view. Where other studies cover a variety of settings, there are no extant examples of cross-contextual comparisons, such as looking at schools alongside colleges, or prisons alongside military units, for example. Not only does the present study provide this cross-contextual view, it also does so with a single set of participants who compare their own personal experiences across the three domains of compulsory schooling, workplace and higher education. By this means, the study shows how the same individual can construct the notion of bullying in very different ways according

to the discourses prevalent within the setting during their period of attendance.

Returning specifically to the literature review, this appraisal of bullying research literature has shown that the traditional bullying literature presents bullying in conceptually different ways depending on the context under focus. In the school bullying literature, the research emphasis is predominantly psychological and frames bullying within an individual pathology paradigm. In the workplace, the bullying literature moves towards a systems paradigm that considers organisational ethos and a range of structural variables, whilst still residing within a psychology-based paradigm. Any sociological inquiry remains peripheral to the bullying research orthodoxy. The implications of such a selective and discipline-bound approach to the scholarly inquiry on bullying are that it restricts development of our understanding of this destructive phenomenon. The next sections conclude findings in relation to the research questions.

## 6.2 RQ 1: How do students construct bullying in different contexts?

The key findings for RQ1 is that bullying is understood differently by the same individuals depending upon the context that they are considering. Students theorised bullying according to the constructs they held at those particular times, and such constructs remained with them into adulthood. Even when the same person had directly experienced the varying contexts of compulsory education, workplace and higher education using the same terms of bullying, victim and bully, their conceptualisations of bullying was markedly different.

Participants hold onto those differences in their minds simultaneously; so even when they are no longer within that setting, their understanding of that phase persists in their minds and is not naturally challenged by new experiences of bullying. This reflects the durability of school-age conceptions of individual monsterisation and personal responsibility, as they become firmly embedded in peoples' minds. Yet in the workplace, students attributed bullying to be driven more by organisational ethos, and were less likely to pathologise individuals for the bullying there.

In contrast, students described the protective features of the HE environment that discourage conditions that propagate and maintain bullying. This variance in participants' explanations of regarding the individual as opposed to systemic factors in bullying is another significant finding. Structural and operational factors combine to create bullying climates within particular institutions, yet the higher level of permeability offered by an institution, the lower the level of bullying. This finding directly challenges the common understanding of bullying as being predominantly an individual responsibility. As the present study has shown, the issue of bullying cannot be explained purely as one of individual behaviour but is framed within the structures, systems and ethos of the environment itself. This is not to exculpate the individual entirely for anti-social acts, but to broaden the picture to include other possible solutions for the intractable problem of bullying.

### 6.3 RQ2: How do students explain differing constructions of bullying in different contexts?

Students theorised more deeply to explain the inconsistencies in their accounts. Their recollection of incidents and climates took them back to the ways they thought about bullying at those times, rather than reflect objectively with hindsight, or apply their current knowledge and understanding. To begin with, normalising discourses re-emerged in the interviews, but were then subsequently replaced with systems discourses. A more critical exploration of the differing environments revealed the organisational and operational arrangements that encourage or negate a bullying climate. The implications of failing to acknowledge discursive practices and the discursive parameters within which institutions operate can limit our understanding of how various control mechanisms can stimulate climates conducive to bullying. This study contributes to the emerging body of literature that explores how embedded bullying discourses within institutions have influence over the populations within them. As Jacobson (2010) posits, such works are invaluable in exposing how bullying is perpetuated by the educational discourses within schools and in the workplace (Linstead et al., 2014).

### 6.4 Institutional porosity: an alternative view.

This study has introduced the concept of institutional porosity as reducing the propensity for bullying in institutions. This takes a uniquely positive approach to viewing how HE offers protective factors that encourage a bully-lite environment. Where Goffman's Total Institutions and Duncan's 4C model examine those elements of an environment that bear down upon and oppress

its members, looking at the porosity of an institution reveals the structures, systems and opportunities within that environment that encourage and facilitate movement and freedoms resulting in reduced likelihood of bullying.

Examining an institution in terms of its porosity is not quite the reverse of Goffman or Duncan's models, but can be applied to more mature contexts and is a more suitable conceptual tool. The concept of Total Institutions and the 4C model have both been useful in helping me to understand what it is about HE that seems to be in contradistinction to other settings. Both have essentially been concerned with the control of members of a setting. This makes these models unpalatable for HE particularly the 4C model that specifically relates to compulsory schooling. Indeed, much of their explanatory power does not resonate with HE whose characteristics, as findings in this study have shown, centre on voluntarism, choice and collaboration.

However, a particularly significant finding reinforces Duncan's concept of compression as a factor in bullying, relating to experiences of HE students who had experienced living in halls of residence. Findings show a highly disproportionate number of students who claimed bullying was prevalent in their halls, thereby supporting the view that the corralling of people together in small, intimate spaces for long periods creates a pressurised environment with concomitant tensions that encourage bullying. Just as Collins (2009) states: "the degree to which a social institution is totalising determines the level of bullying present"; this study suggests that greater degrees of institutional porosity reduce the presence of bullying.

## 6.5 Future directions.

A future intention is to further develop a theoretical model of Institutional Porosity to demonstrate how the permeability afforded by institutions works to promote a climate that fosters and maintains pro-social relations and negates the bullying ethos.

This research inquiry may be further advanced to include further education (FE) institutions. FE sits between tertiary and higher education and has its own distinct characteristics. Like the university undergraduate experience, student-to-student bullying in FE shares a distinct lack of presence in the bullying research arena; a point recognised by McDougall (1999) who offers a rare study. I have yet to find any such literature that has been published since that study. This is despite the fact that the landscape of FE undergoing drastic changes in recent years. What was once a non-compulsory education institution now accommodates school-aged students undertaking national qualifications. Young people are now required to stay in some form of education until they are 18 years of age (DfE, 2014) with FE colleges a key option for continuing study. By the nature of some qualifications that were previously confined to school, it is likely that a similarly prescriptive curriculum operates. This, coupled with a distinctly different compulsory learning environment to school, presents unique characteristics and is therefore worthy of bullying research inquiry.

Further research may also include an investigation of certain undesirable features of HE at staff and management levels. These practices and

relationships mirror those in workplaces and schools that I and others have critiqued as promoting bullying climates; but in HE they do not seem to filter down to undergraduates. It would be important to examine such organisational firewalls. We know that bullying in academia is said to be rife (Lewis 2004; Lipsett 2005) and the massification of higher education and increasing market orientation, including the resultant competition across institutions, is changing the climate within universities. As these tensions increase, the likelihood of the protective factors identified in this study affording the same level of sanctuary against the development of bullying cultures may be compromised.

We need to move away from the *a priori* understandings of the original bullying research to a much deeper reflection of systems and institutional discourses, alongside how these combine and present a multiplying force that encourages or discourages a climate of aggression in schools and other institutions. In doing so we may open the mind to possible ways of understanding the phenomenon of bullying in a new way.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Date	Interview	School	Name	Gender	PoS	Yr of study	Age	Ethnicity	Residential
17.10.12	1	Edu	Bill	M	BEd(Hons) Primary teaching	2	24	WB	N
		Edu	Adrian	M	BEd(Hons) Primary teaching	2	20	WB	N
		Edu	Barry	M	BEd(Hons) Primary teaching	2	22	WB	N
23.10.12	2	Bus	Wali	M	B.Managment	3	20	British Pakistani	Y
		Bus	Saleem	M	B.Managment	3	22	Indian	N
		Bus	John	M	B.Managment	3	21	WB	N
		Bus	Ardash	M	B.Managment	3	21	Indian	N
		Bus	Adil	M	B.Managment	3	21	British Indian	N
1.11.12	3	Sport	Darna	F	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	2	19	WB	N
		Sport	Lucian	M	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	2	19	WB	N
		Sport	Nigel	M	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	2	20	WB	N
6.11.12	4	Sport	Leon	M	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	1	19	WB	N
		Sport	Desmond	M	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	1	18	WB	Y
		Sport	Steven	M	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	1	18	WB	N
		Sport	Lenny	M	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	1	18	WB	N
6.11.12	5	Sport	Adrian	M	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	1	18	WB	Y
		Sport	Michael	M	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	1	18	WB	N
		Sport	Amanda	F	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	1	22	WB	N
		Sport	Richard	M	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	1	19	WB	Y
		Sport	Simon	M	BSc(Hons) Sports coaching	1	19	WB	Y
8.11.12	6	Edu	Sarah	F	BA(hons) Childhood & Fam studs	2	19	WB	N
		Edu	Tarik	F	BA(hons) Childhood & Fam studs	2	23	British Muslim	N
		Edu	Rose	F	BA(hons) Childhood & Fam studs	2	19	WB	N
9.11.12	7	Edu	Belinda	F	BA(Hons) Early Primary	2	37	WB	N
		Edu	Sammie	F	BA(Hons) Early Primary	2	40	WB	N
		Edu	Helen	F	BA(Hons) Early Primary	2	20	WB	N
12.11.12	8	Sport	Ollie	M	BSc(Hons) Sports Coaching	3	20	WB	N
		Sport	Tony	M	BSc(Hons) Sports Coaching	3	21	WB	N
		Sport	Antony	M	BSc(Hons) Sports Coaching	3	20	Black British	N
		Sport	Alan	M	BSc(Hons) Sports Coaching	3	21	WB	N
		Sport	Liz	F	BSc(Hons) Sports Coaching	3	20	WB	N
		Sport	Royston	M	BSc(Hons) Sports Coaching	3	20	WB	Y
		Sport	Kevin	M	BSc(Hons) Sports Coaching	3	32	WB	N
21.11.12	9	SEF	Violet	F	BA(Hons) Early Childhood studies & sociology	2	39	Black African	N
		Edu	Chrissie	F	BA(Hons) Deaf Studies SN & Inclusion	2	49	WB	N
		Edu	Angelica	F	BA(Hons) Deaf Studies SN & Inclusion	2	30	WB	N
		Edu	Leona	F	BA(hons) Childhood & Fam studs	2	39	British jamacian	N
3.12.12	10	Edu	Lucy	F	BA(Hons) SNIS	3	21	WB	Y
		Edu	Lydia	F	BA(Hons) SNIS	3	21	WB	Y
		Edu	Lana	F	BA(Hons) SNIS	3	23	WB	N
		Edu	David	M	BA(Hons) SNIS	3	20	WB	N
3.12.12	11	Edu	Georgina	F	BA(Hons) SNIS	3	22	WB	N
		Edu	Greta	F	BA(Hons) SNIS	3	21	WB	N
5.12.12	12	Health	Jessica	F	Diploma in Nursing Disabilities	3	22	WB	N
12.12.12	13	Health	Mosi	M	Diploma in Learning Disabilities	3	29	Black African	N
19.2.13	14	Health	Majida	F		3	24	Indian Muslim	N
27.2.13	15	Health	Ophelia	F		3	32	Black British	N
28.2.13	16	Health	Lexi	F		3	41	White British	N
28.2.13	17	Health	Paula	F		3	38	Black British	N

Liz Coleyshaw

Doctoral study: Participant consent form for pilot interviews.

### Data collection

With your permission, I would like to pilot an interview to inform the research design of my doctoral study. The focus of the interview is to explore your knowledge and perception of bullying. I am not seeking views of perpetrators or targets of bullying specifically, but more general recollections of bullying in different phases of your life. Should you choose to disclose information of a sensitive nature; such data will be handled appropriately. If any discomfort or distress arises from disclosure of information, I will support you in seeking appropriate internal/external support as you see fit. Our discussion will be voice recorded and transcribed and solely for the purposes of this study.

### Anonymity and Acknowledgement

Any quotations that may be used from interviews will be anonymised and in no way identifiable to individual participants. Interviewees will be identified by simple biographical information and/or programme of study. All data collected will be stored securely and only myself, Liz Coleyshaw, will have access to this information.

### Usage

Any use of data collected may be used in subsequent thesis and/or publications and the same rules with regard to anonymity will apply to these publications. Any data used will be presented to a selection of individual participants to ensure a fair representation of their views.

### Ownership

Any data collected during the research will be the property of University of Wolverhampton from the point at which it is collected.

### Consent

I give consent for data collection and usage in the ways described above.

Signature

Print name

Date

Email

Control	1	1	16	Control was priority(1)	
School characteristics	3	5	2,9,15	School very structured and restrictive(1) Demographics(2) Harsh discipline(1)	
Boredom	4	5	2,6,10	Boredom encourages B (3)	Pupils restricted in choice and subjects. Particular subjects known B.
Prescriptive Curriculum	7	10	5,6,9,10,11,12,15	Different T&L relationships. Lack of choice and flexibility (4) Prescriptive curriculum (5)	Clear comparisons here with so Interesting remark that teachers where disinterested in subject e increased B (INT12)
Compulsion	4	4	2,7,15,16	No choice and repercussions if non-attendance	INT15 – interesting comment on law, Gov etc ensuring attendance
Demographic	5	6	1,2,3,8,11	Area(3) working class(1) Private school(1)	Stereotypical views? Yet contrast schools?
Developmental	5	7	1,2,5,8,12	Related to age(4) Size(1) More emotional as you get older(1)	Check out Ben!(INT1) – contrast stereotypes.
Competition	5	6	3,4,8,10,12	Particularly associated with competence in sports(5) banded by ability(1)	Note association with sport ma

Hi ????,

Hope you are well. You said it'd be ok for me to contact you again regarding my research on bullying? I have attached the transcript for you to look at and have a think about. I challenge some of your thoughts at times. Think about these and let me know if you have any other thoughts. I have added three questions at the bottom for you to consider.

The overarching theme for me is that when you discuss bullying in the school it is very much individual kids. In the workplace you explain it more as structural reasons like staff levels, experience etc and you report no bullying at uni and the reasons you give for this are more structural - non-compulsory education, different teaching and learning environment etc.

Then when I start to probe you about the differences you have mentioned, you start to look at school bullying slightly differently than you did at the start. You mention more environmental aspects such as boring curriculum and ineffective school response.

- Do you agree that you talk about bullying differently depending on the context in which it is being discussed?
- Do you have any ideas why you have come to understand bullying in these different ways?
- Do you have any comments/further reflections since the interview and reading the transcripts (perhaps you want to add points or now disagree with some of the points previously made)?

Hope you find time to read/answer. I would very much value your thoughts.

Thanks for your time so far!

Kind regards,  
Liz