BULLYING IN SCHOOLS
- THE MULTI ASPECT PROBLEM
Abstract

Everyday thousands of children and teenagers live through the hell of bullying. This theoretical research essay describes analyses and gives a literature overview of the phenomenon of bullying from eight different ideal-typical aspects based on Max Weber’s concept of Ideal types as a tool to make text analysis. The essay also investigates and compares three studies with focus on what methodological tools the researchers have employed to come to their conclusions. With the results from this investigation the research essay discusses possible explanations to why results, conclusions and understanding on the self-concept and self-esteem of perpetrators of bullying are so contradictory between researchers. Findings suggest that differences in gender in the sample, sample-size and age-group variations could be possible explanations to why results differ between studies. The essay discusses bullying from a power theory perspective and presents thoughts on how such a perspective could be employed in future research. It also suggests more research in the sociological discipline and investigations on a contextual and organisational level considering that the present study has shown that the academic field of bullying have not been researched to a great extent from this perspective.

Key words: Bullying, victim, bully, perpetrator, power, bystanders, social-context
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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH ESSAY

She is standing at the schoolyard swings, her entire body is shaking and it’s impossible for her to keep the tears from running down her cheeks. The sound from their scornful laughter every time they kicked her still echoes in her head. The contents of her backpack are spread all over the schoolyard. She’s given up hope that tomorrow is going to be any better.

Every day hundreds of thousands of children in Sweden and in the rest of the world live through the hell of bullying. They walk to school with a stone of anxiety in their tummy, but are these children the only ones with anxiety? Could it be that bullying is something that goes on not between a perpetrator and a victim but instead a psychological interaction between two victims? Or is bullying a display of power structures between a victim and his/her superiors? Or could it be a display of sadistic behaviour from a perpetrator?

Everyone who ever has been part of a group context has probably in one way or the other come in contact with the problems of group interaction that we today label as bullying. This considering that bullying in no way is a new phenomenon. The term ‘mobbing’ can be traced as far back as the French revolution and the concept of ‘mobile vulgus’ or ‘mob’, which is Latin for changeable and unreliable crowd (Björk, 1999 p.8-9). In other words people gathering, using violence if necessary, to influence and change a situation that they believe needs changing. In writings from the early 18th century one can read about older pupils harassing younger pupils in the purpose to uphold hierarchies (Frånberg, 2002 p.17).

In other words, bullying as a phenomenon is something that exits in all kinds of context where groups gather. Some might think that bullying is mainly a children’s problem. Unfortunately that is not the case. Every day thousands of adults go to work knowing that they will be harassed during their workday. Bullying in the workplace has been academically investigated since early 1980’s (Leymann, 1996). Although an important problem this research paper will not examine bullying in the workplace considering that this paper will focus on bullying among children. Readers interested in adult bullying issues are
recommended to read, “Adult Bullying” by Peter Randall (1997) which gives a good overview.

Another limitation which has been made is that the author, consciously have left out different models on how to practically work with bullying issues. This decision is based on the existence of numerous models developed by different researchers and lecturers on the subject as well as non-government organisations with an interest and involvement in the issue. In Sweden alone there are; ‘the Farsta model’, ‘Mombus’ and ‘Friends’ just to mention a few.

Bullying among children can have serious consequences. Every year a number of young people decide to commit suicide because they see it as the only alternative to free themselves from their tormentors. Being a victim or a perpetrator can also have effects on the children’s ability to achieve the educational goals, an issue that could have severe consequences for the child’s future education.

During the last five to ten years bullying among children and problems associated with it has received a great amount of media coverage in Sweden. For instance, a search in the Swedish library database of Swedish newspapers and magazines “Artikelsök” on the Swedish word for bullying (mobbning) results in 777 articles from January 1995 to October 2004 which contain the word bullying.

Early research on bullying and the general opinion have placed the reasons for bullying on the victim. Newer research focuses more on the bully and his/her heritage and environment.

1:2 Purpose

The aim of this research essay is to describe and give an overview of the phenomenon of bullying by using academic research on the subject. The research essay will also analyse models of interpretation of bullying. It will discuss possible explanations as to why the understanding of certain aspects of bullying varies to a rather large degree between researchers. Lastly this research essay will briefly discuss bullying from a power theory perspective.

The model of interpretation which uses theories of power tells us that bullying as a phenomenon is entirely linked to aspects of power and that bullying is an utterance of competition for power between children in the power centred and hierarchic environment that is the school. Considering that there has not been many studies on bullying done with a power perspective and that research overviews (for example Frånberg, 2002) suggests investigations based in Foucault’s and Bourdieu’s power theories the author will look at Michel Foucault’s
theories on power and his idea that power is not something an individual posses, instead that power is a result of individuals interaction with each other (Bergström & Boréus, 2000) in relationship to bullying.

Considering the use of the word power in this essay, the following should be said. According to Franzén (2000) power can be explained in a number of different ways. He singles out the intentional power concept, the structural power concept and the relational power concept which in a way is a combination of the other two. Briefly one can say that the relational power concept is a mix of a person’s actions (intentional power) and the power structures (structural power) where the person acts. When this essay refers to power it discuss and refer to a relational power perspective which includes both intentional and structural power. For further elaboration on power see Franzén, 2000.

The area of bullying is of importance due to a number of reasons. One being that it is the author’s conviction that the view of a person working with children has on who the bully and the victim of bullying are is of great importance. Hence, a persons opinions will colour and influence the work he/she does in situations where bullying is the issue. This is particularly relevant as in most action programmes against bullying a great deal of time is spent on how to handle the bully, how to treat the bully, whether to treat him/her as a villain or a victim, friend or foe. Might there also be the case that a certain way of treating the bully could enhance patterns of power within the school environment and by this encourage bullying behaviour? This essay will try and discuss this together with other aspects of the problem.

According to Swedish law, more precisely the Swedish curriculum for the mandatory school years (Lpo94), every school is obligated to actively work preventable and against bullying. As a part of this they are also obliged to have a written action programme on how the school deals with bullying issues. Unfortunately many schools do not have an action programme or the programme is not as comprehensive and developed as it should be.

By gathering, investigating and comparing previous research on bullying one might be able to find mutual concepts among the previous research. This could serve as a platform for professionals working with bullying issues to gain information and ideas how to improve the schools action programme and get inspiration on approaching and working with children exhibiting bullying behaviour.

1:3 Research questions

With the given background this essay will make the effort to discuss and come up with answers to the following questions:
1. What does previous research on bullying say about the bullying situation?
2. How, is it that researchers come to totally different and opposite conclusions, particularly when investigating the issue of bullies self-esteem and self-concept? Can it be due to what methodological tools the researchers employ?
3. What could the outlook on bullying be if one would emanate from a wider contextual perspective, for example that bullying is a struggle for power between different individuals? Or that bullying is due to greater power structures in the society?

II. METHOD

2:1 Introduction to the Essay disposition

The essay will with a holistic and hermeneutic onset provide a thematic overview of previous research on the phenomenon of bullying. A puzzle can be interpreted either from its complete picture or from its individual pieces. A puzzle without all its pieces can not provide the observer with a complete and fair picture, and to understand the ‘puzzle of bullying one needs to look at all its different pieces. Considering that the academic research on bullying is a rather vast area with a lot of specific and detailed research this essay will concentrate on giving the reader a general overview on how bullying and some of its different aspects can be explained, analyzed and defined by some of the most authoritative researchers in the field. The essay will also discuss differences in some of the more detailed research results which have captured the author’s attention.

For the purpose of providing an overview the essay starts with sections for etymology and definitions. Then it goes on to analyzing bullying from Max Weber’s idea of ‘ideal types’ by dividing different aspects of a bullying situation into different ‘ideal-typical aspects’. Each of these aspects will later in the essay be looked at in a descriptive overview with main focus on the findings of six of the most authoritative researchers in the field. Therefore the essay will provide a short presentation of these six researchers. With the purpose to put the ‘ideal-type’ bullying situation in a context some general and widely used definitions of bullying will be presented. These definitions will bring us to the descriptive overview of different academic standpoints and views within each ‘ideal-typical aspect’. From the descriptive overview the essay moves into a further deepening into one of the ideal-typical aspects. The author has chosen to review one ‘ideal-typical aspect’ in detail after presenting different standpoints within the eight ‘ideal-typical aspects’ to more concretely study possible explanations as to how it is that researchers come to opposite conclusions when examining the same issue within the ‘ideal-typical aspect’. This will in the essay take the form of an examination/comparison
of methodological tools used in three different studies on one specific aspect of bullying. Finally the essay will present possible directions for future research to take, and it will discuss findings and other areas of importance in connection to the phenomenon of bullying.

2:2 Literature search
The literature search has been conducted by using electronic databases. The databases used are PsychINFO, PsychARTICLES, Sociological abstracts, Social services abstract and the national library database of Libris. The words being used when searching for relevant literature and articles have been: bullying, self-concept, victimization, bully, personality, bully-victim problems, self-esteem, aggression, friendship. During the literature search the same nine words have also been used in Swedish to locate relevant literature. A literature search has also been done on some, for the author previously known, researchers names.

2:3 Notes regarding Literature
While reading other researchers summaries of previous research it becomes apparent what great influence Dan Olweus (for presentation see ‘six bullying researchers’) has had on the field of bullying research. Although it is the author’s opinion that respect and credit should be given to a researcher that has influenced the field, there is also another aspect in regards to this. When a researcher achieves a certain status there is always a risk that their statements and definitions are not questioned in the same manner as other researchers’ publications. This kind of issue might contribute, to making the field of research even more homogeneous on the general level than it already is.

2:4 Selection process
The articles and books found by using the search words have been chosen because of their focus on different aspects of the phenomenon of bullying and because they in different ways investigate and deepen the understanding of the eight different ‘ideal-typical aspects’ presented in the research essay. The selection process has also been influenced by the author’s wish to include the most authoritative researchers in the academic field of bullying.

The three more thoroughly examined articles were chosen considering that their main research focus has been on the perpetrator and that they present completely opposite results regarding these questions: What self-concept does a bully have? Do bullies have high or low self-esteem? Two of the three articles were also chosen because their researchers are individually strong advocates for each side in the controversy on the specific issue. The author also selected articles from three different countries in Europe namely, Sweden, United
Kingdom and Ireland this in an effort to make the comparison a bit more ‘international’ or at least more European.

Considering that research on bullying issues was quite insignificant before the 1980’s the author has decided to mainly concentrate on research from 1980 until today. The exception is Olweus (1978) which is part of the comparison/examination on three articles regarding bullies. As previously mentioned the influence of this book and his research on today’s research on particularly bullies and victims has been extensive, thus it is the author’s conviction that it is not possible to exclude.

2:5 Tools for Analysis

To answer the research questions described above the essay will analyse previous research on the subject. This analysis will take the form of an idea and ideology text analysis, or more specifically an idea analysis with a focus on contents. The idea and ideology text analysis is a way to gather previous research and highlight differences as well as take note of similarities (Bergström & Boréus, 2000, Esaiasson et al, 2004). The main purpose of using an idea and ideology based text analysis is to provide the reader with a thematic overview of the phenomenon of bullying based on authoritative researchers views on the different aspects within bullying. The text analysis will more specifically divide the different aspects of the phenomenon of bullying into ‘ideal-typical aspects’ based on Max Weber’s idea of ‘ideal types’ (Boglind, Eliaesson, Månson, 1995, p.144), from a fictitious bullying situation. By the use of ‘ideal-typical aspects’ one can gather the different participants in a bullying situation into a framework which helps to build a structure for the analysis of the previous research on the subject.

It is important to analyze previous research and drawing conclusions from this analysis considering that people relate to the previous research in different ways when they come in contact with the written research. The written material reflects conscious as well as non-conscious conceptions of individuals, who in different ways have influenced the research, whether they are the researchers themselves, have taken part in the research process or if they are just a part of the context where the research has taken place. (Bergström & Boréus, 2000).

The previous research is also the platform from where professionals working with bullying issues in the school environment will obtain their views and ideas on how to work with the problem. Whether the professionals will get their ideas from research articles or thesis directly or through the media the researchers still have a great influence on the practical work against bullying. (Bergström & Boréus, 2000). Therefore this kind of overview and
A gathering of previous research can serve as a tool for that awareness. Using this model of ‘ideal-typical aspects’ that have been presented in this essay as a typology-screen on a real bullying situation might help to identify what roles the different pupils have in the bullying situation. When this identification has been made an anti-bullying effort with focus on these different groups can commence.

The dividing into ‘ideal-typical aspects’, can together with previous research, help extract the main arguments and ideas of the researchers. One could then compare the ideas and arguments and draw conclusions from their allocation within the ‘ideal-typical aspects’.

The focus in the examination and comparison of three especially chosen previous studies has been placed on the methodological tools employed by the researchers. The analysis has taken the form of a text analysis with the main purpose to logically arrange and categorise (Esaiasson et al, 2004) a number of methodological aspects. The author has then compared the information retrieved from the three studies in the different categories. Following is an exposition of the analysis process for the three studies comparison.

The author has closely examined the studies to identify sections in each study regarding ‘sample’ and ‘tools for measurements’. The author did this by searching for answers to the same seven questions in each study. The questions were (1) what tool/tools of measurement were used to collect data for the study? (2) What specific measurement was used to identify bullies in the study? (3) How many subjects did the researchers include in their study? (4) What gender did the subjects in the study have? (5) How were the subjects selected and from where? (6) What kind of items was investigated to establish the subjects’ views about themselves? (7) How was the investigation carried out?

The answers were then presented and from this presentation comparisons were made and conclusions drawn.

2:6 Validity and Reliability

Someone once said that ‘the first step towards objectivity is to realise that everything is subjective’. In other words, true objectivity in a study is a utopian impossibility since the researcher always, although sometimes unconsciously, will influence the material with his/her subjective interpretation. However, by integrating thoughts on validity and reliability in the researching process the researcher can enhance the level of objectivity in the study. Or as Kirk & Miller (1986) express it: “Objectivity is the simultaneous realization of as much reliability and validity as possible” (p.20).
When discussing these two areas of validity and reliability it seems important to clarify how these two concepts can be defined. “Reliability is the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research, and validity is the degree to which the findings is interpreted in a correct way” (Kirk & Miller, 1986 p.20).

Now after establishing how the two concepts can be explained a discussion regarding reliability and validity issues in the present research essay can be held.

Reliability

The fictitious bullying situation which serve as starting point for the creation of the eight ‘ideal-typical aspects’ and the analysis of the same eight aspects has been constructed by the author. This could in one aspect be seen as a problem with reliability considering that one could question “whether the frame for the analysis really is an in advance constructed model or merely a result of the study”? (Bergström & Boréus, 2000, p.170, author’s translation). In trying to avoid a reliability problem the author searched for a fictitious bullying situation in literature written in English, but did not find any which was only descriptive not including elements of valuation, which Max Weber claims to be of great importance in creating ideal-types (Boglind et al, 1995, pp.143-145). Therefore the author decided, with her previous knowledge on the subject to create the fictitious bullying situation herself. Considering that the fictitious bullying situation mainly serves as a frame for creating a typology to gather the different aspects of bullying into one unit from where each ‘ideal-typical aspect’ could be analysed individually, the reliability issue regarding this aspect is of less importance.

Striving to strengthen the reliability of the study the author has been careful in accurately following the purpose of the study and as clearly as possible describes the tools used in the analysis as well as the selection of literature.

Validity

Regarding the interpretations the author has made in this research essay some background aspects should be mentioned. The subject of bullying has for a number of years been of great interest to the author which means that the author went into this research project with a large amount of knowledge on the subject. This presents both a positive and negative aspect to the research essay. Positive since the author hopefully has been able to cover more aspects of the issue than if the author would not have any previous knowledge on the subject, negative in the sense that the author’s previous knowledge has influenced the interpretations and conclusions that have been made. However, in certain areas where the author’s pre-
knowledge was extensive and the author had a previous conviction this has been stated in an effort to enhance the validity of the study. The issue of interpretation brings us on to a number of other validity issues.

In this kind of literature review there is the problem of interpretation in several steps. The author of this study interprets results from researchers which in some cases are either interpreted results from a study he/she has performed his/herself, or if the researcher has performed a text-analysis or a literature review it contains results he/she gained from studying other researchers’ reports. This raises a question regarding validity. To handle this issue the author has as far as possible tried to look at the first hand source of information. The author has also been very careful in referencing and clearly marked where second-hand information has been used. Hopefully this gives the reader the option to check the first-hand source.

III. ETYMOLOGY

A number of different concepts have been used historically to describe problems in group interaction and violence within groups. In Scandinavia words like ‘kamratretryck’ (comrade-oppression), ‘pennalism’ (bullying) and ‘mobbning’ (mobbing) are a number of examples. In the English speaking world the more common words for the phenomenon seem to be bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimization. (Björk, 1999) Considering that the words mobbing, bullying and harassment seem to stand out in research reports and studies on the subject. The etymology for these three words will be presented below.

Bullying as a field of academic research is no more than approximately three decades old, but bullying related problems have existed between children for a significant longer period of time than three decades. Therefore it could be interesting to look at the etymology of the words that have been and are used to describe bullying to see if the phenomenon can be traced much further back than only three decades.

In research regarding violence among children, particularly in school environment, different words have been used to explain, define and characterise the problematic interaction between the children in question. Some words are, as mentioned, mobbing, bullying, victimization, harassment and aggression (Eriksson, Lindberg, Flygare & Daneback, 2002). The word “mobbning” which is the most commonly used word by the Swedish researchers descended from the somewhat informal English word mobbing. The Swedish term “mobbning” seems to make its debut in the Swedish language in the early 1970’s. Swedish physician Peter-Paul Heinemann (1972) claims that the word mobbing was originally used when describing and debating the phenomenon of apartheid in Swedish newspapers in the late 1960’s. Heinemann talks about the need for a label on the violence that occurs in Swedish
schools and chooses therefore to adopt the word of “mobbning” for that purpose. (Heinemann, 1972).

Regarding the etymology of the word bullying, the substantive bully probably comes from “the Middle Dutch word boele, meaning first sweetheart, then fine fellow, then blusterer” (Smith et al, 2002). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), bullying is “the action of the verb to BULLY overbearing insolence; personal intimidation; petty tyranny” and “that bullies or acts like a bully [could be explained] domineering [and] menacing” as well as “treat in an overbearing manner; to intimidate, overawe…overweigh, overbalance…bluster [and] use violent threats” According to OED the first use of the word dates back to mid 18th century and the early 19th century, for instance writer T. Hughes (1857/1989) in his book “Tom Brown’s schooldays” talks about children bullying each other (Smith et al, 2002)

A third word which is commonly used in the research field is harassment. This word derives from “the action of harassing” which is defined in the OED as “to wear out, tire out, or exhaust with fatigue, care, trouble…or vex by repeated attacks”. The uses of the word harass dates back to mid 17th century.

In this research paper the word bullying will be used as a reference to all three of the above presented words as this word seems to be the most commonly used word in the field of research on the topic.

After examining the general linguistic background to different words of describing the phenomenon and how these words have been integrated and taken into our day to day vocabulary and ideas of the aspects concerning this problem we will now more systematically try and penetrate and analyze the different aspects of bullying with the help of a fictitious bullying situation and ‘ideal-typical tools’.

IV. ANALYZING BULLYING WITH IDEAL-TYPICAL TOOLS

4:1 Introduction to Max Weber’s ideal-type

How can bullying be explained? To give an overview and a model for understanding bullying this paper will use sociologist Max Weber’s idea of “ideal types”. An ‘ideal type’ can be understood as “a construction of thought which purpose is to measure and systematic characterise individual contexts” (author’s translation, Boglind et al, 1995, p.144). In other words the ‘ideal type’ is to be used as a tool to understand reality. The ideal type should not contain elements of valuation and thus only be descriptive in its essence. It should, according to Weber, have the character of a utopia (ibid p.143-145). Weber emphasized that the ‘ideal
type’ never can be anything more than an aid to understand reality and that how intelligent and educated a person might be he/she can only capture a partial reality. An ‘ideal type’ is the construction based on a person’s thoughts and therefore it will be influenced by cultural aspects the constructor is influenced by (ibid.).

In the following paragraphs a bullying situation will be outlined. From this situation a number of ‘ideal typical aspects’ will be extracted, and together they will form a model of understanding of the phenomenon of bullying which will be used as a foundation in this research essay.

4:2 A Fictitious Bullying Situation

Hanna was standing with her back against one of the schools brick walls located in the corner of the schoolyard. Around and in front of her five of her classmates, 3 boys and 2 girls, had formed a half circle. Just behind the boys and girls another girl from Hanna’s class was standing, pleading with the others to stop. Approximately 10 metres away, three girls in Hanna’s class were sitting on a bench watching. At the other end of the schoolyard a teacher assigned to watch the children was walking to and fro keeping an eye on the children. One of the boys was holding a glowing cigarette in front of Hanna’s face, and he asked the two boys to hold Hanna so she would not escape. While the two boys held Hanna’s arms the third boy with the cigarette bent Hanna’s hand open and then put out his cigarette in the palm of Hanna’s hand. During this whole time Hanna was pleading to the five children to stop and leave her alone. The two girls standing next to the boys laughed and clapped their hands. Hanna could see in the corner of her eye how the teacher still was walking to and fro in the other end of the schoolyard, apparently unaware of what was going on the other side.

In the above description one can single out a number of ‘ideal-typical aspects’. A number of names and typology for these aspects, more precisely ‘the victim’, ‘the assistant’, ‘the reinforcer’, ‘the outsider’ and ‘the defender’ have been borrowed from Finnish researcher Christina Salmivalli (in Eriksson et al, 2002 p.87). Regarding the other three the following should be mentioned. The typology for ‘the perpetrator’ is largely based on Salmivalli’s (2002) description of ‘the bully; however the author has chosen to use the word perpetrator instead of bully. The other two ideal-typical aspects’ names ‘the absent teacher’ and ‘the social context’ are constructed by the author. However, the typology for these two are based on previous research which discusses the role of teachers and the social context in bullying situations (e.g. Olweus, 1993; Fors, 1993 Björk, 1995 Salmivalli, 2002).
4.3 Presentation of eight ideal-typical aspects

* The first one is ‘the victim’ which in this presentation is Hanna. The victim is identified as an individual outnumbered by his/her bullies. Here personalised by a girl, however she could easily be a boy since bullying is as common among boys as with girls.

* Secondly there is ‘the perpetrator’. In this case it is the boy with the cigarette in his hand, since he is the one taking initiative and is the one who most actively execute the bullying.

* Thirdly there is ‘the assistants to the perpetrator’, in the above situation personalised by the two boys taking part in the bullying by holding Hanna, however not with the same leadership attitude as the boy with the cigarette (the perpetrator).

* Fourthly, one can identify ‘the reinforcers’ who in the fictitious bullying situation are the two girls laughing and clapping their hands, in other words reinforcing the bullying.

* The fifth ‘ideal typical aspect’ ‘the outsiders’/ ‘the non-participating children’ are in the above example personalised by two different groups on the schoolyard. On the one hand it can be identified by the two girls sitting on the bench. And on the other hand by the children playing at the other end of the schoolyard. These children might not be aware that the bullying is going on.

* A sixth ‘ideal typical aspect’ is identified in ‘the defender’. In the example it is the girl pleading to the bully, the assistants and the reinforcers to stop.

* A seventh ‘ideal typical aspect’ can be identified in ‘the absent teacher’ who is there on the schoolyard but is either unaware of what is going on or chooses not to see the bullying.

* The last ‘ideal typical aspect’ that will be presented and taken into account in this model is ‘the social context’. In the fictitious situation the schoolyard and more specifically a corner of the schoolyard becomes the scenery for the bullying and a rather important eight participant in the bullying situation, a ‘physical context’. But is this the only aspect of social context one should take into account? There might be other alternative aspects of the social context. For example, we can see the face-to-face interaction that goes on between all the children on the schoolyard verbally as well as non-verbally. We could call this the ‘interactive context’. Finally we can see the abstract structure of the school system as a social context. We could call this ‘the structural context.’
V. GUIDE TO PREVIOUS RESEARCH

5:1 Understanding Bullying and its Participants

To give an understanding of bullying and attempt to give a multiple picture of its different aspects this research essay will investigate bullying from the model based on eight different ‘ideal-typical aspects’ presented above. Each ‘aspect’ will be further explained and developed under separate headings. To each ‘ideal-typical aspect’ previous research regarding that particular aspect of bullying, done by authorities in the field, will be presented. Who then are the main authorities in the academic field of bullying? Below is a short presentation of six of the most influential researchers.

5:2 Six Bullying Researchers

When reading and writing about bullying, or probably any subject, some researchers appear more frequently than others. Considering that this research essay investigates, tries to describe and discuss bullying from an ideal-typical situation with eight different aspects, the author has chosen to place a larger focus on six researchers that could be considered as authorities in bullying research.

Swedish researcher Dan Olweus (for example 1978, 1993) has had a great influence on the research on bullying. His book “Hackkycklingar & Översittare” (Bullies & Whipping boys) published in Swedish in 1973 and in English 1978 was one of the first research reports published on the subject. Olweus has investigated most aspects of bullying and therefore his research will be referred to when discussing a number of the ‘ideal types’ presented in the previous paragraphs.

Christina Salmivalli (for example 1997, 1999, and 2001) researcher in Turku, Finland has in ten years studied bullying from a social context and in this put emphasis on the peer group and the different roles children take in bullying situations. ‘Ideal types’ regarding roles in the peer group have been based on Salmivalli’s thoughts, and the discussion regarding this is to a large extent based on her ideas.

A number of researchers have concentrated their research on the personality and self-concepts of victim and perpetrator. One of them is Irish researcher Mona O’Moore (for example 1997a, 1997b, and 2001). She has, for example, conducted a number of studies on bullies and victims self-esteem. Therefore her research is interesting to discuss in regards to the ‘ideal types’ victim and perpetrator.

Brendan Byrne (1994), also from Ireland has presented some interesting aspects and ideas that give a good overview of the victims of bullying.
The last ‘ideal-typical aspect’ presented in the model is that of ‘the social context’. This aspect could and will be investigated from Salmivalli’s research on peer group roles. Another perspective which Swedish researchers Zelma Fors (1993) and Gunilla Björk (1995, 1999) have chosen, is to look at bullying in regards to power theories.

Before addressing the somewhat more specific ‘ideal-typical aspects’ part of a bullying situation and researchers theories regarding them it could be interesting to summarise how the concept of bullying has been and is defined in broader terms.

5:3 General definitions of Bullying

During the last 30 years that research on bullying issues has been carried out it has been defined in a number of different ways. Heinemann, one of the first to investigate the phenomenon tells us in his writings from 1972 on bullying (or the Swedish/ Norwegian term mobbning) that it is when a group suddenly and violently attacks a person they perceive as a deviant individual and that after the ‘incident’ the group dissipates until the next bullying situations, thus a group of people attacking one single individual physically or psychologically (Heinemann, 1972 p.94-97). An interesting point that Swedish researchers Eriksson et al. (2002) make in their literature review is that Heinemann’s (1972) definition sees the group of people, with emphasis on the group, as the perpetrator. This point of view has consequences, hence it means that the ‘leaders’ or ‘real’ perpetrators stay anonymous in the group (Eriksson et al, 2002 pp.27-28).

Olweus (1978, 1993) found that when working with the problem of bullying among children one could not define it as violence performed by a group against a single individual. According to Olweus (1978) greater emphasis need to be put on the individuals involved in the bullying situations. In one of his first studies Olweus (1973 in English 1978) found that the individuals could be divided into two main groups: Bullies and Whipping boys. Definitions and theories connected to these concepts will be further elaborated on under ‘the perpetrator’ and ‘the victim’ headlines.

Olweus general definition of bullying which is often used by a large number of researchers tells us that: “A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students” (1993, p.9).

There seem to be a mutual agreement between researchers regarding a general definition, however when looking at the more detailed definitions one finds agreement as well as disagreement. A number of researchers (Pellegrini et al, 1999, Randall, 1996, and Olweus, 1993 for example) are in agreement that bullying is aggressive behaviour. Peter Randall
(1996) defines “bullying… [as] the aggressive behaviour arising from the deliberate intent to cause physical or psychological distress to others” (p.5.) This definition correlates rather well the concept ‘malign bullying’ which has “an initial desire to hurt” and “there is no provocation” (Harris & Petrie, 2003 p.2).

One aspect Randall (1996) does not share with many other researchers is his conscious choice not to include a time aspect or regularity aspect in his definition. He supports this by saying that “aggressive behaviour does not have to be regular or repeated for it to be bullying behaviour” (ibid. p5).

Olweus (1999) has in his latter research developed his earlier definition. He states that “bullying is thus characterized by the following three criteria: (1) it is aggressive behaviour or intentional ‘harm doing’ (2) which is carried out repeatedly and over time (3) in an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power” (pp.10-11 Quoted in Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefooghe, 2002). The third criteria lead us into another aspect of bullying, namely that of what part power plays in bullying.

According to researchers Smith & Sharp (1994) bullying can be described as “the systematic abuse of power” (p.2). They elaborate their statement by highlighting that “there will always be power relationships in social groups, by virtue of strength or size or ability, force of personality, sheer numbers or recognised hierarchy” (ibid p.2). In regards to the Smith & Sharp (1994) definition Ken Rigby (2002) has made an important addition. He highlights that with the use of “the term ‘abuse’ in the definition, one is forced to consider what in a given situation is the proper or appropriate use of power” (ibid. p.550), this considering that the ‘proper use’ might differ between cultures, norms and time-period.

Lastly there is one aspect of definitions of bullying which is important considering that it can contribute to a broader understanding of what bullying is to the millions of children that are affected by it. Olweus' (1993) defines the concept 'negative actions' as following: “when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another Negative actions can be ‘verbal’ (e.g. threatening, taunting, teasing and calling names), ‘physical’ (e.g. hitting, pushing, kicking, pinching or restraining another), or ‘other’ (e.g. making faces, dirty gestures and social exclusion)” (ibid. p.9.). Important with this somewhat more precise definition is that it shows the great diversity of what bullying is and can be. It does not matter whether a child is physically hurt or psychologically terrorised it is still bullying and should be dealt with same amount of seriousness.
With this more general overview of definitions we will return to the eight different ‘ideal-typical aspects’ and take a closer look on what previous research tells us about each aspect.

VI. THE EIGHT IDEAL-TYPICAL ASPECTS OF BULLYING - DESCRIPTIVE OVERVIEW

What does previous research say about the eight ‘ideal-typical aspects’ presented in the fictitious bullying situation presented in this research paper? Following is a brief overview of theories and findings concerning the eight different ‘ideal-typical aspects’, we start with the victim.

6:2 The Victim

Who is the victim of bullying? A question, like the others, without one universal answer. Byrne (1994, p.21) has made a compilation of what he chooses to call risk factors that, combined with external circumstances such as the atmosphere in the class or the schools attitude against bullying, can lead to a bullying situation:

1. Physical characteristics
2. Personality traits
3. Family background.
4. Changes in family circumstances
5. Jealousy
6. Atmosphere in school / club / workplace

This outline which to a great extent is based on the perpetrators explanations to why they bully seems to suggest that a great deal of the explanation to bullying lies with the victim. However Byrne (1994) points out that he does not believe that the victim is to blame for the situation.

According to Smith & Sharp (1994 p.8) children who are “different in some way (for example, ethnic group, or being vulnerable, are risk factors for being bullied”, although a rather vague assumption it corresponds in some aspects with Byrne’s (1994) thoughts of physical characteristics, personality traits and family background.

Olweus (1993) found that “the typical victims are more anxious and insecure than students in general…they commonly react by crying…also victims suffer from low self-esteem and they have a negative view upon themselves” (p.32), He labels the victim as “the passive or submissive victim” (ibid.). In the fictitious bullying situation Hanna would be labelled as a passive victim since she has not provoked her attackers.
Important to notice is that all the descriptions of victims were made post hoc. The profiling of the victim’s personality has been done when the victim already was a victim; it could therefore be the bullying itself that made the child anxious, insecure and suffering from low self-esteem.

Peter Randall (1996) is in agreement with Olweus regarding the description of the passive or submissive victim and adds that victims of bullying seem to be “socially withdrawn children and it is their solitariness that makes them vulnerable” (p.9). Randall highlights that children seem to develop their social withdrawal during their pre-school years and that this could be linked to the children’s upbringing, he suggests that children who are brought up in an authoritarian environment are low in self-esteem and self-confidence and therefore they are more prone to be victims of bullying.

In contrast to the passive/submissive victim research has shown that there is also a victim which researcher has chosen to label the ‘provocative victim’, ‘bully/victim’ or ‘aggressive victim’. These children bully others at the same time as they are victims of bullying. (Eriksson et al, 2002). Olweus has described the provocative victims as children that “have problems with concentration, and behave in ways that may cause irritation and tension around them, some of these students can be characterized as hyperactive” (1993, p.33).

According to Eriksson et al (2002) there are studies that suggest that children who are victims of bullying lack skills in social interaction and that this could be a reason for their inability to defend themselves from exclusion from the group. This lack of skills is most common among provocative victims. Summarily we can see that ‘the victim’ can be defined in a number of different ways is that also true for ‘the perpetrator’?

6:3 The Perpetrator

Brendan Byrne (1996) claims that behaving in a bullying manner is something a child learns to do. He elaborates his discussion further and says that “if aggression, either physical or verbal, is the norm at home, that behaviour is likely to be modelled” (p.23). However, he points out that this necessarily does not have to be true in every single case. He even goes as far as saying that “some people who bully are nasty individuals who have a predisposition to aggressive behaviour”. This predisposition does not have to be linked to the child’s upbringing and home situation (Byrne 1996).

Byrne’s thoughts on children being predisposed to aggressive behaviour correlate to a certain degree to Olweus (1993, p.34) who states that “generally, bullies have a more positive
attitude towards violence and use of violent means than students in general” and that the students are impulsive, have a strong urge to dominate and that they lack empathy.

Although the bully often can be seen as a group-leader, sometimes his/her behaviour might backlash on them. According to Pellegrini et al (1999) bullies might encounter disapproval from peers considering that the bullies’ aggressive values are not in line with the majority of the group. This disapproval can lead to rejection from the peer group and disliking from teachers which “leads bullies to affiliate predominantly with other aggressive youngsters” (ibid. p.216). This kind of behaviour can often lead to difficulties in studying for the youngster and in some cases leads to that the youngster drops out of school (Coie & Dodge, 1998 in Pellegrini et al, 1999).

An issue for debate during the last ten years is that of the bully’s self-esteem. Among psychologists and a number of lecturers working with bullying issues there is a common view that children who bully or express aggressive behaviour in fact are anxious and insecure and suffer from low self-esteem. Two examples are the following taken from literature written by lecturers on bullying. “They both [perpetrator and victim] suffer from low self-esteem” (author’s translation Höistad, 2001, p.99). “By shifting there own feeling of insufficiency on to someone else the aggressor is relieved” (author’s translation Larsson, 2000, pp.102-103).

Olweus (1993) has strongly debated this view. He claims he has tested this assumption in several of his own studies and the results he has found is that “bullies had unusually little anxiety and insecurity, or were roughly average on such dimensions” (p.34), according to Olweus “they did not suffer from poor self-esteem” [and] “bullies have a more positive attitude towards violence and use of violent means than students in general. Further, they are often characterised by impassivity and a strong need to dominate others. They have “little empathy with victims of bullying” As support of his claim, he refers to having conducting tests with “‘indirect’ methods such as stress hormones and special personality tests” (ibid. p.34).

Olweus’ findings are supported by Johnson & Lewis (1999) who, in their study of English schoolchildren found that children, especially boys, exhibiting bullying behaviour “had a relatively positive view of themselves in terms of social competence and self-esteem” (ibid. pp. 665-677). And by Pearce & Thompson (1998) who describes the bully as “physically and emotionally strong… [and having] good self-esteem” (p.528). However, Olweus point of view has been questioned not only by ‘non-academic’ anti-bullying workers but by a number of researchers.
Brendan Byrne (1994) claims that “it is important to say that some bullies will have low self-esteem and others high, but my own findings would indicate that victims have the lowest self-esteem, followed by the bullies” (p.23). These findings correlate with the results from investigations performed by O’Moore et al (1997b) who “found that children who bully shared victims’ feelings of lower self-worth than children who were not involved in bullying behaviour” (p.161).

A study performed by Christina Salmivalli in 1998 showed that “adolescents who bullied others typically had high social and physical self-concepts, while their view of themselves was rather negative on academic, behavioural, emotional and family-related domains of self-concept” (quoted in Kaukiainen et al, 2002, p.271). In the 2002 article Kaukiainen et al states that there are certain evidence that claims that bullies have low regard of themselves in some aspects of self-concept, though they mean that it is not enough to make generalisations on the evidence.

A further discussion on how it is that the researchers come to completely opposite conclusions regarding the perpetrators self-concept will be made in part VII where three studies which presents two different conclusions will be examined and compared with focus on what methodological tools they have used in their studies.

6:4 Other participants in bullying situations

A group which is not given major attention in the field of bullying research is the group which is of great importance in the bullying situations considering that they are eye-witnesses to a large part of the bullying incidents going on at their school. The bystanders are in the fictitious ‘ideal type’ bullying situation divided into four main groups. These are: ‘the assistants’; ‘the reinforcers’; ‘the outsiders’ / ‘the non-participating’ children and ‘the defenders’, as further developed below the typology have been borrowed from Salmivalli (1997 & 1999).

Salmivalli has divided bullying children into five different groups. She categorises all children who are not victims and in some way take part in the bullying situation as bullying children. The five are: [1] “Ringleaders or bullies, (organising a group of bullies and igniting the bullying) [2] followers or assistants, (who join the bullying once it started) [3] reinforces (who do not actively join in, but reinforce more passively by watching and laughing or encouraging the bullying)” (Salmivalli et al 1997 and Smith 2004, p.99). Concerning the latter two groups mentioned Sutton & Smith (1999) highlights findings which say that the behaviour and actions of the assistants and reinforcers will affect the victim and the
perpetrator to the degree that it will create self-fulfilling prophecies which will only strengthen the victim and the perpetrator’s roles. Salmivalli (1999) also highlights two groups of children she has chosen to name [4] outsiders and [5] defenders. The outsiders are not at all involved in the bullying situations while the defenders defend the victims and tell the bullies to stop the bullying. Regarding children who are not exposed to bullying and their ability to defend bullied children, there is one particular act against bullying that many researchers agree could be very effective. That is mobilising the ‘silent majority’ (Smith & Sharp, 1994) of children that are aware of what goes on in their own schoolyard but are not personally involved. Following below each of these different participants will be more closely presented.

6:5 The Assistants to the Perpetrator

Christina Salmivalli (1999) points out the important role these children play in bullying situations. She labels the children who actively join the bully in his/her behaviour as assistants.

Why do children follow the bully and actively take part in the bullying behaviour? According to Olweus (1993, p.44) assistants, or passive bullies and henchmen as Olweus terms them, are often insecure and they lack independence. By taking part in bullying they perceive themselves as stronger and they model their behaviour on the bully. They help bully someone else to protect themselves from being the victim (ibid.).

According to Salmivalli’s (1999) study a rather large group fall into ‘the assistants’ category of participant roles. Even a larger group according to her are the reinforcers. These children’s behaviour is somewhat different.

6:6 The Reinforcers

As presented in the fictitious bullying incident ‘the reinforcer’ is often not physically active in a bullying situation. His/her role is “providing an audience…incite [the bully] by laughing or by encouraging gestures” (Salmivalli, 1999, p.454).

As presented in the previous paragraph children might follow the bully and take part in the bullying to protect themselves. However, that might not be the only explanation to why ‘the assistants’ and ‘the reinforcers’ follow the perpetrator/the bully. Sutton & Smith (1999a, 1999b) found indications that the children which are classified as perpetrators scored higher on social cognition tasks than the children belonging to ‘the assistants’ and ‘the reinforcers’ groups. This could, according to Sutton & Smith, suggest “that the more active, ringleader-type bullies may use this skill to understand and manipulate the minds of both their supporters
and their victims” (ibid. 1999a, p.106). In their follow up study (1999b) they suggest that the bully might use his/her higher level of social cognition to “avoiding detection…maximizing the victim’s vulnerability” (ibid. 1999b, p443). These findings are interesting to link to the eight ideal-typical aspect, namely ‘the social context’, and especially Fors’ (1993) research from a power perspective. See 6:10 for a further elaboration on ‘the social context’.

6:7 The Absent Teacher

In the fictitious example the teacher is out on the schoolyard to watch the children. Yet the bullying still goes on and the teacher does not intervene. Unfortunately this does not seem to be an uncommon scenario. Children who bully report that they have not been confronted by a teacher regarding their behaviour (Smith & Sharp, 1994, p.11). Results which correspond with Olweus (1993 p.20) who found that approximately 40-60 percent of the bullied children in primary/secondary/junior high schools in Norway and Sweden felt that their teacher did not do anything to stop the bullying.

Why do teachers not address the problem of bullying? Some researchers says that students have given the following possible explanations: teachers do not want to get involved, the teacher does not feel that intervening bullying is part of his/her work agenda, the teacher does not care for the students and that acknowledging bullying might give the school a bad reputation (Eriksson et al, 2002, p.89).

One other explanation to teachers’ reluctance to work against bullying might be their need for education how to deal with the problem. A recent investigation, although not academic, performed by the Swedish Child Rights organisation BRIS regarding becoming teacher’s education in bullying issues at Universities. Their indications were: that the majority of teacher-programmes had some sort of course related to bullying. However, the courses are not mandatory and they often deal with many different youth connected problems. This makes the education on bullying a rather small part of the teacher’s education and according to BRIS not satisfactory (http://www.bris.se/upload/library/material/briskartlaggning.pdf 2004-11-10).

6:8 The Non-participating children

In regards to ‘the non-participating children’ or ‘outsiders’ as Salmivalli (1999) chooses to call them. These children are recognised by that they choose to stay away from the bullying, they do not take sides. They are not directly involved in the bullying. Despite of this they still are a part of the bullying, hence by not saying anything they silently approve the bullying (Salmivalli, 1999).
6:9 The Defenders

In opposite to ‘the non-participating children’ there are children characterises as ‘the defenders’ (Salmivalli, 1999). The ‘defenders are the ones who: “tells some adult about the bullying, tries to make others stop the bullying, tries to cheer the victim up, gets others to help [and] sticks up for the victim” (Sutton & Smith, 1999, p.111). This group is probably the only one besides the victim, according to Salmivallis’ (1999) philosophy that everyone is a part of the bullying process, which then is not a part of the bullying process. Therefore, one might draw the conclusion that they are not a part of the collective guilt in the same way as the rest of the participants.

6:10 The Social context

When approaching ‘the social context’ as a part in bullying one quickly realizes that the term is very broad and can include a number of different perspectives. Therefore this section will be divided into a number of subdivisions, each with different aspects of ‘the social context’. The three subdivisions of social context which becomes apparent are: 1. ‘the physical context’ 2. ‘the interactive context’ and 3. ‘the structural context’. Obviously, these three influence and affect each other. Nevertheless it could be interesting to try and separate and describe them a little more closely.

6:10a The Physical context

In the fictitious bullying situation with Hanna, the ‘physical context’ is the schoolyard. This since the schoolyard is the most common location for bullying to take place (Olweus, 1993, p.21). Studies has also shown that most bullying among children occur at locations poorly supervised by adults and teachers such as corridors and toilets (Baldry & Farrington, 1999, p.426 and Eriksson et al, 2002 p.65).

6:10b Interactive context

“Through social interaction people create, maintain, destroy and recreate their social bonds” (authors translation, Scheff, 1997 quoted in Eriksson et al, 2002, p.118). According to Scheff social bonds are the transportation of feelings between people. He claims that every single human being is guided by the two main feelings shame and pride, and by interacting with others we value ourselves (ibid.). In other words, if the people we interact with enhance our feeling of pride we will feel good about ourselves. If people strengthen our shame, for
example by bullying us or ignoring the fact that we are bullied we will feel shameful, and will isolate ourselves with the belief that we are not worth a more positive social interaction.

In this light one could consider Salmivalli’s (1999) claim that the non-participating children do participate in the bullying just by giving their silent approval. By not defending the victim they will by their silent presence and awareness foment the victim’s sense of shame. An interesting aspect in regards to this is the one brought forward by Eriksson et al (2002) which say that the children witnessing a bullying situation create a frame for the bullying and that their presence alone could intensify the bullying, and therefore they suggest that bullying could be investigated from a symbolic interactionistic theory perspective (ibid.).

6:10c The Structural context

According to Zelma Fors (1993 p.49) the social environment around victim and perpetrator is of great importance, hence it can either encourage or prevent bullying. She emphasises that when an adult does not intervene in a bullying situation he or she legitimizes the children’s actions. Fors (1993) has in her thesis entitled “Power imbalances. Case studies in bullying involving children” emanated from psychologist Rollo May’s (1974) reasoning regarding power and aggression (Fors, 1993).

May says that “power is the ability to evoke and prevent change” (Quoted in Fors, 1993 p.33). According to Rollo May there are five different aspects of power. The first is; the exploiting power (which means that the person with power uses the other person for his or her personal needs, one example of exploiting power is slavery).

Secondly there is the manipulating power; (It is quite common that the manipulative has encouraged the manipulator to the use of power. This might be due to anxiety or a wish to be controlled).

Thirdly there is a competitive power, (by this he refers to power towards somebody else this kind can be both constructive and destructive. Constructive in the sense that the two subjects stimulate each other to prosper and destructive if it leads to one subject diminishing the other).

The protective power is the fourth kind (the main area where one finds this power is in the child-parent relationship).

The fifth aspect is the integrated power (where two subjects use each others power to strengthen their joint power, for example one student examine another students work and contributes with her ideas to strengthen the work) (Fors, 1993).
According to Fors (1993) exploiting power and manipulative power are the ones which mainly come into play in bullying situations. In her study she found that in all the cases she investigated the relationship between the bully and the victim was characterized by manipulative power and in two cases there were also exploitative power. These ‘relationships’ could all be defined as hostile. Fors (1993) also concludes that most relationships in the school environment are of the manipulative kind.

Fors’ statement does in some aspects correlate with Gunilla Björk’s (1995) views on the underlying factors contributing to bullying situations in schools. Björk (1995) sees the school environment as an arena where there is a constant struggle for affiliation, and power is something that continuously must be recaptured or as she herself puts it “bullying is ‘quite simply’ a means of gaining confirmation of belonging based on the shifting order that prevails in the classroom” (Björk, 1995, p.195). She also points out that relations of power and the struggle for a sense of belonging demands an organisational framework, a “spacial and social free zone where uncertainty can be expanded” (ibid. p.195). These statements lead to the assumption that the school environment with its rules and organisational structures can serve as such a free zone.

In connection to Björk’s discussion Solveig Hägglund (1996) asks some interesting questions. If the school environment is an arena of structural power and if the struggles between pupils for power, on an individual basis, is seen as a psychological power one can ask weather there are links between the two? And are the power-structures in the schools on an organisational level and the quite hierarchic environment especially propitious for bullying patterns? She even goes as far as saying that what individuals that become victim and perpetrator in a bullying situation is merely due to coincidence and the reason for bullying in a school instead depends on the environment in the school and what power structures there are in the school. On this point however she is in conflict with Björk (1995) who claims that the bully has to be someone with practical knowledge on how to use the free zone. Quite interestingly this statement brings us back to Sutton & Smith (1999) and their findings regarding that bullies have rather high social cognition levels.

There still does not seem to be a great deal of research on these two questions asked by Hägglund (1996). Strangely enough considering that the answers, if there are any, might hold the key of successful prevention of bullying.
VII. THREE STUDIES REGARDING PERPETRATORS - METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

7:1 A debate regarding bullies self-concept and self-esteem

There are two different aspects which have been researched in regards to the make-up of the perpetrator. On the one hand there is research on self-esteem and on the other hand there is the self-concept focused research. In this section three studies will be examined solely with the purpose to try and find possible explanations to how it is that researchers come to completely opposite conclusions on the subject of self-concept and self-esteem for children who are perpetrators of bullying.

In 2001 Salmivalli published a general article where she gathered different research results concerning self-esteem, hostility and aggressive behaviour. In the article she points out a number of important aspects regarding the debate on whether an aggressive perpetrator has high or low self-esteem. Presented here will be a few of them which might be of importance in regards to bullies. Salmivalli (2001) emphasises the importance of separating self-concept and self-esteem, she states that “self-concept refers to one’s perception of one’s attributes and traits…while self-esteem can be viewed as one’s answer to ‘How do I feel about who I am?’” (ibid p.384). In the scrutinizing article Salmivalli (2001) points out what she sees as a number of problems with investigating self-esteem. A large number of studies where subjects self-esteem have been tested, especially in bullying research (author’s note), different types of self-evaluation tests have been used. Salmivalli’s (ibid.) critic against this is that the self-evaluation tests have problems with validity, hence that the subject wants to present a good picture of themselves, the subjects “may answer according to social desirability” (p.379) or that the subjects answers indicate high self-esteem when the truth is that the subject really have low self-esteem but use a façade of high self-esteem to cover self-doubts. Baumeister labels the phenomenon ‘self-presentational orientation’ due to that instead of measuring subjects ‘real’ self-esteem the researcher measures the subjects preferred presentation of his/her self (In Salmivalli, 2001). Salmivalli also criticizes some studies for using scales and tests which are meant to measure self-concepts for measuring self-esteem.

How then is it that researchers come to completely different results regarding the self-esteem of perpetrators of bullying? The author has examined three research studies to try and find possible explanations to that question. The studies have been examined from the questions presented in the opening paragraphs of this research essay regarding methodological tools.
Three examined studies

The three studies examined are:

1. **Aggression in Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys,** Olweus (1978). The results presented in Olweus study is based in five different studies he performed in Stockholm and Solna during the early 1970’s. Olweus argues that the results presented in his book gives “a theory sketch of factors that are priori considered to be of potential significance for the appearance and maintenance of such problems (bullying, authors note) in a school class” (p.1).

2. **Do you like what you see? Self-perception of adolescent bullies,** Johnson & Lewis (1999). The aim of Johnson & Lewis study was to make “an attempt to increase our understanding of adolescents who exhibit bullying behaviour, by focusing on their self-perceptions” (p.665).

3. **Self-Esteem and Its Relationship to Bullying Behaviour,** O’Moore & Kirkham (2001). O’Moore and Kirkham wanted to “investigate the relationship of self-esteem and bullying behaviour in a much larger sample than has been possible to date” (p.271). One of the reasons behind this is according to the authors that the variance in results between researchers on the specific issue could be due to sample size.

Before commencing the examination three notes need to be mentioned. 1. Regarding the first selected study is that although the article is old it is one of the most quoted and cited studies by Olweus himself and other researchers, hence that Olweus study published in English in 1978 was the first to investigate the self-esteem and self-concept of bullies. 2. In an effort to vary the national origins of the studies the author has selected one study from Sweden, one from the United Kingdom and one from the Republic of Ireland. 3. The third study is a further development of a previous study presented by O’Moore, Kirkham and Smith in 1997 (b). Considering that researchers in their 2001 study refer to the 1997 study in certain aspects of the employed method. The author has used the 1997 study as a source of information on these aspects.

Another important comment to make concerning this examination of the three studies is that all three studies are quite comprehensive and all three presents very extensive results with many different aspects. This present examination can in no way cover all the different aspects of the three studies and will therefore solely concentrate on the studies method section with the purpose to examine a number of aspects of the methodological tools which the researchers have used in their studies.
7:3 **Summary of findings from the three studies examination and comparison**

In the O’Moore et al. (2001) study possible explanations to why the results regarding bullies self-concept and self-esteem vary between studies are briefly discussed. They suggest differences in sample size, age variations and tools used to categorise the children into groups as possible explanations. Therefore, the present comparison has among other aspects investigated these three. Regarding the seven questions presented in the method section the following has been found.

1. **What tool/tools of measurements were used to collect data to the study?** Olweus (1978, pp. 19-32) collected data within four different areas. (a) Factors in the group setting which could influence the situation. (b) External characteristics for the individual boys he studied, such as height, weight, speech and deviations in appearance. (c) Psychological characteristics. Here he used “various tests and ratings as measures of different aspects of aggressiveness, degree of anxiety and self-esteem” (p.20). Olweus also examined other children’s behaviour and attitudes toward the boys who were his ‘main’ subjects in the study. (d) collected data on the boys’ families, their backgrounds and social status. Emphasis will here be put on (c) considering that this area is the only one in focus in the other two studies.

To collect data in the area of psychological characteristics Olweus (1978) used “teachers’ assessments…, peer ratings on five variables (Start Fights, Aggression Target, Verbal Protest, Popularity, Tease), [and] sociometric choices with regard to the boys” (p26). For the ‘special’ group Olweus examined in his studies he used Q sort test which is “a special questionnaire technique in which the subject has to decide, according to certain rules, how well each of a number of statements fits him” (ibid. pp. 26-27). In other words he used a self-evaluation test.

Johnson & Lewis (1999) used the self-report method “The Life in School Checklist” developed by Arora & Thompson in 1987. Since this checklist originally was developed to identify victims of bullying the researchers modified the list by changing statements like “tried to kick me and tried to hit me” to “I tried to hit or kick someone”. Secondly, the researchers used a modified version of the “Harter’s Perceived Competence Scale for Children” also known as the PCSC to measure self-concept. This scale is also a self-evaluating method where the subjects (children) read statements and tick the box that to the largest degree corresponds with themselves.

This previous choice of methods is not very different from the methods O’Moore and Kirkham (2001) used. They collected their data with self-report measurements, the Olweus self-report questionnaire on school bullying and “the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale [Piers,
1, which is an 80 item self-report questionnaire designed to assess how children and adolescents feel about themselves” (O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001, p.272).

2. What specific measurement was used to identify bullies in the study? Olweus (1978) used teacher assessments to identify bullies while Johnson & Lewis (1999) used the ‘Life in School checklist’ and O’Moore & Kirkham (2001, 1997b) employed a modified (by Whitney and Smith, 1993) version of the Olweus self-report questionnaire.

3. How many subjects did the researchers include in their study? Regarding sample size the following can be said: In Olweus five studies presented in the book he claims he investigated approximately 1000 boys in approximately 20+ schools. (If one adds up the number of participants in each study one reaches the number 986 boys, authors note). Olweus did not collect information of age in his study, however he focused on sixth graders and states in his study that former studies have shown that sixth graders are within the age range of 12-14 years of age.

Johnson & Lewis (1999) included 245 14-15 year olds in 3 different schools. One all girls, one all boys and one mixed school with both boys and girls.

In O’Moore & Kirkham’s (2001) study they present data collected during 1993-1994 as well as results from their present study. In the present study data from 8,249 school children, boys and girls, in 394 primary and second-level schools were used (ibid.). The age range in their study was 8-18.

5. How were the subjects selected and from where? It is not clearly stated in Olweus (1978) study exactly how he selected the number of boys to his study, what can be found though is that he carried out his studies in schools in the city of Stockholm with suburbs. Johnson & Lewis (1999) performed their study in Avon in the middle parts of England. Two of the schools were comprehensive (school for children over 11 years), non-denominational schools these were the all boys and all girls schools. The third school was a comprehensive Church of England school. The author’s do not say how these schools were selected which might indicate that they were chosen rather than randomly selected. O’Moore et al (2001, 1997b) had the aim to include “10 percent of schools from each of the 26 counties in the Republic of Ireland”. This aim was set to get a variation in their sample, therefore the first level schools were randomly selected a number of schools. The secondary schools were reached with the help of departments at the Irish Universities; therefore they were not randomly selected. In the study they included children from vocational schools, comprehensive schools and community schools.
6. What kind of items was investigated to establish the subjects’ views about themselves? In the Q sort test employed by Olweus (1978) five main areas of items were looked at: aggression and violence, anxiety, self-esteem, identification and closeness to parents. In the PCSC employed by Johnson & Lewis (1999) focus is placed on four scales: athletic competence, social competence, scholastic competence and global self-worth. Out of these the author’s chose the latter three and from these they chose four items out of each scale. In the O’Moore & Kirkham (2001) study items such as behaviour, intellectual and school status, physical appearance, anxiety, popularity and happiness and satisfaction were investigated.

7. How was the investigation carried out? The Q sort test, in Olweus study, was carried out in the form of an interview between the subject and a male psychologist where the psychologist asks questions and the subject placed cards in piles to answer each question. In the English study the schools administrated the tests to the children after being verbally and in writing instructed how to complete the questionnaire from the researchers. This procedure was rather similar to that employed by O’Moore & Kirkham (2001). In their study teachers who previously had been instructed on how the tests should be completed administered the tests to the children. The teachers informed the children of the importance of answering the questions truthfully and before answering the test the children read a paragraph with a definition of bullying.

What conclusions did the three studies come to? Olweus (1978) and Johnson & Lewis (1999) both came to the conclusion that perpetrators of bullying have a “relative positive self concept in the social domain and in self-esteem” (ibid. p.665). O’Moore & Kirkham (2001) on the other hand found that children who had bullied others had “significantly lower global self-esteem scores than children who had not bullied others” (ibid. p.273). They also found “that the more frequently the children bullied others the lower was their global self esteem” (ibid. p.273).

With these findings what conclusions are possible to come to and what possible explanations can there be to the question regarding how researchers come to these different standpoints on the bully’s self-concept and self-esteem with focus on methodological tools?

7:4 Conclusions drawn from the examination of the three studies
In the comparison the author found a difference in sample size. The two studies which found positive self-concepts and high levels of self-esteem employed smaller samples than the one which found the opposite. In the above examination we have looked at a number of
aspects linked to the sample. One aspect in regards to this is that the sample numbers presented include not only the bullies but all subjects who took part in each individual study. In Olweus (1978) five studies there were a total of 59 bullies from whose answers he drew his conclusions. In the O’Moore et al (2001, 1997b) studies the number of children who were categories as frequent bullies were approximately 240 children while another 750 children admitted to have bullied sometimes. This indicates that O’Moore et al (2001, 1997b) drew their conclusions from four times the sample of bullies than Olweus did in the 1978 sample. This difference in sample size could be a possible explanation to the differences in conclusions, if one emanate from the notion that the larger the sample the more valid a generalisation to the population is. A further investigation of this issue could be done with a statistical power analysis which could provide more specific answers to the importance of sample size.

All three studies included approximately similar aged children in their studies, children in the age group 13-15 years. O’Moore (2001, 1997b) also included a wider age span when investigating children from 8-18 years of age. In this light one might ask the question whether level of self-esteem could be something that varies between different ages? However, there are no such indicators in the O’Moore et al (2001) study since the self-esteem mean scores for the primary (8-11 y) and post-primary (12-18 y) groups are rather similar. Nevertheless, in the latter study the age variance between the subjects are much larger than in the other two studies which could suggests that results vary due to differences in age.

As to the issue of gender, Olweus (1978) solely studied boys and came to the conclusion that the bullies (boys) had a positive view about themselves. Johnson & Lewis (1999) found that the girls at the all girl-school “scored slightly below average in self-esteem” (ibid, p.672) while the boys investigated scored above average. This could indicate that there is a gender difference in the aspect of self-esteem among children exhibiting bullying behaviour. O’Moore et al (2001) has not specifically addressed the issue of gender in their study however they briefly discusses the issue. They highlight that previous studies (for example Salmivalli et al, 1996 in O’Moore et al, 2001) found gender differences regarding self-esteem. However O’Moore et al (2001) also mention that preliminary analysis which they performed on their data (1997b) did not indicate differences between boys and girls. Summarily one can on the basis of the present comparison say that there could be gender differences given the fact that Olweus (1978) study with only boys came to one conclusion while the other two studies found low levels of self-esteem, Johnson & Lewis (1999) in girls and O’Moore et al (2001) in
both boys and girls. The conclusion is that it seems to be a complex issue which probably could benefit from more research.

Two studies concentrated their research to two different cities, Olweus, 1978 in Stockholm with suburbs and Johnson & Lewis, 1999 in Avon, while the third study O’Moore et al, 2001 gathered data from a country, Ireland. If this is of importance in the variance of results is difficult even to speculate about. What are notable though are the schools the researchers included in their studies. All three included comprehensive schools, the latter two included community schools, and the third study also included vocational schools. These findings raise the question if a bully’s levels of self-esteem and himself/herself-concept are influenced by what kind of school he/she attends. In such an investigation it could be interesting to study whether the subject’s perception of himself/herself is linked to the organisational level (the school system) expectations of how the subject should behave and be. A study like this could incorporate Michel Foucault’s theories of power. See ‘Other perspectives on bullying’ for thoughts on Foucault’s theory of power and possible connections to bullying behaviour.

Concerning ways to categorise the children into groups two studies employed self-report measures while Olweus (1978) used teacher assessment. Comparing the two studies that used self-report measurements no possible explanations to why results differ were found. One could speculate that a more close examination and comparison of the different self-report measurements might give some clues.

What kind of items was investigated to establish the subjects’ views about themselves? A comparison can not single out any obvious differences. All three studies seem to have investigated the same aspects. Apparent though is differences in the number of items investigated. Johnson & Lewis (1999) had one combined scale with 12 different items in their investigation while O’Moore et al (2001) had six scales with 10 to 17 items on each scale and Olweus (1978) had 5 main areas with 10 to 19 items in each area. These differences do however not give any possible explanation to why the results vary since Olweus and O’Moore et al investigated approximately the same amount of items and still came up with opposite conclusion.

Regarding how the investigations were carried out one can see that both the studies which employed self-report measurements retrieved results indicating that bullying children have low levels of self-esteem, in Johnson & Lewis study among the girls, while Olweus (1978) who used one on one interviews did not. According to the author, if one believes that bullies have low self-esteem, this could indicate that children are more truthful when they fill
out a self-report form than if they are interviewed by a psychologist face to face. An aspect that in one way would correlate with Salmivalli’s (2001) thoughts on the subjects desire to present themselves in ‘a good light’, and the theory that subjects who really suffer from low self-esteem and self-doubt use an illusion of high self-esteem to cover up their true feelings. This could mean that neither interviews nor self-evaluation tests provide the researcher with a true picture of the bully. Sutton & Smith (1999) found that a small number of children who were nominated as bullies and reinforcers by their peers also self-nominated themselves into these categories while the majority of children who were nominated by their peers as being involved in bullying claimed not to be involved and nominated themselves as either defenders or outsiders.

Summarily the conclusion of the three studies comparison is that possible explanations to why results differ could be found in aspects of gender, sample size and age-groups variations. Other possible explanations although more speculative are differences in the self-evaluation measures that were employed in the studies or differences in bullies self-esteem and self-concept depending on what kind of school they go to.

Two other aspects which might give indications to why results differ could be differences in theoretical standpoints or cultural aspects. Rather few researchers however report to have a certain theoretical standpoint in their research and this is not true only for the three articles which have been more closely examined here. The author has come across only two researchers who explicitly connect their findings to theory. That is however not to say that such studies do not exists or that the researchers do not connect their research to theory.

Considering that a great deal of the research has been done from an individualistic and psychological point of view and that a large number of the studies ask questions regarding the identity of perpetrators, victims and bystanders one might draw the conclusion that most researchers conduct their studies from development psychology theories regarding identity, self-concept, aggression and socialisation.

Regarding cultural aspects or differences no evidence has been found between the three studies examined. Reasons behind this might be that all three studies have been performed in western society, more specifically northern Europe. One could speculate that differences in cultural aspects and approach could have been more explicit if the culture frames had been more divertive.

As both the descriptive overview as well as this methodological investigation have shown there are number of models which have been used in previous research on bullying. Some of these will now be briefly summarized and the essay will also look at two aspects of
the phenomenon of bullying which lack research. It will also present thoughts on how future research could be done from one of these aspects.

VIII. SUMMARY OF MODELS TO INTERPRET BULLYING

As might have come apparent in the descriptive overview of bullying research in the eight ‘ideal-typical aspects’ a number of different models of interpretation can, and have been used to understand bullying. With the help of Gun-Marie Frånberg’s overview of the main models that have been used the Nordic countries a number of models which has been discussed in the descriptive overview will here be briefly summarized (2002 p.19-24).

There are two models, or ways of explaining and investigating mainly the first two ideal-typical aspects presented in this essay (‘the victim’ and ‘the perpetrator). These two models can be found in a number of studies. The first is an individual based model or point of view. In this model the reasons for bullying are solely linked to individuals, and more specific different external characteristics of the victim which trigger the bullying. For example a person who is thought of as deviant encounter intolerance from his/her peers. To this model one can link the attribution theory which concentrates on family background and external characteristics, in other words attributes outside the individual which the individual do not have direct power over. Swedish researcher Heinz Leymann is one of the advocates for this model (Frånberg, 2002 p.19).

The second model which has been given a lot of attention is the psychological model. This model emphasize on finding explanations in the psychological differences between people and focuses more on psychological aspects, according to the researchers, characterising the participants involved in the bullying, especially victim and perpetrator. Olweus, the main researcher within this model, seems to claim that some children then might be pre-designated to become a bully or a victim while Heinz Leymann claims that anybody can become a victim of bullying.

Bullying can also be explained and investigated by the use of theories on power structures and imbalance of power. As previously presented researchers Fors (1993) and Björk (1995) suggest that it is due to a struggle for power between individuals that bullying arises and that bullying is interplay between victim and perpetrator. Solveig Hägglund (1996 p.22) brings the power perspective one step further when she examines if the school environment is especially propitious for power struggles in the form of bullying. This model has been used with focus on ‘the victim’ and ‘the perpetrator’ as well as the different ideal-typical aspects which together make up the group of bystanders.
This brings us to another ideal-typical aspect which, as presented, other researchers has put emphasis on namely the social context with its different aspects or the peer group and “the bystanders” part in bullying. (For example Salmivalli, 1998). Salmivalli highlights the importance of the different roles children take on in a bullying situation. She even goes as far as suggesting that bullying can not take place without the roles ‘the bystanders’ play. (Frånberg, 2002 p.21-22).

Regarding ways of researching bullying two aspects become apparent. Most research has been done within the psychological and educational academic disciplines where the majority of studies, especially in the individualistic and psychological models have been quantitative research with hypothesis testing (Eriksson et al, 2002).

This has created a void which needs to be filled with research on the social context level and research from a sociological perspective. Therefore many researchers (e.g. Björk, 1993; Eriksson et al, 2002; Frånberg, 2002) have highlighted the need for such studies. In regards to this aspect following below is a brief compilation of the author’s thoughts on how some aspects of Foucault’s theory on power could be used to investigate and discuss bullying from a sociological perspective.

IX. OTHER PERSPECTIVES ON BULLYING
9:1 Connections to Foucault’s Theory on Power

As mentioned earlier Fors (1993) talks about exploiting power and manipulative power as aspects of bullying behaviour and that it is a subjects struggle for this power that might be the underlying factor to the bullying behaviour. In relationship to this one can look at thoughts Michel Foucault (1974) brings forward in his book “Övervakning och Straff” (Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison). He brings forward the French Philosopher La Mettrie’s idea of man as a machine, where the main aspect is amenability and that one important aspect of power is that the subjects become amenable to the given structure.

One could ask if the school system conveys one specific frame of how the pupils should be thru their structural context. This framework could convey a message to the pupils that if one pupil in one way or the other, according to the other pupils, do not adapt to the framework it is accepted by the system for the other pupils to try and 'conform’ him or her into the framework. Use means of power, in other words bully him or her into submissiveness.

The framework can become apparent in the school structure in the aspect of the discipline; this considering that discipline is something necessary in a school environment for teachers to prosecute education. According to Foucault “discipline creates bodies [subjects] that are submissive, well adapted and amenable” (1974, p.162 author’s translation). He
develops his thoughts on discipline even further and claims that a school environment like boarding-schools, at least historically, could be the most perfect form of education environment if one wants to achieve high discipline and turn pupils into amenable people who conform to the prevailing power structures.

In regards to the paragraph above one could mention that a number of pupils who went to boarding-schools during their education years bear witness of being bullied in this specific environment, Swedish fiction author Jan Guillou writes about his experience in the novel “Ondskan”.

Interesting to mention as well is that workplaces in Sweden which is characterized by a hierarchic structure, such as hospitals, restaurants, the police force and schools are some of the working environments where employees report to be victims of adult bullying (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2003). These aspects together with Sutton & Smith’s (1999) suggestion that hierarchical climates such as prisons encourage manipulation and oppression and that the environment participate in legitimize the bullies behaviour makes Solveig Hägglund’s (1996) question if the power-structures in the schools, on an organisational level and the hierarchic environment in the schools are especially propitious for bullying patterns, even more interesting to investigate.

Power-structures, organisational levels and hierarchic environments words which all three are also common in gender related research something which brings us right to the next aspect of bullying which really could benefit from further research, the gender perspective.

9:2 A Gender perspective on Bullying

There are more research on boys and their involvement in bullying than on girls (Eriksson et al, 2002). Considering this essay’s findings that one possible explanation to why researchers conclusions on bullies self-esteem and self-concept varies could be gender differences it is, in the author’s opinion, essential to investigate, discuss and work with bullying issues with a gender perspective. Some findings connected to gender are briefly presented below.

A Swedish study performed by Öhrn in 1990 where boys and girls bullying behaviour was investigated with a gender perspective showed that girls have a tendency to use more ‘silent’ strategies to gain power in the classroom while boys display their bullying on a more public arena (Frånberg, 2002 p.21-22)

Marion K. Underwood and a number of other researchers have during the 1990’s investigated the topic of aggression, and Underwood (2002) presents the following. On one
hand there is ‘physical aggression’ which can be seen as direct aggression and on the other there is “indirect/relational/social aggression” (ibid. p.536). Indirect aggression involves social manipulation and is, as the term tells us, not done directly but more in a circuitous way. Relational aggression is carried out to harm the victims peer relations while the purpose of social aggression is to damage a person’s self-esteem and social status. For further elaboration on the different types of aggression see Underwood, 2002.

In relation to Underwood’s concepts of aggression one can mention that researchers (for example Owens, Shute & Slee, 2000, 2001 cited in Eriksson et al, 2002 and Baldry & Farrington, 1999) divide bullying into direct (mainly physical) and indirect (mainly psychological) bullying.

In the fictitious bullying situation the perpetrator is a boy. This however does not imply that girls are not perpetrators of bullying. Studies (ibid.) have shown that boys tend to a larger extent bully other children by physical means (direct) while girls tend to be more indirect in their bullying (Eriksson et al, 2002, p. 61-63).

One should bear in mind that reality is never as stereotypical as theory there are probably girls that use direct bullying and boys who are more indirect in their bullying.

X. DISCUSSION

The aim and purpose of this research essay has been to answer three research questions. In this section of the essay the study’s findings will be linked together and further discussed.

10:1 Bullying, the multi-aspect problem

By dividing the different participants in a bullying situation into separate ‘ideal-typical aspects’ it has been possible to create an overview of the large number of aspects that can be of influence in a bullying situation. It also becomes clear that they all seem to interact with each other and that they work together. The bully needs the group of different bystanders (assistants, reinforcers, non-participating children, and the absent teacher) as well as he/she needs the social context to be ‘successful’ in his/her behaviour. With this in mind, one might suggest that attempts to change one of these ‘ideal-typical aspects’ of bullying, could be one way to work against the problem. But to consciously influence and to change one of the ‘ideal-typical aspects’ one needs to be aware of all the others since the ideal typical overview has shown that they all influence each other.

To briefly summarise the findings the following could be said: The perpetrator exhibits aggressive behaviour, the victim reacts to the aggressive behaviour by becoming submissive.
and sad, the assistants and reinforcers strengthen the perpetrator and the victim in his/her role by actively assist the bullying or by verbally approving it. By continuing with the bullying behaviour, in fear of becoming victims themselves, the assistants and reinforcers also strengthen their own roles. Every teacher who takes the absent role instead of the active resistant role in a bullying situation sends a message to the children that their behaviour are ok and therefore he/she gives a silent approval to the bullying. This approval the non-participating children give as well. The eight ‘ideal-typical aspect’, the social context, makes it all come together. The seven aspects are individual pieces which together creates the social context or the ‘puzzle of bullying’.

This tells us how important it is to investigate and research both the individual perspectives as well as the contextual perspectives considering that they seem to be interrelated. Deeper studies, comparisons and investigations of previous research on the different ‘ideal-typical aspects’ could be a way to find more universal definitions. Identifying possible explanations to researchers’ different conclusions as well as their different approaches when investigating a certain issue can give more knowledge of the different individual perspectives of bullying. For example has the present study shown that gender aspects could provide an explanation to why the results differ between researchers. If it is the case that girls who bully suffer from low self-esteem and negative self-concept while the opposite is true for the boys. Then perhaps different forms of anti-bullying work should be done with girls respectively boys. A gender study with the base in power theory on a contextual level might give us more information on variance between the sexes in bullying issues. The more we learn on the individual perspective the more clues we have to how we effectively can approach the problem on a contextual level.

The issue of approaching the problem of bullying on a contextual level brings us to the third research question this essay set out to answer, that of bullying and power structures. There are a number of aspects which would benefit from further investigations concerning bullying and power. Especially if we emanate from the notion that the reasons for bullying behaviour could be found in the eight ‘ideal-typical aspect’ the social context.

For some elaboration on the author’s thoughts regarding this we will return to the fictitious bullying situation. In that situation a number of power aspects could be discussed. On the individual level there is the exploiting power in the form of the bully using power to demean Hanna. There is also the manipulative power (Fors, 1993) between the bully and Hanna as well as between the bully and the assistants and reinforcers, that is if one follow
Sutton & Smith’s (1999) theory that the bully has higher cognitive level and therefore uses his power to manipulate both Hanna and the others for his personal needs.

One other power aspect which could be interesting to at least speculate about is the structural power aspect in our fictitious bullying situation. Can the reason to why the children are bullying Hanna be found in the school-structure? Does the school structure contain the spacial and social free zone where uncertainty can be expanded, which is according to Björk (1995) needed for bullying to occur. Is Hanna bullied because her school has a hierarchic environment and the teachers consciously or unconsciously transfer this hierarchic concept to the pupils? Is Hanna bullied because the essence of the school system is to create amenable and well adapted pupils? Does Hanna’s teacher stay absent because he/she have not been educated on how to deal with bullying issues.

10.2 Need for teacher education

The fifth ‘ideal-typical aspect’ which is discussed in this research essay is that of ‘the absent teacher’. 40-60 per cent of the children that are bullied in school each day feel that their teacher does not help them in any way. What seem to be the most alarming in the situation are that teachers are not educated enough during their academic training on how they should act in a specific bullying situation. 2 of 29 colleges and universities which educate teachers in Sweden today have a satisfactory education in bullying issues according to BRIS, non-academic survey, (http://www.bris.se/upload/library/material/briskartlaggning.pdf 2004-11-10).

The ‘ideal-typical aspects’ overview shows us that practically everyone in the school environment, is involved when a child gets bullied. The children’s knowledge of what is going on in the schoolyard, in the classroom, on the way to and from school will occupy the children’s’ thoughts. A teacher need to be aware of this, since in this kind of unhealthy environment where children experience bullying in one way or the other it is probably impossible to pursue effective education because “to allow bullying to go unchallenged is effectively to deprive children from realising their full potential which is after all the aim of education” (O’Moore, 1997a, p.162).

10.3 Are Provocative victims to blame for bullying?

As the overview indicates the academic research seem to have changed focus from ‘the victim’ to ‘the perpetrator’ in their strive to answer the question regarding cause for bullying. The ‘blame’ for bullying has been taken off the victims’ shoulders, important to emphasize
though is some researchers (Olweus, 1993, among others) idea that there are ‘provocative victims’ and that their lack of concentration ability cause irritation among the other children. In the author’s opinion this kind of division should not be made. Since it indicates that the victim is responsible for being bullied. By further research into reasons for bullying on a structural context level and from a power theory perspective one might be able to completely move all sorts of blame from ‘the victims’ no matter who they are.

10:4 Possible future research

During the process of writing this research essay and reading previous research a number of issues which could benefit from future research have emerged. Regarding the perpetrator, one could conduct a thorough study where different self-report measurements that have been used to establish bullies self-concept and self-esteem are compared and closely analysed, such a study could benefit from looking at Salmivalli’s (2001) literature review regarding self-esteem and aggression. Considering that the field of bullying might not be the only one which has this debate concerning self-perception of perpetrators this kind of study could be useful for other academic disciplines as well.

The other main area where there seem to be a void in the previous research on bullying is the contextual level. Numerous studies within the psychological field have been made. In regards to the eight ‘ideal-typical aspects’ presented in this research paper there are a number of studies with different onsets for the first seven. However when it comes to the eight one there are studies that partially discuss and bring forward the importance of ‘the social context’ in bullying research but there are, to the author’s knowledge, no studies that primarily and solely place their focus on the physical, interactive and structural contexts levels.

When writing or reading an academic essay where focus is on previous research, theories, models of interpretation, methodology and analyses the main basic issue which the entire essay is based on might be eclipsed by the formal academic structure. Bullying takes place every single day. We all know somebody who in one way or the other has been involved and affected by bullying and it has to be our mutual responsibility to care for all our children and together make efforts to stop bullying because “each day another boy and girl sets foot into this world, one reaches out to touch the sky, one never learns to fly, where is it written into stone that any child should walk alone, out there on their own. If no one tries to end this game or find a way to ease the pain, then tell me who is gonna stop the rain” (Anastacia, 2000).
References


