

“You were being a man about it, but you weren’t being a man about it”: An exploratory qualitative study of middle aged men reflecting on their boarding school experience

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ABSTRACT

Boarding school is an extremely under researched topic (Schaverien, 2015). With little previous research, an exploratory qualitative study was used in order to find out what boarding school life was like, as it provides the freedom to discover new truths.

In order to gain this insight, six male former boarding school students were interviewed over the telephone, using a semi-structured design. The interviews were then analysed using thematic analysis.

The analysis discovered the themes of: homesickness, bullying and what I have called “the ideal boarding school self” and “the protected self”. The ideal boarding school self is the conceptualisation of the ideal boarding school student; this is someone who: is strong, in control of their emotions, abides and is good at sports. The study concluded that students use what I call “the protected self”, which is the way the self is protected through certain behaviours and strategies. These strategies are: hiding and not discussing your emotions, playing sports, bullying and rebelling.

KEY WORDS:	BOARDING SCHOOL	UNDER RESEARCHED	SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	THEMATIC ANALYSIS	THE PROTECTED SELF
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Introduction

A boarding school is a residential school where pupils live and study during the academic year. It is a British tradition that is thought to provide a superior educational experience. Boarding school is an extremely under researched topic; there is currently plenty of casual literature around the topic, such as newspaper articles (Renton, 2014; Renton, 2014; Barrett, 2015; Brodie, 2015), but an extreme lack of published research. There is body of knowledge out there suggesting that sending a child to boarding school at a young age can be psychologically damaging (Duffell, 2000; Schaverien, 2015). Asthana (2008) does not agree with boarding school as she believes that the best place to grow up for a child's social and emotional development is with a nurturing family. Although the majority of sources state that boarding school is a damaging experience, others suggest that the experience "develops character and independence that they would not get elsewhere" and refer to the experience of boarding as "a gift" (McCormack, 2011: online).

There is a distinct lack of research into the psychological effects of attending boarding school (Schaverien, 2004). However, having read what has been published it is evident that attending boarding school at a young age can have damaging implications that manifest later on in life (Duffell, 2000; Schaverien, 2011; Schaverien, 2015). Nick Duffell (2000) has suggested that there are many lasting psychological patterns and symptoms common in ex-boarding school students, whom he refers to as 'boarding school survivors'. A few examples of the shared symptoms between these 'boarding school survivors' are: a fear of abandonment, a lack of trust in people and a difficulty to show intimacy (Renton, 2014). This is a concept that has been researched further by Schaverien (2004), who has come up with the term 'boarding school syndrome' to describe these complex patterns of symptoms. In Schaverien (2004) she also talks about the issue of the double-bind for boarding school students. Boarding school is "deemed a privilege" and students feel like they should be appreciative towards their parents for the opportunity (Schaverien, 2004: 685). When they are not enjoying this alleged privilege, they feel like they cannot tell their parents, because this would be being ungrateful. The students think if boarding school is supposedly such an honour then why am I not having a very good time? Subsequently, this can then cause problems, because the students cast the blame with themselves and not the school; there cannot be anything wrong with this privileged school, therefore there must be something wrong with me.

Without a great deal of literature around the topic, it is difficult to know people's experience of boarding school. One of the first and only pieces of research ever to have explored boarding school life was conducted by Lambert and Millham in 1968. Before this point the majority of the books about boarding schools were not written by students, but by adults and parents (Lambert and Millham, 1968). They sent a team of researchers into many different boarding schools to live alongside students for up to seven weeks. The aim was to try and explore boarding school through "the eyes of those for whose welfare and development it exists" (Lambert and Millham, 1968: 11). Students were asked to write diaries, which were then collected by the researchers and published into a book alongside writings from Lambert and Millham. The diaries contained truthful and in some cases shocking accounts of day to day living in boarding schools, for example if pupils were caught smoking then the

punishment was 3 cuts, done by a rope that was “spliced and dipped in brine” (Lambert and Millham, 1968: 205).

According to Schaverien (2015) homesickness is a sickness that involves complex symptoms of unprocessed grief in response to the loss of a home. There is plenty of evidence showing that homesickness is extremely common within institutions, such as the army (Matt, 2011). During the war, soldiers’ homesickness became so severe that army physicians began to pay new attention to it as an official illness (Matt, 2011). It was discovered that 58% of soldiers who had suffered from homesickness developed some form of personality disorder (Elisabeth, Duijsens and Verschuur, 1996). Tyzack (2011) says that it is only natural for children to experience some degree of homesickness when going to boarding school. Lambert and Millham (1968) said that it affects all children, some occasionally and others, deeply and persistently. In Lambert and Millham’s (1968) study the students gave many examples of homesickness. One young girl wrote “I get homesick in spasms, it comes and goes” and another “anything can start it off, something on the radio, a dog that looks like yours” (Lambert and Millham, 1968: 295). Kaye (2005) as cited in Schaverien (2015) writes about his observation of homesickness whilst working as a GP in a famous public school for eighteen years. He “observed homesickness as underlying many of the ailments presented in the school medical services” (Schaverien, 2015: 165). He discovered that children were “unconsciously somatising” and were literally becoming sick because they missed their homes (Schaverien, 2015: 165). Fisher, Frazer and Murray (1986) looked at homesickness in children attending a new boarding school. They found that previous boarding school experience seemed to reduce homesickness, and that the reporting of homesickness generally decreased during the two-week study.

There is an abundance of literature that shows bullying to be an extremely common phenomenon within schools (Lipson, 2001; Roland, 2002; Bradshaw, Sawyer and O’Brennan, 2007). Lambert and Millham (1968) found that it is also extremely common within boarding schools, and referred to it as a “major sport” (ibid: 75). Having read many of the student’s accounts, the majority of bullying in boarding school appears to be the senior students mistreating the younger ones. This is shown when an eleven-year-old boy wrote “you keep getting hit if you do not give a senior boy a sweet” (Lambert and Millham, 1968: 75). When referring to a younger student, a sixteen-year-old boy wrote “A note goes into his desk – ‘your next’... a duff over, heads in the wash basin four or 5 times” (ibid, 259). Additionally, they found that it was not only physical bullying that occurred, but also teasing. Many students were teased solely because of their appearance “this boy’s got a hair lip – so we call him Tally (for Thalidomide)” (Lambert and Millham, 1968: 257). Bullying within boarding schools is extremely unpredictable, shown in a case study by Schaverien (2015). She writes about a young boy who had recently joined a new boarding school. He was beaten because whilst taking a stroll around the grounds, he unknowingly stepped onto a rugby pitch that was only allowed to be walked on by the rugby team.

The notion that bullying was mostly administered by the older boys in Lambert and Millham (1968) is supported by findings from Schaverien (2015). Schaverien (2015) found that bullying is seen as a tradition and almost a privilege. As the boys get older they are able to become “law enforcers” through the prefect system (Schaverien,

2015: 180) and can enforce in any way that they see fit. They were once treated very badly as the youngest boys in the school, and if they become prefects they are able to 'get their own back'. Being able to punish fellow students was intuitively condoned and was seen as a perk of seniority (Schaverien, 2015). It was the norm for prefects to abuse and bully other students and it seems they would never get in trouble for this, it was simply part of the job description. This presents an extremely dangerous issue, as prefects were given so much power and freedom, that sometimes this could be misused.

According to Griggs (2015: no page) the self is "the subject of one's own experience of phenomena: perception, emotions, thoughts". In 1959 Ervin Goffman wrote a book called 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life'; within this he developed a dramaturgical theory about the self and society. He compares social interaction to the theatre. Individuals are seen as the performers, members of the audience or outsiders that work in different 'stages'. According to Goffman (1959) we all have two different methods of presenting ourselves, our 'front stage' and our 'backstage'. The 'front stage' is a "carefully crafted representation of the self to others" and "is a manipulation of the audience by the actor (Bullock, 2015: online). In one's 'front stage' an individual is not being themselves, they put on a false 'theatrical performance' and do not show how they really feel. The 'backstage' is a true representation of one's 'self', here people can relax and act like their true selves, as there is no 'audience' to try and impress. Some situations within the 'front stage' require the actor to follow a certain social script, suggesting how is best appropriate to behave in that specific scenario (Crossman, 2014). In everyday life there are certain ways that we should behave, depending on the situation we are in. The way that someone acts is dependent upon factors such as: the desirable behaviour, who they are with and how well they know that person. When you are speaking to one's 'audience', people whom you do not know well, there is an unspoken social script of how you should behave. In everyday life if you are walking down the street and bump into an acquaintance and they ask you how you are, although you might have had an awful day and want to burst into tears, it is more desirable and appropriate to reply "oh yes fine thank you", which is what society tends to do.

In Schaverien (2015) she writes about the concept of 'the armoured self'. She believes that going to boarding school can create an armoured personality, because at boarding school they were not able to show their emotions. Within this armour lies "the unconscious emotional life of the person" (Schaverien, 2015: 191). In the case of all-male boarding schools this could be due to the unspoken rule that "boys don't cry" (Schaverien, 2015: 191). With this concept and ideal in mind, little boys who were feeling sad and upset were not allowed to show these feelings and instead just had to 'get on with it'. Schaverien (2015: 191) believes that it is this taboo on expressing emotion that can lead to an "an inner problem and, at a later stage, a social one". In the chapter called 'the armoured self' she discusses liberation. At boarding school, structure and regimentation play a very big part of the students' everyday lives, and when they eventually leave they feel liberated and free. Due to this lack of structure, many former students do not know what to do with their new found freedom and use it negatively, through uses such as: abuse, sex, drugs and alcohol.

Research Aims and Questions

As no other research since Lambert and Millham's study in 1968 has explored the experience of boarding school, this research aimed to build on this work. With boarding school being such an under researched topic, it looked to explore themes that were common in other institutions: bullying and homesickness (Bradshaw et al, 2007; Matt, 2011). It aimed to see whether these themes were also common in the institution of boarding school. This research aimed to construct what the ideal boarding student was like, referred to as "the ideal boarding school self". The fundamental aim of this research was to look at the comparison between how the participants said they were feeling at boarding school, compared with how they said they were acting. It wanted to see whether there was a contradiction between how they were feeling and how they were acting, were they feeling one thing and showing another? The main research questions are as followed:

-To what extent were bullying and homesickness common at boarding school?

Inspired by (Bradshaw et al, 2007; Matt, 2011).

-What is the ideal boarding school student?

-How today do they describe how they were feeling then, compared with how they said they acting? Building on Schaverien (2015)

Methodology

Design

Exploratory research seeks to investigate an area that has been under researched. As the topic of boarding school is extremely under researched, the research used an exploratory design. There are three pieces of previous exploratory research looking into brand new areas that use a similar methodology to this piece of research (Steinsbekk, Bentzen and Brien, 2006; Kennedy, Haslam, Munir and Pryce, 2007; Barnett, Guell and Ogilvie, 2013). This research used semi-structured interviews because Barnett et al (2013) and Steinsbekk et al (2006) both used semi-structured interviews in their exploratory research. Similarly, the data from this research was analysed using thematic analysis, as Steinsbekk et al (2006) and Kennedy et al (2007) also used this method in their exploratory research.

Participants

There were 6 adult male participants all aged between 50-60 years old. They were interviewed because they all previously attended a boarding school. The participants were recruited using snowball sampling. Flanyak (1999) also used snowball sampling in a qualitative, exploratory research study. The initial subject was a family member and they helped to recruit the other participants from amongst their acquaintances. As it is uncommon for someone to have attended boarding school, the required sample was significantly limited. Snowball sampling was therefore ideal, as it is a method that allows for studies to take place where it might otherwise be impossible to conduct due to a lack of participants (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). The participants were all given pseudonyms, and all identifying information that was given in the interview such as the name of school was changed.

Data Collection Method

This piece of research used qualitative interviews because they produce a firsthand, personal account of someone's perspective or experience as it relates to a particular

issue. It gives the researcher insight into where a subject is coming from, rather than getting a simple “yes” or “no” answer (McQuerrey, no date: online). Semi-structured interviews are well suited for the exploration of perceptions and opinions of participants regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues (Bariball and While, 1994), which is the case when discussing boarding school. A main advantage of using a semi-structured interview is that it is a very flexible method. The researcher is able to follow up on new information given by the participant, that they might not have initially predicted (Stevens, Loudon, Wrenn and Cole, 2012). Flexibility is an especially important asset within exploratory research; because it is unsure what will be found, if new, unanticipated information arises the researcher is able to change their questions based on what they have discovered.

Garbett and McCormack (2001) used telephone interviews in their exploratory research, therefore this research adopted a similar method. Considering that the participants were dispersed all over the country, a major benefit of using telephone interviews was its practical application. It allowed for the participation of subjects, who would have otherwise been unattainable and impossible to interview, due to reasons such as work commitments (Becker, Bryman and Ferguson, 2012). It was an extremely efficient method as it enabled the researcher to conduct the interviews in a short amount of time. Holt (2010) concluded that telephone interviews should be seriously considered as a preferred alternative to face-to-face interviews. This could be because participants are more willing to disclose sensitive information if they are in a relaxed environment (Novick, 2008). Some issues are so sensitive that participants might be reluctant to discuss them face to face with an interviewer (Opdenakker, 2006). This may be the case when discussing boarding school, therefore, because of the use of telephone interviews participants may have been more willing to disclose sensitive information.

Firstly, the participants were given an invitation letter (see Appendix 1) via email, asking if they would like to participate in the research. When they decided that they would like to participate, they were then emailed a participant information sheet (see Appendix 2), which gives extensive detail about what the research was about and informs the participant of all their ethical rights. The participants were then asked to fill in a consent form (see Appendix 3) which is material proof to show that they have accepted to take part in the research. Once these three stages were complete, the semi-structured telephone interviews took place at a time that was convenient for the participant. The interview schedule consisted of 22 questions with added prompts (see Appendix 4). The interview began with a few casual questions in order to build rapport with the participants.

The participants were then given a debrief immediately after the telephone interview (see Appendix 5) which included details about confidentiality and the date that they were able to withdraw from the study. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim (see appendix 6), like in Barnett et al's (2013) exploratory study. Verbatim transcription has been referred to as central to the reliability, validity and veracity of qualitative data collection (MacLean, Meyer and Estable, 2004).

Data Analysis

The interview data was analysed in accordance to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. Firstly, it involved becoming immersed in the data; this was done by printing out hard copies of the interview transcripts and reading them multiple times, whilst simultaneously searching for patterns. While the transcription process was time consuming, it allowed for an early comprehensive understanding of the data. Codes were generated from the data manually using a highlighter; these were features of the data that appeared interesting to the analyst (Braun and Clarke, 2006) for example similar words across the interviews. Codes were then refined into themes; any themes that did not have enough data to support them at this stage were removed. It is imperative that the analysis provides a coherent and concise account of the data set as a whole (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The final phase was producing the report, which was able to begin once there a full set of themes had been worked out.

Thematic analysis is a flexible approach that can be used across a range of epistemologies and when done rigorously it can produce an insightful analysis that can help to answer particular research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is an ideal method for exploratory qualitative research, as it acts as a mean of organisation and summarisation of possible ideas and theories derived from the data set (Pope, Mays, Popay, 2008).

Ethical Considerations

Before any research was conducted, ethical approval was obtained by the dissertation supervisor (see Appendix 7). Informed consent was gained from the participants as they filled out a consent form (see Appendix 3) stating their want to take part in the research. The participants were given the right to withdraw from the research from any time up until the 3rd February 2016, as this is when the data began to be analysed. The participant was made aware of this date in the: participant invitation letter, participant information sheet, consent form and again in the debrief (see Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 5). The participants were told the full aim of the research in the: participant invitation letter, participant information sheet, consent form and the debrief, therefore there was no deception (see Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 5). The participants were not asked to give any personal information. They were given pseudonyms to keep their identity anonymous and any identifying information that arose throughout the interview, such as name of the school they attended, was changed. The interviews were discussed with the dissertation supervisor, used to write a report and may be published, therefore the information could not be kept entirely confidential. The participants were made aware of this in the participant information sheet (see Appendix 2). All data and information about the participant and their interviews were kept in a locked cabinet and on a password protected computer. The research report and data will be passed on to the researcher's supervisor for safekeeping in case it is to be used for publication. If it is not going to be published, all data will be destroyed in September 2016. The participants were interviewed over the telephone therefore the researcher was not face-to-face with them, thus there was no risk of physical harm to the researcher. As it was a telephone interview it took place in a secure and comfortable setting for the researcher and participants. It was not in a public or dangerous place, for example near a road, therefore there was no risk of injury. The nature of the interview was not trauma inducing, probing or offensive. The participants were not asked to disclose

anything they did not want to, therefore there was no harm to the participants. There were no drugs, placebos or substances given to the participants.

Analysis and Discussion

The ideal boarding school self

The participants have constructed “the ideal boarding school self”, describing the qualities an ideal boarding school student possesses. This is someone who: abides, is good at sports and does not discuss their emotions.

Boarding school is all about rules and regimentation, perfectly stated by Godfrey in lines 129-130 “you’re told what to do all the time, from when you get up in the morning, from when you went to bed”. The ideal boarding school self is someone who abided to these rules, like Simon, who was rewarded prefect because of it (line 187). Other students did not live up to this ideal and instead rebelled against it. Alex was not interested in the rules, he “didn’t give a damn about the school” (line 125) and used to go down to the town and get drunk instead (line 127). Similarly, Godfrey also defied this ideal by “drinking and smoking and escaping from the boarding house” (line 170).

There are many examples demonstrating the significance of being good at sport at boarding school. Paul, on lines 174-181, said that you did not have to be academic as long as you were good at sport. Godfrey said that some students enjoyed boarding school more because “they were into sport” (lines 88-89). Someone who did enjoy their sport was Paul, shown on many occasions, “well I used to enjoy my sports Chloe” (lines 165-166) and “the sport was great” (line 174) and again on lines 181-182. Out of all the participants, Paul was the only one who lived up to this sporting component of the ideal self. Other participants, like Alex, were not “interested in anything like sport” (line 124). Paul’s part-fulfilment of the ideal boarding school self could explain why he appeared to enjoy boarding school the most out of the participants.

The final attribute is to be strong and hide your emotions. This was achieved by all participants, as none of them discussed their sadness about missing home, which will now be discussed further.

Homesickness

A reoccurring theme that was found when analysing the interviews was *homesickness*. In concurrence with what was mentioned earlier by Tyzack (2011), all of the participants experienced homesickness, and in some cases very severely. This shows that homesickness is common in institutions other than the army, as shown in Matt (2011). For Godfrey this is shown in line 31 when, in response to “how did you feel when you first arrived at boarding school?” (line 30), he replied “homesick...awful...lost”. Alex felt so homesick that for weeks he used to run down to the local payphone to call his mum and would “cry and cry” and ask her to go and pick him up (lines 102-104). In Simon’s interview he likens homesickness to a physical illness, when he said “you’re sort of under the weather a bit really” (line 59). This corresponds with the findings from Kaye (2005) who said that boarding school students can actually become physically sick from homesickness.

All of the interviewees said that although they experienced homesickness it did become easier, corresponding to the findings from Fisher et al (1986). In Paul's case this is shown in lines 216-217 when he said "because you'd been doing it so long, you wouldn't miss home, you wouldn't miss mummy and daddy". Alex (line 110) and Daniel (line 43) both explicitly state that theirs improved. Although Godfrey stated that it got easier he said that "it was never perfect" (lines 125-126).

An interesting finding from the data was that none of the participants told anyone about their homesickness. This could have been due to the double-bind mentioned earlier by Schaverien (2004); although they were feeling sad and upset they did not want to tell anyone because it was supposedly a privilege. There are very good examples of this from each of the interviews, but I will begin by talking about Simons. Line 56 is when he first mentions not talking to anyone about his homesickness. Later on he says "other people were probably in the same boat" (lines 66-67), implying that he was unsure as no one spoke about it. In lines 72-73, when asked again if he spoke to anyone about his homesickness he replied "not really, not knowingly... you wouldn't admit y'know... you just try and cope with it". The word 'admit' usually refers to something you have done wrong. Simon saying that he would not 'admit' to homesickness, is implying that showing that you are homesick at boarding school is frowned upon. Similarly, other participants said that they did not talk to anyone about it (see line 141 for Godfrey and line 113 for Alex).

None of the participants discussed their homesickness or how upset they were because of it. A reason for this could be due to the notion mentioned earlier that "boys don't cry" (Schaverien, 2015: 191). This is shown in Daniel's interview when he says, referring to talking about his homesickness, "not really... cos blokes didn't do that kind of thing" (line 45). Students did not discuss their sadness, they just simply "got on with it" (Paul, lines 60-61). These findings correspond to Goffman's (1959) theory of "the presented self". The students were putting on a performance to their audience (their fellow students) and were hiding how they were really feeling, sad and homesick. It was only when they were in their backstage that they could show emotion. For Paul this is shown in lines 58-59 when he referred to it as "a private time" and said that once you were on your own you were then able to "have a few tears" (line 59). These findings can contribute to Schaverien (2015) concept of 'the armoured self', as the participants might not have been showing their sadness due to the taboo on expressing emotion at boarding school.

Bullying

Another theme that arose when analysing the interviews was *bullying*. There is evidence of both physical bullying throughout the interviews, but mostly teasing, corresponding to the findings from Lambert and Millham (1968). Daniel (line 110), Paul (line 234) and Godfrey (line 113) all said that they did not see any physical bullying, just teasing. Simon said that at boarding school you were picked on "if you were a bit odd usually" (line 200). Which was confirmed by Godfrey, as he mentioned someone who was picked on because he was "strange looking" and had a "strange personality" (line 117).

The majority of bullying that occurs in boarding school, is the older students mistreating the younger ones (Lambert and Millham, 1968; Schaverien, 2015). Schaverien (2015) said that there is a tradition at boarding school, that as the boys

get older they are allowed to maltreat the younger ones, most commonly through the prefect system. Paul referred to it as “payback time for the new boys” (line 120), everyone went through it and it “was a discipline for everybody” (line 112).

Unfortunately, sometimes this power was abused, demonstrated in Alex’s case. Alex was very badly bullied by two older prefects, shown in lines 6-15. He suffered from very bad dyslexia and could not say the days of the week in order, he said that “they would give me 5 seconds to say it or they’d slap me on the face” (line 12). It got progressively worse and he ended up having a torch smashed over his forehead (line 13). This power of prefects and their ability to bully was also shown in Paul’s interview. He said that “there was bullying going on, especially with the prefects if they didn’t particularly like you” (line 238-239). At boarding school, it seems that bullying was institutionally condoned and teachers would often look the other way, especially if it was prefects who were administering it.

The protected self

From this research I have conceptualised something called “the protected self”. It is the way the self is protected through certain behaviours and strategies, which are: hiding and not discussing your emotions, playing sports, bullying and rebelling. It is an unconscious process which boarding school students do in order to protect themselves from their own feelings. Another example in psychology where people use strategies to protect themselves from negative feelings is Freud’s (1936) defence mechanisms.

When students go to boarding school they leave their home and family behind. It is because of this perceived loss and unfamiliar environment that students experience extreme feelings of sadness and fear. An example of sadness is shown for Godfrey when he said that he “was very deeply upset” (line 72) because he missed home so much. Another is shown in line 30 when he said he felt “desperate...black...depressed, homesick, awful... lost”. Daniel (line 22) and John (lines 33-34) both said they felt scared the minute they arrived at boarding school due to the very “old”, “imposing” and “daunting” buildings. Although the students felt negative emotions, these were never spoken about with other people. Paul (line 263) said that although “you were scared shitless” you would never admit it. Simon said that “you just sort of get on with it really” (line 60). Not discussing emotion is one of the strategies used by boarding school students, in order to protect themselves. This strategy can be identified with elements of Freud’s (1936) mechanism of denial. Students do not want to admit to themselves or others that they are not having a good time, and therefore act like they are not experiencing these negative emotions.

When you go to boarding school you are in a new environment; because of these unfamiliar surroundings, students are unsure whether it is safe enough to show their emotions. They feel it is unsafe to tell fellow students, “you wouldn’t really talk about it to other students” (Paul, lines 56-57), because they might react negatively and bully you because you are being ‘weak’. They also feel that it is unsafe to tell their parents, “you didn’t talk about it with your parents” (Paul, lines 59-60) as there is fear of anger, rejection and disappointment. If you complain about boarding school, they might think you are being ungrateful and not making the most of the ‘privilege’ you had been given.

This produces a dilemma; there is a contradiction between how the students are feeling versus how they are acting. They portray themselves to others as if they are strong, happy and getting along fine, however, inside they are homesick, lost and upset. Students will react to their emotions in different ways; some will become rebellious and others will channel it through productive behaviours, such as playing sports. As previously indicated, Paul used this strategy of playing sports. This strategy of protection corresponds with Freud's (1936) mechanism of sublimation. Students can release these emotions, such as aggression, in constructive ways, such as on the sports field.

On the other hand, some students deal with their emotions with more unfavourable methods, such as rebelling. Alex and Godfrey both acted in this way. It got so bad for Godfrey that he ran away (see line 126), which Alex also threatened to do (see line 105). Godfrey said that he was used to smoke, drink and escape from the boarding house (see lines 169-170). Similarly, Alex rebelled by "drinking cider" (line 125) and running away to the local town to get drunk (see lines 126-127). For Alex, this rebellion continued on into adult life, he said that when he left boarding school he turned to drugs (see line 219) because it gave him an intense feeling of happiness. Schaverien (2015) suggested that former students often turn to drugs as they are unsure what to do with their new found freedom and lack of structure. Another undesirable strategy of protecting the self is through bullying. This strategy corresponds with Freud's mechanism of displacement. When a student goes to boarding school they might feel abandoned and unloved by their parents, which causes them to feel angry. A student places their feelings of anger towards their parents with a substitute person. Because bullying at boarding school was institutionally condoned (Schaverien, 2015) it gave angry individuals many opportunities to let their anger out. Because the older boys have been there so long they let their rage manifest and take it out on the younger students. This is shown in Alex's case where he was viciously bullied by two older prefects, who might have been experiencing this anger.

Critical evaluation and future research

This research predicts that future research should explore whether students carry on strategies of "the protected self" into adult life. It would be interesting to see whether they continue to: not discuss their emotions, rebel, play sports and bully others.

A limitation of the research is that all of the participants who took part were male, therefore the findings cannot be generalised to all boarding school students. Consequently, future research should explore whether "the protected self" is also found with female boarding school students. It might demonstrate a difference, due to the taboo of men expressing emotion "boys don't cry".

Conclusion

Overall, it has been found that there is a contradiction between how the participants said they were feeling at boarding school and how they said they were acting. They felt homesick, scared and upset, but display to others that they are strong, not missing home and enjoying boarding school. Due to the unfamiliar environment, students are unsure whether it is safe enough for them to show their emotion, and instead keep them to themselves. This conflict has led to the conceptualisation of something I have called "the protected self". The protected self refers to the way the

self is protected through certain strategies and behaviours. These strategies are: hiding and not discussing emotion, bullying, rebelling and playing sports, which for the purpose of this research have been linked with Freud's (1936) defence mechanisms of: displacement, denial and sublimation. Students can use these strategies to portray to others that they are coping with boarding school. Regardless of the homesickness and sadness that they experienced, the participants never discussed this with others, neither their family nor fellow students. This is in order to seem in control of their emotions, which has been found to be a quality of "the ideal boarding school self". Other qualities of the ideal boarding school self are someone who: abides and is good at sports.

Reflexive Analysis

When undertaking the unit 'culture, society, community and self' last year, we were asked to do a narrative analysis on someone with something special about them. I immediately thought of my father attending boarding school, as it is something that I has always interested me. It was when I was writing that project that I realised that there was next to no research in this area, which immediately made me want to contribute and do some research of my own. I understand that because two of the participants were my family members, that they might have held things back from me, such as something upsetting or embarrassing. But, it was because of this close relationship that I have with one of the participants that gave me access to my other participants. I was able to access a limited sample, that otherwise would have been difficult and time consuming to find.

I feel very privileged to have been able to hear people's first-hand experiences of boarding school, as due to the lack of research, without their stories this project would have been impossible.

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