

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE
TRAUMA OF ATTENDING BOYS
BOARDING SCHOOL AND ITS
IMPACT ON ADULT LIFE.**

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY
OF CHESTER FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
ARTS (CLINICAL COUNSELLING) IN PART
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CLINICAL COUNSELLING.**

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I. ABSTRACT

This research focuses specifically on the trauma experienced from attending all-boys boarding schools prior to the introduction of the Children's Act of 1989 (UK Government, 1989). The emotional and behavioural adaptations demanded of these young boys beginning a boarding school life devoid of unconditional love and support whilst encountering a new regime of rules, punishments and abuse, are still impacting on the lives of many men today. This phenomenological research study focuses on the lives of four participants during and since boarding school. The research aims to enlighten ex-boarders, their families and counselling professionals of the learnt defences that may be so well hidden that even the men themselves may be unaware of their ongoing influence.

II. DECLARATION

This work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any qualification or course.

Signed Dawn Grundy

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III. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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IV. LIST OF TABLES

Table One - Brief Profile of Participants34

Tables Two & Three - Themes and Sub-themes.....35

V. ABBREVIATIONS

BS – Boarding school

SSP – Strategic Survival Personality

PIS – Participant Information Sheet

CONTENTS

i. Abstract	1
ii. Declaration	2
iii. Acknowledgments	3
iv. List of Tables	4
v. Abbreviations	4
1. 0. Chapter One - Introduction	8
1.1. Background	8
1. 2. Rationale	9
1. 3. Research question	9
1. 4. Aims.....	9
1. 5. Positioning Statement.....	10
1. 6. Introduction to the structure of the dissertation	10
2. 0. Chapter Two: Literature Review	12
2. 1. Introduction.....	12
2. 2. What does the literature tell us about the trauma experienced by children at boarding school?	12
2. 3. What does the literature tell us about the responses developed (coping mechanisms) to manage these traumatic experiences?.....	17
2. 4. What does the literature tell us about the impacts of these traumatic experiences and coping responses on adult interactions?	21
2.5. Conclusion.....	25
3. 0. Chapter Three – Methodology	27
3. 1. Introduction.....	27
3. 2. Research Design and Philosophy.....	27
3. 3. Sampling and Recruitment.....	28
3. 4. The Process of Data Collection	29
3. 5. Data Analysis	30
3. 6. Ethical Considerations	30
3. 7. Validity.....	31
3.8. Limitations	32
4. 0. Chapter Four: Findings	34
4.1. Introduction.....	34
Table 1 - Brief Profile of Participants	34
Themes and Sub-Themes	35

Table 2 – Innocence.....	35
Table 3 – Survival.....	35
4. 2. Super-ordinate Theme – Loss	36
4. 2. 1. Parents and Family	36
4. 2. 2. Home/ Safe Space.....	37
4. 2. 3. Loss of Individual Adult Support	38
4. 2. 4. Loss of Safety	39
4. 3. Super-ordinate Theme – Inexperience.....	40
4. 3. 1. Knowledge of sex.....	40
4. 3. 2. Relating to Girls/Women.....	41
4. 4. Super-ordinate Theme – Institution	42
4. 4. 1. Hierarchy, Rules and Timetabling	42
4. 4. 2. Fitting in / Acceptance by BS friends.....	44
4. 5. Super-ordinate Theme – ‘Fighting my corner’	44
4. 5. 1. Avoidance.....	45
4. 5. 2. False personas.....	45
4. 5. 3. ‘Finding a safe space’	46
4. 6. Super-ordinate Theme – Self.....	46
4. 6. 1. Expectations of BS boy/ man.....	47
4. 6. 2. Expectations of self.....	48
4. 7. Conclusion.....	49
5. 0. Chapter Five: Discussion	50
5. 1. Introduction.....	50
5. 2. Super-ordinate Theme - Loss	50
5. 3. Super-ordinate Theme - Inexperience.....	53
5. 4. Super-ordinate Theme – Institution	55
5. 5. Super-ordinate Theme – ‘Fighting my corner’	56
5. 6. Super-ordinate Theme – Self.....	57
5. 7. Conclusion.....	58
6. 0. CHAPTER 6 - Conclusion.....	60
6.1. Outcomes	60
6.2. Further research.....	61
6.3. Implications for practice	61
References.....	62
Appendices:.....	66

Appendix 1 – Ethics Approval Letter..... 66

Appendix 2 – Research Advert..... 67

Appendix 3 - Participant Information Sheet 68

Appendix 4 - Consent Form 71

Appendix 5 - Audit trail 72

Appendix 6 – Boarding school support organisations 76

Appendix 7 – Reflexive Statement..... 77

1. 0. CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The public perception of all-boys British boarding school seems to be mostly the stories of success, privilege (Green & Kynaston, 2019) and historic sexual abuse cases reported by middle-aged victims. These accounts are told through the media in the form of books, newspaper articles or depicted in television and films. However, there is another narrative; one of accumulated trauma that is often not noticed or discussed, mostly hidden from parents and due to survival techniques, sometimes from the boarders themselves. This study will be looking at mens' accounts of their own boarding experience prior to the 1989 Children's Act (UK Government, 1989), and how growing up in these institutions has had a long-term effect on their adult lives.

The often-undeniable educational privilege of British all-male boarding school (Green & Kynaston, 2019) which has benefitted many, has for others been balanced against the survival adaptations and disenfranchised loss of daily love and support, for boys aged 8/9 to 16/18 years. For some, the trauma of enforced disconnection from family and subsequent survival adaptations to their new environment became a blueprint that has continued into adulthood (Schaverein, 2015; Duffell & Basset, 2016; Renton, 2018). Pre 1970/80s, boys' boarding was generally different to and began younger than that of girls. It often lacked female presence and had more incidence of sexual abuse and bullying (Schaverein, 2004). For some, their own awareness of their boarding school experience with its loss of family/home/security and yet privilege of education' created a 'double bind' (Duffell, 2000, cited by Duffell & Basset, 2016). My interest is in the personal and often 'hidden' (Schaverein, 2015) narrative of how their childhood way of being and expectations of relationships then may then have continued into manhood.

1. 2. Rationale

The emotional trauma brought about by early boarding at all-boys schools is an area that has had relatively little research and is often not recognised within the counselling profession or even by the ex-students until later life (Duffell & Basset, 2016). The perception of boarding school life and its inhabitants has been one of privilege. However, recently there is a growing body of literature, documentaries and support groups which are highlighting the human story of the BS experience. There is increasing demand for an understanding of how the adaptations made to survive the boarding school experience have been carried through into adult life. I am interested in the lived reflections of ex-pupils, now adults and how boarding school experience has influenced their lives.

1. 3. Research question

To what extent does the (often hidden) trauma of attending all-boys boarding school impact on adult life?

1. 4. Aims

- a. To understand the emotional toolkit required of boys adapting to boarding school.
- b. To explore the extent to which childhood behavioural adaptations have affected adult life

Objective - To increase recognition within the ex-boarding school community and the counselling profession of the effects that necessary childhood survival skills carried through to adulthood, may have had on some lives.

1. 5. Positioning Statement

My interest in this research stems from growing up within a farming community where many local girls were BS educated at a nearby convent school. From age 11-16 I also boarded there, followed by a boy's BS with a mixed sixth form until I was age eighteen. Suddenly being in an environment with boys, I observed their way of being, listened to their stories and made lifelong friendships. This was followed by socialising within the local farming community which was heavily endowed with other BS educated young men. My choice of research around the male experience of BS was based on my observations, but also because it enabled me to research with a balanced rather than personal perspective.

1. 6. Introduction to the structure of the dissertation

The research question that structures this dissertation is: To what extent does the (often hidden) trauma of attending all-boys boarding school impact on adult life?

Chapter one has introduced the reader to the rationale, the research question and aims, positioning statement of the researcher and the structure of the dissertation. Chapter two looks at the available literature around the subject of trauma within BS, the coping mechanisms adopted and the effects these have later in adult life. Chapter three focuses on the Methodology employed for the research within this dissertation and chapter four covers the findings from the interviews with participants. Chapter five the discussion of these findings in relation to the literature review. Chapter six a short conclusion and suggestions for further research.

The definition of the word 'trauma' that will be used within the research is: 'an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches

or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives' (Definition of 'Trauma', n.d.).

2. 0. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1. Introduction

While the ‘trauma of attending boys boarding school and its impact on adult life’ is ‘notoriously difficult to research’ (Duffell & Basset, 2016, p. 182), there is now a growing body of works and interest in this area, with three main types of literature. First, there is a limited amount of academic research published about BS trauma; second, memoirs, which may not be representative of the wider group, but useful for qualitative research; and third, polemics, which tend to be politically motivated critiques of power, privilege and elitism. The latter clearly carry an inherent bias and so must be used with care in balanced research. Consequently, the literature review is primarily based on the work of Duffell (2000; 2014), Schaverein (2015) and Duffell and Bassett (2016). However, while the subject links to a wide variety of associated topics, such as attachment, sexual abuse and privilege, it is not possible to respectfully examine them all here, so this research will focus specifically on the literature that explores the trauma that the BS experience visits upon its alumni.

The review covers three areas: the trauma experienced by children at boarding school; responses developed to manage the trauma; and what the literature tells us about the impacts of these experiences and coping mechanisms on adult interactions.

2. 2. What does the literature tell us about the trauma experienced by children at boarding school?

The literature tells us that the arrival of young children at boarding school is the overriding choice of their parents and pre-empted by many factors. The reasons are often social engineering (Green & Kynaston, 2019) and the hopes that their child will reap the benefits of links with others in a similar social class, the quality of the education, privileged surroundings (Okely, 1996) and facilities. Yet, they will also share the school with children from armed forces families (Origin. Join the Family, 2020), middle-class families or those who due to life events need ‘stability’ (Schaverein, 2004). The practice of boarding young

children when the family is dysfunctional, or as in the past, in the situation of marital breakdown or death, is now questioned, as the children are removed from the security and familiarity of family and home (Browne, 2011; Okely, 1996).

'Trauma at the threshold' is the title of Partridge's (2007, p. 311) article which describes the moment when the child first walks into school, leaving their family and entering an institutional 'emotional desert'. Entering BS for the first time and the separation from parents and family appears to remain a life-long memory for many children (Renton, 2018). Schaverein (2015, p. 108) recounts how, for an individual, the moment of separation from his mother was the most alone he ever felt, 'the primary wound'. Bassett (2011) emotively describes his arrival at BS; everything was new, even his clothes and trunk, there was no familiarity. Basset (2018, p. 77) also cites an anonymous school counsellor who experienced the repeated 'struggle' of separation between the parents and the child and likens it to children being 'placed in care'. Gottlieb (2021, pp. 61-62) cites Jennifer Freyd who has termed this 'betrayal trauma', the person you loved and trusted most has deserted you when you truly need them, and so emotional protection is erected and there is a distrust of being able to give or receive love. Duffell (2000) questions how separating a young child from dependence and safety within the family will produce independence and emotional strength.

Children use natural behavioural reactions to elicit care and attention and homesickness is a demonstration of this (Duffell, 2000). The loss of family and home, the inability to escape BS, is coupled with the hard truth that their parents are not coming back (Schaverein, 2015). She continues that this repeated breaking of bonds can cause fear of abandonment in later life. BS is not home, and to show emotion brings attention and shows weakness, neither of which are wanted at boarding school (Burr, 2021). It also, reflects those emotions that other boys are desperately trying to hide (Duffell & Basset, 2016). Barclay (2011, p. 27) discusses that the 'cultural normalisation' and the positive statements about the BS experience from those that surround that child, 'cements' these beliefs in the child, protects the system from challenge and helps to bury the homesickness. They learn that 'big boys don't cry. They simply carry on. They are survivors' (Stibbe, 2016, p. 86). However, the inability to grieve the loss of family felt by the child means it becomes disenfranchised (Corr, 1999), and so being unable to process

and accept it, they have little choice but to deny it (Scott, 2011). For the unhappy boy, the repetitive nature of contact and separation from family due to weekends, holidays and sporting events accentuates the circle of 'abandonment and captivity' (Schaverein, 2015, p. 146), and in the case of the 'new' boy, the second term can be yet more traumatic as the child now knows what to expect (Gottlieb, 2021).

The collateral damage of joining an all-boys BS was the loss not only of parents, but also the home, siblings (specifically female), contact with girls/women, local friends, pets/animals and people of differing ages and social classes; and these often, geographically remote BSs are designed to house both teachers and pupils from a similar social standing and so their separation from normal life is complete (Okely, 1996; Duffell, 2000). Bowlby (2006) the founder of Attachment Theory, suggests that if children need to be housed within institutions it should be with less than one hundred occupants, subdivided into houses with a mix of ages and genders to reflect family life and that schooling should be within the local community. He adds that the splitting of children by sex and age, in turn splits families, which is detrimental to the child's mental health.

Once in the BS, young children can feel overwhelmed by the large numbers of boys now living with them (Schaverein, 2015), and as in a family situation, they naturally look for adults to fulfil the parental support role that would guide them towards adulthood and independence (Duffell & Basset, 2016). The possibility of individual adult attention might be ideal for the boy, but it is not achievable due to staff to child ratios (Okely, 1996). In 2016 the ratio of teachers to children within private schools was 1 teacher to 8.6 children (Green & Kynaston, 2019), and contrasts with the suggestion that private schooling can provide 'young men who are confident, creative and better team players' (harrowschool.org.uk, n.d.). It is worth remembering that these children have left a home with an average 1:1 ratio of 2 parents to 2 children. Schaverein (2015) writes that without adult support, children have no witness to events or guidance or confirmation about the behaviour of others.

With no adult or family available, there are no witnesses, no one to mediate concerns and no understanding of the structure of events (Gottlieb, 2021). Iwaniec (2006, p. 176) notes

that the biggest factor in the emotional wellbeing of a child who suffered trauma was 'unconditional positive regard' being given by just one adult who cared and made them feel special. Also, developmentally it is essential for a child to feel 'safe, valued and competent' (Levine & Kline , 2007, p. 382),

For a boy aged eight, his mother is usually the primary emotional and physical support, but on their arrival at BS any female influences or sensitivities are replaced with masculine qualities of strength, duty and the need for power (Patterson, 2021; Okely, 1996). Suddenly the boy becomes known by only his surname to emphasise tradition, generational boarding and the importance of family and duty (Okely, 1996). There is no privacy, provision of time or solace to process the switch from home to BS; instead, a new timetabled life of communal sleeping, bathing, eating, teaching and sports; with a new set of school rules, initiations and traditions (Duffell, 2000). The BS is run on a system of a full timetable and rules, leaving no time initially for the children to 'think or feel' (Burr, 2021, p. 112). The only private time can be found in bed at night and in the toilet cubicles (Duffell, 2020), but by living constantly with peers; nothing goes unnoticed (Gottlieb M. , 2021, p. 59); there is no escape. Young children who cannot verbalise their feelings may transfer them into object attachment and may not realise the relevance of these objects until explored later in life (Jack & Devereux, 2019). Lendrum and Syme (2004) agree that physical connection to belongings can be a link to, and an attempt at continuing a relationship after a great loss.

Initiations are an early introduction to bullying; not performed by prefects necessarily but sometimes by peers and so in many ways more terrifying, as an expectation of trust from those closest to you at school is immediately lost (Schaverein, 2015). The 'never snitch' rule is instilled and necessary for respect and friendship (Kennedy-Moore, 2018), a requirement of acceptance, leaving the child with no adult witness, mediator or protector. Bullying from within the peer group again meant that there is no escape, they were always around (Duffell, 2000), and the secondary trauma of watching boys hurt other boys reinforced the sense that no-one could be trusted (Schaverein, 2015). Being too young, weak or scared to help others brings a denial of ethics and a sense of complicity: Duffell (2000, p. 38) describes that these compromises amount to a 'self-betrayal'.

Corporal punishment by staff and prefects was a normal part of BS life until the Children's Act of 1989 (UK Government, 1989) legally brought this to an end. Prior to that, Renton (2018, p. 193) notes that physical discipline was considered necessary in 'good' schools, bringing not only pain, but 'humiliation' too. The punishment was inflicted more 'liberally' by prefects than staff (Bennett, 2021, p. 84), the younger boys had no choice but to accept the punishments with staff seeming to 'tacitly condone' the abuse by ignoring it (Schaverein, 2015, p. 197). For the BS child this life can feel relentless and there is no family to witness, adding to the feelings of abandonment (Schaverein, 2015). The physical punishments and bullying that were tolerated until the late 1970s would nowadays be considered child abuse (Smythe, 2013).

Bassett (2011) suggests that society has forced boys/men as they grow older to suppress their emotions and at BS there seems to be an extra dose of masculine expectation, hence, when society communicates that being a 'gay' man is not 'manly' (Beckett & Taylor, 2016, p. 104), the bias at BS is exaggerated. Subsequently, many boys boarding schools were profoundly homophobic and if a boy questioned his own sexuality he is in an institution where he is effectively silenced (Gottlieb, 2005). Many other experiences of sexual abuse at boarding school in the past were 'glossed over' (Duffell & Basset, 2016, p. 6). Worrall-Thompson (2003) writes that during his school life it was accepted that scandal was avoided or hidden. Verkaik (2018) cites a Channel 4 interview with an ex-BS sexual abuse victim who expressed that the abuse broke the connection of parents to child due to the child's sense of complicity and a fear of speaking out. Verkaik continues that in BS's where masculinity and reputations for the school and the boy's future standing in life are paramount, there is a clear incentive for none of the parties to believe or accept the truth.

Lack of contact with girls/women and sexual inexperience accompanies all-boys schooling, and this has been highlighted recently highlighted as misogynistic behaviour in BSs in newspaper reports (Halfon, 2021; Sawyer & Hope, 2021). Duffell and Basset (2016) agree that over masculinised environments can unwittingly breed a misogyny that the boy/man may not even be aware of. Duffell (2000), notes that because there are no relationships with girls in school, unrealistic images can develop: either those of idealised

caring figures or with the onset of puberty and adolescence sexualised ones. Beckett and Taylor (2011) inform us that it is normal for boys to use sex or sexual knowledge as a display of status and maturity.

The cognitive ability of an 8-year-old boy is set in the reality of 'what is' rather than 'what might be' (McAdams, 1993, p. 77), and in this new world of BS the child processes what has happened, this is termed the 'double bind' (Duffell & Basset, 2016). The belief that their parents love them is at odds with being sent away, they must be bad not to appreciate the sacrifices made and the opportunity given. The children cannot tell the parents if they are unhappy or feel anger at being sent away, because then the parents might not love them (Duffell & Basset, 2016). The child's sense of being abandoned was diminished by the boarding school system and the parents emphasising the benefits (Stibbe, 2016). Being so young they are unable to adequately verbalise their feelings, and the school and the life they live becomes their unquestioned normality (Okely, 1996). The child protects both the parents and himself 'from the truth' (Duffell & Basset, 2016, p. 9). Acceptance and survival is the duty paid by the child to his parents, and unlike children sent to detention institutions they could not blame or focus their anger on the authorities, hence 'the double bind is complete' (Okely, 1996, p. 154). The choice is to 'implode emotionally' and leave the school or to deny emotion and to stay (Stibbe, 2016, p. 83). They conform to the schools and parents' mantra that the experience will be 'the making of them' and to fully overcome any doubts they 'anaesthetise' their emotions (Stibbe, 2016).

2. 3. What does the literature tell us about the responses developed (coping mechanisms) to manage these traumatic experiences?

As discussed, the child being left alone in a strange environment with strangers and no parental support on their first day at BS, leaves them with no other option but to survive (Gottlieb, 2021). Partridge (2007, pp. 311-312) describes the transformation from a little boy into a 'precocious man' and it is at this point he explains the 'stiff upper lip' of the elite is formed along with the ability to hide emotion. This is emotively shown in the TV

documentary 'The Making of Them' (Luke, 1994). Boys on their first day at BS try desperately not to cry as their parents drive away and they are forced to fulfil the role of being a 'grown up' in the absence of trusted adults. Yet historically, a BS education was seen as an early strengthening of young boys, by revealing the harsh realities of the world early, so that they were prepared for life and leadership opportunities within the British Empire (Green & Kynaston, 2019).

The separation from parents can sometimes be one that is not remembered (Jack, 2020; Renton, 2018). Some experience amnesia, a form of dissociation as an unconscious reaction to an unbearable situation (Schaverein, 2015). The boy in the documentary could be experiencing the double-bind, hiding the fear that his parents may not love him whilst also being in a strange environment. He constructs the 'false self' of a pseudo-adult or the wearing of a mask (a form of dissociation or 'splitting') which personifies confidence and competence to retain the parents' affection (Duffell, 2000, p. 67). The discovery of this new survival persona designed to gain acceptance is usually unconscious, but if consciously made can be a moment of strength, the realisation that reinvention as the funny, kind, sporty, brave, intelligent one...can be his survival role (Duffell, 2000). The cost of this strategy is the loss of the authentic 'innocent and trusting' child within, now forever vigilant and looking for acceptance (Schaverein, 2015, p. 141).

In childhood, if a sense of belonging to family is not fulfilled, the child needs affirmation by proving themselves in some way, to gain the confidence required to start to build individuality (Duffell & Basset, 2016) with a permanent change of family structure children can become 'adults' too soon, taking on emotional and practical responsibilities and so affecting their development of individual identity (Levine & Kline, 2007). The boy makes one of two unconscious choices, either to become a pseudo-adult, showing independence, seemingly needing no-one, but hiding a need to belong within the group; or to become compliant, fit in and gain acceptance, but lose individuality and hide his true feelings (Duffell, 2000). Either way, a sacrifice of innocence and childhood is made (Schaverein, 2015). Duffell (2000) suggests that the classic pattern is for boarders to show a pseudo-independence, and due to the losses of security, homelife and all things feminine, develop an immature masculinity.

However, there is still a need to belong. The loss of the child's family and home is often replaced by a connection to the school buildings, the staff, and their friends (Gottlieb M. , 2021, p. 60). Support and belonging can be sought from year groups, and within those the added protection of smaller and closer 'sibling' groups (Schaverein, 2015), which offer a buffer and a level of resilience to the child (Iwaniec, 2006). These groups can offer strong and often lifelong friendships (Schaverein, 2015) and Stibbe (2016, pp. 110-111) describes how 'unhealthy attachments' can develop towards their chosen group, whether through sport, work and so forth. He continues that a strong desire for success and need for approval can detract from their loss of family, and as discussed above, this demands that a temporary personality be constructed to fulfil the needs of approval for the next decade. Public humiliation or praise also greatly influences this behaviour: the more the child adapts to the expectations of the system, the more terrifying failure becomes, and the more rewarding is praise; and so, individuality is abandoned (Okely, 1996). Constantly living with others means that nothing goes unnoticed or unjudged (Gottlieb, 2021).

The need to fulfil this new role is essential to survive the unfamiliar world of BS and requires adaptations to the authentic self. Schaverein (2015, p. 2) describes these adaptations as 'Boarding School Syndrome' an 'identifiable cluster of learned behaviours and emotional states' that originate from a BS childhood. She continues that these children have grown up in a rigid system and as a result have learnt to hide their feelings. The symptoms of Boarding School Syndrome may vary but it is the pattern of behaviour that is noticeable (ibid).

Duffell (2014b, p. xiv) describes these new behaviours as a 'façade of confidence and success, masking rigid emotional illiteracy and intimacy avoidance' which left unchallenged can develop into 'grandiosity, masochism or pathological rebellion' he has termed this the 'Strategic Survival Personality' (SSP). He states that it is based in dissociation and is constructed as a 'defensively-organised personality structure'. The word 'strategic' is used to reference the requirement of avoiding trouble and surviving, as required at school, but often continues into adulthood (Duffell, 2014, p. xiii). There are three types of SSP's, the compliers, the rebels and those that are crushed by BS (Jack, 2020). Duffell (2014) suggests that the SSP is a mask of success and confidence, which

hides the emotionally illiterate and intimacy-avoidant person inside. He explains that this is formed unconsciously in a BS childhood and grows so closely with their own 'self' that it is difficult both to identify and shed (Duffell, 2014b, p. xiv).

Descriptions from ex-boarders of these survival techniques or dissociation/splitting are variations on the same theme: self-scrutinising (Duffell & Basset, 2016) and a loss of emotion and hyper-awareness (Mair, 2005). Gottlieb (2021, pp. 61-62) adds there can be an 'alienation from self, a traumatised brain...including compartmentalisation and a strategic approach to living.'

Dissociation or splitting is encouraged by the hiding of emotions; initially by the double bind (the boy not wanting to disappoint his parents) and then exacerbated by the child maintaining two different personalities at home and at BS (Duffell & Basset, 2016). When a childhood trauma and the resultant emotions cannot be understood with the help of an adult, the incident may remain unprocessed and buried, resulting in dissociation (Schaverein, 2015). Once spoken about, the memories can begin to be processed, accepted and become part of their history (ibid).

As mentioned earlier, boarders can either become compliant to fit in and hide within mediocrity or deny all vulnerability and display an air of confidence, success and independence (Duffell & Basset, 2016). Schaverein (2015) agrees recounting how clients realised that they only had themselves to rely on, so they worked hard, became independent and pushed forward into becoming an adult and as such, now appear to the world to be a success. The experience of all-boy BS means that the world becomes divided along the lines of gender; there is masculinity and there is 'the other' (Schaverein, 2004, p. 696). The feelings of parental betrayal and the inability to stop abuse being inflicted on others, creates a sense of betraying themselves and their ethics, as well as a fear of being complicit (Schaverein, 2015). From this comes judgment of himself and feelings of shame for not standing up to bullies or indeed his own parents' wishes, the truth is that if he had the capability, he would have (Gottlieb, 2021). To survive, a denial of emotion while masking any recognition of problems, becomes an essential coping strategy within BS (Duffell, 2000, p. 7). Adams (2021) describes that for him an initial loss

of family, home and possessions, an inability to show any sadness, and feeling he was no longer integrated within his family, forced the suppression of emotion. This is demonstrated by Rivers (1918) who noted of ex-BS army officers in 1917, that it was 'not only the expression of fear, but also the emotion itself' that was denied. BS boys 'go forth with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds and undeveloped hearts' (Forster, 1964, p. 15).

As previously discussed with Duffell's term SSP, the strategic coping mechanisms are also a protection for these boys. As if in a war zone, the child is hyper-vigilant to any signs of danger; the avoidance of bullies, punishment, vulnerability and the use of a confident mask to hide the underlying anxiety that accompanies the watchfulness (2016). Wit is also useful in the deflection of showing signs of emotion or vulnerability (Schaverein, 2015), the need to always be ready with a quick-witted comment to prevent any chance of being ridiculed or seen 'as the loser' (Lewis, 2014). Duffell and Bassett (2016, p. 162) suggest that it is difficult for others to appreciate living in 'a hostile environment 24 hours a day, unsupported by parents, subject to potential bullying and abuse'.

2. 4. What does the literature tell us about the impacts of these traumatic experiences and coping responses on adult interactions?

Ex-boarders are characterised as English gentleman, confident and able, whilst hiding an inability to relate emotionally (Duffell, 2014a), but there is sometimes an opposing persona: an antagonistic, mocking bully (Duffell & Basset, 2016). Alternatively, Grier (2013) describes the ex-boarder with a veneer of charm and composure that can break to show 'underlying rage and misery' due to the continuing effect of separation as a child. Gottlieb (2021) explains that the ex-boarder is critical of others and self-protective, to hide his belief that he is not good enough. Feeling abandoned as a child, he has learnt how to present himself falsely (ibid). Schaverein's (2015) description of male ex-boarders is one of contrasts; successful but unable to verbalise emotions, bright but not very emotionally astute, loving but incapable of expressing it; a masculine man who may have had

childhood homosexual experiences. She continues that the socially successful ex-boarder feels safe by keeping his original child persona hidden into middle age, but if it emerges no one recognises it as part of his character, least of all him.

The BS survival mechanism of lying and denying to protect his own worth, fails to be a protection in adulthood (Duffell, 2000). Years of being repeatedly deprived of love has taught him to display emotions dishonestly, and in stressful situations he can cut the pretence of empathy with little cost to himself (Gottlieb, 2021). At school he survived alone, so a relationship is not deemed essential (ibid). With no acknowledgment of their own 'normalised neglect' (Duffell, 2020), and after a lifetime of accepting it was for his own good, it becomes part of one's reality and so it is not questioned (Miller, 2002). However, a sense of entitlement can be heavily defended; it is the reward for a childhood without love and home life, but also for the lack of emotional development within familial and intimate relationships (Duffell, 2014a).

Duffell (2000) reports that ex-BS men attending therapy may be doing so due to relationship difficulties. These difficulties can come about because their childhood defence systems were developed to tackle BS life and not the adult challenges of sexual/intimate relationships, family life and becoming a parent (Duffell & Basset, 2016). Growing up with only partial fulfilment of his emotional needs, he finds with age that life becomes more complex, and his protective emotional defences are reinforced (Duffell, 2000). The childhood 'emotional shut-down' survival technique that worked well for years is ineffective when he wants to invest in an intimate/caring relationship, and failure is more likely when his partner wants that too (Burr, 2021, p. 116).

Misogyny may be a trait of which the man may not even be aware, encouraged by the 'over-masculinised' BS environment (Duffell & Basset, 2016, p. 10), allied with their childhood survival mask of success and independence and the denial of a need to belong (Duffell, 2000). Despite displaying independence these men may still have not developmentally separated from their mothers. As adults, they can display a mother/son connection that is false and as a result, are unconsciously misogynistic, suffering in relating intimately, sexually and maintaining close relationships (ibid). Schaverein (2015, p. 159) explains that the men who were 'abandoned' by their mothers at BS, idolise and

crave women, yet despise them in equal measures. The effects of trauma can mark an ex-boarder by altering their capacity to love; it is concerning that this emotional pain is dismissed by society when compared to material want (Schaverein, 2011).

Schaverein (2015) discusses, that in adulthood this can manifest itself as ex-BS men idealising women and forming dependent relationships. With time, the woman naturally becomes less eager to please and more ambivalent about their relationship. Any criticism from her may confirm his conception of how 'bad' he is and the low self-worth he felt at BS. As she continues to push for her own needs and wants, it leaves the man feeling rejected, and provokes an extreme reaction; he avoids confrontation without warning, instantly withdrawing emotion (ibid). Shaverein (2015, p. 159) explains this as a reflex action; 'immediate and unconscious' adding that often, he can cut emotion entirely and end the relationship, fearful of being abandoned again.

The lack of relationship experience before marriage is suggested by Latham and Ferdow's (2018) as a reason for many ex-boarders failed marriages, but possibly also because they know they can make it alone. Schaverein (2011) has found within her own counselling a commonality between ex-boarders being unable to show or understand emotion and difficulties with intimacy. They get on with the relationship but often never discuss feelings, or alternatively as discussed, the ex-BS man finds a dependable partner to compensate for the missing love and care of his mother (Schaverein, 2015). Traditionally the marital matching of ex-BS men and women could synchronise for many years, although possibly never reaching an intimate emotional understanding of each other. Both are 'trained' in complimentary ways: men instilled with a sense of duty and entitlement, and women in subservience to 'their men' (Schaverein, 2015, p. 43).

The theme of contrasts that Schaverein (2015) discusses earlier in this chapter can be applied to homosexual relationships at BS. For boys or men who identify as gay during or after school, there is a need to overcome the inner 'homophobia' to gain a healthy self-concept (Frost & Meyer, 2009, p. 98). Also noted, is that married heterosexual men may miss the excitement of the childhood sexual contact with peers and so secretly seek out homosexual encounters (Schaverein, 2015).

Denying emotional connection to survive through school and then into adulthood can result in ex-BS men being robbed of visceral intimate and familial connection. The 'repetition of loss' within the child's closest relationship, and the realisation they could be abandoned again, can bring a permanent mistrust of intimate relationships (Brighton Therapy, 2016) and even when a long term stable relationship and family life is craved, this can be difficult for the ex-boarder (Grier, 2013). Family long for the connection and to see the real person behind the husband/father role, 'but that person disappeared a long, long time ago' (Stibbe, 2016, p. 112). Burr (2021) adds that the inability to feel safe enough to become involved intimately and show deeper feelings has limits; the problem arises when the person that loves you wants to fully know who you are. The literature heavily suggests that after years of denying emotion, talking about feelings may be difficult as these men may have no words or experience, and silence may be preferable to showing inadequacy (Sanderson-Shortt, 2019).

Generational boarding brings its own consequences, and Hellinger (2006) interestingly suggests that the trauma (in which he includes abandonment) can be carried forward into younger generations and becomes a pattern as families unconsciously repeat or make amends for the previous harm. The influence and belonging of each family member leaves its unconscious mark. Often the sense of incongruence is not identified as the legacy from a generation before, but assumed it belongs to the younger member (ibid). This is displayed with the ex-boarder now a father, becoming exasperated with his children for being young, at an age when he was already a pseudo-adult parenting himself (Duffell, 2000).

Shame also plays its part after BS; when the man tries to speak about the difficulties of BS but is only met with judgment about the privilege (Duffell, 2014b). He receives no sympathy from society and so considers himself weak (Duffell & Basset, 2016). At school he was 'made' to identify only with success, and as an adult those roles of failure are still projected onto someone else (Duffell, 2000), as happened with the mob attitude towards bullying during school (Duffell, 2000). For him to be safe, someone else needs to be weak (Schaverein, 2015).

Numbing the pain of homesickness with comfort foods, sport or working, can be a technique continued and developed in adulthood with addiction to work, food, sex or substances (Stibbe, 2016). Overworking can stem from a fear of failure and so living for the approval of others rather than from oneself (Stibbe, 2016; Duffell, 2000). The other benefit of overwork is it leaves no time to think or feel, just as at school (Burr, 2021). Timetabling with little free time distracted the child from missing home or having chance to feel lonely. Long hours at work can be a retreat from problems within married or family life, but those men who principally identify themselves with their job will find maintaining a relationship difficult (Duffell, 2000). Just as their BS experience has been normalised, they assume any relational difficulties are normal too (Duffell, 2014b).

Society's view of BSs and ex-boarders is generally formed by literature and the media, and as such ex-boarders carry an awareness of this. Accessibility to the world of BSs has been through literature, various newspaper reports, documentaries (BBC, 2013; Cutting-Edge, 2010; Luke, 1994), comedy and films (Rowling, 1997) and all have an influence on the expectation of ex-boarders. Barclay (2011, p. 27) notes that on the mention of her BS education to her counsellor, there were assumptions of 'privilege', she heard the 'accusation' and felt the rage but after years of BS being normalised she was not confident enough to counter his assumptions. Green and Kynaston (2019, p. 96) are an extreme example of this, bringing a polemic angle to literature as they see BS as a 'service industry' that is providing the requirements of those who attend and concedes that there were hardships in the 1970s or earlier. The only specific reference to trauma in their entire book is this half sentence, noting that BSs are now dealing with 'historic scandals relating to physical and sexual abuse' and concludes that 'the image of an especially stressed or unhappy *private* school child is illusory' (Green & Kynaston, 2019, pp. 98-99).

2.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, due to constraints on space the literature review has focused on the trauma experienced within all-boys British BS's prior to the Children's Act of 1989 (UK Government, 1989) and how these emotional behaviours adopted on entering BS have

had a widespread effect upon their childhood, which is ongoing into adulthood. The literature suggests that there is a denial of emotions and a forming of a persona, or a mask of independence made to fulfil the needs of acceptance and approval, in an environment where unconditional love is not available. Encouraged by the experiences and systems within BS this persona becomes normalised and is carried into adulthood. However, this mask was created by a child, and it proves inadequate in adult intimate relationships which demand raw emotion and connection. On leaving BS there is a merging with society and the understanding of its view of ex-boarders, which can influence their protective behaviour and judgment of themselves.

3. 0. CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

3. 1. Introduction

This chapter explains why IPA was chosen as the research methodology, how the research was conducted, ethical considerations and the validity of its results.

My research question explores the extent to which ‘the (often hidden) trauma of attending all-boys boarding school impacts on adult life’, through an understanding of the emotional adaptations these boys made during BS and how these have impacted into adulthood. The understanding of how ‘often hidden’ emotional adaptations might affect the boys/men both emotionally and within relational situations is more suited to the use of qualitative research rather than quantitative methods. Quantitative research ‘excels at identifying statistically significant relationships between variables’, whereas qualitative research aims to explain how the ‘macro’ such as class, age, gender affects the ‘micro’ such as everyday life and personal understanding and the individual’s actions/behaviour (Barbour, 2014, p. 13). Qualitative research offers differing means of enquiry – phenomenology, narrative, ethnographic and grounded theory (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

3. 2. Research Design and Philosophy

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has been chosen for this research study because it is ‘concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience’ (Smith, 2009, p. 1). The semi-structured interview method, with its psychological grounding and flexibility allows the participant to reflect on areas of personal meaning, that in a more structured interview process might have been missed (Barbour, 2014).

IPA encompasses phenomenology – the exploration of the experience in its own terms, hermeneutics – ‘the theory of interpretation’ and idiography – the individual experience and how that is similar or different to the experience of others (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p. 21).

Descriptive Phenomenology also looks at the lived experience, but ‘precisely as it presents itself, neither adding or subtracting from it’ (Giorgi, 1992, p. 121), this would be an unsuitable research method with ex-boarders due to their confident presentation and ability to hide emotion. I believe IPA is the correct mode of research for the ex-BS participants as it will allow flexibility and space within the interview for sensitive discussion of trauma and the recalling of distant childhood memories. As highlighted, the use of idiography is important for ex-boarders as it allows their individual feelings to be expressed in a society where there are assumptions about the privilege of BS. Likewise, the flexibility of the ‘double hermeneutics’ process (the researcher ‘trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them’ (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p. 3), is valuable when the ex-boarder may have masked feelings for many years. Willig (2013, p. 16) discusses how the role of IPA researcher is similar to that of a person-centred counsellor; as this is my training, it is also conducive of a confident yet relaxed interview style as a new researcher.

3. 3. Sampling and Recruitment

Due to the explicit nature of the research, sampling of participants was purposive. This is due to needing participants to have the ‘characteristics’, ‘perceptions and experience to engage with the research (Barbour, 2014, p. 67). The participants were a homogenous group of men who attended a British BS before the 1989 Children’s Act (UK Government, 1989) became law, from ages 8/9 to 16/18.

The Chair of Social and Political Science Departmental Ethics Committee at the University of Chester considered and granted ethical approval before any research commenced (Appendix 1). Following approval, the participant research advertisement (Appendix 2) was posted on social media (LinkedIn and Facebook), the BACP noticeboard and Boarding School Survivors website. Confidentiality required that there was no personal link between the researcher and the participant either directly or via a third party (also due to contamination of data) and that if third parties shared the advertisement that there should be no personal data trail. Anonymity and confidentiality

were also noted in the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and informed consent form (Appendix 3 & 4). Contact with myself was directed via the University of Chester's email.

Due to the influence of the Children's Act of 1989 (UK Government, 1989) prohibiting corporal punishment within BS's, participant criteria inclusion was men aged 51 plus, who attended an all-boys British boarding school from age 8/9 to 16/18 years. Participants were required to be sufficiently fluent in both written and spoken English, for ease of communication and currently living in England or Wales. Lastly, to be grounded in their school experience either by personal development or by counselling.

Four participants were recruited. (A fifth candidate was interviewed, but it was felt that the content of the data was heavily affected by other traumatic events that happened close to his BS and political influences at that time. After discussion with my supervisor this fifth transcript was omitted from the research).

3. 4. The Process of Data Collection

Participant Information Sheets (PIS) (Appendix 3) were emailed to all prospective participants (which included an outline of the questions to be considered) and after receiving email agreement, Consent Forms (Appendix 4) were emailed for signature approval. On receipt of agreement, interviews were arranged at a time and date suitable for both participant and researcher. The anticipated time duration of the interview and the need for it to be conducted in a safe, private space where the participant felt comfortable were also noted in the PIS.

The interviews were semi-structured, conducted online via Zoom and recorded. These recordings were then transcribed.

3. 5. Data Analysis

The 'multiple phases of data analysis' (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 131) began with the transcription of the interviews; the reading, re-reading and familiarity with each participants experiences in itself became an interpretative activity (Smith, 2009, p. 74). The transcripts were then analysed for 'content and language' (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p. 83) which was noted in a detailed descriptive manner initially, followed by noting 'emergent themes' latterly alongside each transcript (Photo 7, Appendix 5) (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p. 91). On completion of the individual analysis, the data taken from all four participants was brought together by means of 'convergence and divergence' (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p. 3) to identify emergent themes. This process was facilitated by each participants themes being printed in a different colour, cutting up each list of printed themes and merging them all into groupings (Photos 1 & 2, Appendix 5).

Subsumption was the process that enabled the grouped data to identify super-ordinate themes (Photos 3, 4, 5, Appendix 5). With the super-ordinate themes and sub-themes identified, the next step was to 'translate' this as a 'narrative account' (Smith, Osborn, & Osborn, 1999, p. 235). The data continued to alter and change during the writing of the 'findings' as sections of transcript were re-read (Photo 5, Appendix 5) resulting in Tables 1 and 2.

3. 6. Ethical Considerations

The safety of participants was my primary consideration throughout the research process. Awareness of the participants emotional well-being was ensured by stipulating that the participant should be grounded in their BS experience and preparing the participant for the interview questions beforehand when they were emailed within the PIS (Appendix 3). However, if the participant showed signs of emotional distress during the interview we would discuss re-arranging or ending, and the availability of local support. No cost-support agencies for men and ex-boarders were listed within the PIS (Appendix 3).

Confidentiality is crucial and there was verbal confirmation that the participant felt able to talk openly before the interview. Pseudonyms and altered place names have been used throughout all the transcripts and written data, to ensure confidentiality. Finally, directions about how to use Zoom were emailed within the PIS and at the beginning of each online video call an alternative means of conducting the interview was verbally agreed upon.

There was also a self-awareness of the effects that interviews may have upon myself and memories of my own BS experience. My dissertation supervisor was available for support, additionally personal counselling or support from Student Wellbeing support within the University.

3. 7. Validity

The validity of the research process is important to prove to the reader that the data collected is trustworthy (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). The traditional route of judging the validity of research is by means of 'reliability, internal validity and external validity' (ibid).

The role of the methodology chapter, evidencing paperwork and photographic proof of analysis has validated the participants' 'reliability' and ensured that if the same methods of research were applied again, similar results would be achieved. This is built initially upon the training for the research and then on the systematic gathering of data, the conditions under which the interviews were held, the transcription of the data and its analysis. It might be argued that the re-reading of the participants' transcripts and the replaying of audio tapes provides 'internal validity'. The micro elements of the interview become more apparent to the researcher during the research and are consequently noted within the original transcripts along with the annotated ones. The 'external validity' comes from Table 1, giving background information on the participants before BS and the years attended, indicating their current age and context of life experience.

However, there is growing concern that the 'validity and reliability' of qualitative research has been evaluated on quantitative terms, rather than an evaluation appropriate to the method (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p. 179). Yardley (2000) is cited, suggesting the

principles of 'sensitivity to context', 'commitment to rigour', 'transparency and coherence' and 'impact and importance' (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p. 181-183).

'Sensitivity to context' was employed in the recruitment of participants, building connections where the advertisement could be posted, achieving a purposive and homogenous sample to facilitate a good interview and gain the best data. The process of double hermeneutics when analysing the data, and in the presentation to the reader, again involves 'sensitivity to context.' Finally, knowledge of the academic research that was gathered for the literature review, also supported the data.

'Commitment' has been demonstrated by attention to the participants during interviews and in the analysis of the data afterwards. 'Rigour' was shown in the selection of participants to match the criteria for the research question, the interviewing skills being both enquiring and professional; and balanced narrative accounts being shown within the findings.

Yardley's third principle is 'transparency and coherence'. Transparency has been shown within Table 1 in Findings with the background details of the participants and an explanation of the research process within this chapter. Coherence has been shown in the writing-up of this research to provide the reader with a clear understanding, and in the following of IPA research methodology.

The final principle is 'impact and importance', and the aim of this research is to not only answer the research question but for it to be of value to those that read it.

3.8. Limitations

One of the research participants had worked professionally as a counsellor to ex-boarders and a second participant had previously worked in an academic position within an all-boys BS. Although both spoke during the interviews from personal experience there could be contamination from their previous work lives. However, it could be argued that these participants have an extra breadth of knowledge that makes their data more relevant.

The BS literature has limitations due to it being mostly written by ex-boarders who endured BS and in later life became aware of coping mechanisms from childhood that were presenting problems within their adult lives, and so the literature is slanted towards their own experience of trauma. Others that may have enjoyed BS or who have disconnected with their BS past are therefore not represented in the literature, bringing a bias to the research. Likewise, the societal view of ex-boarders is equally subject to survivorship bias. Those who are proud of a BS education and have been successful in life tend to be the visible examples of the cohort. Those who have struggled and felt they have failed expectation have been largely silent and are not seen as part of the public image of the ex-boarder. This means that these two vastly different outcomes of the same experience are not directly comparable in research and neither view of BS is fully balanced.

4. 0. CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

There are two super-ordinate themes – Loss and Innocence - representing the boy’s experience at boarding school (BS) and beyond. The remaining three super-ordinate themes - Institution, ‘Fighting my corner’ and Self, show their coping strategies and ‘survival’. Each theme uses data to demonstrate the effects where possible from childhood and adulthood. The subject is broad, but this chapter shows the main elements of trauma within the BS experience for the four participants.

Table 1 gives a basic history for each participant before BS, their family situation and their years of attendance. (The participants’ names have been changed to pseudonyms throughout the research to ensure confidentiality).

Table 1 - Brief Profile of Participants

Name	Age at BS	Years of attendance at BS	Experience
James	8-18	1970-1980	Younger sister at home with parents. James attended day school, followed by different Preparatory and Senior boarding schools
Peter	9-16	1961-1968	Family living abroad, no fixed home-base, two older siblings at BS. When parents and two younger siblings returned to UK, one remained at home, the other attended local BS. Peter attended various day primary schools and one boarding school.

Louis	7-18	1971-1982	Older brother at same school. Older father busy with business and interests, mother at home. Louis attended local day schools, followed by the one boarding school.
Henry	9-18	1955-1964	Youngest of 4. Father working away from home frequently. Mother at home. Until age 9, Henry was home educated with 7 other children, followed by different Preparatory and Senior boarding schools.

Themes and Sub-Themes

Table 2 – Innocence

4.2. Loss	4.3. Inexperience
4.2.1. - Parents/ Family 4.2.2. - Home / Safe space 4.2.3. - Adult Guidance 4.2.4. - Safety	4.3.1. - Knowledge of sex 4.3.2. - Relating to Girls/Women

Table 3 – Survival

4.4. Institutional Safety	4.5. 'Fighting my corner'	4.6. Self
4.4.1. - Hierarchy/ Rules/ Timetabling 4.4.2. - Fitting in/ Acceptance by BS Friends	4.5.1. - Avoidance 4.5.2. - False Persona 4.5.3. - Finding Safe space	4.6.1. - Expectations of BS boy 4.6.2. - Expectations of Self

4. 2. Super-ordinate Theme – Loss

A theme of loss was generated from the data analysis of the participants' lived experience. The childhood innocence of the boys arriving at BS (aged 7-9) was followed by shock at the realities of boarding without the support of family and home, along with further shock at losing trusted adults they expected to keep them safe and the impacts of that loss.

4. 2. 1. Parents and Family

There is little or no memory of that first day. James speaks of his first day, *'I just remember realising that I was there, and they weren't....I probably blocked it, I don't recall it at all'*(53-54). Peter has no recollection of his first day: *'I don't remember arriving there...being shown around or settling in'*(25-27) *'we blank it because it's just too traumatic...it was so unexpected...such a big impact'*(30-32). Louis's memory of his first day is vague: *'I don't...remember the first day a lot'*(29). Henry remembers his parents leaving, but says *'I don't think I really had any sense of what was happening...'*(29-30).

Family connections became broken. For James, family *'relationships just disappeared. I knew they were relatives...there was...no shared experience'*(485-487). He continues *'it couldn't be resolved of course...there was...nothing there'*(492-493). Peter describes, *'I went off and my younger brothers were still at home...I was...envious of their ability to be at home,...my elder siblings, I didn't really relate to...they were moving on in their own lives'*(841-844). Louis joined BS a year early to support his older brother, yet rarely saw him. Henry recalls after his parents left, being *'just....dreadfully, dreadfully homesick'*(32-33). Homesickness reignited regularly with *'re-establishment of contact and then them going away again at the end of the day or the end of the weekend...and... holidays'*(40-42).

James' later family life was *'a total shock, because I had no experience, I was only used to institutional life'*(333), so *'It caused...lots of problems when I first got married'*(322-323). Peter describes his own divorce and loss of contact with his children, as *'another whole story of abandonment'*(1017) and adds *'I feel...loss and grief of family and sibling*

association'(779). It was important to Louis, to have a *'more normal family life...[and has] spent huge amounts of time with the kids and loved them'(614-616)*. Henry agrees *'I wanted...a close family of my own...And absolutely was never going to send my children away to school'(363-365)*.

4. 2. 2. Home/ Safe Space

James describes his first day at school *'I just remember things were cold...alone and strange'*. He explains *'I was occupying two worlds... home and school. Neither of them mixed with the other...sort of...schizophrenic I suppose....one person in one place and another in another'(463-466)*. Peter echoes, *'I just used to see them [family] in the holidays...home becomes an alien place ... school becomes where you're more comfortable'* there is a *'split... between home, school'(1232-1235)*.

This contrast grew bringing a sense of isolation at home. For Peter, other than siblings *'you wouldn't have very much contact with anybody'(345-346)*, Louis agrees *'I never had any friends at home'(287)*. Henry also felt isolated, *'long stretches of time where there was no interaction with anybody or anything'(318-319)*.

Individuality and belonging at home was important. Aged 10/11 Peter discovered that some old toys had been discarded *'I felt absolutely bereft. All my past has suddenly just wiped out, all my emotional attachment to it was gone'(900-901)*. Henry describes his loss, *'I missed my mother...the home...the animals...my sister...at night, I would just...constantly go back and walk around the house, in my head...I'd go around every...room and inch of the house'(46-49)*. Additionally, *'this sudden anonymity, this...switch from being known as Henry' to being a surname, 'that's quite disorienting.....It's almost like being a number. And of course, you are given the number'(106-108)*.

Peter reflects *'I never felt at home with myself. It's taken me a long time to get ... a sense of 'this is my home''(1174-1176)*, *"I think the experience of boarding school makes you homeless'(1177)*.

4. 2. 3. Loss of Individual Adult Support

James describes the loss of reliance on parents or trusted adults for support at age 8, *'You can't really... guide yourself, you spend your life doing as you're told... Suddenly, it was down to me and I'd never done that before'*(62-64). Peter describes *'I became an adult...at nine...that first day at school, you're on your own. You sink or swim...because your parents aren't there'*(1224-1227). For Henry, the shock and *'just the total strangeness...you're under the control of people you don't know'*(54-55).

James continues by contrasting the involvement of responsible adult support, *'Prep school was okay, bits of it were good'*(74), in comparison *'senior school was a disaster'*(75)...*'controlled by the senior boys; the staff did nothing except turn up and teach a lesson and go away'*(92-93). At age 15, James describes *'pleading'*(246) with his parents not to send him back and instead of support, *'I was told that...I wasn't going somewhere else'*(248-249).

The expectation of adult support/protection continues; Peter was shocked at the behaviour of a teacher he thought kind, *'he accused me of talking and I said it wasn't me, emphatically, and he slapped me around the face'*(186-187). Expectations of support were not realised by Louis's *'good'*(173) Housemaster, when he and others were long term victims of bullying, there was *'surprise that more action wasn't taken sooner'*(177). Again, a *'really nice'*(371-372) teacher witnessed Louis being bullied and failed to support, instead he called him a *'cry baby'*(363), *"I remember thinking that's really, really bad"*(363-364) he reflects that was *'one of the worst hours of my life'*(372-373).

Henry recalls being emotionally overwhelmed, and hearing *'that what I needed was disciplining, and some more sane voice...saying just to...leave me for the time being'*(99-101). Henry emphasised *'sane'* and it seemed that one voice was important to him.

Peter reflects on a lack of individual praise from adults. *'I don't remember... anything that related to me individually, where I was made to feel special'*(545-547).

4. 2. 4. Loss of Safety

Peter recalls fear and *'punishment, corporal punishment... was part of the norm'*(188-189) at BS. The trauma of an incident was followed by *'fear and anxiety...tension, and then being shamed'*(221-222). Peter, who considered himself as *'quite a congenial, passive, amenable person'*(219-220), feared not meeting expectations and being physically hurt, *'it was very frightening at the time ...'what have I done?'...'and is it all gonna fall apart?' and...'I'm going to get hurt and punished'*(200-201). Henry agrees that the BS system was *'a regime built on fear that...if you don't behave, you'll get beaten'*(55-56). James reflects *'there weren't times, the whole thing...was traumatic...We all lived in constant fear'*(153-156).

James intimates the fear and trauma stemming from the control of older boys and prefects, *'if they'd had a bad time when they first went, they made sure that kids who just arrived had an equally bad time...And, and so it was a constant nastiness..... and no control'*(95-97). Henry agrees that the older boys abused their power towards the younger. He describes the *'beating part of it, was at night-time'*(141), the six prefects *'all together, yell as loudly as they could'*(144)...*'but it's that scream...in the dark. And waiting in your bed. Even if you've done nothing wrong...thinking 'Is it me they are after?'*(150-151).

Louis recalls bullying being covered up: *'kneeling on you, hurting your arms, he [the bully] wouldn't punch you in the face, he wasn't that stupid'*(119-120). Other than Louis's very early *'basic minor bullying'*(80), he suffered again, *'I was not the most bullied...probably fourth in line...But, even if you knew you weren't the worst... it was still awful'*(106-108), also the secondary trauma that *'you're witnessing against...your friends'*(118). The inability to avoid or escape plays a role in the fear *'you share the same dormitory. So, it was difficult to get away'*(148-149).

For James, even driving past his BS forty years later can retrigger the terror, *'I will still feel physically ill'*(76), he adds *'if I ever become a multimillionaire, I shall buy it and pull it down'*(85). Henry revisited his BS, although it was *'30 years...before I could bear to go back'...*and...*'not in term time'*(424-425); it was a case of *'not wanting to go back*

somewhere where you've been abused...it was just too traumatic'(432-433). More recently, Henry revisited his Prep School and said 'my memory's stuck back in late 50s'(463-464)...'now, I've got a new picture. So that helps'(463-464). Peter agrees 'I get triggered...quite viciously, at times...I will just react...it is just a PTSD trigger, but it[s]...still...quite shocking'(1187-1193).

4. 3. Super-ordinate Theme – Inexperience

A lack of life experience or understanding of intimate relationships both from a sexual experience viewpoint and in relating to girls/women threads through the participants' interviews. This initial inexperience develops during their lifetime into an understanding.

4. 3. 1. Knowledge of sex

Henry relates his experience of the boys' sexual contact at Prep school was developmental *'curiosity in people's bodies'(468)... but wonders if it was an 'attempt at...closeness...it was absolutely rampant'(469-470). Peter recollects 'homophobic fear'(313) was prevalent. 'You didn't want to be seen as the fairy or...the pretty boy or anything that was ...related to intimacy or contact or...homosexuality was a no, no, you didn't want to be called a homo'(313-315). Louis agrees that homophobia altered the boys behaviour, 'to be called gay was...one of the biggest insults, and you probably would have got bullied by a lot more people'(253-254), and continues being 'gay'...'would have probably felt awful'(252-253) and that despite statistics there were no 'openly gay'(249) boys in his BS.*

Peter describes how at 14/15 years old there was interest amongst friends in pornographic literature *'but it was very much sex, it wasn't loving relationships'(331-332). Henry recalls the importance of getting a girlfriend 'that's the first thing, then...sexual experience that's another thing...that's how you begin to see them...talk about women as sex objects, that's...kind of how you begin'(380-382).*

For Louis, *'girls were a rare thing...I never had a relationship(282)...it probably still took me a term and a half to two terms to, to get my first...girlfriend'(302-303)*, at University, but was unconcerned because he knew *'my other friends were struggling just as much'(304-305)*. When he did have intimacy, *'I was...looking for a relationship rather than...a one-night stand'(313-314)*.

James met his future wife after years of being single, *'I had in my mind how things obviously would be...without...making sure that they were'(510-511)* he continues, *'I got into it [the relationship] in a big way and I had to make it happen, it was me'(540-541)*.

4. 3. 2. Relating to Girls/Women

Peter expresses how he was *'quite fearful about...anything to do with intimacy, because...I had no experience of women'(324-326)* other than family. Henry explains *'nearly all the teachers were...men'(373-374)* girls felt like *'another species...you're just not natural with them. Because...you've not had them as mates'(375-376)*. Louis agrees, he *'never really had any friends at home'(286)* so, holiday jobs, provided his experience of women, *'learning a bit of banter...standing up for myself when they were deliberately trying to...take the mickey'(332-334)*. In contrast, James avoided women *'totally, I didn't know about them. I knew they were different...I didn't interact'(431-433)*. When forced to interact at work his inexperience brought *'rather inadequate professional contact'(439)*, and he *'could often upset'(439)* by being *'totally direct'(448)*, *'I didn't think that I'd done anything wrong'(441)*.

Henry feels that his broken close relationship with his mother meant he could never let himself *'be that vulnerable again...I think I found emotional intimacy...very uncomfortable...I want it, but I can't bear it'(398-400)*. He admits in his first marriage he *'could never quite let my ex-wife in, in the way that she would have liked'(405)*. Similarly, in early relationships Peter *'wanted the emotion...but...on my terms, I wanted to be loved. But I didn't want...responsibility...of making them feel loved'(1084-1086)*. He adds *'my relationship with women changed greatly as I got older'(385-386)* and he was *'so in favour of co-education'(371-372)* and that he *'ended up working mainly with women'(383-384)*.

On the subject of women he continues, that he has had '*real closeness with several people*'(403).

Later, Peter sought the security of '*dependent relationships, where I expected the other person to take care of me...organise me*'(522-523). He married his first wife aged 22 and '*I put her on a pedestal...in a very reverential and deferential way...she would make most of the decisions*'(957-958). The marriage '*met all my needs at the time. It was secure...and...that's what I thought...normal married life is*'(983-985). Until the marriage ended at '*the age of 40, I just went along with the stream of life, I had no awareness that I can make...choices*'(514-515).

Louis however is '*celebrating 30 years of very happy marriage...so...no, it hasn't affected it in any way*'(298-300). All four participants are currently married/remarried.

4. 4. Super-ordinate Theme – Institution

The institution of BS played a large role in the boys' lives, they lived within its hierarchy, rules and timetabling, but also needed to be accepted to feel safety. The structure of the BS was one that could not be escaped, they could submit and conform, or rebel either outwardly or inwardly. It appears that the chosen routes are still in evidence with the ex-boarders today.

4. 4. 1. Hierarchy, Rules and Timetabling

The hierarchy at BS was very impactful for the participants. James comments '*they call it tradition... it was completely out of hand*'(102-103), he tells us that their power over the younger boys was justified as '*as teaching senior pupils to become responsible adults*'(117-118). Peter references friendship groups as having hierarchy. '*I wasn't a leadership of any group*'(88). It seems at school that not being a leader or breaking rules but occupying the middle-ground had advantages for Peter: '*you didn't want to be*

punished or demonised or attacked...so just sit in the middle,...it's a pretty dead space, was actually quite, quite safe'(564-566).

Timetabling and rules have continued to play a major part in James' life *'I'm completely institutionalised'(391), he explains 'it's easier for me not to think and sort of wait to be told'(396-397).* He continues, as a long term single man he *'lived on autopilot...That's how my life had always been...I thought everyone was like that'(335-338).* Peter's first job was within a *'familial type of institution...very democratic... the harder you work, the more benefits we all got. And I liked that, that was sort of collectivism'(530-532)* he found here the familiarity of an institution and rules, but also the *'familial'(533)* support. He also understands *'boarders who become workaholics, because that's where your home is...at your work'(1237-1238).* Louis has always been *'organised'(228)* and an employee but recognises his *'nature was quite settled in...that regime'(234).*

James appreciates the value of being good at timekeeping, however *'I'm constantly slightly stressed about making sure that I'm not late'(200-201).* The arrival of untimetabled young children into his life brought *'chaos, which terrifies me'(349),* leaving him feeling *'out of control'(357).* Peter found on leaving school, he struggled to organise himself *'what do you do with your time?'(485-486).* James demonstrated discomfort at speaking against school authority in the interview, by suggesting *'You might find yourself in a lot of trouble, a lot of big institutions...perhaps you'll be assassinated'(592-593).*

Henry expresses acceptance of and an ongoing resistance towards the institutional framework: *'you've lost your freedom, really, to do what you want. And you're institutionalised to follow their rules...and agenda'(63-65).* Henry showed disdain for unjust rules and *'because of my attitude...[wasn't]...to be picked'(169)* as a prefect but would use his senior *'authority'(174)* in *'beneficial ways'(177).* He continues *'it's very difficult to live a different life...you're controlled by the structure...and it's reinforced by punishment'(210-211)* but also resignation: *'you have to if you're doing it for nine years'(223-224).* However, in adulthood, Henry will *'avoid institutions'(226)* with *'strict structures'(227)* and *'formal occasions of any description'(228)* and *'when I've been in a position of power, I've held those reins very loosely'(249),* but notably is *'on time for every appointment'(254).*

4. 4. 2. Fitting in / Acceptance by BS friends

Peter's parents hoped that BS would engender *'lasting friendships'*(78) after an early nomadic homelife. *'I did fairly well, socially. I felt I belonged to the school, I belonged to a group of friends'*(86-87) but talks of being *'very mediated by others'*(384) opinions and responses. He continues that being at BS 24/7, *'judgments or statements'*(377) made a big impression on you, as there was *'nobody else mediating any of those impacts'*(378). He became skilled at *'high vigilance, that ability to pre-empt, how do I need to be in this situation to be okay?'*(705-706) and rooted in safety needs *'how can I be attached...feel safe, secure?'*(707-708)

For Louis, it was *'instilled'*(349) that *'you tried to suppress'*(346) sad emotions to be accepted. At his previous school Louis was bullied *'for being the cleverest'*(515) and found acceptance at BS by conforming. A year younger than his peers, he *'enjoyed...[being]...the thickest in the class'*(510-511) but participation in sport *'seven days a week'*(188) was important. After BS, Louis reflects on his school life as mostly positive, with continued friendships *'I'm fairly loyal, I still meet up with two or three of my school friends and have done every year for forever'*(419-420). He is the *'instigator of'*(427) reunions and holds *'on to friendships that I value over...many, many years'*(428-429) and a loyalty to the school *'I liked the outdoor life, the sport, the freedom'*(62-62) and the *'good range of sports'*(189) and having revisited praises, *'it's just phenomenal now'*(190).

With Henry living within, but at odds with, the BS system his method of fitting in was to keep *'a low profile'*(183) *'not to draw attention to myself unduly to get negative treatment'*(185-186), yet by doing this *'you just hide your feelings, to some extent'*(186-187).

4. 5. Super-ordinate Theme – 'Fighting my corner'

There appears to be a determination to 'fight' or survive by whatever self-care/survival means the participants could find within themselves. Avoidance and disguise seem to

have been a way to find some control within the system. Vigilance and avoidance to stay safe, a false persona to disguise their subversion and 'escaping' to a safe space to find temporary relief.

4. 5. 1. Avoidance

James' cognitive avoidance of BS difficulties became a behaviour: *'I avoid...I'm actually adept at that...I can just put up and ignore'*(424-425) and *'choose not to see it'*(422-423).

Peter believes he suppressed memories of BS as protection, *'it's just too traumatic for the psyche...to accept'*(30-31). A protective *'pattern...that I still struggle with occasionally'*(157-158) has been *'to cut off'*(159) or split, *'It's going to be this or that'*(553). Peter found safety in being *'mediocre'* or *'neutral'*, a tendency to *'capitulate, fit in...adapt'*(1025) and learning to be *'highly vigilant'*(589) and *'more aware and able to manage risk'*(594-595) than others.

Louis recalls the normalised hiding of emotions, *'no one wants to...risk having their status lowered by appearing to be weak or a cry baby...but it was very, very instilled'*(348-349).

Henry attempted to evade difficulties by trying *'not to participate in the things that I didn't believe in...not to draw attention to myself unduly to get negative treatment'* (184-186).

4. 5. 2. False personas

James describes his perception of false identities surrounding BS, *'nothing's quite real, it's like living in a world of smoke and mirrors. You don't know what...or who you're up against... powers that you can't see, that you don't know, that you don't even understand'*(170-174).

Peter elaborates: *'I was a covert rebel...and I took this out into adult life. On the surface...conforming, compliant, well behaved...conscious of fitting in and...not being a disappointing person...underneath...a seething, rebellious anger'*(122-126). Henry's

safety mechanism was to *'develop a kind of false self, a kind of ...polite, conformist sort of exterior, when you're actually full of subversion underneath'*(187-188). Henry wonders if even the sexual comfort found with peers at Prep school had an element of thrilling rebelliousness, *'maybe it was part of subversion, doing it actually while sitting around a table discussing...divinities...'*(479-480).

In adulthood Peter continued a *'false self-projection that I'm okay and have to be okay, all the time...and learn quickly'*(475-476). On leaving BS he could cut ties with friends, *'why would I want to stay attached to something that wasn't relevant or was in the past?'*(155-156). He reflects on his reaction to the shock of others regarding his toys being discarded, and *'it's like what do you want to get so emotional about that for?...it was my normal and I didn't know any different. But I can explore it myself now...reflect...and think...how did you survive that?'*(876-878).

4. 5. 3. 'Finding a safe space'

Peter reflects that *'school becomes where you're more comfortable'*(1234-1235) rather than home. At BS, he found the church a safe place in his role as sacristan.

Louis found safety at times when he *'didn't have an agenda'*(200), break times and before bed, but also when he played *'sport'*.

Similarly, Henry found safety outside *'on the playing fields with a friend'*(509) or *'swimming....you were free of rules and regulations...you're outside... it feels better and you're not in uniform'*(529-532). Also, in senior school sharing a room with a friend *'that was our room'*(504) or when *'you could have your own room'*(504-505).

4. 6. Super-ordinate Theme – Self

This theme is around the expectations BS brought from others and with the BS background personal expectations of themselves. The participants own sense of self, expectations of others and awareness of the preconceptions of BS pupils has

undoubtedly affected their lives. As mature adults there is a recognition of survival behaviours, and these appear to be a subject for reflection amongst the participants.

4. 6. 1. Expectations of BS boy/ man

James relates *'I knew I was privileged but... I felt under-privileged and abused and harmed'*(253-254). At university other students *'imagined that I only got where I was because my parents had money'*(308), *'there are benefits in terms of...quality of education'*(570-571), but the downsides are *'far bigger and more detrimental'*(571-572). *'I can't argue...public perception'*(277), but it *'hurts'*(300) that *'people don't understand that, won't accept it and think you're just a rich kid who's complaining'*(299-300).

At a job interview Louis felt *'categoric discrimination against the fact that I'd gone to a Public School'*(477-478), and *'would deliberately not tell people'*(448) in case *'it might be counted against me in friendship groups'*(448-449). Henry had learnt mentioning he attended BS could bring *'instant dislike'*(300) or *'this kind of rejection because of where I'd been'*(302), also embarrassment around the *'reputation that...Public Schools have, and not wanting to be thought of in those ways...I wanted to be as ordinary as possible'*(270-272). This negative reaction was exemplified when a school holiday friendship was forbidden *'because we were essentially from different worlds'*(286), he comments it would be good *'not to have that held against you...to be accepted as just a normal person'*(275-276).

Henry felt judged and *'so uncomfortable with my upper-class, public-school voice...I couldn't hide...my way of speaking'*(294-298) and yet knew *'it was a privileged education and I think I felt as an adult...I hadn't...made the most of it'*(262-263). Peter felt both from his parents' and BS a *'feeling of being judged or measured or monitored and wanting to just not be accountable in that way'*(797-798). For Louis, BS brought expectation from his father of *'all the right things that he wanted me to do'*(572) at *'the age of 13/14...I knew for the first time he was so upset(576-577)'* and *'so incredibly disappointed'*(566). James remembers *'I was expected to do well'*(235) and as an adult, feels *'like a failure as a result of over high expectations'*(236-237). Still, he feels a *'lack of confidence...esteem...self-*

belief...A constant feeling of not living up to expectation...it permeates everything'(576-578).

Peter felt his lack of life experience would mean *'if I told people I went to boarding school, they would then know, that I didn't know and... potentially expose me...to being inadequate'(673-674),* but in later life has used the *'benefits'(1128)* of BS *'advantageously'(1129),* which in turn *'somehow gives me satisfaction'(1130).*

4. 6. 2. Expectations of self

In BS Peter became *'a little adult, far beyond my years, but...that was my normal. I should be okay doing that'(1217-1218)* and learnt a confident ability *'to manoeuvre or manipulate... to be in a much safer...or in control position'(596-597).* With confidence he can present *'as being quite expert...I'm quite skilled in...social-related situations'(1137-1139).* Despite not meeting the academic requirements for his first job *'I felt...capable of doing it'(256)* and self-observed that he felt *'superior'(665)* to the incoming trainees, *'I was one of these elite...five O-levels, private school, and now they're letting all the riffraff in'(663-664).*

Louis shows the expectation of self-reliance from age 6 with the role of keeping *'my brother company'(24-25),* and his little adult theme is echoed *'I was about 12. So, I was actually...quite grown up'(350-351)* and his noticing that he *'probably cried less than a normal child of that age'(342).* His denial of emotional vulnerability is shown, *'the fact I had cried was like, 'Shit, I've cried'. And then it got even worse'(375-376),* he believes adverse childhood experiences prove a strength in adulthood, thinking *'I'm just gonna get through this and life will be better tomorrow(752-753)'. Louis, at times has been 'unwilling to take it anymore'(400), will 'stand the ground'(394) and 'be so stubborn'(402), he wonders if this stems from 'experiences of bullying'(755).*

Henry reflects on his loss of a *'normal'(411) 'childhood...it undermined...my sense of self...my sense of self confidence...I think to some extent, I've been in reaction against it all my life'(411-414)* because if you do not fit the BS expectations *'it undermines your*

sense of...that you're okay'(196-197). 'I'm still working through it...I think I'm still processing it in a way'(408-409).

4. 7. Conclusion

The vast amount of data collected from the voiced experiences of the four participants covered a very broad subject area. The following chapter will discuss the experience of the participants and how this relates to the current literature.

5. 0. CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5. 1. Introduction

The Discussion aims to bring together the participants voices from the previous chapter with current research around the effect that BS has on ex-pupils' adult lives. The four participants' different experiences, schools, backgrounds, and life stories add different complexions to the data and yet common themes occur in their survival mechanisms during BS and in later life. The data used in the findings chapter will be the basis for discussion and it will be structured by the super-ordinate themes used previously.

5. 2. Super-ordinate Theme - Loss

The separation and BS arrival traumas experienced by these young boys aligns with statements in the literature that the first day is relevant to them but not necessarily one that they remember. The common mechanism of dissociation or 'splitting' (Duffell, 2000; Duffell & Basset, 2016; Schaverein, 2015; Renton, 2018) relates partly to these experiences. Eight-year-old James and nine-year-old Peter have no memory of their first day. Seven-year-old Louis has a 'vague' recollection, although he was starting school with his elder brother and nine-year-old Henry has a memory of his parents leaving but remembers a sense of confusion.

'Trauma at the Threshold' is a term coined by Partridge (2007) to express the breaking of bonds and parent/family connection between child as they enter BS. This corresponds with James's assertion that the relationship with family was 'ruptured/ broken', and all the participants voiced feelings of abandonment by parents throughout the transcripts. However, the loss of trusted adults, although recognised in the literature, appears to be a fundamental loss, far more impactful than the literature suggests. For Henry it manifested as 'dreadful homesickness' or disenfranchised grief (Corr, 1999). Schaverein's (2015) assertion that the repeated breaking of bonds brings the fear of abandonment in later life is confirmed by Henry's inability to show vulnerability in his first marriage. However, the breakdown of Peter's first marriage raised 'a whole other story of

abandonment' and his need of belonging is now met with increased connection to his siblings.

Okeley's (1996) discussion of the disconnection and isolation from community, differing social classes and girls/women corroborates the participants' desire to 'fit in' with their communities as discussed by Peter, Louis and Henry. James also intimated that this would have been his choice, but he was unsure how to socially integrate with women. Seven to ten years of living at BS would therefore appear to have created a complete disconnect with society in all participants except Louis, who had the benefits of a holiday job.

Disconnection and separation between BS and home grew as the contrasts became more apparent. James and Peter speak of being separate personalities in each place and Peter, Louis and Henry all noticed isolation in the holidays with no local friends. Schaverein (2015, p. 50) explains the splitting of personality into a 'home' and 'boarding' child. This is another mild form of dissociation, caused by confusion about where 'home' really is (ibid).

The findings agree that a physical connection to belongings can link to feelings and be an attempt at continuing a relationship after a great loss (Lendrum & Syme, 2004; Jack & Devereux, 2019). This is borne out by Peter's discarded toys representing his earlier childhood at home with family, and Henry's comfort in continuing his physical connection with home in his imagination. Their loss of home was deeply felt and contrasted starkly with BS, where, as Henry tells us, you even lose your first name.

It is essential for children's development that adults allow children to feel 'safe, valued and competent' (Levine & Kline, 2007, p. 382), yet Peter relates that he was never 'individually...made to feel special' at school. Decades later, Henry remembers and values one 'sane' teacher's voice amongst several other judgmental ones, at a time when he felt emotionally overwhelmed. James keenly felt the loss of supportive adults, replaced by the fear of older boys when he joined his main BS, and Louis struggled to understand the lack of support from teachers. This corresponds with Schaverein (2015, p. 50) who writes that children at BS need the support of adults as witnesses to experiences and mediate feelings. However, although the literature notes the loss of individual adult

support available, it appears to have under-emphasised the extent of the damage caused and how this exacerbated the boys' trauma. In adulthood, the losses manifest themselves in highly polarised ways, both of which are found in the literature. In some cases, they will crave the security and support which they lacked during BS and become highly dependent in relationships (e.g., Peter and Louis). In contrasting cases (typified by James initially and Henry in his first marriage), they become isolated, even within relationships, always vigilant of danger and abandonment. Having learnt the only person they could rely on was themselves, they become fearful of relying on anyone else.

The findings show that the loss of safety is impactful to all the participants. The experience of physical and emotional trauma being 'repressed' until the psychological impact is recognised in adulthood described by Schaverein (2015) is also reflected by the participants. Peter remembers how punishable behaviour was followed by 'fear and anxiety', 'tension' and then 'shame'. James speaks of the older boys bringing 'constant nastiness' during the day. Henry adds how this fear of punishment extends into their night-time, adding to the terror of darkness, mixed with not knowing if it was him who was to be beaten, which questions Duffell's (2020) suggestion that their beds were often one of the only safe places they had.

Duffell (2000, p. 190) writes that the bullying victim, having no means of escape, can have their sense of self affected for life, and this is confirmed by Louis, who speaks of bullying injuries purposely made in out-of-sight places, the secondary trauma of seeing friends bullied and the inability to escape when they are in the same 'house' or dormitory. In adulthood, Louis also references similar bullying in work situations and notices how he reacts against these and refuses to show vulnerability. Similarly, Peter recognises that reminders of BS behaviour from others can suddenly trigger him to have an unexpected outburst.

Alex Renton (2014) revisited his BS as an adult and writes that a place of past trouble triggers both physical and emotional symptoms. Likewise, James felt physically unwell driving past his previous BS and Henry struggled emotionally to revisit even decades after leaving.

In the absence of parents, the boys reported looking to the teachers for support and feeling shocked when this was not forthcoming, but rather replaced with victimisation or corporal punishment. This is another example of them having no escape. Schaverein (2015, p. 24) writes of prefects and older boys having progressed through the system and now as proxy adults earning the right to punish; Peter and Henry both agreed that the whole BS system was built on maintaining control with fear and punishment. Justice was rare, the unwritten rule of not reporting bad behaviour was commonplace which Henry terms as 'skewing' and this corresponds with Kennedy-Moore, (2018). This fear still affects them in later life. Louis exemplified the attitude of not speaking badly about or 'skewing' his previous teachers during the interview. James still appears to be in fear of breaking the rules by joking that the research might cause repercussions with the BS institutions.

5. 3. Super-ordinate Theme - Inexperience

Schaverein (2015, p. 217) notes that a lack of affection and maternal love could explain premature interest in sexual experiences, and peer pressure causing the premature need to appear knowledgeable. Henry also questioned whether the sexual contact amongst boys at Prep school simply provided physical and emotional comfort or was actually developmental curiosity.

The theme of sexuality is continued with Peter and Louis both describing how fear around homosexuality brought a strong homophobic culture within their schools, mainly driven by the fear of bullying. Louis points out that statistically there must have been homosexual boys, but he knew of none. Schaverein (2015) and Gottlieb (2005) discuss how the bias against homosexuality can leave them questioning their sexuality in later life. However, this does not appear to be the case with these participants. They all appeared securely heterosexual and demonstrated no latent concerns about their sexuality.

Henry states that only having pornography as a reference, girls were seen as, and spoken about as 'sex objects' and how sexual experience with young women brought status, which aligns with Beckett and Taylor's (2011, p. 103) assertion that this a natural

developmental stage for adolescent boys. The suggestions that all-male BS engenders misogyny in boys (Duffell & Basset, 2016; Sawer & Hope, 2021; Halfon, 2021) was not my experience of the adult participants, who all spoke of women with respect and care. Henry and Peter both discussed being interested as young men in the sexual experience of relationships, but Henry particularly emphasised that his relationship with women changed greatly throughout his life. His work life was primarily with women, and he was very much in favour of co-education, suggesting that inexperience in relationships with girls/women was the problem rather than the misogyny suggested by the literature. This corresponds with James being unsure how to interact socially with women in early adulthood and inadvertently being seen as rude.

The suggestion in literature that lack of experience may make talking about feelings difficult, and silence may be preferable to showing inadequacy (Sanderson-Shortt, 2019) has some parallels in the findings. All four participants left school feeling unsure how to relate to girls/women. Peter expressed fear of intimacy, and both Henry and James expressed lack of confidence in relating to women after living in a masculine world. Louis was the part-exception; a school holiday job had provided him with relational experience of middle-aged women, yet at university he still felt the pressure and status needs of having a girlfriend, as demonstrated with him discussing with friends their relationship success. However, when he did have girlfriends, he was looking for a longer-term relationship, and that want of stability has now developed into a long-term marriage. The ability to relate emotively to others was one that changed in later adulthood for both Henry and Peter, with both working in caring professions.

According to Brighton Therapy (2016), the 'repetition of loss'/fear of new abandonment causes permanent mistrust of intimate relationships, and Grier (2013) references difficulty in long-term stable relationships and craving of family life. Peter and Henry report using emotional distance in relationships, and yet still wanting love and affection, but on their terms. Henry believes that the broken close relationship with his mother made him so 'vulnerable' that he could never let his ex-wife in. Once committed, Peter found long-term security in a dependent marriage, and reflects that until his marriage breakdown at age

40, he was directed by his wife or life itself and he never really understood he could make his own choices.

After years of hiding feelings, being able to share and talk emotively understandably requires a 'risk assessment' (Sanderson-Shortt, 2019). For James, an all-male childhood, denying any feminine sensibilities and little female relational experience, brought an avoidance and fear of women, but the lack of social experience meant he could be unintentionally verbally insensitive. Also, for James, an absence of loving familial relationships, meant it was shockingly apparent that he had no relational experience of young children and family dynamics, and felt out of control with his own young family. All participants except for Louis therefore have struggled with intimate relationships during their adult lives, although all four participants are now happily married.

5. 4. Super-ordinate Theme – Institution

Hierarchy within the BS system begins with adult staff, then as James highlights, was followed by the seniority of the boys. The smooth-running of the system and timetabling is controlled by the rules, punishment, fear and shame. Adherence to the hierarchy, rules and timetabling keeps you safe and less likely to be punished or shamed, as Peter found. This aligns with Duffell's (2000, p. 36) writings that the best way to survive and thrive is to join 'the club' and 'identify' with the school system.

With no alternative reference, BS life becomes their normality, especially when others are living the same experience (Schaverein, 2015, p. 50). Peter found security in being accepted into a friendship group but was constantly aware of the risk of being judged by others. Likewise, among the other participants, Henry, despite his ethics, speaks of accepting the rules and hiding his feelings and continues this way of being into adulthood, Louis hid emotion to be accepted and James, until marriage, believed everyone lived this way.

The system of hierarchy and rules appears to be one that is accepted rather than written about specifically in the BS literature and yet it is the engine room for much of the

behaviour. The hierarchy, rules and timetabling have become intrinsic in their characters and as James says, 'I'm completely institutionalised'.

5. 5. Super-ordinate Theme – 'Fighting my corner'

For the youngest boys who arrive at BS from the safety of home into a strange environment, with no experience of systems, rules and this new hierarchy, there is a survival need to find some control or safety. Mullender et. al. (2005, p. 81) note that children have two types of coping strategies; the immediate, looking for safety, help and finding ways to divert their attention and then, coping mechanisms to deny the events and the giving and receiving of support from those around them. All four participants have used avoidance in some capacity as a coping mechanism for incongruence to BS situations, in the first instance amnesia or dissociation of memory on their first day, and Duffell (2014b, p. 217) describes dissociation being prevalent in a variety of forms. This is exemplified by James' ability to deny a problem, Peter cutting off from relationships that are no longer necessary, Louis hiding emotion and Henry distancing and denying his own ethics to survive a situation.

James speaks of BS being 'smoke and mirrors' with powers that you don't see or understand. This is echoed by both Peter and Henry who felt that they presented themselves as conforming yet underneath there was 'a seething, rebellious anger'. This links to the BS literature: the veneer of a charming, composed man can break to show 'underlying rage and misery' due to the continuing effect of separation as a child (Grier, 2013, p. 148).

Schaverein (2015, p. 160) discusses that children perform an 'encapsulation of themselves' which is similar to Duffell's description of the 'strategic survival personality' (SSP) (Duffell & Basset, 2016, p. 7) to present themselves favourably and be accepted. The strategies of finding safety through high vigilance, appearing compliant, avoidance, following the rules and playing the system have been used and demonstrated by all the participants. Peter describes his compliance whilst being a 'covert rebel', the ability to cut ties with the past and emotions and how this has followed into his adulthood. Henry has

spoken throughout of feeling 'subversive' whilst hiding his opinion and appearing conformist. Louis has shown conformity in the hiding of emotions to be accepted, to the extent that even today he maintains a respect for staff who failed to support him and yet an acknowledgment that he can only be pushed so far at work. James found safety in following the rules and being on time yet is constantly stressed. Grier (2013) explains that coping strategies need to be employed to hide the normal emotions felt by children in family situations; and yet, as shown above these feelings are still bubbling beneath.

Duffell (2000, p. 38) writes that acceptance of the BS system means wearing a mask and compromising one's own ethics which acts as a form of 'self-betrayal'. Henry has struggled with this and wherever possible exercised his own control yet admitting that working with the system is inevitable after 9 years. In adulthood, he shows an acceptance of inevitable rules and timetabling in the workplace, but now whenever possible, he works with his own ethics and has more choice and control.

For children suffering abuse, having time away can prove to be essential for their well-being (Iwaniec, 2006). Peter, Louis and Henry all described their individual safe spaces as a place or time without rules or restrictions where they could relax and be themselves, which sounds similar to many people's description of home.

5. 6. Super-ordinate Theme – Self

There were three aspects of expectation of BS that affected the perception of the participants 'selves'. First, the negative reaction they sometimes received because of the perception around wealth and privilege. Verkaik's (2018, p. 270) opinion that ex-boarders leave BS 'with inflated egos, unshakeable faith in their own abilities and a craving for success', was a societal attitude discussed by all the participants. Duffell and Bassett's (2016, p. 162) suggestion that it is difficult for others to appreciate continually living in 'a hostile environment' was borne out by all the participants' experience. Second, the contrast of those judgements with their own childhood experience or in Henry's case the desire to be 'accepted as just a normal person'. As raised by James, the 'over high expectations' of success from the BS and parents, were felt by all, and if not attained

brought ongoing feelings of failure and inadequacy. Third, Peter's shame around people realising his lack of life experience as an ex-boarder.

As grown adults, Peter, Louis, and Henry all recognise a loss of normal carefree childhood, with Peter believing himself to be grown up at 9, and for Louis at age 12 (his fifth year of boarding) and this corresponds closely with the literature describing the need to take on adult responsibilities and demeanour at a very young age. (Duffell & Basset, 2016; Levine & Kline , 2007).

The ex-boarder learnt at BS to present himself with a confidence that demands respect, but also the ability to 'deflect' away from vulnerability (Schaverein, 2011a, p. 11). Participants do recognise different strengths and struggles within themselves; Peter has awareness of possessing the ability to manipulate situations to his advantage and to present a masked version of himself. Louis sees that his learnt ability to deny emotion through difficult times at BS has given him the resilience and confidence to face problems in adulthood. The experience of successfully managing the effects of repeated trauma does build a confidence and resilience (Kain & Terrell, 2018) and as suggested by Louis the experience of bullying at BS enabled this. Henry is 'still working through' and 'processing' his childhood and decades beyond his experience has had the resilience to revisit his previous BS.

5. 7. Conclusion

The 'Findings' from the four participants' transcripts reveal that their experiences fit mostly with the literature around BS survivors. However, my literature search revealed little information on the effect of physical or emotional abuse through corporal punishment from staff or older boys, or bullying at that time, but rather how the feelings or memories were repressed.

The effects of these boys lacking individual trusted adult support during BS life appears to be of huge consequence to their emotional development and ongoing trust in others. Also, the literature suggests a prevalence of misogyny within all-male BSs, which does not align with the participant findings. The findings suggest an inexperience in sexuality

and being unsure how to relate girls/women that slowly dissipates during adulthood, mixed with an ongoing fear of abandonment.

6. 0. CHAPTER 6 - Conclusion

6.1. Outcomes

BSs advertise that they build 'young men who are confident, creative and better team players' (harrowschool.org.uk, n.d.) and indeed many of the boys who leave these establishments fulfil those expectations. However, as the literature and research has shown, pre 1989 this was partly created by the rules and fear engendered within the BS system rather than by instilling these skills through positive support and personal self-worth. Basset (2011, p. 102) writes that despite all theories of human development stating that the sudden breaking of close attachments is 'the worst psychological practice' and is an experience to be endured. This appears not to be the view taken by some ex-boarders who may still potentially be using their learnt coping mechanisms, masking emotions or still under the influence of the double-bind with now elderly parents. This ongoing denial and independence shown by ex-boarders has an influence on, and adds to, the view of society which lacks the experience or understanding of living inside BS.

The traumas of parental separation, loss of home, guilt of the double-bind, and bullying have clearly left deep scars. Rules, timetabling and institutional behaviour and a lifelong fear of breaking the rules, have become part of their character. The loss of trusted adults, however, polarised behaviour in later relationships, with some alumni becoming highly dependent on their partners in order to fill the void left by absent parents, and others becoming obsessively self-reliant and insular, unable to share their feelings or allow others to give help. All demonstrated the fear of showing vulnerability generated by the school bullying culture/lack of refuge, and all developed an ability to cultivate different public and private personalities and suppress unhappy memories/feelings.

While the gender separation and subsequent premature sexual interest, pornography, objectification and 'otherness' of women overall led to a distancing and difficulty with intimacy, they appeared in later life to be left untouched by the misogyny and confusion about sexuality reported in the literature. All had initially felt a disconnect from society except Louis, perhaps due to his having broadened his social horizons through a holiday job.

Nevertheless, while the negative impact of BS is clearly considerable, one obvious strength also shines through. The overcoming of these multiple traumas without refuge or outside support have indeed forged the resilience and outward confidence that boarding school purports to instil. The ability to suppress emotion and mask hurt have to an extent equipped them to survive the damage the system has done to them.

6.2. Further research

The research into the trauma experienced at BS could be furthered with larger sample groups, mixed-gender groups or female-only groups, along with control groups comprising 'successful' BS alumni. Interviewing children currently at single sex or co-educational BS to gain an understanding of the coping mechanisms they employ, this would help strategise how the mental health support available in BSs could be improved.

6.3. Implications for practice

The childhood survival skills that have been employed by ex-boarders have remained hidden for decades and so raw emotion is avoided, to the extent that even the ex-boarder may be unaware of their existence. It is therefore essential that if an ex-boarder attends therapy, the therapist has an awareness of these survival mechanisms and where felt incongruence may possibly stem from.

Informing ex-boarders of support networks that can be accessed online (Appendix 6) and the reference list below highlights literature on this subject.

Word Count – 16,273

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APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Ethics Approval Letter



University of
Chester

Department of Social
and Political Science

sps@chester.ac.uk
Direct Line 01244 512040

1st March 2021

1816751@chester.ac.uk

Dear Dawn,

RE: ETHICS APPLICATION

The Department of Social and Political Science Ethics Committee has considered your application for ethical approval for your research for the following study:

An exploration of the trauma of attending boys boarding school and its impact on adult life.

Approval has been granted for the study to be undertaken. Research projects must be undertaken with strict adherence to the approaches and processes in your approved application. If you have an amended application then the approaches and processes in your most recent application must be adhered to. If you wish to change any aspect of your approved study you must apply for a Chair's action and await approval before you can proceed with changes.

Please be aware that a final written report must be submitted at the end of each research project to the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office. For further information on this please see the Research Governance Handbook.

I wish you all the best in conducting this study.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. White'.

Dr Holly White
Chair of Social and Political Science Departmental Ethics Committee
Deputy Head of Department

Cc: Student email address
Supervisor if applicable

University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester CH1 4BJ Tel 01244 511000 Fax 01244 511300 www.chester.ac.uk
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Appendix 2 – Research Advert

Research - call for participants

An exploration of the trauma of attending boys boarding school and its impact on adult life.

February 2021, Dawn Grundy

My interest is in determining how all-boys boarding school for those who attended from 8/9–18 years, affects emotions and development in childhood and if this is carried through to later life.

This research is part of an MA in Clinical Counselling that I am undertaking at the University of Chester. This research has been granted ethical approval by The Department of Social and Political Science Ethics Committee at The University of Chester.

If you are interested in taking part, your involvement would be answering semi-structured questions by online Zoom video call for approximately an hour. To take part you must have attended an all-boys British boarding school before 1989, from age 8/9 through to 18 years. To have explored and addressed problems in life that you believe originated from your boarding school experience, leaving you now feeling grounded in the subject. To currently be living in England and Wales, and to be sufficiently fluent in written and spoken English. **No relationship with myself either directly or by a third party.**

I kindly ask, due to confidentiality, that if this advert is shared via social media, please do not tag or link any potential participants names to this advert.

For more information, please contact me by email -1816751@chester.ac.uk

Thanking you, Dawn.

This advert will expire on 31 July 2021.

Appendix 3 - Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

An exploration of the trauma of attending boys boarding school and its impact on adult life.

February 2021, Dawn Grundy

Dear

Thank you for indicating that you are interested in taking part in this research. This Information Sheet will hopefully explain what is involved, but if you need further clarification, then please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact details below.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research is part of an MA in Clinical Counselling that I am undertaking at the University of Chester. I am interested in finding out about how the experience of attending male boarding school from age 8/9, affected childhood and ongoing adult life. I would be interested in exploring your view on, and experience of, this. Please take time to discuss the information with relatives and friends and to ask questions of the researcher.

What will happen to me if I take part?

To enable this, if you decide to take part, I will arrange a time to have an online Zoom interview with you. Your written consent will be obtained through the enclosed consent form (which you can post or scan and email to me if the interview is conducted through Zoom). The interview will be digitally recorded and last no more than an hour and a half. You will need a comfortable, quiet, private space where you can talk without being overheard or disturbed for the duration of the session. Information on the use of zoom can be found at: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/coronavirus/working-online-resources/>

The interview will be semi-structured and be focused around the following questions:

1. How would you describe your time at boarding school?
2. Were there times during your school life, that you would describe as traumatic?
3. Do you feel the school environment made you adapt your emotions or behaviour?
4. What affect if any, has the institutional/ timetabled elements of school life affected you?
5. Do you feel the realisation of a privileged education or sacrifices made, altered either your childhood or adult feelings towards boarding school?

6. Did the lack of daily close contact and support from parents and siblings influence your own expectations of family life?

7. Has the early lack of interaction with girls/women altered your adult intimate relationships?

8. Have you, or would you, have your own children educated full-time at boarding school?

9. Looking back, what are your overall views about how going to boarding school as a child has impacted you?

Once the interview is complete, the digital recording will be transcribed. Your transcript will be allocated a pseudonym or code to protect your anonymity, and any identifying features in the data will be deleted.

Your right to withdraw without prejudice.

You have every right to withdraw from the research at any time, without prejudice, up until two weeks after the date of our interview. I will let you know when that is. Once the writing-up has begun, it will be impossible to remove your data as it will be aggregated, making your data more difficult to identify.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

If, for any reason, personal issues are stirred for you, I will do my best to support you in the time we are together. You may also find the following information useful in accessing support:

Samaritans - Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair. Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline) Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

Mind - Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems. Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm) Website: www.mind.org.uk

Men's Health Forum -24/7 stress support for men by text, chat and email. Website: www.menshealthforum.org.uk

Boarding School Survivors Support – Website: info@bss-support.org.uk

or write to 40 Lavengro Road, London SE27 9EG.

Boarding School Survivors – Facebook group for people affected by long-term effects of having boarded at school. Please note that only ex-boarders are admitted to the group.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The experience will give you time to reflect on your experience and/or work, and to share your thoughts. This may contribute to something greater at research and policy level.

What if something goes wrong?

I will do everything within my ability to ensure your safety and confidentiality. However, if you are not happy with any aspect of the research process, please raise it with me. If you are still not happy, you may raise it with Amanda Sives at the University of Chester.

Email - a.sives@chester.ac.uk

If you are still unhappy with things, you may raise it with the Chair of the Ethics Committee. Email: SPS.Ethics@chester.ac.uk

The University does not accept responsibility for any harm experienced apart from that which is proven to have been caused through its negligence. In the unlikely event that you experience harm through your participation in the research, and this is due to the negligent conduct of the researchers, then you may have grounds to bring legal action. If you choose to bring such action, you may incur legal costs

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential, and how will my data be stored?

The fact that you are taking part in the research, and everything that you share, will remain confidential. In the unlikely event that Child Protection issues are raised, I may have to alert Social Services or Police, but otherwise, what you share will form part of the data which will be anonymised by use of a pseudonym or code. The data will be stored securely in locked premises and kept encrypted on a password protected computer. Only I, and my Research Supervisor, will have access to the data. The data will be destroyed (shredded or electronically deleted) after five years, in keeping with the data protection act. Participants should note that data collected from this project may be retained and published in an anonymised form. By agreeing to participate in this project, you are consenting to the retention and publication of data.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The completed research will be stored (bound and electronic) at the University of Chester. The research will be disseminated in future publications and at conferences.

Whom may I contact for further information?

I, the researcher, am: Dawn Grundy

My contact details are: 1816751@chester.ac.uk

Thank you for your interest in this research.

Appendix 4 - Consent Form



Consent Form

An exploration of the trauma of attending boys boarding school and its impact on adult life.

Name of Researcher: Dawn Grundy

Please initial box

1. I have read and understood the participant information sheet and have had the chance to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I agree to the research conversation being audio recorded.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time up to two weeks after my interview has taken place, without giving any reason.
4. I agree to take part in this study.
5. I understand that the data will be written up as part of a thesis / publication, and I will not be identifiable in the literature.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 5 - Audit trail

Photo 1 – First stage grouping of minor themes

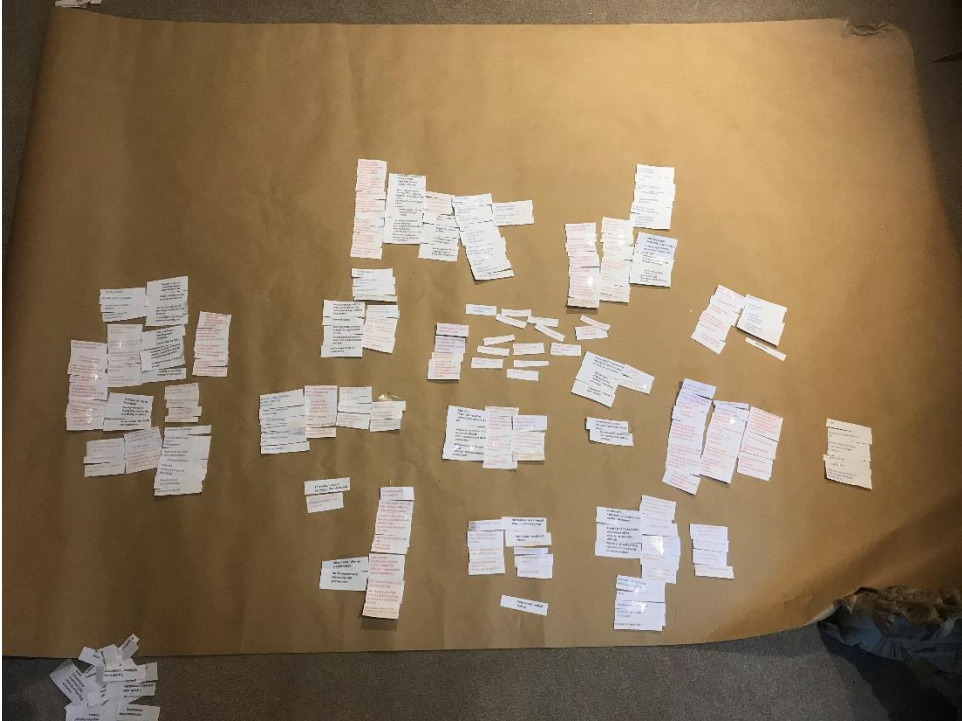


Photo 2 – Second stage grouping of minor themes with headings

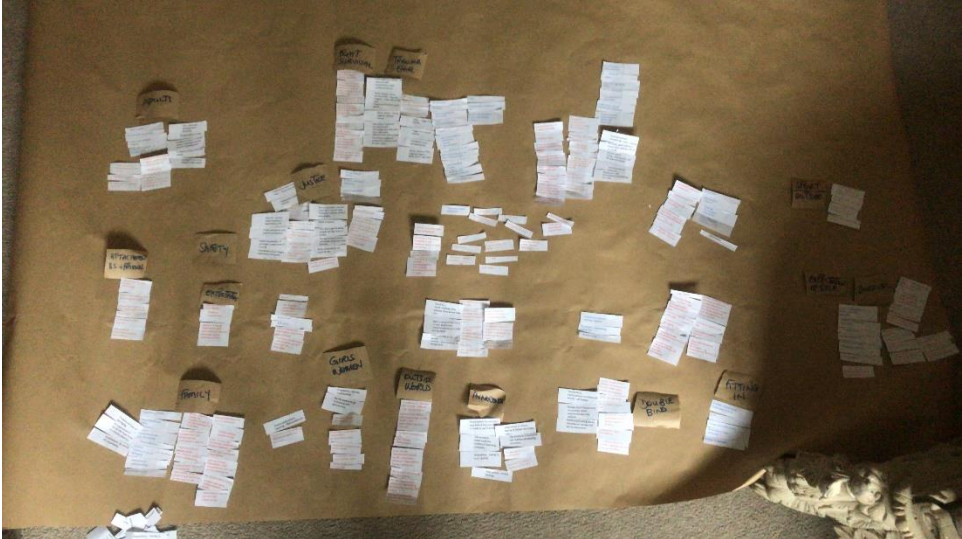


Photo 3 – Third stage grouping of themes into sub themes.

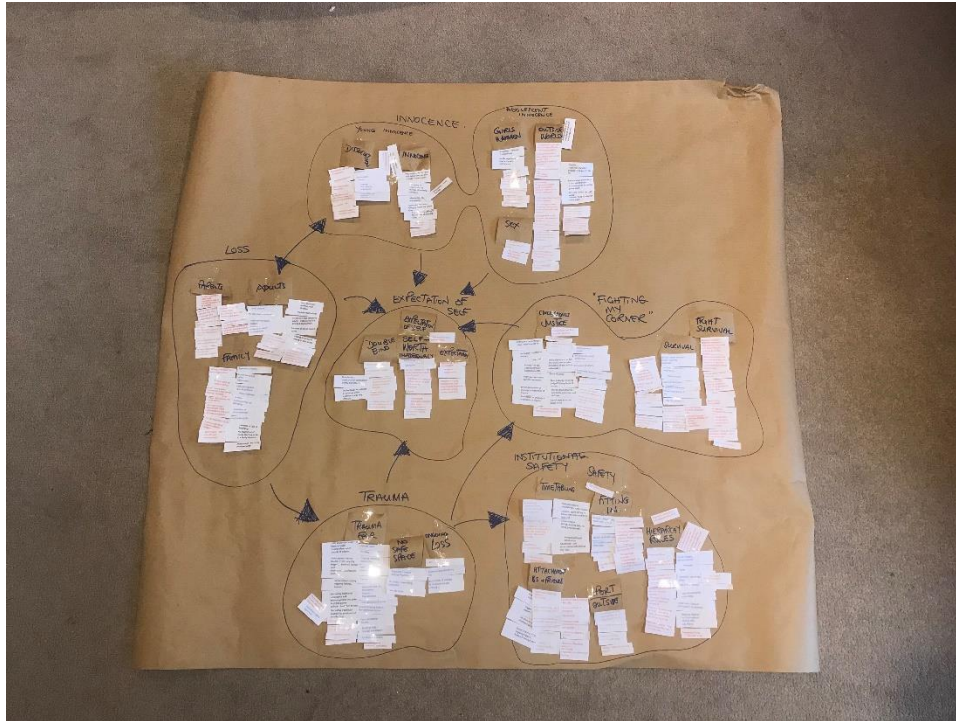


Photo 4 - Third stage grouping of themes into sub themes with super-ordinate themes.

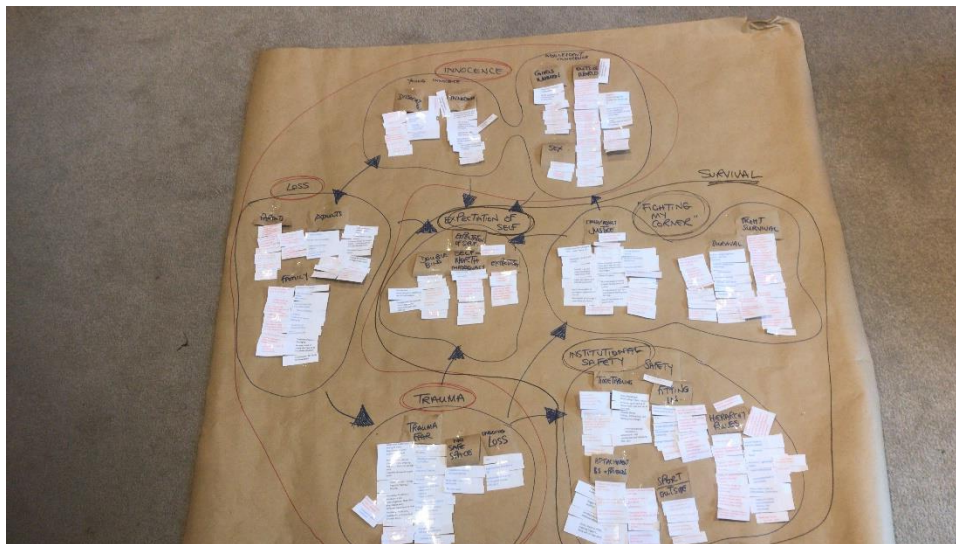


Photo 5 Super-ordinate themes and sub- themes

UNEQUIPPED

Loss	Trauma	Innocence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - i. Parents / family - ii. Family / home / safe space - iii. Adults Guidance <p><i>Handwritten: <u>Identity</u></i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - i. Fear - ii. Survival <i>Smoke + markers</i> - iii. Ongoing Loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - i. Dislocation <i>Young Innocence</i> - ii. Adolescent Innocence - iii. Girls / Women <p><i>Handwritten: <u>Key? STARTING FAMILY</u></i></p>

SURVIVAL

Institution	'Fighting my corner'	Self
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - i. Hierarchy / Rules / Timetabling - ii. Fitting in / Acceptance / friends - iii. Attachment to BS and friends <p><i>Handwritten: <u>Survival</u></i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - i. Justice - ii. Survival / <i>Hidden silent</i> - iii. Finding safe space / fight <p><i>Handwritten: <u>Dissociation</u></i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - i. Over and <i>Expectations of BB boy</i> - ii. Expectations of self <p><i>Handwritten: <u>Expectations of self</u></i></p>

Photo 6 - Example of Numbered Transcript

166 fulfilled friendships, you know, my older brother, who went to the same school, as me,
 167 did have a couple of friends that he related to and did stay in contact with for many
 168 years afterwards. But it's not something I did at all.
 169

170 12:27 Interviewer - Okay. Were there times during your school life that you would
 171 describe as traumatic?
 172

173 12:36 Peter - As I said, I, I don't remember them being, a particular trauma, apart from
 174 one incident, that happened and I can talk about that. But so much of the environment
 175 was a normal and I think in hindsight, I can look back and be quite shocked at some of
 176 the situations. And I'll perhaps talk about that, in addition, but the only incident of
 177 trauma happened is that when I was I think fourteen, thirteen or fourteen, after the day
 178 boys went home, we would go and have, it would be a sort of playtime, and then we'd
 179 go and have our tea or dinner. And then we would have to go into a classroom and do
 180 our homework for two hours or something, so it's like half past five or half past six to
 181 half past seven, or something like that we had, and we were supposed to be quiet and
 182 not talk during that time, so there was about half a dozen of us boarders in this, in this
 183 classroom, and there would be a teacher, one of the brothers sitting at the front reading
 184 a book or something, and we were supposed to be getting on with our homework. And
 185 we weren't supposed to talk at all, complete silence. And somebody behind me was
 186 talking. And this brother got up and thought it was me. And he accused me of talking
 187 and I said it wasn't me, emphatically, and he slapped me around the face. Because that
 188 was what they did. (Peter - laughter). In those days, you know, punishment, corporal
 189 punishment, and others was part of the norm. This is, you know, 1963/ 1964. And I was
 190 so outraged because I denied it again. And he went to hit me again, but I just stood up
 191 and I punched him. And everybody in the class behind me all stood up and cheered and
 192 clapped and 'why' and all that sort of thing. And of course, he felt quite shocked and
 193 shamed by that.

194 So, I got sent out down to the Headmaster, or got sent outside and then he went down
 195 to see the Headmaster. And I had the trepidation of going down to see the Headmaster
 196 who was quite a distant and, and quite a feared figure and I was talked to by him, told
 197 off for my behaviour, told that it was an expelling offence, but he would write to my
 198 parents and tell them and consider the position. And then I was, I was given a cane,
 199 given six of the best, which was very painful, but it felt at the time although, it was quite
 200 scary, it was very frightening at the time of 'what have I done?', you know, 'and is it all
 201 gonna fall apart?' and all that 'I'm going to get hurt and punished'. There was also a little
 202 badge of honour that came with that, for having stood up to a teacher who was quite a
 203 benign teacher generally erm... I was quite shocked by his, his reaction. But I, but uh,
 204 but it did sort of give me a badge of esteem amongst my colleagues that I've stood up
 205 and rebelled and done my bit. You know.

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Photo 7 – Example of annotated transcript

<p>hurt, disappointing and being shamed.</p> <p>Strong sense of justice – automatic protection and defense.</p> <p>Loss -Safety</p> <p>Hierarchy/ Rules no privacy... constant witnesses.</p> <p>Loss -Safety</p>	<p>clapped and 'why' and all that sort of thing. And of course, he felt quite shocked and shamed by that.</p> <p>So, I got sent out down to the Headmaster, or got sent outside and then he went down to see the Headmaster. And I had the trepidation of going down to see the Headmaster who was quite a distant and, and quite a feared figure and I was talked to by him, told off for my behaviour, told that it was an expelling offence, but he would write to my parents and tell them and consider the position. And then I was, I was given a cane, given six of the best, which was very painful, but it felt at the time although, it was quite scary, it was very frightening at the time of 'what have I done?', you know, 'and is it all gonna fall apart?' and all that 'I'm going to get hurt and punished'. There was also a little badge of honour that came with that, for having stood up to a teacher who was quite a benign teacher generally erm.. I was quite shocked by his, his reaction. But I, but uh, but it did sort of give me a badge of esteem amongst my colleagues that I've stood up and rebelled and done my bit. You know.</p>	<p>and anger... admiration for those who stood up to bullying. <u>Couldn't be hidden due to witnesses.</u></p> <p>Fear tactics used outside Headmasters room.</p> <p>Punishment for hitting was being hit.</p> <p>Fear of what might happen, fear of parents being disappointed, fear of being hurt.</p> <p>Teacher seemed benign and safe – shock that he hit Peter.</p>
<p>Shock of unexpected reactions brought trauma.</p> <p>Survival/ Control – Barriers /protection</p> <p>Fear</p> <p>Shame</p> <p>Justice</p> <p>Survival/ Control – Dissociation / Split</p> <p>Hierarchy/ Rules</p>	<p>15:57 Interviewer – So, the two sides to that really... the one that it was, I'm just wondering which bit was the trauma most traumatic, but the fact that the master had hit you, (Peter - I think), you or the caning or the waiting?</p> <p>16:09 Peter - Well, I think I think the, the, the experience of it, as I, as I recall it, the trauma was one that he hit me, and then two that I hit him back, and it was like, 'Oh, my God', it was such a it was, you know, I didn't think about it what 'the bastard, I'll hit him', it was just like, it just happened. You know, it was a visceral reaction. And I was so shocked by my own reaction, and obviously then had to face the punishment of it. That was I was a little bit, I suppose, ashamed, you know, what I'd done, but also felt justified and vindicated that what had happened to me wasn't fair. So, I think the trauma was one that was that part of it, the fact that I'd reacted in an unconscious way, but in quite a violent way. And that shocked me, because I'd always seen myself as quite a congenial, passive, amenable person, you know, fitting in it and as I said, going, going with the flow really, and then the fear and anxiety over having to, as they do with these things, make you wait, you know, and build up the tension, and then being shamed in front of this huge authority figure that was</p>	<p>Shock that the teacher/brother hit Peter.</p> <p>Shock at his own automatic reaction but also shock that his nature was not always congenial. <u>Split – angry side had been hidden, forgotten it was there?</u></p> <p>Fear of punishment and 'Headmaster' and parents reaction.</p> <p>Shame of hitting the teacher yet justified.</p>

Appendix 6 – Boarding school support organisations

Boarding School Survivors: (www.boardingschoolsurvivors.co.uk) provides therapy for ex-boarders and specialist training for therapists. Boarding School Survivors also has a support group accessed via Facebook.

Boarding Recovery: Healing the Wounds (www.boardingrecovery.com) is a network of therapists with expertise in working with ex-boarders.

Boarding Concern: (www.boardingconcern.org.uk) is a support network and aims to educate the public about the risks of boarding.

Boarding School Action: (<http://boardingschoolaction.wordpress.com>) is an organisation that seeks to challenge the tradition of boarding schools in Britain.

Details of support organisations noted from - Duffell & Basset, Trauma, Abandonment and Privilege, 2016

Appendix 7 – Reflexive Statement

The medias portrayal of BS men seems to be based upon a pre-conception of them being privileged, over-confident, bombastic, misogynistic, and lacking empathy; or a politician, which in my opinion is not representative of many ex-boarders. My personal experience has been that of men who are gentlemanly, respectful of women, family-oriented, usually confident, sociable, and hardworking, with a strong sense of duty to care for family. They are very aware of the assumption of privilege and duty to succeed that accompanies a BS education and so strive to become successful and gain respect. Their success enables them to support those around them but there are limits to their tolerance and they do not suffer fools. With close friends these men can show deep sensitivity but defend themselves from vulnerability and especially raw emotions of loss, in fear of what that might bring. From attending reunions, I have noticed obvious feelings of sibling relationships and a sense of family, however there is also an awareness among those who have been less successful in life of judgment, failure and a need of acceptance; and that some cut off from their school connections completely.

These men were those little boys who were too young to comprehend life in a BS without family but were usually sent by well-meaning parents who made financial sacrifices to give them a good education and lifelong connections. Through sheer resilience and determination, they have made the most of what a childhood at BS had to offer and in adult life are still working hard to find love, respect and acceptance.

My main hope is that this research gives ex-boarders an insight into their survival of BS from such a tender age without the support of parents and family. The positive regard of just one individual during school was referenced as being enough to support that child onwards into life. The experiences every child undergoes form the foundation of their life, and that child accompanies us throughout adulthood. It is my hope therefore that every survivor of childhood trauma can secure the positive regard and support they need, and with that become more able to see their journey and appreciate the strength it required to travel along it.