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Introduction

Bullying has been recognised as an international problem, with remarkable similarities between countries and groups of differing socioeconomic status, and regardless of ethnicity.

As knowledge of the severity and widespread nature of bullying has increased, literature attempting to explain and understand the issue has proliferated, with increasing input from students. This input is important if we are to make any serious attempt to reduce bullying in schools.

Much of the literature focuses on the actions of the bullies in determining the characteristics and features of bullying. This approach has facilitated recognition of boys' bullying but has not been able to similarly recognise bullying by girls. However, by focusing on the impact on the victim, recognition of girls' actions and manipulations becomes easier and parallels recent research which suggests that girls' bullying is much more prevalent than has been previously recognised.

Unfortunately, many schools' history of addressing bullying has not been as good as it could be; schools have had many social issues added to their curricula without adequate resourcing or time to deal with them. However, increased media reporting, research and awareness has encouraged action on this insidious problem, and schools have been able to seek successful measures from among the many programs that have been developed.

Addressing bullying is not a resource-neutral project. Reliance on discipline may restrain the actions of some, but bullies do not intend to be caught. For some, bullying is a tool to achieve self-esteem, perhaps their best tool. For these students, negative consequences may exacerbate the situation if they do not develop other tools.

Some bullies give little thought to the impact their actions have on others. Adolescence especially has been characterised by young people grasping their own identity; finding out which rules they can break, and which they cannot; how far they can go without getting into too much trouble; and experiencing new aspects of life. However, it is not a time characterised by enormous empathy for others. Being in the 'in group' becomes increasingly important and what the group does is followed too often without thought. When adolescents follow the pack, or seek their own gratification, there is little thought about the victim's plight.

This book seeks to reduce teacher time and stress by outlining processes for schools – from policy to classroom lessons – that may be adapted or changed with minimal effort to assist educators in addressing this widespread concern. With teachers as busy as they are, some lessons and few short cuts might help.



What?

There have been many definitions of bullying. Some presented here are a little older, some recent. Most define actions of the perpetrator; the last focuses on the impact on the victim. This appears most appropriate:

We say a person is being bullied, or picked on, when another person, or group of people, say nasty and unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a person is hit, kicked, threatened, locked inside a room, sent nasty notes, when no-one ever talks to them and things like that. These things can happen frequently and it is difficult for the person to defend himself or herself. It is also bullying when a person is teased repeatedly in a nasty way. But it is not bullying when two people of about the same strength have the odd fight or quarrel. – Olweus 1989.¹

Teasing and bullying is behaviour which can be defined as the repeated attack – physical, psychological, social or verbal – by those in a position of power, which is formally or situationally defined, on those who are powerless to resist, with the intention of causing distress for their own gain or gratification . . . Bullying is an attitude rather than an act – Besag 1989.²

To hurt, intimidate or persecute – Collins English Dictionary Australian Edition 1992.

Repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons – Rigby 1996.³

Bullying is the aggressive behaviour arising from deliberate intent to cause physical or psychological distress to others – Randall 1997.⁴

Bullying involves an initial desire to hurt, this desire is expressed in action, someone is hurt, the action is directed by a more powerful person or group, it is without justification, it is typically repeated, and it is done so with evident enjoyment – Rigby 1998.⁵

Bullying is defined as a pattern of behaviour by a group or an individual toward another which is designed to hurt, injure, embarrass, upset, or discomfort that person or group – adapted from McGrath and Francey 1991.⁶

Bullying occurs when a person or group is intimidated, frightened, excluded, hurt or discomforted by a pattern of behaviours directed at them by others – Griffiths 2003.

There is variation in definition. This has caused some difficulty in identifying bullying and probably in measuring its incidence. That bullying definitions rely on actions and processes that are observable and measurable favours identifying bullying that is overt. Historically, boys' bullying falls into this area, and for many years, boys have been identified as being engaged in the larger proportion of bullying. A growing body of recent research is suggesting that girls may be similarly engaged, but the nature of girls' bullying means that it is often unobserved by supervising staff and quite often not identified as bullying even by students.



How Much?

Pioneering research on bullying was carried out in Norway with a countrywide project to reduce bullying being launched in 1986. Elsewhere, bullying may have received media attention but until the latter years of the century there was little systematic analysis.

A report by Foster, Arora and Thompson in 1990 suggested that:

reports of the proportion of pupils affected by bullying in schools vary from 5 to 25 per cent, depending on its definition, the size and socioeconomic background of the school, the source of the reports (pupils, teachers or parents) and pupils' age and gender. The incidence of bullying is thought to be underestimated because it is mostly hidden and only infrequently reported to adults. It is thus a problem which is not easily tackled.⁹

This demonstrates that the issue is complex, results are varied and reliable data is difficult to gather.

International research since then has continued to give variable results, with victim identification fluctuating between 8% and 46% and bullying between 3% and 23% (for 8–12 year olds) in various studies. These percentages are influenced by sample size, instruments, definition of bullying, language issues, cross-cultural considerations and school systems.¹⁰

In Australia, Rigby suggests that, as a broad generalisation, about one child in six is bullied in school in any one year.¹¹ Forero et al,¹² in their 1999 report on bullying in New South Wales schools, suggest more than half of their sample population either bullied or were bullied, while American research puts the figure at nearly one third.¹³ Research published in 2000 reviewing northern-suburban state high schools in Victoria concluded that almost 90% of students are bullied at some time, and nearly half at least weekly.¹⁴ The NO BULLY organisation in New Zealand offers the summary shown in table 1.¹⁵

Country	Primary		Secondary	
	Often bullied	At least weekly	Often bullied	At least weekly
New Zealand	<i>Not available</i>	10%	15%	9%
England	27%	10%	10%	6%
International	23%	15%	10%	6%

Table 1 Comparison of rates of bullying

The 'hidden curriculum' may not be a core subject, but it appears a very popular elective. As the body of research increases, the extent and variations of bullying in our schools appear to grow more than proportionately.



Surveys to gather data usually have definite time periods on their questionnaires. For example Rigby's data (one in six bullied) refers to a given year, Forero's questionnaire (more than half of the sample either bullied or were bullied, or both) considers the last term. If the data gained from this type of research yields figures of this magnitude, then after ten or more years in educational institutions, the chances of students passing through the system without having been bullied, bullying or both, or witnessing instances during their school careers, seem remote.

The presence and impact of this curriculum is gaining media attention outside schools as well, with media reports of bullying on buses and trains, in schools and in the workplace. Many of these articles focus on the hopelessness of victims.

\$2.2m to calm gang violence

– *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) 11 July 2001

Parents told they can help stop violence

– *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney) 16 April 2000

Youth suicide on the rise – the experts speculate why

– *Sydney Morning Herald* 2 August 2001

Bullied with nowhere to turn

– *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney) 16 April 2000

Education: Making a drama of bullying crisis

– *Birmingham Evening Mail* (U.K.) 9 July 2002

Girl, 14, tells of 'bullying torment' at city school

– *South Wales Echo* (U.K.) 8 July 2002

Parent to parent: An interactive forum dedicated to bullying – How to help our kids to keep themselves safe

– *Canada Newswire* 16 April 2002

Exclusion, ridicule: Girls have devised a more sophisticated way of bullying, researchers say, employing ostracisation and meanness

– *National Post* (Canada) 13 April 2002

Back to bullies?

– *Learning Magazine* (U.S.) 8 July 2002

Bullies in the workplace

– *Supervision* (U.S.) 1 March 2002



How?

Verbal harassment – name-calling and teasing – is the most commonly reported form of bullying. Boys and girls report this about equally and there appears to be little change from this dominance over primary and secondary schools. Reports of physical bullying, however, reduce with age, and boys report this form of bullying more than girls, who are more commonly the victims of indirect bullying (such as exclusion).

However, verbal harassment on its own is rarely bullying. Many students deliver verbal insults and comments to their peers on a regular basis without offence being meant or taken, just as teachers and parents witness boys (especially) jostling, pushing, wrestling and chasing each other with little intent to hurt. Changes in students' friendship groups occur repeatedly, and that they sit with a different group, or play with various students on different days is not unusual. Theft and vandalism of property is unfortunately not uncommon.

It is when factors such as verbal taunts, playground pushing, property damage and exclusion combine to present a pattern of activity that differentiates and intimidates or hurts the victim that bullying occurs. It can be said that a combination of:

Physical	Verbal
Emotional	Social

factors make bullying effective. One is rarely found without at least one other, though physicality may be less involved amongst girls, who are able to find so many other ways to gain the same effect.

An American voluntary survey with over 3000 responses came up with the following data.

Girls are more likely to:

- experience verbal abuse such as being teased about their appearance (64% of girls cf. 58% of boys)
- have false rumours spread about them (72% cf. 60% of boys).

Boys are more likely to:

- suffer physical aggression (11% of boys cf. 6% of girls)
- have property destroyed (46% cf. 31% girls).¹⁶

Boys' Bullying

Bullying by boys often falls into a pattern represented by the pyramid shown in figure 1, with the most common and first stages at the lower part of the pyramid, and the least common at the top. Moving up the pyramid there is reduced incidence, with some bullying sieves along the way.

When victims are strong enough to counter bullying at any stage it may cease, or stagnate in the level it has already achieved without progressing. Each step is significant in its