Findings of bullying research in Victorian schools: Implications for prevention and school policies

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Today’s presentation

Definitions

Part 1
- Brief literature review
- International Youth Development Study
- Our findings

Part 2
- Brief literature review
- The NZ and VIC study
- Our findings
- Implications for schools
Definitions

Traditional bullying includes:

- aggressive/negative **intentional** acts
- repeatedly directed toward victims over time
- a **power imbalance** between perpetrator and victim

Cyber-bullying (Smith et al., 2008)

“An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using **electronic forms of contact**, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.”
Egs of Cyber bullying

• malicious or threatening text or online messaging
• text ‘wars’
• ‘hate’ pages about an individual on the web
• fake or malicious blogs designed to humiliate another
• degrading images (pictures or video clips)
• impersonating the victim and then sending malicious messages thus putting victim at risk
• pretending to be somebody else and then attacking the victim under the guise of the fake name or username
Relational Aggression

Relational aggression can be described as “harming others through purposeful manipulation and damage of their peer relationships” (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, p.711).

E.g., exclusion from one’s peer group, withdrawing affection, and threatening to tell lies or rumors about another person.
Part 1

Rates of bullying
Brief literature review
Prevalence

• Varies widely depending on study, country, and measure used
  → Typically 5 – 40% of young people report engaging in bullying
• Similar variation in victimisation rates
• Aus rates of cyber bullying (Cross et al., 2009)
  - 4% boys, 3% girls perpetrators
• Mixed findings regarding gender differences
• More prevalent in older age groups – peaking around Year 9
Why important to know?

• Examination across time for boys and girls can increase understanding of how behaviours change across development

• May guide the timely delivery of anti-bullying programs targeted at particular stages of development
• Collaboration with Washington State, US
• 1000 students in Years 5, 7 & 9 in each state
• Equal numbers of boys and girls
• Recruited through schools
• Detailed survey of students
• Parent interview (socioeconomic status)
• Excellent retention rates over time
Victorian Youngest Cohort

• 927 students
• 10-11 year olds in 2002
• Followed up in Years 6, 7, 9, 10 & 11
• Asked about cyber bullying from Year 9 (2006)
• Retention rate 89% in Year 11
Student Self-Report Survey

• Cyber bullying perpetration (past 12 months)
  “… have you bullied another student using technology such as mobile phones, the Internet, computers, answering machines, or cameras?”

• Cyber bullying victimisation (past 12 months)
  “… have you been bullied by another student who has used technology such as mobile phones, the Internet, computers, answering machines, or cameras?”

Rated as:
• No
• Yes, less than once a week
• Yes, about once a week
• Yes, most days
Traditional bullying

• **Perpetration**
  “Have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school recently?”

• **Victimisation**
  “Have you been bullied recently (teased or called names, had rumours spread about you, been deliberately left out of things, threatened physically or actually hurt)?”

Rated as:
- No
- Yes, less than once a week
- Yes, about once a week
- Yes, most days
Relational aggression

• How many times in the past 12 months students had:

1) “gotten back at another student by not letting them be in your group of friends”, and

2) “told lies or started rumours about other students to make other kids not like them”.

• Rated as never to 40 times or more on 8-point scale
Rates of engaging in bullying

• Years 9 to 11 examined
• Rates of cyber-bullying approximately 11-12%
• Traditional bullying rates 18-28%
• Relational aggression reported in over half of the sample
Rates of being bullied

• Data from Years 9 to 11
• Rates of 13 to 14% for being cyber-bullied
• Rates of 23 to 39% for traditional bullying victimisation
Gender differences

• More boys than girls at each Year level on:
  – Traditional bullying
  – Relational aggression

• More girls than boys in Year 9 on:
  – Traditional and cyber victimisation

• More girls than boys in Year 10 on:
  – Cyber victimisation
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Part 2

School anti-bullying policies
Background

• Analyses of school policies in England and Wales (e.g., Peter Smith and colleagues)

• These can show areas of policies to improve

• Some areas of policies not covered by past studies (e.g., travelling to and from school, cyber-bullying)

• More guidelines and resources in VIC, will there be differences in VIC and NZ policies?
The study

• 253/640 NZ schools
• 93/152 Victorian schools
• Recruited slightly differently
• Policies returned by schools or obtained from school websites (esp in VIC)
• Primary and secondary, more secondary in VIC
• 33% NZ and 75% VIC had separate bullying policy
The checklist

1. Definition of bullying behaviour
2. Reporting and responding to bullying incidents
3. Recording bullying and evaluating policy
4. Strategies for preventing bullying
5. Overall score (35 points)
   - NZ Mean = 10.2 (SD = 5.7)
   - VIC Mean = 17.4 (SD = 5.1)
Findings

• Mean scores suggest both sites could improve their policies
• VIC schools scored higher than NZ schools in most areas
• Areas to improve included;
  – Mention homophobic bullying (@ most 31%)
  – Mention bullying due to disabilities (@ most 16%)
  – Mention bullying due to faith (@ most 38%)
  – Bullying different to other forms of aggression (< 7%)
Findings (2)

- Areas to improve included:
  - Recognise adult/teacher to pupil bullying (18%)
  - Clearly mention the responsibilities of other staff (assistants, lunchtime supervisors; 17%)
  - Follow up to see if sanctions effective
  - Who co-ordinates recording system for incidents (9%)
  - How data will be used to work out if policy is working (@ most 25%)
Findings (3)

- Areas to improve included - prevention
  - Advice for parents about bullying (19%)
  - Discuss issues of inclusiveness (3%)
  - Mention bullying on way to school or happening outside school (8%)
  - Preventive role of lunchtime supervisors or playground activities (19%)
Implications

• Guidelines and resources in VIC may have assisted schools to develop more comprehensive policies relative to NZ
• Clear areas in need of improvement, esp emphasis on prevention in policies
• Need to be wary of generalisations given relatively small number of schools in the study
• Checklist could be useful tools to help schools develop/improve their policies
Acknowledgements – Part 2

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Published paper

Resources available
• **Bullying**
  www.ncab.org.au  
  www.bullying.org  
  www.cyberbullying.ca  
  www.kenrigby.net  

• **International Youth Development Study**
  • www.rch.org.au/iyds
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Thank you