Part I

Social awareness and research on bullying and cyberbullying

1 Research on bullying in schools in European countries

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One origin of school-bullying research is in Western Europe, and specifically in Scandinavia. This chapter will review how this research program originated, the early work, and how it spread to the United Kingdom and to other European countries during the 1990s and 2000s. It will mention relevant issues around definition, history of research, types of bullying and some main research findings. The chapter is necessarily quite selective, as a vast amount of research has been carried out, in a range of European countries. As examples, I give a fairly detailed description of how interest and concern about bullying has developed in the United Kingdom, and use a recent survey in Northern Ireland to illustrate some common findings about bullying.

Origins and definition

The English term *bullying* first came to prominence through Thomas Hughes' (1857) book *Tom Brown's School Days*, in which Tom and some of his friends are tormented by Flashman and his gang at Rugby school: 'Flashman was about 17 years old, and big and strong of his age ... a formidable enemy for small boys' (p.178). The Head of House says: '... there's a deal of bullying going on. ... Bullies are cowards ...' (p.123). This early literary example already emphasises the imbalance of power involved in bullying, here through physical strength.

However the scientific study of bullying in Europe has its main origins in Sweden and Norway. A school doctor, Heinemann, introduced the Swedish term *mobbning* in a book *Mobbning – Gruppvåld bland barn och vuxna* (1972). This was borrowed from the ethological term *mobbing*, or 'all against one', describing a collective attack by a group on an individual (here, often of another species). His work was taken up by Dan Olweus, a Swede who later and for most of his research career has worked in Norway at the University of Bergen. Olweus used the term in his book *Forskning om skolmobbning* (1973), translated into English as *Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys* (1978). His later book

Mobbning – vad vi vet och vad vi kan göra (1986) uses the same term, and was the basis of his most well-known book *Mobbning i skolan* (Swedish version), *Mobbing i skolen* (Norwegian version) and *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do* (English version) (all 1992/1993), which has been translated into many languages.

Mobbing carries the connotation of the 'group vs. one'. However, Olweus soon rejected this: 'It is questionable how common all-against-one situations really are in a school setting . . . it is perhaps rather unusual for the whole class (the boys or the girls) to be united in an intense collective activity . . . mobbing by very small groups is the more frequent type in our schools' (1978, p.5); and later 'Data from our Bergen study . . . indicate that, in the majority of cases, the victim of bullying is harassed by a small group of two or three students, often with a negative leader. A considerable proportion of victims, some 25–40 percent, report, however, that they are mainly bullied by a single student' (1999a, p.10).

Olweus also designed a self-report questionnaire to assess bullying in schools. This included a definition which mentioned different kinds of bullying (such as being hit or threatened), and emphasised that 'these things can happen frequently and it is difficult for the young person being bullied to defend himself or herself'. Thus, besides intentional hurt, bullying was defined by the criteria of repetition and imbalance of power. Shorter but similar definitions at the time were: 'Bullying is repeated oppression of a less powerful person, physical or psychological, by a more powerful person' (Farrington, 1993); and 'The systematic abuse of power' (Smith and Sharp, 1994, p.2).

The earlier work on bullying (Olweus, 1978) only mentioned physical and verbal kinds of bullying (reflecting the main kinds of aggression described at the time). However contemporary definitions stress a broader range of forms that bullying can take. Only in the 1990s was attention drawn explicitly to indirect, psychological and relational forms of aggression, and also of bullying (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz and Kaukiainen, 1997). And in the 2000s, research on cyberbullying has developed rapidly, in Europe as elsewhere (Smith et al., 2008; Mora-Merchán and Jäger, 2010).

History of research in Europe: (1) Scandinavia, the Netherlands

Action in Norway on school bullying was accelerated by the publicity given to the suicides of three 10–14-year-old boys in late 1982, attributed in large part to their experiences of severe bullying. This, together with Olweus' existing research findings, helped bring about the first

Norwegian National Anti-Bullying campaign, starting in autumn 1983. This campaign (see also Chapter 15) involved a nationwide survey using the Olweus questionnaire, a video for use in schools and materials for teachers and parents (Olweus, 1999b). In parallel with this, Olweus developed a school-based intervention program. His evaluation of this original version of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (1983–1985), with reports of reductions in bullying of around 50 percent, encouraged researchers and inspired the next wave of research.

In 1988 there was a conference in Stavanger, Norway, organised by Erling Roland, which also helped bring the Scandinavian work to a wider audience. From around 1989, books and journal articles started to appear; and surveys in other countries beyond Scandinavia were beginning to be carried out. Besides self-report surveys, some studies started to use peer nominations methodology. Also, some intervention campaigns took place, partly inspired by the Norwegian campaign; in Europe, early large-scale interventions were in England (Smith and Sharp, 1994) and Flanders (Stevens and Van Oost, 1994; and see Chapter 15).

Intervention work in Norway has continued, with both Olweus, and Roland, coordinating interventions in schools (Olweus and Limber, 2010; Roland, 2011). In Sweden, there was also a significant input by Anatol Pikas (1989, 2002), who developed his Pikas method of working in a non-judgemental way with children who bully others; this and the similar Farsta method are used quite widely in Sweden, although its empirical research base is limited and it is criticised by some, including Olweus.

In Finland there has been a strong research tradition since the 1980s, started by a research group with the late Kirsti Lagerspetz. This was one of the first groups to develop the peer nominations approach to gather information. In a nomination procedure, an informant is asked to nominate self or others (e.g. classmates) for involvement in roles such as bully, or victim. A development of this technique by Christina Salmivalli and colleagues (1996) allows differentiation of participant roles such as ringleader bully, follower, reinforcer, outsider and defender, as well as victim. Salmivalli and colleagues have also developed a nationally based intervention, KiVa (Salmivalli, Kärnä and Poskiparta, 2010; and see Chapter 15).

In the Netherlands, Veenstra et al. (2007) have developed the methodology of peer nominations further by asking about dyadic relationships, with questions such as 'who do you bully?' and 'by whom are you bullied?'. Huitsing and Veenstra (2012) asked for dyadic information on all the main participant roles, as well as getting sociometric data, enabling them to carry out a social network analysis on a class basis.

History of research: (2) United Kingdom

School bullying remained a low-key issue in the whole of the United Kingdom well into the 1980s. Two early studies by Lowenstein (1978a,b), on characteristics of bullying and bullied children, relied mainly on teacher nominations. Arora and Thompson (1987) used a 'Life in School' booklet to define the nature of bullying in a secondary school in the north of England. However public and media attention became particularly focussed on the issue in 1989–1990.

Three books on bullying appeared in the United Kingdom in 1989, and in that year a Government report, the Elton Report on Discipline, mentioned school bullying, the work in Norway and the need for further research. The Gulbenkian Foundation supported several research initiatives, one being a survey service, based on an English-language version of the Olweus questionnaire (Ahmad, Whitney and Smith, 1991). Some early results from these surveys suggested that bullying in English schools was higher than the rates in Norway.

This period also saw an expansion of media interest in the issue. In 1992, the BBC *That's Life* program pursued the topic of school bullying vigorously, following the suicide of an adolescent girl due in part to bullying at school. Following questions in Parliament about what was being done about school bullying, the then Department for Education in London decided to fund a survey and intervention project in Sheffield from 1991–1994 (Smith and Sharp, 1994; and see Chapter 15). This resulted in a Pack for schools, *Don't Suffer in Silence*; the first (1994) edition was free to state schools and was requested by most schools; a second edition came out in 2000, and was available on the internet. The national charity Kidscape, with a long interest in child protection, produced materials and campaigned on the issue of school bullying. These varied support activities contributed to not only keeping bullying 'on the agenda', but also to providing sources of practical help for schools and teachers.

Research in the 1990s pointed to certain at-risk groups for being bullied, such as ethnic-minority children, children of different sexual orientation, and children with SEN. Family factors were also implicated in the likelihood of a child becoming a bully or a victim (Bowers, Smith and Binney, 1992). In addition several studies (mainly cross-sectional) illustrated negative correlates of involvement in bullying, such as psychosomatic symptoms for victims (Williams et al., 1996) and anxiety, depression and low self-esteem (Salmon, James and Smith, 1998).

Telephone help lines were promoted as one source of support, and a dedicated ChildLine bullying line obtained funding for seven months

in 1994, and received a total of 58,530 calls; the majority of callers were within the age range 11 to 14 years, predominantly girls. A detailed analysis of the calls, and of an associated survey on bullying, was given by McLeod and Morris (1996).

Interest in peer-support and mediation approaches increased considerably. A survey of peer-support schemes by Cowie (1998; Naylor and Cowie, 1999) found that there were benefits to the peer helpers in terms of confidence and responsibility, and to the school atmosphere generally; but there were also problems due to some degree of hostility to peer helpers from other pupils, and to issues of power sharing with staff, and ensuring sufficient time and resources for proper implementation.

By the end of the century, the climate of knowledge and opinion on school bullying in England had changed radically from that prevailing ten years earlier. It was now widely acknowledged that any school was likely to have some issues regarding bullying; it was no longer really plausible or acceptable to say 'there is no bullying in this school'. In late 1999 it became a legal requirement for every state school to have some form of anti-bullying policy. Regular inspections of schools by OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) now asked to what extent bullying was a problem in a school, and whether the school had taken measures to combat it, including having a policy. Many more materials were now available to schools and teachers in the United Kingdom.

A new and comprehensive package of materials, *Safe to Learn*, was issued from November 2007, and was available until 2011. The importance of having effective anti-bullying policies was reinforced by a Report of the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee on Bullying (House of Commons, 2007). The response by the Government, in June 2007, referred extensively to the forthcoming *Safe to Learn* guidance (DCSF, 2009), including that 'schools should undertake an audit of behaviour and review their policies as a result'; 'policies should be reviewed every two years'; 'anti-bullying policies must address all forms. This would include bullying related to race, religion and culture; homophobic bullying; sexist and sexual bullying; bullying related to special educational needs (SEN) and disability; and cyberbullying'; and that 'as well as dealing with the bullying of pupils by pupils, anti-bullying policies should cover the bullying of school staff, whether by pupils, parents or other staff'.

Following the new coalition government in 2010, the now DfE issued a *Schools White Paper, The Importance of Teaching*, in November 2010 (DfE, 2010). It stated (section 9) that head teachers are expected to 'take a strong stand against bullying – particularly prejudice-based racist, sexist

and homophobic bullying'. It also stated (section 3.17) that 'It is important that head teachers are able to maintain a culture of good behaviour and respect by reinforcing the school's expectations beyond the school gates. Bullying can happen or continue outside school, and behaviour on the way to and from school affects the perception of the school in the wider community'. It signalled an intention (section 9) to 'focus Ofsted inspections more strongly on behaviour and safety, including bullying, as one of four key areas of inspection' (DfE, 2010). Revised guidance on preventing and tackling bullying (DfE, 2014) was issued, most recently in October 2014, covering legal requirements, stating that 'Teachers have the power to discipline pupils for misbehaving outside the school premises "to such an extent as is reasonable"' (p.5), and that 'Schools should apply disciplinary measures to pupils who bully in order to show clearly that their behaviour is wrong' (p.7).

The development of these requirements over the last fifteen years has obviously impacted on schools, and the proportion of schools having an anti-bullying policy has increased dramatically over this period. Surveys carried out in relation to use of the *Don't Suffer in Silence* pack indicate that from 1994–1996 about 55% of schools had an anti-bullying policy (either separately, or as part of a wider behaviour/discipline policy); this had risen to 91% in 2002, with 8% developing a policy, and 1% providing no information (Samara and Smith, 2008).

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA; www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/) was founded in 2002. This brought together over fifty national organisations in England, from the voluntary and private sectors, LEAs, professional associations and the research community into one network to work together to reduce bullying and create safer environments for children and young people to live, grow, play and learn. It supported regional seminars, the development of a portfolio of resources, and promoted Anti-Bullying Weeks which have been held annually since 2004. The charity Beatbullying (now dissolved) developed various initiatives, notably a cybermentors scheme to provide counselling and advice for victims of bullying or cyberbullying (Kaenel-Platt and Douglas, 2012). Childnet International (www.childnet.com) has been very active in the areas of e-safety and cyberbullying.

History of research: (3) other countries in Europe

Through the 1990s, research on school bullying developed in many European countries, and by now there is some history of research and interest in the topic throughout all the European Community (EC) countries and indeed most countries in Europe. A wide range of activities

and research is documented in the books *The Nature of School Bullying: A Cross-National Perspective* (Smith et al., 1999) and *Violence in Schools: The response in Europe* (Smith, 2003). A number of European countries developed legal requirements concerning bullying, or violence, in schools (Ananiadou and Smith, 2002).

One major research initiative was an EC funded Training and Mobility of Researchers project (1997–2001), linking teams in England, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Germany. Other notable European initiatives in the early 2000s included national surveys and the Donegal intervention project in Ireland (O'Moore and Minton, 2004); the anti-bullying work in Seville and Andalucia (Ortega, del Rey and Mora-Merchán, 2004); work by Menesini and colleagues in Italy (Menesini et al., 2003); and intervention in kindergartens in Switzerland (Alsaker, 2004).

During the 2000s, cyberbullying started to attract attention. This started off as text message and email bullying, which increased through the mid-2000s; but since then, the development of cameras in mobile phones, smart phones, and increased internet use of instant messaging and social networking sites, have offered many new tools for those wishing to hurt others. A project financed by DAPHNE II Programme (promoted by the European Union for projects concerned with child and family safety), was coordinated by Maria Luisa Genta (University of Bologna) from 2007–2009 (see Genta, Brighi and Guarini, 2009); it developed a questionnaire and carried out surveys on traditional and cyberbullying in Italy, England, Spain, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Finland. This project also developed resources for teachers and educators. Some cross-sectional data from three countries (Italy, England and Spain) are reported in Genta et al. (2012) and Brighi et al. (2012).

A collation of reports on action and research on cyberbullying, mostly focussing on the European countries, was provided by Mora-Merchán and Jäger (eds.) (2010). A further project carried out under DAPHNE III financing (2010–2012), on investigation and intervention regarding cyberbullying in adolescence, was carried out in six European countries: Italy, Spain, Poland, United Kingdom, Greece and Germany (Genta, Brighi and Guarini, 2013; www.bullyingandcyber.net).

Analysis of cyberbullying in many European countries was facilitated by COST Action IS0801 (2008–2012). This was primarily a networking action, involving twenty-eight European countries, plus Australia. Its full title was *Cyberbullying: Coping with negative and enhancing positive uses of new technologies, in relationships in educational settings*. The project website is at http://sites.google.com/site/costis0801/. In addition to many journal articles and book chapters, an edited book on the work of the Action, Smith and Steffgen (2013), summarises the work done. This includes

discussions on how cyberbullying has been defined by (see also Menesini et al., 2012); a systematic review of forty-four instruments used to assess cyberbullying (see also Berne et al., 2013); and current knowledge on coping with cyberbullying (see also Perren et al., 2012). Other topics investigated perspectives from the law, industry and the media; the role of Internet Service Providers and Mobile Phone Companies; and the amount of attention that media pay to cyberbullying, and how the way they frame the issue influences the general public and policymakers.

Another product of this Action was a booklet, *Guidelines for preventing cyber-bullying in the school environment: A review and recommendations*, which is available for download on the COST Action website. This was based on a review of already nationally published guidelines in twenty-seven different European countries. Criteria for assessing best practice were determined, according to school ethos, policies and programs, skills and collaborative partnerships, and they targeted parents, young people, schools and teachers. For each target group, the research evidence is reviewed, key findings presented from the content analysis and recommendations made.

Some research findings

Prevalence

Prevalence has usually been assessed by large-scale surveys using anonymous self-report questionnaires. There are a number of issues in designing questionnaires appropriately, and they are not always well used; but they have obvious advantages in allowing researchers to gather data quickly on large and representative samples. The Olweus anonymous self-report questionnaire is probably the most widely used; it incorporates a standard definition of bullying (Solberg and Olweus, 2003.

The actual incidence figures reported in a survey or research study can vary very greatly, independent of the actual phenomenon. Even considering just questionnaires, incidence figures will be influenced by: what time span is being asked about (e.g. last month, last term, last year, ever at school); what frequency is regarded as bullying (e.g. once/twice a term; once a month, once a week or more); what definition is used (e.g. whether it includes indirect as well as direct forms, and cyberbullying). The time of giving a questionnaire in the school or calendar year can be important, if a short time span (last month, or term) is taken. All these issues make it often difficult to compare across different studies.

Two large-scale sources of prevalence data that used the same methodology across different countries, come from the World Health