

# BULLYING: PERSPECTIVES, PRACTICE AND INSIGHTS

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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# Foreword

The Council of Europe has, since its creation in 1949, always promoted human rights, democracy and the rule of law, not just in its 47 member countries but also across a much broader region of the world. We are constantly reminded that the children in our generation will become the leaders in the next, and will shape the world with the values and attitudes inculcated from the social environment in which they live and learn. Their understanding of democracy and respect for human rights will be largely influenced by their own childhood experiences. For this reason, the protection of children against all forms of violence is a principle central to our work, and is one of the five priorities of the recently launched Third Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021).[1] Bullying is one of the most difficult areas of violence against children to eliminate, especially with the ubiquitous role that internet and mobile technology plays in their life today and the capacity this gives for bullying to continue night and day.

Prevention starts with educating children about the harmful effects that their actions can have on others. It is nevertheless also very important that everyone working with or raising children is fully aware of the challenges and impact of bullying and is able to provide timely, meaningful guidance. This underlines the importance of implementing a holistic approach that tackles the problem at its roots by opening up for children new learning opportunities to develop their social skills, their capacity for empathy and an appreciation of just how enriching diversity can be. Such opportunities and challenges are presented in the pages of the present publication, through the perspectives, practices and insights of the many researchers and practitioners who have contributed to the work of the European network ENABLE, which is one of the many initiatives that the Council of Europe supports for the protection of children's rights. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all the contributors for their dedication to this very worthy cause.

Equal opportunities, freedom of expression, participation and a life free from violence are the essential ingredients of democracy, and the right of every child. Bullying affects all of these rights. It is therefore imperative for the future of our society that we work together to prevent it, at the level of governments and organisations, industry and civil society, experts and teachers, and parents and children themselves. I hope that all of them will use and draw inspiration from this publication to join in a common effort to eliminate bullying from our children's lives.



Snežana Samardžić-Marković

Director General of Democracy

Council of Europe

# Notes on contributors

**Parry Aftab** is a digital privacy and security lawyer. She founded the world's first internet safety and help group and has received the FBI Director's Award and the Air Canada/RCMP Child Recovery Award, and accepted on behalf of her volunteers the Clinton Whitehouse President's Service Award. Parry sits on Facebook's Safety Advisory Board and MTV's Public Affairs Advisory Board. Many cybersafety programmes (for example, StopCyberbullying – www.stopcyberbullying.org – and www.cybersafety.org) were created by Parry and, combined, have been delivered to more than two million young people.

**Amy Barnes** holds a Master's degree in Public Health and works as a health promotion researcher at the Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia. She has been involved in school-based research addressing the health and well-being of Australian children and young people for several years, particularly in relation to their involvement in bullying, cyberbullying and other risky online behaviours.

**Anne Collier** is executive director of The Net Safety Collaborative, a national nonprofit organisation now piloting the US's first internet helpline for schools. Anne has written and spoken widely on the subject of youth and digital media, served on three national task forces on youth internet safety and currently serves on the safety advisory boards of Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and ASKfm. She blogs at www.netfamilynews.org (accessed 13 November 2016) and lives with her family in the Seattle, Washington area.

**Ken Corish** is Online Safety Director for UK charity South West Grid for Learning, drawing on 20 years as an educator and 10 years as an award-winning adviser with Plymouth City Council. He advises the UK Government, education inspectorates, local government and schools on online safety policy and practice. He developed and wrote the multiple award-winning 360 degree safe (online safety self-review) tool and the Online Compass tool. He also created the award-winning BOOST toolset for children's settings. Ken works with a broad range of national and international organisations and has spoken at global conferences across the world.

**Donna Cross** is a Winthrop Professor with the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at the University of Western Australia and the Telethon Kids Institute. Donna has led over 50 applied longitudinal school and community-based research intervention projects in Australia and the US investigating ways to enhance social and emotional development and reduce bullying and cyberbullying among children and adolescents. She is currently leading nine research projects investigating ways to enhance student well-being, especially their social competence, and other skills to reduce all forms of antisocial behaviour and mental health harm, especially among vulnerable school-age children.

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**Katja Engelhardt** is a member of the Knowledge Building Team at European Schoolnet (Brussels) and regularly prepares reports and studies, including the current study "An analysis of educational approaches to developing Computational Thinking (CompuThink)".[3] She has developed expertise in the areas of mobile learning, special needs education and accessibility of information, coding as a 21st-century skill, self-assessment and online teacher training. Katja holds a Master's degree in International Law and a Bachelor's degree in Social and Cultural Studies.

**Luis Fernandes** is a senior psychologist and has co-ordinated and supervised several projects on bullying and violence involving schoolchildren. He has conducted professional training sessions and awareness initiatives throughout Portugal, aimed at students, teachers, educators, officials, coaches, parents and the public in general. With Sónia Seixas, he has published *Bullying plan – Deleting school bullying* and a children's book entitled *Say no to bullying. Do not let them hurt you*.

**Urko Fernández** has a Master's in Business Administration from Wheeling Jesuit University (USA). As a project manager at PantallasAmigas (FriendlyScreens), he designs new educational materials related to healthy use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), with particular emphasis on the prevention of child grooming, cyberbullying, sexting, sextortion and gender-based cyberviolence.

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**Barbara Forresi** is a clinical psychologist. She received her PhD in Psychobiology from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (Italy). Her clinical and research interests are concerned with developmental psychopathology and the promotion of child and adolescent mental health as well as the use of new technologies and social media. As a member of Telefono Azzurro, the Italian helpline for children and adolescents, she has taken part in several European and international research projects aimed at protecting children from violence and other online risks.

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textbooks on informatics and mathematics, she writes scientific and expert articles and presents papers about e-learning and e-safety.

**Elizabeth Milovidov** is an American lawyer, law professor, children's rights advocate and e-safety consultant at European Schoolnet. A graduate of the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of California at Davis, she practised as a litigator in California for four years before moving to France to work as General Counsel in two internet technology companies. She is a faculty member of the Université de Cergy-Pontoise Law School in France and she teaches law and technology at L'ISCOM, Institut Supérieur de Communication et Publicité, Paris.

**Tito de Morais** founded and runs Portugal's pioneering internet safety project, Miudos Seguros Na.Net.[4] He is on the Advisory Board of the Portuguese team of the EU Kids Online project and represented Miudos Seguros as a partner in Google's Family Safety Center. He has provided his internet safety expertise to companies such as Microsoft, Symantec, Easybits, Google, Caixa Mágica, AnubisNetworks and Facebook.

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**Natasha Pearce** is a health promotion researcher and practitioner with over 25 years' experience working to improve health outcomes for children, families and communities. Specialising in implementation science, her current role as a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Telethon Kids Institute and previously as Senior Research Fellow at Edith Cowan University includes a range of school and community-based research and evaluation projects aimed at improving child and adolescent well-being. Her particular research interest lies in using knowledge translation and implementation science to improve real world impacts from evidence-based interventions. She is part of the Australasian Implementation Conference Committee and the Australian Implementation Network.

**Janice Richardson**, international adviser on information literacy, children's rights and digital citizenship, is co-ordinator of the ENABLE network and leads a range of projects for the European Commission, the Council of Europe and government organisations from Europe, the United Arab Emirates and northern and sub-Saharan Africa. She has authored more than a dozen publications books on literacy and citizenship for children, families and schools, and most recently completed the fourth edition of the Council of Europe's *Internet literacy handbook* in co-authorship with Elizabeth Milovidov and Martin Schmalzried, both contributors to this publication.

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initiates blogs, group chats and articles about specific themes, relevant for and co-created with youth.

**Martin Schmalzried** holds a Master's degree from the ULB (Université libre de Bruxelles) in Political Science. He is a sociology teacher in upper secondary education and is Policy Officer at COFACE (the Confederation of Family Organisations in the EU). His areas of expertise include safer internet and new technologies, and he has been involved in a number of EU projects and initiatives linked to this field. He has supervised the development of a variety of tools such as Nutri-médias, which aims at raising awareness of parents regarding advertising and nutrition, and the #DeleteCyberbullying app, which is designed to help teenagers, parents and teachers deal with cyberbullying.

**Sónia Seixas**, from Portugal, is a member of the ENABLE think tank. She has a PhD in Educational Psychology and researches the bullying and cyberbullying phenomenon. She is a member of the National Project Advisory Board "Social adventure" and published (with Luis Fernandes) *Bullying plan – Deleting school bullying* and in 2015, a children's book entitled *Say no to bullying. Do not let them hurt you*.

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**Andrew Williams** has more than 10 years' experience at all levels of primary school management. Experiences as a school improvement adviser in ICTs led Andrew to work on a range of projects nationally and internationally. Andrew regularly works with wide-ranging audiences. He is the creator of the new addition to the South West Grid for Learning 360 family, 360data, which is a data protection and security self-review tool. Andrew is passionate about the use of technology in schools and supporting children, young people and adults with online safety and data protection issues. With skills in school improvement and self-review cycles, Andrew has a unique breadth of knowledge and experiences.

# Introduction – Perspectives, practice and insights on bullying

*Janice Richardson*

… for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

– Shakespeare

Bullying, as the saying goes, is as old as the hills. From Exodus in the Old Testament to Matthew in the New Testament, and from Dickens in the 18th century to the Harry Potter books today, we learn about pharaohs, kings' wives and Malfoys who bullied to get their way. We sympathise with the trials and tribulations of the slaves of ancient Egypt, Oliver Twist and Myrtle, and although some of the interplay may initially amuse us – think of Laurel and Hardy, for instance – we would certainly not want to be in the shoes of the person on the receiving end. Nevertheless, some of us simply are not able to put ourselves in their shoes, because this requires empathy. Indeed, there is a significant difference between sympathy and empathy, and developing empathy along with other social and emotional skills as a means to combat bullying and promote the well-being of every young person is what this publication is about.

Even if bullying has long plagued humanity, it was not until fairly recently – in the 1970s – that the phenomenon of bullying became the object of systematic research,[5] with early investigations mainly taking place in Scandinavian countries. As our knowledge of the brain and learning processes increased over the next quarter of a century, and society generally became more aware and interested in the social impact of individual well-being – or the lack of it – research became far more widespread.

In the mid-1990s, Jacques Delors, eighth president of the European Commission, was one of the first economists to point out that democratic values and social prosperity can only be promoted through an education built not only on learning to know and to do, the mainstays of most school curricula, but also on learning to be and learning to live together.[6] We will look at this in more depth later in this book through interviews with social and mobile media companies, and a youth who has grown up in this media-rich world.

## Bullying – The impact of social and mobile media

Although it is important to point out that, more often than not, bullying takes place or is at least instigated in face-to-face situations,[7] the emergence of social media and mobile platforms as well as our rapid take-up of online technologies have had a considerable impact on this and other social interactions, as many of the authors note in this publication. Today, in 2016, although just 40% of the world population use the internet, the figure is far higher in most parts of the Western world and in the UK, for example, reaches 89.9%. We can therefore safely say that almost all children in Europe are online, many of them even before they can walk or talk.[8] The use of Wi-Fi and mobile-connected devices is progressing more rapidly than that of any other type of device, and it is predicted that by 2017 such devices will account for 68% of all internet traffic.

This underlines the mobility and pervasiveness of the tools young people use as they conduct their social life in a blended world of online and offline existence. Bullying, hate speech and hurtful messages can therefore follow a child into the most private corners of his/her life, at all hours of the day and night. More bystanders become rapidly involved too, turning private hurt into public humiliation at the click of a mouse. Technology has put Photoshopping, video-making, the uploading of fake profiles and a thousand other tools within the reach of all, and online harassment can take on imponderably imaginative forms. In the "Perspectives" section of this publication, readers will get a glimpse of some of the challenges young people grapple with on a daily basis.

In all, authors from more than a dozen countries have contributed to this publication, presenting widely differing perspectives, practices and insights on how they are tackling or think we should be tackling modern societal issues such as bullying and hate speech. While some chapters focus more specifically on case studies and what the research tells us, others look as well at issues related to bringing up and educating children for the world we live in. This publication is also about ENABLE, described in the following section, and aims to introduce readers to the psychologists, researchers, teachers, parents and social media innovators who have helped shape it.

## ENABLE – Learning to be and to live together

The acronym ENABLE stands for European Network Against Bullying in Learning and Leisure Environments. It was created in 2014 by six organisations working in highly complementary education-related domains in Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Greece and the United Kingdom, with support and co-funding from the European Commission. The common aim of these partners is to develop new social and emotional skill-learning models to tackle bullying, and to culturally adapt these models for implementation in at least five countries and six different languages. A secondary aim is to train a core group of teacher-ambassadors interested in rolling out the approach in their home country within the framework of a cascade model.

ENABLE strives to integrate the "learning to be" and "learning to live together" concepts mentioned earlier, by taking into full account the ecosystem in which

children play and learn. In this respect, children's social contexts at school, at home, in the local community and, increasingly, online is of particular importance. In a nutshell, ENABLE is a think tank: an approach and a repository of learning material and activities embedded holistically in a peer support programme for 11- to 14-year-old children, their parents and their teachers. In little over a year, it has been rolled out by hundreds of teachers in schools as well as by youth leaders and several helplines across Europe. ENABLE aims to lead children and young people to reflect on, and better understand, their interactions and behaviour as well as the impact of their behaviour on others. It does this through a four-pronged process that focuses on self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relationship management.

The opportunities technology offers to today's generation are undoubtedly the reason why a number of the authors in this publication have chosen to turn their attention to skilling young people for life in the online environment. It may also explain why digital parenting is such a hot topic nowadays. Most people will agree that online and offline worlds have now blended into a single, vast, public space where children learn to be and to live together in the view of all, yet where they have to make up many of the rules as they go along. Moreover, possibly for the first time in history, we are letting our children loose in this vast space to play, learn and interact without any adult presence. When examining the impact of bullying in a child's life, the biggest challenges recognised by researchers, educators and families are their own inability to really see and understand what is happening online, and to intervene in a timely manner.

The ever-expanding role of the internet for young people is also having a resounding impact on their behaviour and their reasoning capacity in a multitude of ways. In a recent study[9] on the human attention span (actually conducted to find the best ways to reach consumers), 2 000 people were surveyed and the brain activity in 112 others was monitored using electroencephalograms (EEGs). The results were alarming: the human attention span has seemingly declined from 12 seconds as measured in the year 2000 to 8 seconds in 2015, much shorter than the attention span of a goldfish (at 9 seconds)! Although the findings and the methodology may raise questions, we cannot help but ask ourselves: what does this mean in terms of impact on behaviour? Does it modify in any way the capacity of young people to reflect on their own actions and the effect they may have on others?

Other research has aimed to look at the impact of online technology on our brains.[10] This indicates that overexposure to a rapid succession of sounds and images via the media may be resulting in underdevelopment, in children and young people, of the pre-frontal lobe: the very part of our brain needed to formulate hypotheses and predict the possible consequences of our actions. Several of the following chapters examine, from a practical perspective, how the meaning of literacy has changed, and how we need to re-shape school learning if we are to ensure that the upcoming generation can acquire the essential competencies to become active, responsible citizens in the digital world. How can we counteract the effects of their immersion in an environment that is not yet fully understood even by the most knowledgeable among us?

## Tackling bullying – Learning from each other

One of the early steps that ENABLE took soon after its creation was to set up a think tank as a means of drawing on the knowledge and experience of leading international practitioners and researchers from varying domains of activity. A dozen regular members continue to advise and guide the actions of the network, with input from parents, teachers and, of course, children and teens who are encouraged to have their say every step of the way. Although we were unable to find any young people willing to write their own chapter for this publication, their ideas and insights are reflected throughout these pages, along with those of both regular and occasional think tank members.

Bullying is a vast subject and tackling it comes down to providing an environment in which every individual is encouraged to develop self-awareness and self-management as well as empathy for others; to reflect and act rather than to react; to sense when humour is turning sour; and to know how to be supportive. The global world we encounter online and the multicultural societies in which we live out our "real life" mean that people, especially children who are usually less guarded in their interactions, may have very different ways of expressing emotions. Due to a lack of cultural and social awareness, we can easily step on the toes of others without realising it. For many young people, their teenage years are about "fitting in" and being accepted, which underlines the importance of their being confronted with diversity and learning to embrace it.

In recent years there has been an emerging consensus among anti-bullying experts that improved social and emotional skills – or social and emotional intelligence, as it is referred to by many[11] – is key to the empowerment of children and young people and that diversity is a positive and enriching facet of any community. In this approach, the aim is to empower every individual to become the master of their own well-being and an active contributor to the well-being of others around them. Such self-awareness is also a key ingredient in resilience: the quality that enables a person to tackle and learn from challenging situations rather than to be harmed by them. However, the development of these capacities is rarely included in school curricula, and the need for them barely understood by society in general. When such skill-building is part of the school programme, especially when peer supporters are trained to take the lead, the benefits are quickly evident in terms of a better overall learning environment; less absenteeism on the part of pupils but also teachers; and fewer bullying incidents. Success stories from schools and from ENABLE's Danish partner – which runs a youth centre, a helpline and a number of youth-related projects – tell us that this social-emotional focus on the individual is proving effective in offering new paths to reach more vulnerable children too. And what child or teen isn't vulnerable at some point of their childhood or teen years?

Society is facing major challenges at present, with hate speech almost commonplace in certain circles and in the media, and radicalisation a vision of terror for many parents of teens. There is obviously no easy solution, but early findings seem to indicate that greater focus on learning to be and to live together could well be a route worthy of further exploration.

## Perspectives, practice and insights

Readers will discover in the pages that follow a wide range of topics and examples drawn from the experience of practitioners working in one way or another in the field. The one common denominator is that they are all seeking to empower children and build their resilience so that they can respond positively and responsibly to the challenges they encounter in today's rather complex world.

Section 1, "Perspectives", begins with a glimpse of the future and some of the challenges and solutions that virtual reality (VR) may bring. This is followed by an interview with Facebook, ASKfm and Vodafone: all three figuring among the more popular providers of social and mobile media platforms today and playing a significant role in the life of many teens. They are three of ENABLE's associate partners and have supported the network since its outset. Certainly many young people will take a similar perspective to Floran, the 23-year-old "digital native" from the Netherlands who comments on their responses. In the following chapter, an anti-bullying expert shares the lessons she has learned over several decades spent working with youth. This sets the scene for the next chapter in this section, which looks at online issues from the viewpoint of parents, and offers some useful guidance on strategies that are proving successful for coping with the challenges and pitfalls we all encounter when educating children in the digital age. Fittingly, Section 1 comes to a close with an analysis of some of the difficulties that children with special educational needs and their families face. This sector of the population is often especially vulnerable to bullying and less able to defend themselves against it, as the young people and their families themselves testify.

Section 2, "Practice", takes readers in and out of classrooms in some of the countries ENABLE is working with, and into the wings of two helpline services, one based in Italy and the other in Denmark. The section ends with several case studies that illustrate the importance of being able to adapt to cultural and linguistic diversity while respecting certain core principles that remain constant worldwide – for example, the crucial role of senior leadership in promoting a learning culture and an environment conducive to the well-being of pupils.

The final section in this publication, "Insights", draws on the research and experience of psychologists, educators and other experts in a range of countries from Greece and the United States to Portugal and the United Kingdom. All authors underline the importance of life skills such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and empathy, as well as examining in depth the role of the school and the family in developing these skills. Differences between bullying and cyberbullying are discussed at some length, though all concur that a majority of bullying cases begin in "real life" situations rather than online. They also stress the importance of encouraging peer support in fostering a healthy emotional environment in schools.

We hope that the insights, perspectives and practice on bullying, teaching and parenting that are presented in the following pages will help open up a broader debate and trigger new ideas and approaches. As the English poet John Donne once observed, "No man is an island", and this is truer than ever in our connected world. Like the intricate geometrical symmetries that made the Dutch artist Maurits

Cornelis Escher[12] famous, human behaviour itself is a tableau of interlocking repetitive patterns and processes, every emotion and action we emit shaping those of the people around us. Our aim is to cast the spotlight on evolving social interactions, foster a deeper appreciation of diversity, and strive to ensure that every child can enjoy a violence-free environment, which is, after all, a fundamental children's right.[13]

Section 1

# Perspectives

Chapter 1

# Virtual environments – Multiple facets, multiple opportunities

*Martin Schmalzried*

Novelty is an elusive concept. Cyberbullying is certainly a recent phenomenon, originating from the gradual permeation of bullying behaviour into the online world as it developed, leaving us to grapple with the implications of such things as anonymity, outreach, 24/7 connectivity, instantaneity and permanence of data. However, in 2016, a combination of parallel evolutions in technology has brought a truly novel experience to users with the merger of social networking/online communities and virtual environments through virtual reality (VR), with possibly new implications for cyberbullying, online harassment, privacy and more.

Social networking and online communities, or Web 2.0, started sometime at the turn of the 21st century and expanded gradually, bringing together communities of over a billion people. Online gaming communities such as World of Warcraft, League of Legends and Second Life gained millions of users and managed to couple entertainment with online socialisation and interaction. In parallel, the evolution of both hardware (graphics cards, processors and screens) and software (operating systems and graphic application programing interfaces, or APIs) led to a gradual increase in the realism and quality of virtual environments, reaching levels of detail mimicking reality. In fact, VR has been around for longer than most remember but has had a very shaky history, especially with Nintendo's Virtual Boy fiasco. Nevertheless, it was finally able to take advantage of both of the previously mentioned evolutions to enable companies to provide a commercially viable and quality experience for end users at a relatively modest price. Indeed, VR has been used by professionals for some time, in healthcare and by the military, but only with tailored and expensive devices, unsuitable for widespread release.

So while neither virtual environments, social networking/online communities or VR are new phenomena, the combination of all three is nothing short of a revolution.

This chapter will be structured in three parts. The first part will briefly review research about the effects of VR; the second part will raise a number of risks that VR may pose to a phenomenon like bullying; and the last part will present concluding remarks and tentative recommendations for addressing some of those risks.

## The impact of VR – An incomplete picture

Research on the impact of spending time in VR is still in its infancy, with the exception of a number of restricted clinical trials of VR, generally designed to help test subjects rather than test any negative effect. Nevertheless, some side effects of immersion in VR have been identified.

## Overcoming traumatic experiences and resolving certain mental health-related issues

As VR is now being used as an innovative means to help patients suffering from stress-related and other disorders, and even to better apprehend challenging situations, we cannot help but wonder if it could lend itself to overcome trauma for victims in areas related to bullying and hate speech, for example. One of the more dramatic recent applications of VR has been in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), especially for soldiers who have endured a traumatising experience in combat. For instance, for soldiers who cannot stand the sound of a helicopter, taking a ride in an actual helicopter can help them get past the trauma. However, helicopter rides are expensive, and the immersion of the patient in a VR helicopter ride can have similar effects to an actual helicopter ride.[14]

Another experiment showed that VR environments can help depressive patients who have trouble expressing self-compassion and thus find it difficult to get out of their depressive state. By making them express compassion towards a virtual "depressed" character and then experiencing compassion from another virtual character, the VR environment significantly reduced the severity of their depression and their self-criticism, enhancing self-compassion.[15] Imagine applying a similar application of VR to raise compassion and empathy in bullying or hate speech situations. Beyond "self-compassion", VR has shown promise in identifying and possibly addressing issues such as body image disturbance (BID), which is heavily associated with eating disorders, especially among young women. By immersing test subjects in a VR environment where they could interact with virtual characters of varying "body sizes" in a number of settings such as a beach or a party, researchers could monitor the responses of test subjects and how much they were affected by BID.[16]

Phobias can also be reduced using VR. One experiment aimed at treating social phobia by exposing patients to a dozen 50-minute sessions of relevant images in VR. Results showed a significant drop in social anxiety, even six months after the treatment.[17] Treating phobia via VR will likely become increasingly popular since it is much easier, logistically speaking, to treat patients via VR than using "real life" situations, for example in treating spider phobia.[18] Another example is the management of music performance anxiety. Subjecting musicians to VR simulations of giving a concert in a variety of environments and to a variety of audiences yielded measurable improvements in the quality of their actual performances and anxiety levels.[19] Finally, VR has even demonstrated its potential to treat addictions such as nicotine or drug dependence by placing the patient in virtual situations that allow them to smoke a cigarette or experience the feeling of drugs, psychologically rather than physically.[20]

## Developing empathy

In the United States, Stanford University has a research branch dedicated to looking at the impact of VR on human interaction. The Virtual Human Interaction Lab has published a number of papers on the encouragement of empathy, or more generally understanding, by placing individuals in a different "social perspective" where they are obliged to see themselves in someone else's situation. One experiment, for instance, placed the viewer in the perspective of his older self in order to encourage saving for retirement. The study showed a marked impact on the test subject's propensity to save after the experiment.[21] Other studies focused on increasing empathy or understanding towards ethnic minorities or people with disabilities such as visual impairment or those that require them to be in a wheelchair.[22]

## Carrying out otherwise unethical research

Carrying out research on human reactions in delicate situations such as violent altercations between other human beings to measure their propensity to intervene would be highly unethical. VR simulations can help address some of these ethical concerns and gain insight into important human behaviour such as the phenomenon of bystanders. One study, for instance, measured the likelihood of 40 male Arsenal supporters (an English football team) intervening in a VR-simulated violent attack against an individual. The test was meant to measure the likelihood of such fans intervening depending on whether the victim of the assault was an Arsenal supporter or not. Unsurprisingly, the number of interventions was much higher in cases where the victim was also an Arsenal supporter (in-group as opposed to out-group).[23]

Even more controversially, a study demonstrated the use of VR to help identify sex offenders or paedophiles by measuring their arousal level or penile plethysmography (PPG) to VR simulations featuring computer-generated child characters. The research showed that the measurements for distinguishing the PPG of sex offenders compared to non-deviant males were much more accurate with the use of VR as opposed to standard methods using a screen.[24]

In a number of studies, VR has proven a powerful distraction from pain or real world stimuli. For instance, one application has been to distract overweight children from the pain or difficulty of physical exercise.[25] In fact, using VR to distract from pain has seen many applications including dental care, surgery, burn treatment and oncology treatments for cancer patients. The studies provide evidence that VR is immersive enough to dull pain signals received by the brain. This effect is not unique to VR. Traditional virtual experiences using a screen have shown similar effects and have given rise to conditions such as Nintendo Wii tendonitis, where players fail to pay attention to their bodies' pain signals while playing Wii games involving repetitive motions such as Wii tennis.[26] VR arguably adds another layer of realism and immersiveness, which provides an even stronger distraction for the brain.

## Side effects

Through all of this research, some side effects have been noted including: disorientation and temporary loss of motor skills due to "past-pointing";[27] panic attacks during prolonged use;[28] injury due to sudden moves while in VR and an inadequate/unsafe surrounding environment or visual discomfort.[29] Other side effects have included headaches and nausea,[30] potentially enhanced occurrences of game transfer phenomena[31] and potential impact on the eyes, such as seeing ghost images when closing one's eyes. However, all these occurrences are only based on testimonies and have yet to be substantiated by research.[32]

## General implications

All of the research above proves one essential point: VR has pushed the boundaries of realism so far that it manages to successfully trick the brain into believing a virtual environment or experience is "real", with real psychological and even physical effects (e.g. physiological reactions or the production of hormones). This has major implications for areas such as therapy and health, but also in terms of risks.

As Jeremy Bailenson from the Stanford Virtual Human Interaction Lab has put it, "The brain treats virtual experience as if it's real. The same as if you saw another person in a room – the brain reacts the same way to a virtual person".[33]

## Cyberbullying and VR

### Treating trauma, causing trauma: a double-edged sword

VR environments have successfully demonstrated their therapeutic effects in helping patients to get over certain traumatising experiences. Thus one can only assume that VR also has the potential of causing trauma. Some content creators in VR have already expressed their concerns about "scaring" players in VR, given the increase in realism, and advocate the setting of standards. Alex Schwartz, chief executive of Owlchemy Labs, has commented that "scares in VR are borderline immoral".[34] Others such as Richard Marks, a Sony lead VR engineer, take the view that "[j]ust like any medium, [VR] can have good effects and negative effects. I think people can get just as immersed in a book."[35]

Besides trauma from in-game programed content, bullying in online gaming can also have a profound impact on a victim, given the increased feeling of "presence". For example, some online players intentionally restrict your field of view. As annoying as that may be on a computer monitor, in a VR setting, such an action could have a similar impact to someone invading your private space in real life. To go even further, online games often include pre-programed taunts to "spice up" the game.[36] In VR, in order to increase the sense of presence, the controllers held in each hand also serve to move the characters' arms, which means players have a much higher degree of freedom to communicate via gestures with other players. Such gestures can simply be signals to move closer or away during a team-based multiplayer game, but also

to mimic all sorts of obscene gestures or actions such as physical violence or sexual harassment (e.g. masturbation or coitus).

Violence and sexual harassment against women in VR is a serious concern. Sexual harassment is already a well-known and widespread phenomenon in online gaming.[37] Women are exposed to death and rape threats, extremely offensive language (in both written and spoken form), and demands to share sexually explicit content or favours. A VR environment adds a further layer of "realism" to these occurrences.

It is almost inevitable that eventually content that simulates rape or murder will be made available on VR. Such content has already been developed by third party individuals in the form of "add-ons" or "mods" for games like Grand Theft Auto,[38] and there is every reason to believe that this will happen in VR as well. Palmer Luckey, the founder of Oculus Rift, has acknowledged that "it's impossible to control those kinds of things. You just have to accept it."

Furthermore, harassment is not limited to video games. Social networks such as Twitter have a longstanding reputation of poorly handling harassment and abuse of women.[39] According to a Women, Action & the Media study,[40] this is due to many factors including anonymity producing low accountability for one's actions and poor reporting mechanisms. Transposing this phenomenon to VR environments might have an even stronger impact on women.

A further reason to worry is the development of products aimed at increasing the realism of VR. Several companies are testing haptic suits, which simulate the sense of touch in VR, essentially via electrodes stimulating muscles. For instance, the Teslasuit not only provides a full suit simulating touch but also the feeling of warmth and coolness.[41]

The Impacto project tries to simulate the effect of physical impact through its own Electric Muscle Simulation technology.[42] Finally, a number of companies are working on treadmills like Virtuix's Omni.[43] These are specifically designed to enable users to walk in a VR environment or even build or adapt spaces for a fully immersive VR experience: a sort of laser tag game combined with VR.[44]

In terms of cyberbullying, such technologies could prove to be not only traumatising but even dangerous. Think about an online game where several players gang up on another and decide to shoot them continuously. If the victim is wearing a haptic suit, they will feel every blow and depending on how the game and the suit are configured, this could even physically hurt.

No doubt extreme, graphic violence and/or sexual assault in VR, potentially enhanced with haptic feedback, will renew the longstanding debate over the impact of technology on "real life" behaviour.[45] Although the topic is not new and doomsday predictions about the impact of media violence on children have been around for some time, VR achieves such levels of realism that increased caution is necessary.

## Online empathy

Many point to the impersonal and seemingly anonymous online environment as part of the explanation for cyberbullying, since "real life" signals that should trigger

empathy towards a victim are not present. An online bully does not realise that the victim is hurt. Furthermore, many cyberbullies say and do things online they would never do offline, believing their actions are shielded by anonymity and thus impunity.

Since VR aims to create an environment that is realistic to the point that it mimics reality, it could include some of the signals that should trigger empathy such as expressions of sadness or distress. In VR interactions, be they in games or social networks, individuals are represented by avatars and, in some instances,[46] by realistic virtual representations of themselves. With technology able to read in real time the emotions of a person, the virtual representations will be able to adapt and display a smiling face or a sad face. The question is whether such reactions from avatars will trigger the same kind of empathy that "real life" signals do. According to the few research papers published on empathy and virtual reality, there is hope that such signals will be rightfully interpreted by individuals and thus potentially reduce cyberbullying. However, offline bullies that take their bullying online will very likely be unaffected by VR's ability to convey distress signals, since these signals are already ignored offline.

## Identity theft and release of private information

In the sub-section above, we mentioned the possibility of creating a photo-realistic avatar in 3D for VR interactions between users, especially through social networks. In fact, the technology enabling the digitisation and 3D modelling of a real life model is evolving fast. Widely used open-source game engines, such as Unity 3D, already managed such a mapping three years ago,[47] and the hardware and software necessary to film in 3D for VR is developing fast.[48] This will enable just about anyone to create a photo-realistic avatar for themselves that is usable in any VR environment – games, meetings, virtual social gatherings. They will also be able to customise these avatars according to their taste: by making them slimmer or removing facial blemishes, for example.

However, this also means that identity theft will be a much greater risk. A victim of cyberbullying may be "mapped" via a 3D video taken without their consent, without them noticing or hacked from their profile or videos. A photo-realistic virtual character could then be created and captured doing obscene or embarrassing things in a virtual environment. Creating photo-realistic scenes for humorous purposes like the photo-realistic sketches of world leaders sitting on the toilet[49] is not new, but the use of VR to do this could be extremely harmful in the case of cyberbullying.

Use of VR environments may also aggravate incidents of "doxing": the practice of searching for and publishing private information online with malicious intent. VR environments will be spaces to interact socially with others through games, virtual parties, meetings or private virtual get-togethers. However, unlike in "real life" where one can make sure no one is recording while one is acting foolishly or saying foolish things, VR can be entirely recorded. How will humans react to this false sense of privacy in VR environments, which will nevertheless look very real? A user could feel they are in a private situation (e.g. being alone in a VR room) but in fact be visible to thousands of users observing them and recording their every action. This might exacerbate the risk of being "exposed" or ridiculed online through the release of "genuine" embarrassing content as opposed to a convincingly realistic fabrication,

as described above. It might also fundamentally change the way we perceive privacy and private spaces, triggering paranoia about being observed at all times, not only online, but also offline.

## Peer pressure, societal norms, invisible bullies

The definition of cyberbullying clearly relates to an individual or a group of individuals who carry out a repetitive action with the intent to hurt someone: but what about more subtle or invisible forms of bullying? Can peer pressure or societal norms, under certain circumstances, become forms of bullying? In this sub-section, we will suggest that they can be, while recognising that the question deserves to be addressed in more depth.

Even though peer pressure or societal norms do not intend to hurt a person, the end effect can be very similar to cyberbullying given the element of repetitiveness and the powerlessness of victims who suffer from low self-esteem, anger, sadness or depression. Of particular significance are issues such as racism, gender roles, gender stereotypes and body image.

While many would dismiss video games as entertainment, the design, character choice, environment and scenario of a game inevitably conveys messages. Who is the "hero" of the game and what does he (or, highly unlikely, she) look like? Who is the "bad guy" and what does he/she look like? Beside the issue of the gross underrepresentation of female characters in video games other than "bimbo" characters such as that of Lara Croft in Tomb Raider, issues around racism and ethnic representation have been widely brought up in both research[50] and the media.[51] For instance, Arabs and Muslims have been represented as being hostile and as terrorists, flattening and simplifying the diversity of Arab cultures and religious identities. Some research has already looked at how the Western video game industry struggles to depict a more accurate picture of the Arab world, notably through serious games.[52] Other research has also clearly shown the link between how Arabs are represented in the media and the violence they may be subjected to in their daily lives.[53] In effect, ethnic groups that are negatively depicted in the media including in virtual environments, will not only suffer directly from such depictions but will also be more exposed to violence from others, including in the form of cyberbullying. Once again, VR can be considered a double-edged sword, with research showing that VR can be used to increase empathy towards ethnic minorities and at the same time accentuate racist attitudes and preconceptions.

Gender roles, gender stereotypes and body image are also an area of concern.[54]

Besides the violence and harassment women are subject to online, the depiction of female characters in virtual environments also constitutes a form of psychological violence towards women. Female characters already suffer from underrepresentation in virtual environments,[55] but when games offer the possibility to play with a female character, their appearance suffers from several gender stereotypes including excessive skinniness, unrealistic body proportions (huge breasts, tiny waist) and sexualisation (minimal body coverage, sexually explicit attitudes). Faced with criticism, the video game industry has made some efforts, especially with characters like Lara Croft, which has gradually moved away from being a cyber-bimbo with ridiculous body

proportions to a realistic female heroine.[56] VR has shown the potential to help users accept their body image, but at the same time, could induce a new form of "virtual competition" for skinniness or sexiness via female virtual characters or even VR social network avatars. In the online virtual world, Second Life users are free to model the appearance of their avatars. With avatars becoming more and more realistic, what will women and especially young women make their avatars look like on VR social networks? Societal pressure might push female users to "trim" or "edit" their virtual selves to match societal norms or perceived peer expectations, triggering a race to the bottom and exacerbating problems like BID and anorexia.

Finally, there are many other groups that suffer from their depiction in virtual environments such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people and people with disabilities. All of these groups may also end up suffering from online hatred and violence due to the effects of VR on an already hostile online environment. For instance, being called a "fag" or "gay" is already commonplace in video games[57] that convey hyper "masculine" values.[58]

## Tentative conclusions and recommendations

Many of the issues that have been identified above are not new and are already present in today's offline or two-dimensional online world. VR will most likely exacerbate existing problems but we can at least be assured that we are not dealing with totally new challenges. Nevertheless, given the increased impact VR can have, both psychologically and physiologically, tackling these issues will be even more pressing if we are to maximise the benefits of VR and minimise its potential harm.

Furthermore, some unknown factors remain. Will human beings behave in VR settings much like they would in the "real world", given the increased sense of realism? Or will humans eventually be able to successfully convince the brain that what they are seeing is not real and thus behave differently from "real life"? In the latter case, we may find that VR will fail to trigger empathy similar to real life situations, which would undermine human interactions in VR settings and exacerbate the existing online harassment or cyberbullying that stems from anonymity and lack of understanding for the victim. As Jeremy Bailenson has so eloquently put it, "I think virtual reality is like uranium: it's this really powerful thing. It can heat homes and it can destroy nations. And it's all about how we use it."[59]

In conclusion, we can identify some tentative recommendations that may help prevent cyberbullying or other forms of harassment in VR environments. We recommend reinforcing core values such as empathy, self-esteem, authenticity, autonomy, liberty, open-mindedness, deliberation, critical thinking, privacy, and social and emotional learning (SEL) through all relevant parties such as schools, content providers, service providers, families, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society. Setting up a "virtual" environment that reinforces and actively promotes such values is key in this respect and is the responsibility of private actors. This could have a positive impact on issues such as body image, gender stereotypes and homophobia. For example, algorithms that determine the ranking of news or posts are already configured to maximise revenue and profit. So, such algorithms could easily be configured

to favour certain types of content that respect and promote positive values and downplay negative content. The recent social experiment carried out by Facebook proves the feasibility of this, as long as such "tweaking" of algorithms is done with full transparency to avoid the sort of outcry that followed Facebook's "manipulation" of its Newsfeed. Some might argue that such initiatives infringe freedom of speech, but we should remember that ranking content will always in a way limit freedom of speech, regardless of whether it is for the purpose of maximising advertising revenue or promoting certain values.

Promoting socially responsible VR design can also help prevent the occurrence of cyberbullying. Examples of socially responsible design include:

- setting up appropriate game play structures that minimise the possibilities of "trolling" or bullying. For example, the "hit box" or "colliders" of a game can be set up so players can pass through each other instead of being able to block each other, thus creating the possibility for "trolls" to annoy or even bully other players by blocking their path. Game play can also set rules for how "close" players can get to each other, thus minimising the possibility, in a VR setting, of players being able to "invade" each other's private spaces;
- creating easy ways to pause or interrupt a VR experience if the user feels uncomfortable, without spoiling the game;
- designing an efficient reporting/blocking system to minimise the damaging effects of harassment or other negative behaviour. This could include ways to deal with identity theft and doxing, as well as implementing a certain accountability for negative behaviour. Examples of such measures include the League of Legends Tribunal, which is composed of players of the game and is responsible for sanctioning players who have displayed negative behaviour with temporary banishment from the game.

Issuing guidance and properly informing VR users about potential threats, safety measures and where to find more information or help should they experience a problem is also recommended, as well as proactive monitoring of VR as it develops to quickly address any unforeseen risks through measures such as updating design, privacy and security functions according to the advice of key stakeholders such as academics, researchers, policy makers/law enforcement and civil society representatives.

Chapter 2

# New social settings – Seeking solutions

*Janice Richardson*

## An interview with Facebook, ASKfm, Vodafone and Floran van Houts

To state that internet and online technology have upset the very way we communicate and interact is somewhat of an understatement – children at school today, and even some of their parents, have never known a world without e-mail and internet. Online platform providers have fashioned unprecedented informational and creative opportunities for the 40% of people across the world who have access to the internet,[60] and one quarter of the world's population will own smartphones by the end of 2016.[61]

However, while opening up new opportunities, information and communication technologies (ICTs) are pushing age-old concepts of literacy, knowledge, friendship and family to the limit. Back in 1996, Jacques Delors[62] spoke of the emerging tensions being triggered by the rapid advance of technology – between the local and global, the universal and the individual, tradition and modernity, short- and long-term considerations, and competition and equal opportunity. He underlined the importance of building education on four essential pillars: learning to know, to do, to be and to live together. A rapid look at education systems across the world seems to indicate that the latter two pillars have become lost in curricula and key attainment levels. On the home front, have they been lost too through our scramble to keep pace with technological evolution and our eagerness to look at life through the eyes of the media and the lens of our mobile phones? Is the rise in bullying, hate speech, radicalisation and the many other forms of violence that we are seeing today just a sign of the times, or a direct consequence of some of the tensions that Delors tried to draw our attention to?

ENABLE[63] is a project co-funded by the European Commission from 2014 to 2016 under the Daphne programme. It aims to support children and young people within their schools and families in learning "to be" and "to live together" through the development of their social and emotional skills. This is equally important if children are to increase their capacity to reflect on their own behaviour and learn to systematically weigh up the potential consequences. Given the predominant role that social media and mobile technology play in the communication and interaction that take place among young people, ENABLE would not be able to fulfil its aims without a close partnership with the platforms where young people spend much of their time.[64] These partners have accompanied ENABLE on every step of its journey: on the one

hand sharing with us valuable insights and participating in youth-friendly activities, but also developing through osmosis a deeper understanding of how their platforms can help colour interaction.

To delve more deeply into the value of these partnerships, we interviewed people at Facebook, ASKfm and Vodafone who have been involved in ENABLE, and we share with readers some of their insights in the following pages. In order to get a broader picture of the opportunities and challenges confronting young social and mobile media users today, we also gathered reactions from a young person, Floran, who has often been involved in peer support activities and was eager to comment on some of the ideas that emerged from the interviews with partners from industry.

## The opportunities

**Q. Over the past two decades, online technology has opened up a vast range of opportunities. What do you consider the priorities?**

**Facebook:** Giving people the power to share and enabling positive interaction on things closest to their heart! We also aim to provide a place where people feel safe themselves, and feel that their content is safe. And we're constantly striving to bring people new tools, better connectivity and new ways to engage.

**ASKfm:** Our platform allows people to ask and answer questions. We see that the Q&A format is a powerful tool for young people for connecting with their friends, exploring issues around their family and broader society. The ability to ask anonymous questions facilitates self-exploration and communication with other users on the platform. We are very happy to notice that in many cases ASKfm is used to promote and advocate social change, democratic principles, tolerance and rule of law.

**Vodafone:** Innovation has delivered a myriad of online content and services as well as the increased internet speeds that enable you to access them and do so wherever you are. Innovation is the key to allowing the internet to grow and the gigabit society to become a reality. Ensuring that the internet continues to innovate and provide opportunities, for education, employment and entertainment, is the priority; and that also means maximising the positive experiences for young people.

**Q. What are the most essential skills young people should be developing to make a positive contribution as citizens to society?**

**Facebook:** One crucial skill is understanding how their message is received and perceived, and the impact it can have on others. This is something children have to learn at a very young age. They need to have plenty of opportunities to find their voice, and be willing to hear disruptive ideas.

**ASKfm:** We believe that active citizens nowadays need strong critical thinking skills, and the ability to reflect, analyse content, search information and build relationships. In addition, making a positive contribution to society requires listening skills, empathy and tolerance. More than anything, young people need to receive professional support in learning about their emotions and how to manage them in order to build healthy relations with their peers and broader society.

**Vodafone:** The reach and the permanence of what we say or read about ourselves and others on the internet coupled with the predominance of immediate-response text communication, requires the skill to express one's feelings or views, in real time, without the use of intonation and body language: sometimes in no more than 140 characters. While emojis may help to express sentiments, "think before you post" still holds true to ensure that contributions remain positive.

**Floran:** The most essential skill is to think before you speak and reflect on what you are going to say before you say it. It is a little far-fetched to believe that young people need professional support to learn how to act responsibly; the majority are able to live together without racism, and it is only a minority who don't. This has always been the case, but today we hear more about this minority because technology amplifies their voice. People also misinterpret things quite fast online because they can't feel the undertone … Jokes can rapidly be misinterpreted whereas in face-to-face communication you can quickly clear up any misunderstanding. It's the same problem on social media, where things can really be blown out of proportion.

**Q. We hear a lot about resilience, empathy and entrepreneurship today. Are they as important as they are made out to be, and how can we help young people develop these qualities?**

**Facebook:** Empathy is integral to digital citizenship, and needs to happen both online and offline. Resilience is a part of the learning process, and implies being able to pause and reflect, not immediately react. It means having healthy coping mechanisms, knowing who to turn to and what is normal rational behaviour. When children's parents and teachers are left behind, it creates a big gap; because, when it comes to building resilience and empathy, nothing can replace conversations between children and their parents.

**ASKfm:** We believe that the ability to communicate effectively and creatively is an important aspect of entrepreneurship, and our platform is an incredible tool for young people to develop their communication skills. ASKfm users learn to express their point of view in writing and by using images in a creative way. In addition, as members of a global community, ASKfm users can explore various world views. This in turn can help to develop their empathy and resilience.

**Vodafone:** While the tools that are available to both parents and young people to manage their online activities such as privacy settings are important, they will never provide 100% protection. Where young people find themselves in new environments, although they may not have any previous experience of a particular situation, they can be prepared by developing their ability to manage or cope with such situations. While parents and teachers play an important role in supporting young people in developing these qualities, young people also respond well to peer-to-peer initiatives, especially as they can relate to their contemporaries' online experiences.

**Floran:** Empathy is something you experience at a young age and is at the core of your personal self. You can't teach it at a later age and you can't learn it at school. You can only learn to "reason" about it at school. You can't teach people to be resilient either, but you can motivate them to give resilience a boost. Perseverance and a positive self-view are key to resilience.

## Issues

**Q. What new trends are you seeing in bullying?**

**Facebook:** People show amazing creativity in using online tools and platforms; and this both surprises and challenges our team, especially when we see the reactions of people on the receiving end. Some trends such as using hashtags and emojis in special ways are local; and getting feedback from young people, teachers in schools and helplines is important as it contributes to understanding local contexts. Other trends such as posting hurtful comments and tagging people in strange ways in photos can also be locally nuanced; understanding them is, as always, a question of context. We also see that sometimes things that start out very small can have a copycat or snowball effect. Other things we see fall outside of what is generally considered bullying; for example, when strangers create impersonation profiles or post nasty comments on the profile of someone they don't know. Interactions are tricky to understand at the best of times, and we strive to make sense of some of the very interesting dynamics we see.

**Floran:** I've never really been involved in a bullying incident, but through the news it seems that bullying is shifting to social media, which allows bullying to take place all day long. Maybe this is because it is really easy to send messages via social media. False tagging as animals is more something that happens among a group of friends. Bullies don't always do things with the intent to hurt, but people who are more sensitive can see this as bullying.

**Q. What is "self-bullying", which we hear about from time to time?**

**ASKfm:** This is harmful self-messaging, and is given different descriptive terms such as self-harassment, self-bullying and digital self-harm in the current online safety world. Apparently self-messaging can take place on all social media networks through the use of multiple profiles or accounts. On the ASKfm platform users have the option of asking themselves questions anonymously. Our proprietary moderation filters have a capacity to detect some hurtful and suicidal content directed by users towards themselves, and we are currently working with mental health experts to better understand the phenomena.

**Floran:** This sounds strange and I have never really heard of it before, but I suppose it is a cry for help. Do social media platforms work with psychologists who can communicate with the young person doing this type of thing?

## Solutions

**Q. What sort of tools and strategies do you implement to enhance user experience and avoid hate speech and bullying?**

**ASKfm:** Like many social networking sites, we predominantly focus our efforts on detection, takedown and prevention measures against bullying and hate speech. Since acquiring ASKfm in 2014, the new leadership team has put in place a comprehensive safety strategy in line with industry good practice. The ASKfm platform offers a number of safety tools for users to manage their experiences and safeguard

against unwanted content and contacts, including bullying. All users can switch off the ability to receive anonymous questions altogether. In addition, users can block individuals (including anonymous users) from sending them questions. Those two measures can be effectively used to prevent bullying on the platform.

**Facebook:** Our strategy includes blocking tools and reporting processes, safety by design, awareness raising about things like manifestations of bullying and empowering bystanders, supporting NGOs, "in-country" peer-to-peer learning and informing users about responsible online behaviour. Our model relies very much on people, on trying to understand the sub-text, on shortening response time and keeping in touch with research to stay on top. We are constantly on the lookout for opportunities to build relationships for in-depth knowledge about new types of abuse. Our updated content policy has become very nuanced, and we are always adding new reviewers. For example, in our Dublin office we work in more than 35 languages, and 75 nationalities are represented.

**Floran:** Hate speech and bullying are not the same, and bullying still happens among adults. Hate speech is trying to convince other people to hate a person or a group, whereas bullying is picking on someone and making their life miserable for your own pleasure. The focus is different. Social media platforms could use a filter to filter out certain words; governments use filters like this against terrorism. But filters alone wouldn't be enough, you would need to follow up so that people know that the content they have posted isn't acceptable, and why. Social media should have a zero-tolerance policy for hate speech. People should be more aware that this is punishable by law, and social media should work more closely with the legal system to punish it. You can't push your opinion so far as to desecrate other races or religions – the intention behind the speech is what counts.

**Q. And what about prevention?**

**ASKfm:** We have developed information materials for users about safety measures on our platform. Those are available in ASKfm's Safety Center. However, like most of us in the industry, we are struggling to find the right communication channels and tools to deliver safety information to teens in an engaging but educational form. We have started a partnership with the Diana Award in the UK to develop content and raise the awareness of young people about online anonymity in general and use of the ASKfm platform in particular. We believe that ENABLE allows us to reach our teen audience in the way that is appropriate for them.

**Floran:** Using social media and mobile phones as learning tools in school won't make much difference to the attitude of young people; you would need to do specific activities with the tools related to making them understand the impact of the things they do and write. Schools should be developing in all of us the strategy that whenever we receive a comment we don't like, we should ask "What did you mean by that?" We do this when we are speaking face to face, and it quickly clears up any risk of misunderstanding or taking offence at a statement that wasn't meant to hurt.

There should also be more publicity about what mobile and social media platforms do against bullying. I don't see anything about this on their front page.

**Q. Can you tell us more about how reporting works on your platform?**

**ASKfm:** The ASKfm Web platform and applications (IOS and Android) offer our users the ability to report content from different points of access. It is possible to report both abusive content and users. Since a lot of our users are teens (40% of ASKfm users are under 18) our intention is to ensure that reporting on ASKfm is simple and intuitive. To achieve this goal, we monitor report volumes in different countries, analyse their validity and listen to our users through focus group interviews.

**Facebook:** We receive millions of reports each week, but actually spam and nudity top the report list at present. It is hard to measure the real prevalence of bullying when the vast majority of reports concern issues other than bullying. There are many ways of contacting Facebook and it is difficult to track what people are thinking through what they report. The gravity of issues therefore has to be assessed using other means. Sometimes people use the reporting tools we provide to abuse or bully others, for example by claiming that content is fake. People can be clever in distorting reality to suit their purpose.

**Floran:** That's precisely the problem of reporting! But social media should make their report-handling strategy much clearer to the public. If someone reports, they should track all interactions between bully and bullied. Then they could just sever the link between the people involved, without fully blocking the person who seems to be doing the bullying. This would make people aware that they are doing something wrong, and might lead them to reflect on their actions.

**Q. Parents and teachers often enquire about the moderation systems on social media and mobile platforms. Can you give us more details about your moderation system?**

**ASKfm:** ASKfm moderation filters are based on our Terms of Service, which outline the type of content and actions that are forbidden on the platform. This includes bullying and specifically refers to cruel or hurtful posts; threatening or aggressive posts; and offensive images. We review all reports from the users about possible violations in text, images, videos or URLs. For this we use a combination of in-house moderators together with a global, distributed team working around the year 24/7. Furthermore, all images and videos are reviewed manually, usually within 15 minutes. Images containing prohibited content are removed after review by the site. As a result of these efforts we doubled the amount of inappropriate questions and answers removed from the site as compared to last year.

**Facebook:** Moderation can be seen in some respects as almost the invisible side of the picture, but electronic moderation simply can't compete with the human eye. There are so many nuances in an image or a phrase that you cannot understand if you lack context. And moderation can be insidious because images and texts can be misconstrued. What seems inoffensive to the "naked eye" can be something perceived entirely differently by those most closely involved. We believe in the importance of having people look at content live and take into account signals, but even this can never replace reporting.

**Floran:** With moderation you should look at the number of times the same people commit the same "mistakes", then block them if they do it many times purposely.

This could work in a similar way to the points system on a driver's licence. Then there should be a lot of publicity about it.

**Q. Do you have any sort of cyberbullying detection system, and if so, how does it function?**

**ASKfm:** We employ a proprietary database of inappropriate words and phrases in multiple languages to help filter and alert to content, including bullying that violates our Terms of Service. This database is updated regularly. In addition, we encourage our users to report bullying content from a number of places on the site and applications. Reports are then reviewed by a team of moderators within 24 hours.

**Q. What more could we do to encourage young people, parents and teachers to benefit from the positive opportunities online and circumvent the risks?**

**Facebook:** More interaction needs to be fostered between parents and children so that both have a better understanding of tools and processes. Bullying is so upsetting that we have to tackle it from many angles, including creating resources for parents with expert organisations. We all have work to do in addressing parents and ensuring positive action rather than panic. Empowering parents to have conversations with their children on these topics is essential, because parents have context and experience even if they sometimes lack technical ability.

**ASKfm:** We are continuously developing relationships with NGOs in Europe to reach out to parents and teachers with our safety information and guidance. As a member of the ICT Coalition, ASKfm is working with policy makers, educational institutions and civil society to raise awareness about online safety.

**Vodafone:** Providing online safety messaging continues to be important but in isolation it can create an unbalanced view that the potential risks outweigh the benefits. Such education and awareness information on internet safety needs to be integrated with the positive messages of digital literacy and the educational and career opportunities that are available. While there continue to be high levels of youth unemployment across Europe, the projections for future job vacancies in information technology exceed the projected supply of candidates. Some of these jobs have not yet been invented – for example, programing the personalities of our home robots!

**Floran:** We could make this a subject in school explaining the risks. If these things are explained well enough, with real examples of what could go wrong, then people could learn a lot more. Parents learn a lot from their children, but older people without children get scammed much more easily. Everyone should have access to education, which would help a lot in avoiding problems. If free courses were offered in the local community, people would come together and learn, including from each other.

Online technology is unique in its ability to cast a spotlight into the darkest corners of humanity. It offers a megaphone to the minority, whose voice can often drown out the majority who are benefiting from the boundless opportunities that ICTs provide. It is a fact of life that when it comes to technological progress we should proceed with caution; this is where education has an essential role to play, whether

at home, at school, online and wherever people come together. However, according to sociology professor David Finkelhor, who advises ENABLE on its work, "digital natives" are handling the challenges of society better than any generation before them since the 1950s.[65] Our Facebook interviewee aptly said in closing:

> We are only at the start of a long journey, and the power of the internet is that it is owned by nobody but also by everybody. It needs to be youth-led, in the most democratic way possible, by all, including people at risk. Young people should take away the understanding that this is a place where they should be creating.

Chapter 3

# Understanding cybersafety, cyberbullying and cyberwellness – The youth perspective

*Parry Aftab*[66]

In the two decades and more that I have worked in the field of cyberlaw, policy and cybersafety, there is one thing I have learned: young people see things differently. Experts use terms like "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" to try and explain the differences, but it is much more than that. In a world where online and offline are always connected, young people do not see a difference between the two. To them, it is just "life".

However, while they claim there is no distinction between the "real" and the "virtual", ironically they believe that online/digital somehow matters less than "real life" and different rules apply in each realm. Just as they have "inside" and "outdoor" voices and behave differently at a party with friends than at grandma's house, they also behave differently during their online and offline activities.

"Tweens" or pre-adolescents use language online that they would never dream of using in real life and many become the cyberbullying equivalent of Dr Jekyll and Ms Hyde. This alter ego engages in lewd and disrespectful language, confrontational tones, sexting (more focused on the sharing of visual content) and cybersex[67] (action-oriented).

This dichotomy needs to be understood by experts, industry leaders and medical professionals addressing the digital lives of youth. We need to appreciate how young people see their cyberworld and define their terms. Unless we understand their beliefs and attitudes, we can never change them, create better awareness or keep them safe online.

That is why we at WiredSafety, Cyberwellness and StopCyberbullying speak directly with up to 10 000 students a month, from locations around the globe, and have run teen and tween peer-leadership groups since 1998. We have learned that while some groups of youth, depending on demographics, have different values and priorities, most have similar beliefs and attitudes.

This chapter recounts only a very small amount of what they have shared with us over the years. However, it forms the basis upon which we build our cybersafety, cyberwellness and anti-cyberbullying programmes for youth and their families or caregivers.

## Cyberbullying – What they tell us

WiredSafety created the StopCyberbullying programme and website in 2005. However, the organisation has worked on cyber-harassment and cyberbullying since its formation as a cyber-help group in 1995. (WiredSafety defines "cyber-harassment" as digital-sourced attacks by adults or minors against adults, and "cyberbullying" as digital-sourced attacks by minors against minors.) Over the years WiredSafety has conducted polls and surveys of more than 100 000 adults and minors on cyberbullying and digital abuse issues. It has unique insight into how young people define cyberbullying, the risks and harms of cyberbullying, what they think can and cannot be done to prevent or address it, and its importance to them.

## Defining the problem

"Cyberbullying" is an accepted term, originally adopted in Canada. But few young people or even experts can agree on a definition. Many experts use the offline definition of bullying, which requires an imbalance of power (real or perceived) and that the action be repeated or continuous.

WiredSafety's definition of cyberbullying is "the use of digital technology as a weapon to hurt a minor by another minor." Cyberbullying also has a longer and more academic definition, but this one is easier to understand and repeat. WiredSafety does not agree that all cyberbullying must always be continuous or repeated to qualify as cyberbullying. In the case of more serious incidents, repetition may not be necessary for the activity to be considered cyberbullying.

Serious incidents might be considered to fall into two categories:

- sextortion, sext-bullying and significant reputational attacks (e.g. those related to sexual preference, promiscuity, criminal behaviour, sexually transmitted diseases, communicable diseases, and other types of reputational attacks constituting defamation per se);
- death threats or threats of serious bodily harm to the target or someone close to the target, designed to distress the target.

WiredSafety also does not agree that an imbalance, real or perceived, is required (as it may be in "traditional" bullying). Digital technology itself provides the power and its deployment is the imbalance, if any imbalance of power is required at all. Interestingly, power can shift from one actor to the other with the victim lashing out at the original provocation and in turn becoming the bully.

Young people define cyberbullying in a very personal and subjective way. Some only see death threats or provocations of suicide as cyberbullying. Others consider all

name-calling to be cyberbullying. This is one of the reasons cyberbullying studies, surveys and polls have a wide range of disparate conclusions.

Ask a minor if they have been cyberbullied, and their response is highly dependent upon their own definition of the term; the person conducting the study often has no idea what that is. That's why we never ask young people if they have been cyberbullied. Instead, we list the 87 different actions students have identified to us as constituting cyberbullying, and ask if any of those have happened to them.

In most cases, over 85% of young people (in group presentations to 12- to 16-year-olds across the world) tell us that they have experienced at least one of the actions constituting cyberbullying in the last year. We have asked this question of more than 43 000 young people, in person, in various North American, Asian and European locations, and more than 55 000 young people by digital survey in North America.

Another problem exists when young people cannot agree on a definition of cyberbullying. If they cannot agree on where the line is, they cannot stop their own actions from crossing that "thin line". Without being able to identify unacceptable behaviour, they do not report it when it happens to them, thinking it falls within acceptable, although "mean", behaviour. They put up with behaviour that is clearly unacceptable because they do not understand that it is unacceptable. And they are often self-critical for not being able to brush it off.

StopCyberbullying's "Are you a cyberbully?" quiz, developed by schoolgirls at the Spence School, New York 12 years ago, has received more views and requests for reuse than most of our other resources: only our "Stop, block and tell" initiative has been used and adopted more. It helps show how often young people seek definitions of digital abuse and where the line is drawn.

## "Cyberbullying is important because people are dying"

After I ask students the threshold questions designed to help me understand how much they understand cybersafety and cyberbullying, I ask them to tell me what the most important issue is that they face online. "Cyberbullying!" is the overwhelming answer, no matter where I am in the world. When I ask them why, the most frequent response is because kids/teens are dying. When I ask how many they think have committed suicide because of cyberbullying worldwide since the arrival of the internet, typical responses include: "Millions!" "Hundreds of thousands!" "10 a day!" "12 500 a week!" Their responses are rapid and, to them, credible, and when asked to vote on the best answer, they usually conclude that it is somewhere between 5 and 18 million. If anyone guesses at a more realistic figure, like between 500 and 1 000, the other students laugh.

Many young people believe that cyberbullying-related suicides are far more common than they are, and this is true for students around the world. Although I discuss their misconceptions, the fact that students see digital abuse as a substantial contributing factor to death among young people is a serious problem. In fact they are overestimating the numbers of suicides, hardly a sign that they are underappreciating the damage?

Young people are genuinely fearful. They believe that suicide and self-harm are expected behaviour. They do not know how to react when they are targeted, and fear for their friends when their friends are targeted. They panic and, unless they feel they are being targeted worse than what others are, they think they have no right to be hurt; they may not reach out for help.

They blame the cyberbully for provoking suicides and do not understand the reality. In every case that I am aware of, globally, when suicide is connected to digital abuse of minors, the minor is at risk for some unrelated reason. In my experience, cyberbullying may contribute to a minor's vulnerability, ostracise them from potential support networks or act as the straw that breaks the proverbial camel's back, but it does not actually cause suicide or self-harm.

Many "cyberbullycide" victims have been under treatment for emotional stress and disorders. Many have been on medication for many years to address depression and behavioural issues. They may be ostracised by their peers, rejected by former friends and significant others, and socially rejected for many reasons.

They may be different from others and in some cases different from the way they were before a disabling accident, illness, treatment or life-changing incident. For example, a recent "bullycide" in Virginia occurred after a popular young woman received a concussion while playing soccer. The resulting brain trauma changed her behaviour, and bullying and cyberbullying ensued. She went from popular to "different" and she eventually took her own life only hours after sharing her torment with her father.

Various circumstances may contribute to undermining a young person's resilience and self-esteem, such as a divorce, death in the family or among close friends, sudden economic crisis, health-related crisis, lifestyle change, social rejection due to changes in weight/attractiveness/sexual activity or sexual preference, a hostile breakup with reputational attacks, legal/criminal-related repercussions or intellectual/physical/emotional special needs. Equally, new schools, moving to new locations, immigrant status or ethnic/religious/cultural differences may result in alienation from peers and isolation.

Our mental health experts and medical professionals tell us that cyberbullying alone does not provoke serious self-harm or suicide. They admit it can be a contributing factor and often, when the target feels they have no one to trust and no options, it can lead to consideration of self-harm. Cyberbullying does not kill but it hurts and can have lasting effects throughout a person's lifetime. There are ways to address cyberbullying and the better young people understand this, the better equipped they will be to survive it and move on.

## Amanda Todd

Amanda Todd's name and story is recognised worldwide. At school presentations in Budapest, Bangalore, Melbourne and Prince Edward Island, the students know her name and her pain. There have been many digital abuse-related suicides before and since Amanda's, but her story is the one they remember best.

Why is Amanda remembered the most? Because she shared her story using flashcards on a lengthy YouTube video viewed around the world by teens and pre-teens in the millions. They watched her over and over, identified with her and were shocked by her. She became someone they knew and they felt her loss personally.

The misconception that Amanda is a typical teen creates serious problems and needs to be corrected. High-profile media coverage of cyberbullying-related suicides has so resonated with youth that they have problems believing the reality about cyberbullying/digital abuse-related suicides.

Since there are no accurate statistics on suicides connected with digital harassment among young people, compiling known cases could be very useful in helping young people understand the reality instead of the hype. We estimate that the number of such suicides worldwide is less than 1 000. In fact, we believe that cyberbullying has actually been connected with fewer than 500 suicides but have doubled that number to be conservative.

## Should provocation of suicide be a crime?

We hosted a StopCyberbullying summit in Ireland in 2015. Attended by 350 students and 200 adult experts in Limerick and 350 students and experts in Dublin on the second day, the summit explored youth perceptions and approaches to address cyberbullying.

Part of the summit had a trans-Atlantic focus because of the case of Phoebe Prince; a well-known bullycide victim from the Limerick area. She had moved from Ireland to the US and eventually took her own life. As a US lawyer specialising in digital best practices, security and privacy, I facilitated a breakout discussion group on "Law and cyberbullying", along with an Irish legal expert.

I began by asking whether a cyberbully who tells a target to kill themselves should be charged with murder. About one third responded that they should, so I probed further: "Does it depend on whether the cyberbully knows that the target is especially vulnerable? Perhaps a death in the family, a crisis they are facing or a special needs situation? If they know that the target is especially depressed or vulnerable, is that the deciding factor?" The students nodded their heads in unison, with the exception of a handful of girls in the front.

One of those girls stood up. "I have never told my friends this before. I have never told anyone this before," she offered, refusing to look anyone in the eye. "Everyone thinks I am strong and in control. They don't see the pain inside. I have been cyber-bullied and considered hurting myself. And I want to make sure that anyone who tells someone to kill themselves is punished. Requiring that others know the target is suicidal, depressed or especially vulnerable misses the point. YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON INSIDE ANOTHER PERSON!"

I was in tears, as were her friends and others in the room. However, as I think about devising a legal approach to cyberbullies who provoke suicide or whose actions (in part) result in self-harm or suicide, I remember what she said.

Traditionally, laws may deal with vulnerable groups or individuals differently if the person being charged knew or should have known of this vulnerability. This is a way to address laws that hold self-harm as unreasonable and therefore, unforeseeable. These laws tend not to hold the provoker responsible for the ultimate suicide or self-harm of someone affected by their actions or words. Even so, the question arises: should those vulnerable and concealing their vulnerability be any less protected?

## Only "traditional bullies" cyberbully

Young people tend to cast the instigators in a cyberbullying or perceived cyber-bullying incident as bullies. Nevertheless, according to our estimates only 50% of cyberbullying incidents involve traditional offline bullying motives or actors. It is interesting to note that while young people think that "traditional bullies" are people on the other side, they are also very understanding of the pressures and insecurities that may result in the "bullies" lashing out.

StopCyberbullying categorises cyberbullying into five types – direct, indirect, cyberbullying-by-proxy, privacy intrusions and inadvertent/accidental cyberbully-ing. Accidental cyberbullying is the only unintentional type of cyberbullying and results from either the lack of digital literacy or miscommunications like typos and misinterpreted humour. However, it accounts for roughly 30% of cyberbullying and perceived cyberbullying incidents, especially for those aged 16 and under.

Those who instigate an inadvertent cyberbullying incident sometimes have no idea they have done so and the recipient has no idea their actions were not intended to hurt. As a result, when the recipient retaliates, they are actually the ones starting an intentional cyberbullying incident.

A further misconception is that cyberbullying always involves "traditional bullies". In fact, many targets of traditional bullying themselves turn to cyberbullying to level the playing field or seek retribution. They disguise their real identities behind the stolen identities of their targets or their friends or lash out anonymously to protect themselves from their larger, more popular and socially influential targets. They sometimes stop when the bullying does and sometimes they become cyberbullies in their own right, targeting others unrelated to their own bullying incidents.

StopCyberbullying divides cyberbullies into four categories: "mean girls", "power hungry", "revenge of the nerds" and "inadvertent or accidental cyberbullies". Only "mean girls" and "power hungry" cyberbullies operate online and offline. In fact, only 50% of the cases of cyberbullying involve traditional offline bullies, which is one of the reasons that we need different programmes to address cyberbullying and traditional bullying.

When probed in depth, young people understand how cyberbullies differ from their offline equivalents because many of them have cyberbullied someone else. For example, in one case, 70% of 1 000 boys polled in a New York private school admitted to having cyberbullied someone at least once. Despite this, young people still perceive cyberbullies as the tough guys or mean girls who constitute the ranks of offline bullies.

## Reporting cyberbullying doesn't work

I am one of the members of Facebook's Safety Advisory Board, and have been advising the industry on digital best practices for 22 years. I have helped design and deploy abuse-reporting systems and procedures for most of the major internet, social media and game industry leaders. They are well designed and respond to the needs of users to report abuse and, in some cases, get help.

Nevertheless, it is notable that few young people use these services, and these are the reasons they give:

- when they report something, nothing happens. It is a waste of their time;
- if they make a report, the person they report is told who reported it;
- if they report something as cyberbullying and it turns out it was not really cyberbullying, they can "get into trouble".

While the frustration of young people over the lack of response by the networks is understandable, and in many ways valid, their other beliefs are unfounded. The networks do not tell the abuser who reported them, unless compelled to do so by applicable law. And "good faith" reports that turn out to be incorrect are never held against them. Despite this, young people continue to seek alternatives to address cyberbullying that are often less effective.

Young people have come up with ideas to improve abuse report systems, some of which have been adopted by the tech giants. For example, an 8-year-old from Prince Edward Island (Canada) suggested that if networks allowed children to share the offending post, image or video with a trusted adult, the trusted adult would be able to help them more effectively. I shared this idea with Facebook and they have now made it possible for a young person to share offending material with a trusted adult.

Until young people understand and trust the reporting process, and unless social media companies are more effective in taking action on cyberbullying reports, they will continue to be denied a potentially effective way to stop cyberbullying. Although teen and tween volunteers with StopCyberbullying are working to design apps to improve this situation, this has to be an industry-wide initiative.

## Red buttons and help/support – What they tell us

Years ago Jim Gamble (representing CEOP, the UK's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) and I debated his demand that Facebook build in a "red button" for victims of digital abuse. His demand followed a tragic incident in the UK and he argued that if young people could press one button and get information on cybersafety, lives could be saved. This was not meant to be an emergency number to call, but merely a link to cybersafety materials provided by CEOP.

Eventually, I helped broker a resolution where Facebook would assist CEOP in creating an app that users could use on their Facebook profile. The app provided a red button to CEOP's cybersafety resources, but a 13-year-old from Canada took it one step further.

In a discussion I was facilitating with a group of 80 13-year-olds, this student suggested a "red button" with a difference. "The red button would get you help in real time," he explained. "When you need to talk with someone right then, or get help right then, you could click the button and someone would be there to help you or talk with you."

The cost of providing live help and assistance for networks the size of Facebook or YouTube is prohibitive. However, NGOs and existing help groups, as well as helplines, can make this a reality as long as they are trained and certified in cyberbullying, safety, privacy, security and digital best practices. WiredSafety's volunteers have been offering online chat/e-mail help and support for 20 years, but this is larger than any one group's ability to address it. This is a problem that requires a collaborative partnership of non-profits, help groups, victim assistance agencies, industry leaders, programmers and young people.

## Next steps – What we have learned

In conclusion, looking at what young people have told us can help experts, the industry, policy makers, wellness professionals and risk managers address digital abuse, risks and cyberbullying. We have to listen better. Young people need a place at the table.

We need to help young people define the parameters of freedom of speech and where the line exists between being rude and being abusive. They need to understand how the power of digital technology can improve lives and help victims of abuse and crime, and how community interaction and social networking can be enjoyed in safer ways. We also need to ensure that they gain the necessary legal and cyberlaw literacy skills. In turn, young people need to help us understand their needs, views and the value of their contributions to fixing what's broken and innovating solutions.

Young people should be seen, heard and respected. When it comes to digital best practices, safety, privacy and security – it is their world and they must have an important voice in framing it and managing it.

Chapter 4

# The future of parental engagement

*Ken Corish and Elizabeth Milovidov*

> Parenting is providing the conditions in which a child can realize his or her full human potential.
>
> – Gordon Neufeld

Parents are the keystones in successfully raising children today, but engaging parents in conversations about bullying and other difficult issues is often a challenge. Yet issues of safety, resilience and managing bullying in both the offline and online worlds are among the main themes that parents need to know about.

A fundamental premise of the ENABLE programme is to promote resilience in bullying situations through the progressive development of social and emotional knowledge and skills – a behavioural intervention akin to parenting itself. It is vital that parents themselves support the initiative in a consistent way at home for it to be effective. It has never been more important for them to be involved, which is why the ENABLE programme includes a resource specifically designed for them.

While the majority of bullying continues to happen face to face, cyberbullying is the number one issue reported by the INSAFE network[68] and also an issue regularly covered by the media. However, parents often do not feel sufficiently empowered to be able to manage their child's online experience for a whole host of reasons, mostly technical. Many parents find it difficult to transfer their parenting skills into what, for them, is often an unfamiliar and alien world. However, parental education in digital citizenship allows schools to extend their duty of care for their students and build in them a resilience that will ensure they can keep themselves safe even when the necessary technology or adult intervention is not there to support them.

Bringing parents up to speed with the challenges of the online world is no easy task. In this chapter, we will examine the best practices and tried and tested strategies to engage parents in both general internet safety practices as well as specific cyber-bullying prevention techniques.

## Parent's attitudes to their child's online life – What research tells us

The Ofcom Media and Attitudes Report[69] is a bi-annual report that highlights how UK families use media and how their concerns and aspirations shape that use. It provides a useful reference to parental attitudes and can help schools shape an engagement strategy. The following summary provides a list of the salient issues covered by the report and what parents say about them.

Around 1 in 4 parents say they are very/fairly concerned about their child: being bullied online/cyberbullying (24%); downloading viruses (23%); or giving out personal details to inappropriate people (22%). Almost 1 in 5 are concerned about who their child is in contact with online (19%). However, there was less concern about online content (16%); that their child might bully others online (14%); or online sharing/accessing of copyrighted material (12%).

About 1 in 4 parents of 8- to 15-year-olds have concerns about mobile phone use. They are mostly concerned about their child being bullied through their mobile phone, or about them sharing their personal details with inappropriate people. About 1 in 5 parents are also very/fairly concerned about their child downloading bogus or malicious apps on their smartphone, or the use of location-based services on their phone.

Gaming has become an almost exclusively social activity and presents a number of challenges, including regular incidences of bullying. Around 1 in 8 parents of 5- to 15-year-olds who play games are concerned about gaming content (13%) and who their child might be gaming with through their device (12%). Both these indicators remain unchanged since 2012.

Many children use the internet unsupervised and feel they are being intruded on when a parent monitors them or intervenes. This often means they are reluctant to seek support from an adult when issues arise. As young people become older, they are less likely to go to a "trusted adult" for help and often feel they are resilient enough to deal with bullying issues themselves. Most parents of 5- to 15-year-olds who go online at home trust their child to use the internet safely (83%), and feel that the benefits of the internet outweigh the risks (70%). Around half of the parents of 3- to 4-year-olds trust their child to use the internet safely (52%) with most (63%) saying that the benefits outweigh the risks. Around half of the parents of 5- to 15-year-olds who go online at home (47%) say their child knows more about the internet than they do, and 14% of parents of 3- to 4-year-olds also agree with this statement!

While the Ofcom report only covers the opinions of parents across the UK, the EU Kids Online research programme analyses trends across the entire European Union and although there are cultural variations and peculiarities, it appears that many parental concerns are similar. In general, both research and more anecdotal observations note that:

- not all parents are clueless;
- parents are concerned about some of the issues arising from their child's use of the internet and welcome guidance and support;
- parents do not discuss these issues enough with their children in a constructive way and often do not know or understand the issues their children face;

- children welcome the right support and intervention from parents if things go wrong;
- parents are often anxious when thinking about what their children do online;
- parents may be swept up in media storms about the latest trend, without thinking of actually speaking with their child;
- very few parents either understand or employ technical intervention to monitor or manage their children's online access;
- parents find it difficult to initiate conversations that strike the right balance;
- mobile phone use and gaming are high-profile concerns.

With respect to bullying, increased parental engagement and awareness:

- provides effective communication routes between school and home to inform parents of incidents, approaches or events;
- facilitates reporting of bullying behaviour from school to home and vice versa;
- facilitates more effective responses when a bullying incident becomes more serious (e.g. involving violent or illegal behaviour);
- strengthens parental buy-in and support of strategy;
- ensures consistency of messages between school and home.

## Effective strategies for parental engagement

### Understand parental concerns

Research can only offer a general view of parental attitudes. It is more effective to understand the actual concerns of your specific parental community.

### Generate a parental survey

A traditional paper-based survey can be used but surveys produced and completed online can be more effective and meaningful. Survey Monkey[70] is a free tool to produce simple or complex online surveys that include a range of response options from tick boxes to free text.

### Use impact tools

An in-built impact assessment tool is available in the free online safety mapping tool Online Compass,[71] from South West Grid for Learning. While Online Compass is intended for children in settings other than school, the impact survey is still a useful tool to canvass parental opinion and timestamps and collates results automatically back into the tool.

### Engage parents directly in the shaping of safety strategies

Survey results can be effective in informing strategy but engaging parents directly places them at the heart of what can be a complex decision-making process. It is important to recognise that such decisions have an impact not only on the school environment but also on the home and many situations that occur between the two.

## Include parents in school governing bodies

Many schools employ the services of a parent on their governing bodies to both ratify and challenge school policy and strategy. Encouraging parent governors to contribute an external perspective on child safety matters can be very helpful, especially if combined with the obligations and expertise of the safeguarding governor. It is also a worthwhile investment to provide additional training for any parent governor who is willing to take up this role.

## Set up an anti-bullying group

Digital citizenship requires successful leadership and schools that promote this effectively often have an online safety lead group with appropriate powers and accountability. Having a parent member in this group not only allows an external perspective but also broadens the group's focus beyond purely technical issues to include other behaviour or safeguarding strategies.

## Offer opportunities to educate parents

Schools often act as learning hubs for the wider community; their facilities and expertise are a valuable asset and are often employed to provide a rich resource for families in the local area. This is particularly true when it comes to new technology, and the ENABLE parent carer pack[72] is a great resource for the education and support of parent communities.

## Take advantage of parent meetings

Parents' evenings, assemblies and other school events are often occasions when parents will freely congregate to see their children perform or to check on their progress. If you have them all together in the one room, take advantage of it. A well-structured presentation of key information, even if only for five minutes, can have a very effective impact.

## Encourage child/parent dialogue

A few years ago, the US psychologist Marc Prensky[73] coined the phrases "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" in reference to the perceived gap between parents and their children when it came to technology. Prensky argued that "digital natives" have grown up with technology and have a whole language and culture based around it while "digital immigrants" struggle to learn the language, the rules, what is cool, what is safe, what is right and what is wrong.

Getting both parties at the table to engage and exchange when they are not speaking the same language can be a challenge. It takes dialogue, but where do you start? How do you begin that conversation when the parents' own experience of online life may be limited? The following age-specific advice on online and offline child protection is taken from the *Digital Parenting* magazine by Vodafone and ParentZone.[74]

## Under 5s

Start early and strive for a balance regarding TV and iPad use.

Privilege face-to-face and family time.

It is important young children play with technology, but keep devices out of their reach so you can decide when they can use them.

Think carefully about the content they watch, particularly if they are around when you or older siblings are watching TV or going online.

Make sure the rest of your family and friends know your rules too so there is consistency for your child.

## 6 to 9 years

Manage your children's access to the family computer by creating their own personal user account. This makes it easier to track their activity.

Have a conversation about the sorts of websites they should use and the ones that you would not be happy them accessing. Let them know that you will occasionally check what they are doing.

Discuss the sorts of information that are valuable to others but could make them vulnerable.

Set time limits for when and how long technology is used. Try to avoid any gaming or heavy media use one hour before bedtime.

Talk to other parents about these issues and observe what their children are doing so you have some comparisons to inform your rule set.

## 10 to 12 years

Set some boundaries when they get their first game console, such as when it can be used and where it is sited. Get used to using the parental controls and check regularly that they have not been bypassed or compromised.

Remind your child about the risks of phone theft and tell them not to leave their phones on display when out and about.

Discuss what they post online and what it says about them to others.

Discuss the kinds of things they see online. This is the age when they might be looking for information about their changing bodies and exploring relationships, for example.

Hold the line on letting your son or daughter sign up for services like Facebook and YouTube that have a minimum age requirement of 13. Talk to other parents and their school to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Keep checking and revisiting your rule set. It might shift and change but that should only happen through honest dialogue and compromise. Be prepared to impose sanctions if the rules are broken: for example, removing the device or disconnecting it for the evening. Your house; your rules!

## 13+ years

It is never too late to set some rules, particularly at important points in their schooling such as exam time or when homework is due.

Talk to them about how they might be exploring issues related to their health, well-being and body image online because they might have come across inaccurate or dangerous information on the Web at a vulnerable time.

Discuss how their behaviour and activity has an impact on others and do not shy away from difficult conversations about things like pornography, bullying and other risky behaviours, such as sexting.

Give your son or daughter control over their own budget for things like apps and music, but make sure you have agreed boundaries so that they manage their money responsibly.

Discuss the impact of plagiarism and illegal downloading, especially before leaving school to go on to higher education or a job.

Help your child understand that they can create a positive digital reputation by posting and behaving responsibly online.

Reach a negotiated compromise over parental controls, particularly in relation to content and time spent online. Do not forget to include in this all connected devices including tablets, mobile phones and game consoles.

As noted by danah boyd (who spells her name in lower case), "While we cannot protect youth from all forms of meanness and cruelty or stop teens from getting hurt when they negotiate social relations, we can certainly make a concerted effort to empower youth, to strengthen their resilience, and to help recognize when they are hurting."[75]

Parents can help increase the social and emotional learning (SEL) skills of their children and their resilience by:

- ensuring that they feel accepted;
- helping them increase their self-awareness and self-esteem;
- showing them that they are accepted and loved just the way they are;
- teaching them to adapt to, handle and overcome tough situations;
- inspiring positive emotions, and helping them find pleasure and humour in life;
- promoting problem-solving skills and learning to be flexible in their responses;
- showing them the importance of empathy;
- nurturing a positive self-view;
- challenging any self-critical behaviour;
- leading by example.

Other conversation starter resources include internetmatters.org,[76] Common Sense Media[77] and the ENABLE Parent Pack.[78] Parents should be encouraged to dive in, find a style that they like, and then mix and match what works in their family.[79]

## The future of parental engagement

As technology changes and evolves, so too must the strategies to encourage and engage parents. There is unfortunately no one-size-fits-all strategy or best practice. The observations outlined here will work well in some countries, but may have to be modified or adapted in others. However, irrespective of culture or country, the engaged parent has a vital role in raising a resilient child in the digital age and there is no doubt that parental engagement will continue to have a role in the future.[80]

Chapter 5

# Special needs, special cases – Tackling bullying for all

*Katja Engelhardt*

There is no doubt that bullying of students with disabilities and special needs is widespread and a serious concern, certainly in the United Kingdom. As Philippa Stobbs, from the Council for Disabled Children, puts it, "We know that bullying remains the single biggest concern raised by children with special educational needs and disabilities."[81]

People with special educational needs (SEN) are not a homogenous population and their needs vary, as does how they are affected and how they react to bullying. Definitions of SEN vary widely across countries and the term is not well defined internationally. However, it usually covers those for whom a special learning need has been formally identified because they are mentally, physically or emotionally disadvantaged.[82] Children with SEN may have complex health needs, learning disabilities, sensory impairments (visually or hearing impaired) or social and behavioural needs. In the UK, one of the few countries for which detailed information is available, the largest categories are moderate learning difficulty (24.2%), behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (22.7%) and speech, language and communications needs (16.3%). A much smaller proportion of pupils have physical disabilities (3.8%), visual or hearing impairments (3.4%), and autism spectrum disorders (8.1%).[83]

Bullying of children and young people with SEN is more prevalent than that of children and young people in general. Primary school students in England with SEN are twice as likely as other children to endure persistent bullying, according to research carried out in 2014 by the University of London's Institute of Education. Yet the study found that disabled youngsters had been "largely neglected" in research assessing the impact of bullying,[84] therefore the reasons for this are a matter of conjecture.

Bullying of children and young people with SEN could be a reflection of the discrimination they face in society: "Bullying reinforces the inequalities experienced by disabled people, putting them at double disadvantage", according to the study mentioned above.[85] In a survey of parents of children with SEN, nearly all respondents (85%) believed their child was bullied because they had disabilities or SEN, and not for other reasons.[86] As disabled children are also more likely to have disadvantaged backgrounds, it has in the past been difficult to determine whether it was their disability, their family's disadvantaged socio-economic position, or another factor that led to the bullying.

Cited in an article on why children with SEN are targets, Dr Raffailli says, "No matter how you look at it, bullying is a form of abuse victimization, plain and simple … It's a case of the strong – or at least the stronger – preying on the weak."[87] Rosemary Musachio, born with cerebral palsy, testifies in an article by Debra Ruh: "Even though I attended a special education school, many children were more physically able than I was. I think their greater ability made them feel more important, more powerful,"[88] she says.

Students with SEN are often easy targets for bullying because they are different from their peers in the way they look, speak, act, socially interact or the work they do at school. They may have additional support (including the use of assistive technologies that, although designed to enable participation, can draw attention to the child's difference) or be treated differently by adults in their lives. They may also have difficulties telling others what is happening to them and are likely to have fewer friends to protect them, since students with SEN often find it harder to make friends as a result of their condition. On top of that, students with SEN are also less likely to defend themselves effectively because they want to fit in or may not even recognise that they are being bullied, making them easy prey. Rosemary Musachio, however, is convinced that being bullied is not the victim's fault: "Bullying has nothing to do with the person being bullied. The perpetrator is flawed." Even so, the school environment and society at large do not always provide a protective environment, as negative attitudes towards disability and a lack of understanding of different disabilities and conditions still persist.

Among young people with SEN, some groups are at higher risk than others. Among these are children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or learning disabilities. For instance, a study found that children with ASD were more than three times as likely to be bullied as their peers.[89] In a landmark survey conducted in 1994, researchers found that children with visible physical conditions or disabilities, such as cerebral palsy and Down syndrome, were more likely to be called names or aggressively excluded from social activities.[90] In the following pages, the stories of Debra and Sara, who were born with Down syndrome, and that of Rosemary, who was born with cerebral palsy, clearly underline this point.

The internet can provide life-changing and positive opportunities for students with SEN to learn, be creative, be empowered and have fun just like their peers, possibly more so in some cases. In the UK, 90% of disabled 15- to 34-year-olds access the internet, for things ranging from social interactions to managing finances and

finding out important information. The often anonymous nature of the internet can be liberating so users often deliberately do not reveal this aspect of their identity.

Going online, however, also exposes some of these students to more risk than their peers. One reason is that some children with emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties might find it more difficult to fully understand what is going on online. This can include difficulties in identifying reliable content and understanding online social conventions, and the potential risks of sharing information. For instance, autistic children may make literal interpretations of content, or students with learning difficulties might not understand the terminology used.

Some young people with complex needs may have difficulties understanding the concept of friendship and therefore trust everyone implicitly. This makes them more vulnerable to forms of bullying like manipulative bullying, where a person is controlling someone; or conditional friendships, where a child thinks someone is being their friend but times of friendliness are alternated with times of bullying; and exploitative bullying, where features of a child's condition are used to bully them. Children may not realise that they are being bullied – or indeed that their online behaviour may be seen by somebody else as bullying.

The culture and ethos of a school and its commitment to tackling bullying has a significant impact on children and young people's understanding of why bullying happens. Children's understanding of differences between them and their peers varies greatly, and is strongly linked to the way in which their individual schools frame this issue, according to the Anti-Bullying Alliance.[91] In schools where children felt safe and listened to, and knew that bullying incidents would be responded to effectively, their understanding of difference and why children are bullied extended beyond disability.

Some learners with SEN cannot recognise bullying behaviour and may not be able to identify the child who is using bullying behaviour. Likewise, some young people will struggle to remember details of an incident several days later, calling for prompt intervention by carers. In such circumstances, it is important to work with bystanders. The following case studies underline, among other things, just how important it is to encourage peers to step in, in particular since bullying does not happen only in the classroom but also in the schoolyard, school bus or online, where adults are not always present to protect children. It is not only peers, but also the victims of bullying who need to be encouraged to speak up. "All we have to do is speak up to teachers, employers, even police officers if we experience bullying", notes Rosemary Musachio.[92] The fourth case study pushes the concept of special needs a little further. It leads us to consider some of the challenges that children and young people face through special needs related to the socio-economic conditions of their family, in this particular case when a parent is in prison.

## Bullying and children with disabilities – A parental perspective[93]

*Jackie Hunter*

Having a child with Down syndrome has opened my eyes to a whole new world of bullying. Children with all types of disabilities tend to be easy targets because most of them cannot stand up for themselves. Some don't even realise they are being teased, made fun of or bullied. Bullying children with special needs can come in many forms. Some of the cruellest instances of bullying I have witnessed have been through the unauthorised use of pictures of children and/or adults with Down syndrome in memes that are blasted on the internet. As a parent of a child with Down syndrome, I am constantly trying to make sure any photos of my daughter are not being misused by people who make these sick memes and videos for the sole purpose of cyberbullying. The special needs community is a tight-knit group and we all try our best to protect each other as best as we can. We report any cyberbullying immediately.

I am a huge advocate for inclusion of all people, especially since my daughter with special needs was born. I have found that most people are afraid of the unknown and the unfamiliar, and it sometimes causes them to act in ways they would not do if they had more knowledge and were more familiar with a certain subject or person. Sometimes it can be as simple as saying hello and having a brief exchange to put one's mind at ease. I strongly believe that when we KNOW better, we DO better.

Part of "knowing" better is educating our community about Down syndrome and letting them interact with others to show them that kids with Down syndrome are "more alike than different" from their peers. I have accomplished this in my own community by bringing my daughter with me to speak to high school kids about what it is like to have Down syndrome during Disability Awareness Week.

I showed a YouTube video called "Just Like You-Down Syndrome" that the Down Syndrome Guild of Greater Kansas City made. It shows several sets of friends and how they have genuine friendships with peers who happen to have Down syndrome. It briefly describes the genetics behind having Down syndrome and explains how you can foster a great friendship with someone just like they do.

After showing the video, I did a few hands-on activities that gave kids a first-hand experience of some of the struggles that people with Down syndrome have, including with their speech, memory and gross motor skills. It is helpful for people to be able to put themselves in someone else's shoes to help understand their struggles.

After the activities, I let the students ask my daughter any questions they wanted. Of course, she ended up dancing and singing for them and making them laugh. The most important thing came at the very end. I encouraged anyone who had never had any previous contact with a person with Down syndrome before to please come give a hug, handshake, or a high five to my daughter before they left. Needless to say, there was a line of several hundred students waiting to hug her, take a selfie with her, and tell her how great she did during the awareness presentation.

Since that day, we have seen several of those students out and about town and they now smile and come up to my daughter (unafraid) to say hello, have a brief conversation, or get a hug. Hopefully each of those students told a few of their

friends about that experience and the next time those friends see my daughter or someone like her in public, now they too will be encouraged to smile, say hello, or start a conversation with them.

Again, when we *know* better, we *do* better! Education and awareness are key to making change. The more people see kids and adults with disabilities included in mainstream media, in our own community, and participating in events like everybody else, the less chance there is of those people being bullied and treated as outcasts. People with Down syndrome have so much to offer and can teach others about love, companionship, gratitude and appreciation in life.

## The story of Sara: another parental perspective

*Debra Ruh*

My husband and I are blessed to have two children – Sara, born with Down syndrome, and Kevin. They are adults now and making a difference in the world with their work. When they were heading to middle school they had a long bus ride. Almost an hour each way and I was so worried that Sara would be bullied on the bus. She had not been bullied much in elementary school but we were nervous.

She did experience bullying but not as much as we feared. Her brother Kevin was protective of her and quick to defend her. Also, other students on the bus defended her and it appeared that she was "off limits" when it came to bullying.

I remember my son telling me about an experience he witnessed on the bus. Two girls about the same age as Sara got on the bus. Sara said, "Hello, can we be friends?" The girls responded, "No, we don't want to be friends with you." Then they made snide and nasty comments that upset Sara. It so angered my son and other students that they made comments defending Sara. The girls laughed and smirked but did not further antagonise Sara. The next day the girls got on the bus and Sara said, "Can we be friends today?" The girls both said no again with the same reaction from Kevin, and other students. This same scenario went on for weeks – each day (morning and afternoon) the girls got on the bus and Sara asked if they could be friends. Each time they said no and made nasty comments, giggled and smirked. Finally, between Sara's persistence, peer pressure from other students and Kevin, the girls gave in. One morning Sara said, "Can we be friends today?" They both said, "Yes, we will be your friend Sara." It made Sara so happy and many of the students cheered. They rode the bus together for years and the girls were always nice to Sara after that day.



Another time during the beginning of summer school another community of children joined our community for day camps. Several of the children from the other community started picking on Sara. The same thing happened – the children in our

community quickly defended Sara and got the adults involved. Those children were counselled and the bullying stopped.

*Rosemary's perspective*



I work with a talented woman named Rosemary. She was born with cerebral palsy. I asked her if she has experienced bullying. Here is her response:

Even though I attended a special education school, many children were more physically able than I was. I think the greater ability made them feel more important, more powerful. Consequently, some started bullying me by making faces at me, calling me "stupid" and profane titles, and throwing sexual gestures at me. Their hurtful actions and words made me unworthy and ugly, like a monster.

My impulsive reaction was to swing at the boys who were bothering me, which elicited further bullying from them. My friend also confronted them, which was detrimental because they made fun of him as well. I finally turned to my father, who wrote a letter to the teacher. Although the intimidation decreased, I still could feel their eyes on me as if they were cursing me under their breaths.

At the time, I thought these boys bullied me because they were jealous of me due to my good grades or because I actually felt I was less important than they were. Consequently, my self-confidence became disabled. After 35 years, it still needs rehabilitation at times.

Bullying has nothing to do with the person being bullied, however. The perpetrator is flawed. Most likely, he is the victim of bullying himself or he has insecurities that have not been addressed. Persons with disabilities are easy targets for verbal abuse because we appear defenceless. Yet, if we summon our inner strength, we can avoid becoming verbal punching bags. All we have to do is speak up to teachers, employers, even police officers if we experience bullying. Then the instigators would stop hurting not only us but others as well.

– Rosemary Musachio, Ruh Global Communications, Chief Strategy Officer.

I like to believe that young people are starting to be more evolved. I know the children in our area did not allow others to bully Sara. Some of the other children with other disabilities did not fare as well. Plus, many of the students without disabilities were picked on including my son. I am not sure if Sara got a pass from heavy bullying because she had Down syndrome, or maybe because her brother and the other students watched over her or some combination. I do believe both Rosemary and Sara's tenacity allowed them to triumph over these bullies.

We still have so much work to do with bullying. All we have to do is watch the US presidential candidates to see active bullying happening. It is sad to witness. I believe we could learn a lot from young people today about being kind.

## Looking at other "special needs" – Children separated from a parent in prison

*Sonia Tito*[94]

In Sweden, an 8-year-old girl told her peers at school that her father was in prison. In only a few weeks' time, the classmates began to use this information against her, threatening to tell others about her father. The girl is one of the estimated 800 000 children in the EU who, on any given day, have to cope with the fact that one or sometimes both of their parents are in prison. Like other marginalised children, children separated from a parent in prison are often at greater risk of discrimination and social exclusion, which can result in lower self-esteem and may increase the risk of being bullied or lashing out and bullying others.

These children also face a higher exposure to increased poverty. Imprisonment of a parent often affects a family's financial situation due to loss of income as well as additional costs stemming from the incarceration.

Families in Belgium, for example, spend an average €200 monthly for prisoners while the income for 53% of these families is under €900/month,[95] and 39% of partners quit or change jobs to take care of the prisoner.[96] After release, the fact of having been incarcerated cuts ex-prisoners' earnings by up to 40% in some countries.[97]

In the light of new child-led research, "At what cost",[98] this aspect becomes even more relevant. This UK study found that millions of families across the UK are struggling with the cost of school, and that more than 25% of the children surveyed said this led them to being bullied. Schools are the one institution that almost all children regularly attend and are a significant influence on their socialisation. Schools therefore have a huge potential to contribute to the emotional well-being of children, particularly by supporting the child and helping reduce bullying and stigma.

From 2010 to 2013, the Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) Network participated in a multinational and multiagency study, which found that teachers and other staff can play a key role in tackling stigma surrounding parental imprisonment.[99] Schools, however, are often unaware of the existence of children of prisoners, their experiences, life changes and needs. School staff and other professionals need to be alert to these children's need for emotional support and counselling and should in turn receive assistance and guidance themselves on how to engage children in conversation around parental imprisonment.

Many children and families fear reactions, and unlike the little girl in Sweden, may be unlikely to reveal the parent's imprisonment for fear of social stigma. Schools can help by:

- raising awareness of this issue in schools among students;
- promoting a positive, non-discriminatory school environment;
- encouraging parents to trust and be open with their children about parental imprisonment;
- reassuring and encouraging parents to be honest about the impact of parental imprisonment on their child's school attendance (e.g. absences due to prison visits).

Teachers and other staff can tackle stigma surrounding parental imprisonment by raising awareness of this issue in schools and by promoting a positive, non-discriminatory school environment.

John F. Kennedy once said, "If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity", and all four case studies clearly underline the need for this in school as well as in all learning and leisure environments. And this is one of the central aims of all social-emotional skill development programmes: not only to promote a greater understanding of the value of diversity and of empowering every individual to realise his or her full potential as a citizen, but also as a path to developing sufficient resilience to defend oneself and the others around us.

Section 2

# Practice

Chapter 6

# Greece: innovating to respond to 21st-century teaching challenges

*Eleni Papamichalaki*

This chapter aims to offer a broad outline of the present-day situation in Greece, as seen through the eyes of a Greek high school teacher.

Innovative teaching practices will help tackle the challenges of the 21st century and contribute to the sustainability of Greek education. However, studies have shown that the unprecedented financial and humanitarian crisis that has gripped the country has had a profound impact on student life and school climate. The crisis has also increased the incidence of deviant behaviour, such as violence and bullying, within the school setting and outside of it. At the same time, programmes that promote emotional intelligence seem to have ameliorated the "turmoil" that has ensued. In this context, the author attempts to convey certain ideas regarding the role of the teacher of today in meeting students' ever-changing needs. She notes that the skills and aptitudes that specialists claim students ought to have attained do not coincide with what students themselves claim their needs are.

The last part of the chapter refers to examples of good teaching practice and teacher-student testimonials. These emerged during the piloting phase of ENABLE, a social and emotional learning (SEL) programme that aims to empower children and eliminate bullying. ENABLE is a "user-friendly" vehicle that encourages synergy within and between disparate subject areas, practitioners, methods, ideas and concepts, and helps overcome the occasional resistance that is often intrinsic to change.

## The Greek educational context, from a teacher's perspective

The history of educational systems worldwide is characterised by constant reforms and revisions undertaken in an effort to keep up with the times. Similarly, the Greek education system has undergone numerous reviews intended to keep up with social, financial, cultural and technological developments.

Rapid technological advancements have brought about an unprecedented need for communication and for the exchange of information, goods and services. Furthermore, over the last few decades, the displacement of large groups of people for financial or political reasons has instigated substantial changes in the social make-up of schools, leading to a significant increase in the number of students from diverse ethnic, national and cultural backgrounds. Recently, the massive influx of refugees from war zones and beyond has added to existing problems caused by the protracted financial crisis: a system already plagued by underfunding, insufficient staffing and poor infrastructure.

The financial crisis has not only led to numerous school closures over the past five years, it has also created tensions within families and society at large, which have in turn affected school life. This has resulted in a palpable increase in incidents of violence and bullying.

The 2012 European Bullying Research survey,[100] conducted in six European countries (Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Bulgaria), revealed a marked increase in victimisation incidents among students whose parents are unemployed. The study also revealed that problems within families had led to an increase in incidents of school bullying.

The 2015 ENABLE Research Review[101] showed that 27% of 11-year-old students are instigators of bullying episodes, and by the age of 15 this number doubles to the equivalent of 1 in 2 teenagers. Issues pertaining to disciplinary and emotional matters impede the smooth adjustment of students to school life, which pose additional challenges to the effective operation of schools and the cultivation of "a good school climate". In general, bullying has been subject to extensive studies, research and prevention programmes at primary and secondary education levels. However, the systematic study of the phenomenon in Greece and the implementation of preventive programmes are still lagging behind.

In addition, the 2012 European Bullying Research[102] survey shows that the second most significant factor in victimisation incidents is the victim's vulnerability and ethnicity (44.6% and 44.34%, respectively). It is therefore imperative that the philosophical orientation of the school system be reformed and that structures are put in place that will assist the adjustment of students who come from different linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds. Schools need to encourage interaction, communication with and knowledge of the various cultural identities in Greece. Adopting such a stance will not only benefit students from the host country, but also those who come from other countries. The former will come into contact with, and become aware of, other cultural traditions and languages. The latter will develop their skills and enhance their performance, as the school becomes more inclusive of varying experiences, values and world views, thus promoting equality and tolerance.

Even more than in the past, it is essential that schools adapt to an ever-changing world and promote sustainable development. International institutions such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) acknowledge the need for skills in sustainable development, equality and active democratic citizenship as well as general well-being within a

free, equitable and just society. Nevertheless, how schools prepare students to be active citizens of tomorrow remains a major challenge, given constant changes and unforeseeable social developments.

Ideally, schools should relinquish their traditional teacher-centred role in favour of a more student-oriented focus in line with the latest pedagogical trends. Schools should offer every student an education that is creative, innovative and receptive to the changes that are occurring worldwide. Education should counter economic, educational, religious or cultural prejudices and inequalities, and ensure the active participation of teachers to this end. It is imperative that schools be open to society, new ideas and to the future in order for them to promote the values of democracy, equality, solidarity, tolerance, environmental awareness and sustainable development. In other words, schools should be free of intimidation, bullying and violence.

According to Freire (2007),[103] the "banking" concept of education, whereby knowledge is merely "deposited" in students in a mechanistic way, is no longer effective. The school of today must link the acquisition of knowledge, abilities and skills with social learning: the learning of various forms of interpersonal communication, co-operation in joint activities and research for alternative solutions. Moreover, students should be able to resolve tensions and conflicts, and be able to deal with situations such as bullying incidents with imagination and perspicuity. Finally, schools ought to equip students with the skills that will allow them to expand their knowledge, develop their skills, take responsibility for their actions, adjust their attitudes and adapt to constantly changing and interdependent environments in a spirit of lifelong learning (OECD 1996; 1998).[104] To this end, we need to learn from new psychological and pedagogical developments and contemporary theoretical methods (Fagan and Wise 2000;[105] Oakland and Jimerson 2007),[106] as well as from international research and global experience. Over the last decade, international experts have begun examining what makes a school effective and are focusing on the need for emotional resilience as an important aspect of a "positive school environment". Emotional health and psychological resilience demonstrably promote the educational process and facilitate the adaptation of students to school and social life, lessening or eliminating the occurrences of violence and bullying.

Theories of multiple intelligences, including emotional intelligence, have introduced new educational perspectives and highlighted the emotional aspect of personality. Consequently, schools worldwide have adopted several approaches to enhance academic performance and prevent bullying (Gardner 1993;[107] Goleman 1995;[108] Gottman 1997).[109] For example, according to Durlak.[110]

A meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal SEL programmes involving 270 034 students from kindergarten through high school, pointed out that SEL participants demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour and academic performance.

Even though the value of systematic SEL implementation in bullying prevention has been proven, the integration of emotional education in Greek school curricula is still erratic. Clearly, changes in schools occur gradually and resistance is intrinsic to innovation and change. A number of teachers and parents maintain that these duties are exclusively within the realm of parental responsibility and beyond a school's jurisdiction. Such attitudes

are a particular challenge given that the Western model of the family unit is faltering. Further problems that exacerbate the situation include a lack of parental knowledge about how to deal effectively with bullying, and teacher reluctance to cede time from their subject-specific instruction to teach something they have not been trained in. These reservations are fully justified, as emotional learning requires specialist training and teachers themselves need to be very familiar with the nuances of emotional intelligence.

## Redefining teacher roles – A look at the challenges 21st-century teachers face

In an era of rapid change and great upheaval in all areas, teachers need to redefine their role. Indeed, many teachers are already searching for new teaching approaches that can meet the ever-changing needs of their pupils, secure a bully-free environment and encourage learning.

The teacher's role today is more multidimensional than ever before and one of continuous adjustment due particularly to the evolution of technology. A plethora of technologically advanced educational tools and readily available information means that the teacher is no longer the omniscient actor in the learning process, and books are no longer the sole source of knowledge. The teacher's role is not merely to impart knowledge; it is to serve as facilitator, and to inform learners in a way that will guide them through the maze of potential solutions so they can make informed judgments. Furthermore, the teacher should be able to direct and co-ordinate the learning process, allowing for independence of action and initiative, so that students are encouraged to explore the less familiar areas of knowledge. As the prominent Greek philosopher and educator Papanoutsos[111] wrote, "Successful are the teachers who … give their students' lives such meaning that they no longer need their teacher's guidance."

To help a young person become self-sufficient and independent is no easy task. Teachers need to be able to demonstrate affection, enthusiasm and zest for their job. Only thus will they be able to reach out to their students, listen to and understand their various problems, inspire and create incentives for lifelong learning and constant personal development. First and foremost, the teacher must make every effort to ensure a safe learning environment in which students receive equal opportunities, regardless of age, sex, race, origin, sexual identity, religion or economic status. Cultivating emotional intelligence through innovative SEL and peer support programmes is the key to preventing violence, bullying and other forms of delinquent behaviour that often render the school environment intimidating and not conducive to learning (Elias et al. 2009;[112] Zins et al. 2004[113]).

As mentioned earlier, the application of innovative activities requires continuous and systematic teacher training in order for educators to successfully fulfil their multifaceted and particularly demanding role (European Commission 2004).[114] Discussions with teachers have shown that there is still quite high resistance towards innovation, which primarily stems from insecurity and fear of failing (Zimmerman 2006).[115] On the positive side, teachers who piloted the ENABLE programme in their classrooms with the aim of reversing any negative climate in school and reducing bullying have noted the great enthusiasm of their students. However, they also make mention of reservations and scepticism expressed by some of their colleagues. This reflects the

findings of the Children's Ombudsman, which show that teachers are reluctant to handle episodes of bullying, and a lack of confidence among parents in their ability to handle such matters (Greek Ombudsman for Children 2016).[116]

## Considering the students' point of view

Today's students and tomorrow's citizens are unlike the students of previous generations. They are technologically savvy and recipients of rapidly changing stimuli, which creates equally changing needs. With copious amounts of information at their fingertips, students are constantly on the lookout for new challenges. Keeping learners interested in education and providing them with the right tools to meet the challenges of the 21st century is fundamental. Students are not just consumers of knowledge; they demand an active role in the educational process and have equally high expectations.

In fact, 21st-century education is the subject of extensive debate. Teachers have always tried to prepare children for the "real world" through imparting skills like writing, reading and arithmetic (the "three Rs"). Today, students are not only expected to survive but also to flourish in a highly competitive environment that requires them to demonstrate adaptability, creativity and inventiveness. As a result, along with the traditional three Rs, the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21)[117] now proposes the 4Cs (collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking), and the list of skills does not end there. It is necessary for students to acquire knowledge of issues that transcend the boundaries of a school subject and include issues such as the environment, the economy, health and sustainability. Furthermore, the need to educate students in the safe, responsible and productive use of technology is more pressing than ever before.

Exactly which skills a child needs in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century, as a student or as a future citizen, is still under discussion because the world itself is ever-changing and unpredictable. For the author of this chapter, what matters most is for the student to achieve self-awareness and self-respect, the essential prerequisites for emotional health.

According to current research, a school that fosters a positive emotional climate is better able to meet the basic need for safety, independence and inclusion. The piloting of the ENABLE programme in Greek schools clearly revealed the enormous need for emotional empowerment programmes to combat bullying and the number of spontaneous positive responses received from students was notable.

Before we decide what skills the students of today require, we should pay attention to what their real needs are.

## ENABLE piloting in Greek schools as a springboard to creative teaching practices

In his essay "Initiative and verve … Here's the lesson" Papanoutsos affirms: "teaching is an intellectual pursuit based on inspiration and creative fervour. In a word: creativity."[118] Some of the outcomes of such "creative fervour" in the piloting phase of the ENABLE programme are described in the following sub-sections.

## When peer supporters enable the disabled on stage

### The blind hunter

In her article on social exclusion, Kirsten Weir maintains, "A broken heart does not differ much from a broken arm".[119] Social exclusion "hurts"; it often hurts even more than physical pain, especially if the pain is suffered by someone with a handicap. An estimated one billion people (around 15% of the world's population), have some kind of disability, making them the world's largest minority (United Nations 2006).[120] Such individuals feel the need for social interaction and safety as strongly as anyone else, but recent research shows that individuals with special needs are more likely to fall victim to bullying than their peers.[121]

With this in mind, a theatrical play on the topic of "difference" was performed by the peer supporters of the 5th Gymnasium of Petroupolis and students of the special needs team of the Municipality of Petroupolis. The aim of this collaborative action, which used ENABLE material, was to raise awareness, enhance compassion and increase respect among teenagers through their interaction with people with special needs.

The outcome of this collaboration was the play, *The blind hunter*, a story set in Africa that extols difference, understanding, acceptance, co-operation, kind-heartedness and love. The cast was made up of high school students and the members of the special needs team of the Municipality of Petroupolis. The play was performed before an audience of students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders and was greeted with great enthusiasm by participants and audience alike. It was recorded as a short film so it could be used as a tool for preventing the bullying of disabled people, both in school and the wider community. The project confirmed the value of anti-bullying programmes like ENABLE, as well as their contribution to changing attitudes, cultivating compassion and promoting respect for diversity. Peer supporter testimonials, some of them cited below, were indicative of the project's success.

#### A special day

Through my collaboration with the special needs students in the theatrical play *The blind hunter*, I realised that these children have some qualities that many of us don't have:

"What I realised on that day, is that we whine and grumble and get angry all the time about unimportant things, while we should be happy and we should see all difficulties as something positive like these young people do … I am happy that I have had the chance to meet these new friends and I would like to hang out with them, because I can learn a lot of things from them." – Odysseas, age 14.

#### Friendly advice

"What I will always remember is a piece of advice that Christos, the blind student, gave me. At some point, during the recording, I couldn't say my words because I was tired and I spoke very fast. Christos touched my hand gently, and with his soft voice, he showed me kindly how to speak slowly and clearly because just from the

words he hears, he makes pictures! This was a unique experience and I will never forget the kindness and openheartedness of these young people." – Charilaos, age 13.

### A unique experience

"My participation in the play *The blind hunter* was one of the most creative and pleasant experiences of my life … What moved me the most was the participation of the special needs students. Their happiness and enthusiasm impressed me a lot because, despite the difficulties they face, they were very willing to co-operate and complete all the tasks way better than we did! My participation made me realise that it is worth seeing with your heart's eyes. This experience made me feel content and gave me a mental and moral satisfaction because I saw the smile on their faces … I hope to have the chance to participate in similar activities in the future." – Maria, age 14.

## Implementing ENABLE in different subject areas

Although the ENABLE material is structured in lessons, it is not just another typical school subject. As an alternative way of learning, it aims to create a positive and co-operative climate and to enhance social skills that complement and reinforce the objectives of all the other curriculum courses. For example, Elena Fengiti, a philologist at one of the Greek pilot high schools, integrated the ENABLE material into her course on Greek literature. The material provided the inspiration for a play she wrote on the topic of emotions entitled *Cinderella after the wedding*. The aim was to use the play as a tool for improving the school climate and preventing bullying, as Elena Fengiti explains:

> First comes the literary text, the author's viewpoint, his or her era, personality, culture … and then come the children. They put on the author's hat and set off … they give life to all the voices in the text and to the author himself, they keep asking questions, interact, distance themselves and they end up profiting from this contact with the other world. They identify themselves with the heroes and shape their own points of view on specific topics. In this way, the culture of the whole classroom changes since all voices are heard and a common opinion is shaped.
>
> Thus, we started reading a fairy tale from the school book. We asked ourselves, our families and the whole school community a series of questions: how many people listen to fairy tales nowadays? What is the meaning of fairy tales today? Do they still have any importance or validity? Which stories move us? What would happen if we reversed the roles of the heroes in the classic fairy tales? How would these heroes survive in our times and what messages would they deliver to children and adults?
>
> Under the guidance of the characters and, of course, through my perspective as a mother and professional and through their parents' point of view, the 35 children, aged 12-13, became very competent "agents" in their family and social environment. In Part 1, we showed in a humoristic way what happens to Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, their princes, the fairy godmother and the witch when nobody pays attention to them and they try to survive in the year 2016, amidst the humanitarian crisis in Greece and Europe. In Part 2, with their parents and with the help of three narrators, the children conveyed meaningful messages about human relationships and values needed to survive in today's violent world.

## Concluding remarks

In a volatile social environment, the number of "emotionally upset" children who are unable to cope with the challenges of everyday life is constantly increasing. Successful learning should engage the heart as well as the mind of the student and requires the enthusiastic involvement of all stakeholders: students, teachers, parents and the community as a whole. Teachers today are called upon to deal with the ever-increasing need of children and their families for emotional empowerment. International studies show that the systematic implementation of SEL programmes is a major contributor towards the prevention of bullying.

Teachers from different disciplines have been trained to implement the ENABLE programme in diverse teaching contexts within the Greek educational system. The pilot implementation of ENABLE has proved that it is a particularly user-friendly and flexible tool for any teacher, and it was received with great enthusiasm by students, parents and teachers alike. Despite the inherent challenges in the public school system and the short period over which the programme was implemented, the systematic interaction among educators from a wide range of educational backgrounds has led to an interesting osmosis of novel ideas and practices, which transcend arid teaching methods and stagnant preconceptions. The teaching resources made available through the programme fostered innovative teaching practices and helped the creation of a positively enriched school climate and the curbing of bullying.[122]

Chapter 7

# Italy: innovative experiences in tackling bullying and cyberbullying

*Barbara Forresi et al.*

Children and young people around the world suffer from bullying, both in the real world as well as the virtual world. Victims of bullying can feel isolated, depressed and anxious, and may suffer from personality disorders as well as suicidal and self-harm tendencies. In Italy, there has been a growing interest in the problems schools face regarding peer aggression and victimisation. According to a recent survey, 21% of Italian adolescents (12 to 18 years of age) suffered from some form of bullying; 80% of these episodes happened at school, while 12% happened on the internet.[123]

This chapter presents the development and implementation of an innovative service for children and teens run by Telefono Azzurro and the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR) since 1 February 2015. The project includes a helpline (Telefono Azzurro's 19696 and one-to-one chat service) as well as training courses for school staff and students to help them manage difficult cases of bullying.

The authors explain how this project works and why it is innovative, and summarise the results of the first year of activity. The strengths and challenges of the intervention model developed by Telefono Azzurro and the MIUR are also highlighted along with case studies, indicating which anti-bullying actions schools may benefit from most.

This is the first service of its type in Italy in which the public and private sectors have collaborated using a standard pathway to identify and intervene in cases of school bullying. More in-depth and long-term research will help identify what "good schools" can do about bullying and cyberbullying, in terms of principles, policies and responses.

## Background

Since 1987, Telefono Azzurro Onlus has been one of the leading children's charities fighting to end child abuse in Italy. Telefono Azzurro promotes total respect of children and adolescents during their development, supports their well-being and protects them from any physical and psychological abuse, such as bullying. Its priorities are helping children who have been abused to rebuild their lives and finding the best ways of preventing abuse from happening.

With regard to bullying, Telefono Azzurro promotes a preventive as well as a multi-agency approach, according to international best practices. The activities developed by the association are focused on stimulating the active participation of children and adolescents, on empowering teachers and other school personnel, and strengthening the role of parents.

In recent years Telefono Azzurro has tackled bullying with several initiatives and projects, in Italy as well as at a European level. Helpline counsellors are available 24 hours a day to help children, adolescents, parents, professionals and anyone worried about a child, both through the toll-free line 19696 and a chat service.[124] They listen to concerns, offer advice and support, and take action if a child or teen is in danger.

Training courses are tailored to students, to those working in primary and secondary school, and to parents, with a focus on prevention and response to bullying. Students of primary and secondary schools – bullies, victims and bystanders – are targeted with a wide array of training in social skills and are helped to increase self-disclosure and empathy skills. The main objective of training school personnel is to create a school-wide environment that recognises, discourages and effectively responds to bullying.

Learning about "what works" is essential to Telefono Azzurro's growth, with effective impact assessments helping to improve the service and support offered to children and young people.[125] Therefore, the association is engaged not only in assessing its impact and effectiveness in protecting children and teens through its helpline,[126] but also in developing epidemiological surveys on bullying and cyberbullying, and interviewing nationally representative samples of school students.

According to the most recent survey published by Telefono Azzurro and DoxaKids,[127] 21% of Italian adolescents (12 to 18 years of age) are victims of bullying, with 80% of these cases happening at school and 12% online. One in every five adolescents in Italy is scared by the possibility of being assaulted by peers at school. While 65% of the victims of bullying talked to their parents, a high percentage compared to other European countries, 22% decided to ignore it, and 15% did not tell anyone about what had happened.

Bullying results in fear, shame and embarrassment, and victims often do not tell anyone about what happens. As a result, Telefono Azzurro has promoted many awareness campaigns, developed and disseminated information packs and leaflets for parents, schools and children, and organised seminars and congresses on the topic.

Following an agreement signed in December 2014, Telefono Azzurro's helpline became the toll-free number of the MIUR for victims of school bullying. In April 2015, the Ministry released "Guidelines to fight against bullying and cyberbullying", which summarises the new governance strategy, including the creation of Local Support Centres with a co-ordinating role. The guidelines require every Italian school to implement incident-handling measures, and to update curricula with modules and lessons on bullying and cyberbullying.

This chapter summarises the results of the first year of activity of the helpline for victims of school bullying. It also presents the intervention model developed by Telefono Azzurro and the MIUR to tackle bullying in Italy, showing how it works and why this collaboration is challenging, innovative and effective.

## National bullying helpline – Data, procedures and intervention goals

The data presented below compiles statistics and information on contacts about bullying that Telefono Azzurro's helpline received and managed in collaboration with the MIUR between 1 February 2015 and 31 January 2016.

During this period, helpline counsellors together managed 3 621 cases. About one case per day concerned bullying and cyberbullying, for a total of 277 cases. A significant percentage of contacts made with Telefono Azzurro (7.7%) were on this topic, higher than those concerning sexual and physical abuse of children.

While 82% of bullying cases were received on the phone line, about a fifth of them (17.5%) were received via e-mail or the real-time chat service, which was mostly used by children and adolescents. The majority of cases concerned traditional school bullying (86.6%), while only 13.4% concerned cyberbullying. However, the spread of technology-mediated communication in recent years suggests there is increased potential for this form of bullying in the future.

Bullying is often associated with other forms of abuse and emotional difficulties. While in 170 cases, bullying was the primary reason to call the helpline, in more than one in three cases (38.6%) it was secondary to other problems such as child abuse and family violence, severe relational problems with parents, or mental illness.

The number of boy victims of bullying was slightly higher than the number of girls. Nevertheless, more girls than boys called Telefono Azzurro on the issue of cyberbullying, with girls apparently more involved than boys in online bullying, both as bullies and victims (Table 1). On two occasions, several children called the helpline together and their gender was not recorded, accounting for a 0.5% disparity in the bullying figures and 2.9% for those on cyberbullying.

**Table 1: Gender of the victim**

| Category | Male | Females | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bullying | 133 (58.3%) | 94 (41.2%) | 228 |
| Cyberbullying | 11 (31.4%) | 23 (65.7%) | 35 |
| Total | 144 | 117 | 261 |

*Source: calls received by Telefono Azzurro from 1 February 2015 to 31 January 2016*

Both traditional school bullying and cyberbullying appear to occur more often in the transition age from primary to secondary school. In fact, more than 1 in every 2 victims of bullying were aged between 11 and 14 years (51.1%), 27.1% were under the age of 10, while 21.7% attended high schools. Data concerning children under the age of 10 also show that bullying can begin at a very early age.

**Table 2: Age of the victim/reason for call**

| Reason for call | 0-10 | 11-14 | 15-18 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bullying | 60 (27.1%) | 113 (51.2%) | 48 (21.7%) | 221 |
| Cyberbullying | 2 (6.3%) | 22 (68.7%) | 8 (25%) | 32 |
| Total | 62 | 135 | 56 | 253 |

*Source: calls received by Telefono Azzurro from 1 February 2015 to 31 January 2016*

## Who are the bullies?

Regarding nationality, for calls in which nationality was registered during the period of reference, in only 5.7% of cases were the victims of bullying immigrant children or adolescents, with more than 8 out of 10 cases being Italian (84.5%).

In terms of gender, 72.5% of the cases reported the bully as a male, but in 1 case out of 4 (25.6%) the bully was a female. Not unsurprisingly, bullying is often carried out by friends or classmates (86.9%) and only in 3.6% of cases is the bully unknown. The remaining 9.5% are cases of cyberbullying. In fact, these results strongly replicate those from other national and international studies, revealing the bully as a person who is well-known to the victim.

## Where does bullying happen?

According to Telefono Azzurro, most of the bullying (72.9%) happens in schools: during lunch breaks, in the playground or in the bathrooms. Approximately 7.2% of bullying cases take place online, 6.5% when the child is at home and 3.6% in the street. It is not always possible to record data on where bullying takes place. These results are also consistent with international studies showing that school is the most frequent place for bullying.[128]

In the management of bullying cases, Telefono Azzurro follows specific procedures, according to scientifically informed models and protocols for interventions. The evaluation of cases is based on a bullying assessment matrix developed in Australia,[129] which takes into account variables concerning the caller (victim, bully or witness) and the incident (severity, impact and frequency). Telefono Azzurro takes into account these factors to classify the seriousness of bullying incidents (mild, moderate, major or severe) and develop an appropriate response.

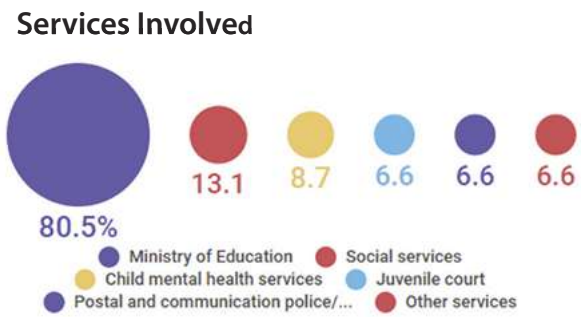
Factors that may decrease the impact of bullying are the resilience of the victim and ability to manage the situation with minimal support; the unlikeliness of the incident reoccurring or being replicated via digital technology; and the willingness of the bully to cease the offensive behaviour. Factors that may increase the impact are, for example, the vulnerability of the victim and likely need for considerable support; significant physical and/or psychological impact on the victim; the occurrence of similar incidents previously; or the involvement of sexual or physical violence in the incident.

The counsellors have three main goals:

- to promote self-esteem as a protective factor.[130] The goal is to help children consider themselves in a positive way and not just as "victims", thereby overcoming their feelings of helplessness;
- to involve parents, as trusted adults, and to enable them to help the child resolve the bullying situation as well as to support and understand their emotions;
- to promote better communication between school and family, and the development of a shared intervention strategy.

More serious instances of bullying behaviour require a more complete network approach: in one in six cases (16.6%) it was necessary to contact the school through the MIUR, as well as other external agencies such as the courts, the Postal and Communication Police, mental health services or social services.

**Figure 1: External agencies involved – Calls received by Telefono Azzurro from 1 February 2015 to 31 January 2016**




*Source: Telephono Azzurro – Italy 2016*

While law-enforcement agencies and courts were always informed when bullying met criteria for illegal behaviour such as assault, social and mental health services were involved when victims had to deal with severe personal and/or family problems and difficulties.[131] The involvement of mental health services is required if a child or young person meets certain criteria:

- they are unsafe or in danger of harm;
- they are suffering from abuse or neglect;
- they exhibit poor social skills or a significant drop in school attendance;
- the parents seem stressed or are not coping;
- there are signs of parental substance abuse problems or other mental health issues;
- the family is isolated and does not have support networks.

In a case that came to the attention of Telefono Azzurro, C. has been a victim of insults and humiliation by peers older than him, both offline and online (through WhatsApp), since elementary school. He has experienced feelings of exclusion and isolation. C. learned to reply very aggressively and last year he was referred to the police for

having assaulted another boy. His family is very isolated from the community and his mother suffers from severe depression due to unemployment.

## Collaboration between Telefono Azzurro and the MIUR

According to a recently published special issue of *American Psychologist*, "Bullying: what we know based on 40 years of research",[132] school policies should reflect best practices informed by scientific research. In light of available evidence, "given the reluctance of many children and youth to report bullying that they experience or witness",[133] and the high number of bullying incidents that go unreported, it is recommended "that school policies on bullying include provisions to increase the ease of reporting, especially anonymously."[134]

The MIUR recognised that a 24/7 anonymous and confidential bullying reporting service, like the one offered by Telefono Azzurro, could help identify a higher number of school bullying cases, provide a clearer picture of school bullying in Italy and allow for the implementation of prompt and effective interventions.

Only a minority of victims who called Telefono Azzurro had already told other adults or peers about their experience because, although they needed help, they often felt too ashamed and scared to ask for it.

A typical call to Telefono Azzurro goes something like this: "Will my classmates or the Principal get to know about it? Could I please remain anonymous? I don't want anyone to know that I called you …"

Reluctance to talk to adults[135] may be due to barriers such as the fear that things could worsen, the perceived ineffectiveness of speaking out, and sometimes threats made by the bully, as in the call transcribed below:

> He always insults me, says bad things about my mother. He knows I will never reply to his violence and he is used to saying things that hurt me. Ever since I put my backpack at the back wall of the classroom, he always crushes things inside it … two years ago, he punched me in the face outside of the classroom and I ended up in the hospital, but I was too scared to talk … he told me not to tell anyone what was happening … so I kept it to myself.
>
> Please, I beg you to do something very quickly because he's mean and sooner or later something bad is gonna happen to me … if Alessandro found out that I looked for help, he would beat me to death … I don't want to disturb you, but I can't stand this anymore … I really need to talk to someone … sometimes I'd rather be dead … can you help me?

In these cases, it is of primary importance to calm the victims who contact Telefono Azzurro, to explain clearly the benefits of seeking help, and to reassure them that looking for help does not mean being a spy or being "weak". Instead, they are told that calling is the first and most effective step to protecting themselves and resolving the situation.

Students are more willing to self-disclose to a confidential service and always appreciate it when Telefono Azzurro reports the incident to schools. This practice

also greatly benefits the school system. Principals and teachers need to know what is going on outside of their immediate purview, and with these referrals can gain a better understanding of the extent of bullying in their school. It also allows them to launch a thorough investigation of suspected or reported bullying cases.

The collaboration between Telefono Azzurro and the MIUR is of particular importance. On the one hand, the involvement of the MIUR, and the contact between it and school principals allow acts of bullying to be stopped immediately and specific actions to be taken. On the other hand, Telefono Azzurro helps schools to differentiate between types of bullying and other forms of peer victimisation or peer relationships.

## What kinds of actions were implemented by schools?

The role of the MIUR is to help schools identify and plan the right action to put in place. This can involve interventions with the victim, the bully or with the whole class. It can also take the form of meetings with parents, school meetings, training courses for teachers or workshops with students (implemented in collaboration with Telefono Azzurro). The following case study is typical:

> Mrs G. is the mother of a 13-year-old girl who is in the last year of secondary school. She says her daughter has been suffering for several months due to verbal and physical aggression from a group of female peers. The girl has been targeted not only because of her excellent academic performance, but in particular because in the past months she had to use a wheelchair due to feet surgery, and she experienced consequent walking difficulties. The school's Principal, informed about the facts by the Ministry of Education, immediately contacted the teachers, the bullies and their parents, helping them recognise the severity of the behaviour and the impact on their classmate. In a follow-up call to Telefono Azzurro, Mrs G. says that the situation is going better because the girls decided to apologise for their behaviour. At the same time the school Principal decided to plan regular teacher-student meetings to promote dialogue, respect and self-disclosure.

The MIUR performs a fundamental role, both in supervising the implementation of the school action plans and in promoting the engagement of schools in the development of anti-bullying policies. During the first part of 2016 and starting from single cases, Telefono Azzurro and the MIUR were able to exchange thoughts on bullying dynamics, factors involved and possible intervention strategies. They also addressed many crucial questions: what is bullying? What is school bullying? Who is the bully? How to intervene? What is a "good school" with regard to bullying?

Telefono Azzurro and the MIUR agreed that "every episode of bullying must be given the right importance and attention"[136] since even milder episodes of bullying (teasing, exclusion and isolation) may have an impact on the victim's self-esteem and well-being. It is always important to focus on how victims feel and to understand their emotions. However, these emotions do not completely depend on the experience of being bullied and many factors can lead to different psychological reactions, including the victim's support systems and self-perception.[137] The following testimony is an illustrative example:

> I don't play football and I don't like PlayStation as others do … I am not the classic type of a guy … I am actually creative, I like singing, dancing and acting, I like to dye my

> hair … they used to tell me I was more like a female and so they insinuated that I was gay. Now I am attending the first year of secondary school and they started to tease me for these reasons … I feel like I'm ugly and worthless.
>
> They make fun of me on WhatsApp, especially in the chat group of my class, they recorded audio messages (Voice Notes) in which they were singing that I was black like s*** … last year they Photoshopped a picture of mine and they shared it in the chat group … they always make fun of me saying I am a nigger and a lesbian, and I cry because I really don't know what to do … I feel confused, alone, stupid … like I'd done something wrong … Sometimes I am scared to go back to school.

Children and adolescents dealing with mild episodes of bullying can manage the situation with minimum support from Telefono Azzurro's counsellors, who help them in dealing with emotions of sadness, shame and anger, and improving their trust in themselves, in parents, teachers and friends:

> It's so good to hear that you [Telefono Azzurro's operator] think I am brave … you are the first who finally listens to me and doesn't tell me that it's just a joke … or a silly argument between peers

Telefono Azzurro and the MIUR also agreed that no bully should be considered a criminal: bullying is instead a complex form of interpersonal aggression that negatively affects not only the victim, but also the bully and those who assist the bully.[138] This is consistent with international studies[139] and with what children and adolescents tell us during calls: the bully is often described as an insecure child/adolescent, with many academic difficulties, and often a disadvantaged family background:

> L. [the bully] is taller than me, and he's also older because he failed a year at school. He still does not do well at school, he's always nervous and he has many problems in his family … I do not know for sure but somebody told me his father has problems with alcohol abuse … No matter what I do, when he gets angry with me, there is no way to stop him.

As bullying negatively affects the whole group involved, tackling bullying means not only stopping the behaviour and supporting the victim, but also helping the bully, the perpetrator, and the whole classroom (or group of teens involved) to stand up against bullying and behave with tolerance, respect and collaboration. These are two testimonies from witnesses of bullying:

> Insults are not only aimed at M. [the victim], but also directed at other classmates who do not react … But you can see they feel bad … They may do nothing because they believe it's not worth it or because they consider the situation is not as bad as it actually is … anyway we all suffer because of F. [the bully].
>
> I think everyone should be involved, just to help them understand the effects of their actions … just the fact that they laugh, supports the bully … also, my classmates who prefer to be silent, should understand that they could be bullied any minute.

This approach is consistent with international studies showing that strategies to reduce bullying are more effective when they are part of a wider focus on creating a positive climate that is inclusive and helps students to learn. Whole-school

interventions establish positive social values and a positive school climate, which is important in the prevention of risky behaviour.[140]

The collaboration between Telefono Azzurro and the MIUR has also been an important opportunity to reflect on the differences between "good" schools and "not-so-good" schools in terms of their responses to bullying.

A good school is not defined by whether bullying occurs – a belief that is very common among schools – but rather by the way that teachers, principals, students and parents deal with bullying issues. Effective schools have inclusive practices and positive staff, parent and student relationships in place.[141]

## What is the extent of schools' responsibility for bullying that occurs off school premises?

Schools are increasingly recognising that asking where and when the behaviour occurred is less relevant than asking what effect the bullying behaviour is having on the student/s and how they should respond. In fact, according to our experience bullying often occurs off school premises, after school hours, online, and out of the direct view of parents and teachers. However, many students report these bullying incidents to teachers and bullying may affect a student's well-being, showing up in absenteeism, lower academic results, or violent behaviour in school. Moreover, bullying that occurs outside school may continue in school and vice versa. In any case, the idea of behaviour occurring "outside school" is becoming irrelevant due to the ubiquity of technology. When bullying outside school is reported to school staff, should it be investigated and acted on? There are no hard and fast rules: these new challenges need to be specifically recognised and dealt with.

## Conclusions

School bullying is a very important issue because it has a serious impact on the development of every personality. Reducing violence in schools is a major concern of educators, parents and legislators. Violence manifests itself in numerous ways, and there is growing evidence that low-level or underlying forms of violence have a profound effect on the learning environment of the school. For example, it may affect school climate, academic results, teaching effectiveness, and school–family relationships. Bullying is the most prevalent form of low-level violence in schools today and, if left unchecked, can lead to more serious forms of violence. Consequently, an essential aspect of promoting school well-being is the identification and implementation of interventions and strategies designed to manage, reduce and prevent bullying in schools.

While there are a number of initiatives and projects in Italy that focus on tackling school bullying, the project described in this chapter is the first service in which public and private sectors have closely collaborated to identify and intervene in cases of school bullying.

The MIUR is highly committed to providing a safe learning and teaching environment, and to developing specific policies to prevent bullying in schools. It draws up nationwide safe schools strategies, policies and plans; drafts relevant regulations and supervises their implementation; and provides guidance and guarantees high-level co-ordination.

As an NGO, Telefono Azzurro has a child-focused approach. Its main roles are to listen to children and adolescents; pay attention to their feelings and well-being; and to take into account the impact that even mild episodes of bullying may have on long-term development, especially if a child is vulnerable or lives in a vulnerable context.

The collaboration between the Ministry and the NGO has produced very positive results with regard to promoting victims' self-disclosure, detecting early signs of bullying, stopping bullying episodes, developing models for a detailed assessment, supporting schools in developing anti-bullying policies and implementing proper interventions. The management of new cases and long-term research will further help identify what "good schools" and "good communities" can do about bullying and cyberbullying in terms of policies and responses.

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Chapter 8

# Croatia: developing a future-friendly school curriculum

*Lidija Kralj*

Generations that are currently receiving their education and those yet to come should be prepared for everyday interaction with ICTs. This was recognised by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, which included digital competence in the key competencies that each person needs to possess in order to adapt to a rapidly changing world. Along with knowledge and skills, their definition of digital competence includes development of a critical attitude towards the responsible use of ICTs.

Currently, students in compulsory schools in Croatia have a chance to obtain ICT-related skills and knowledge only if they choose an elective subject – Informatics in Grades 5 to 8 – or if similar extra-curricular activity is provided for Grades 1 to 4.[142] At the moment, there is no obligation for children to obtain even a minimum of knowledge about appropriate and safe use of the internet. Nevertheless, the Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010 considers equipping people with the skills to use ICTs in everyday life as one of the prerequisites for active involvement in an information-based society.[143] In the National Curriculum Framework from 2011, the use of ICTs is a transversal theme, with developing information literacy skills as part of competencies for lifelong learning.[144]

All children should gain a minimum of practical experience regarding risky and safe use of the internet and new online technologies, and a big part of this is interacting responsibly online – although bullying takes place in many different ways and places, it nevertheless relates closely to responsible online interactions. Children should be trained in the use of computers and the internet and given advice appropriate to their age. This should include information about the visibility and public availability of their personal information on the internet as well as advice about the various malicious and harmful things that they may encounter online. At the same time, they should be encouraged to use the internet for creative and lifelong learning.

According to a survey by UNICEF, in Croatia 85% of children have internet access at home. Their favourite online activities are seeking entertainment, communicating with friends and using social networking sites, while using the internet for research and learning are less frequent.[145] The same survey showed that 34% of children experienced some form of online violence and that the usual reaction of teachers was to ask for advice from an expert. It is therefore clear that teachers need further professional training to prevent online violence and successfully deal with children's safety on the internet.

The EU Kids Online study "Risks and safety on the internet", encompassing 25 countries in 2011, showed that the average age of first internet use is 7; 93% of children aged 9 to 16 say they use the internet daily or several times a week; 55% of them have public profiles with personal information published on social networks;[146] and 12% say that they have been bothered or upset by something on the internet. The research findings suggest that digital skills need continued emphasis and updating in terms of training and safety features to ensure that all children reach a minimum basic standard and avoid becoming digitally isolated and unskilled. All policy actors have the responsibility to ensure greater availability of age-appropriate positive content for children, especially in small language communities such as Croatia.

The EU's Safer Internet Programme recommends using programmes that include children, parents and teachers to develop effective models of support for children using the internet for learning and research. Such targeted initiatives are especially important for countries in eastern Europe, where there is a major difference between child and parental knowledge of the internet. The incorporation of courses about children's safety on the internet into Croatia's school curriculum is also particularly important.

## Project aims

The Children's Safety on the Internet project was an EU-funded initiative that ran from October 2013 to December 2014. It was developed by the OŠ Veliki Bukovec primary school, together with Croatian partner schools OŠ Popovača, OŠ Mladost, OŠ "Gripe" and OŠ Mato Lovrak, and was financed under the European Social Fund, component IPA IV grant scheme.[147] NGO Suradnici u učenju was a project associate and the project used resources developed by national Better Internet for Kids campaigns as well as the Safer Internet Committee for Croatia. The project objectives were:

- to develop a learning outcome-based school curriculum for children's safety on the internet that would enable a holistic approach involving students, parents and teachers working towards the same goal;
- to develop and implement appropriate pedagogical and didactic models for student-centred learning that would make the most of teachers' potential and new technology strengths;
- to improve primary school teachers' educational skills and expertise so they could apply the new methodologies for student-centred learning;
- to improve students' digital competencies and encourage children to assume responsibility for their own safety as much as possible with a focus on empowerment and emphasising responsible behaviour and digital citizenship;

- to raise awareness and understanding of issues relating to children's safety online among students, teachers, parents and the general public.

The project facilitated co-operation and the exchange of experience and best practices between Croatian and EU schools on issues relating to children's safety online. It also promoted gender equality and equal opportunities through carefully chosen characters and role development in all forms of learning materials. This included the modification of digital materials for use by disabled people. The project provided an equal opportunity for all students to reach standard learning outcomes in the area of safe, legal and ethical behaviour on the internet.

**Figure 2: Examples from multimedia resources developed in the Petzanet project**



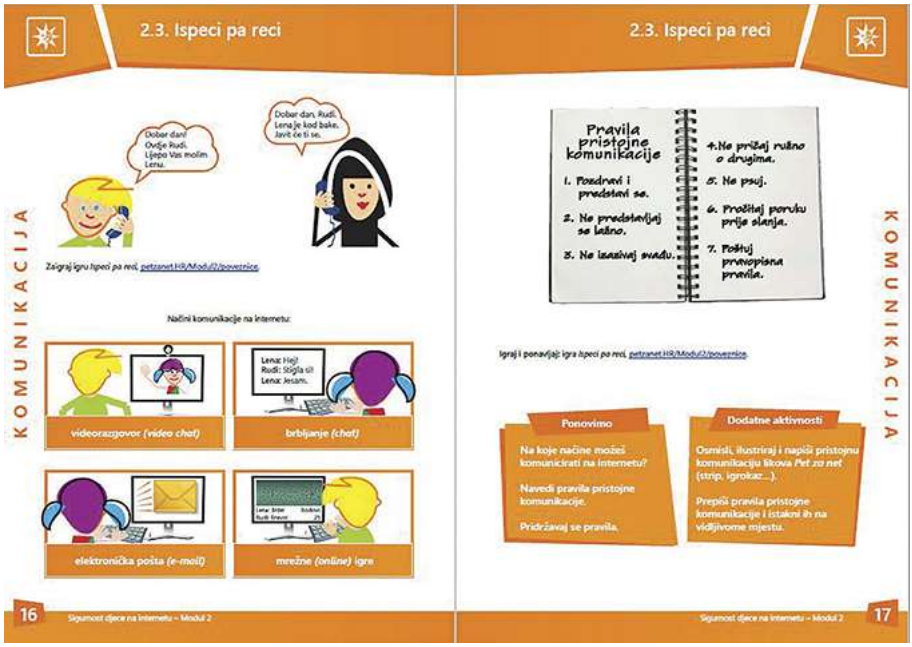

Source: http://petzanet.hr

## Curriculum development

The pedagogical team working on the project developed and published material on the school curriculum areas, with courses for each of the four age groups in primary schools (students aged 7 to 8, 9 to 10, 11 to 12 and 13 to 14). Each set of teaching/learning materials included textbooks for students, multimedia resources, teachers' guides and guides for parents. The content included text, hypertext, pictures, animated stories, videos, audio files, computer games, social games, colouring pages, photos and interactive quizzes. Colourful characters were created and used in all learning resources so the curriculum had a unique and recognisably multimedia feel about it.

The school curriculum was divided into five units: information, communication, content creation, safety and problem solving, according to the recommendations of the EU Framework for Developing and Understanding Digital Competence in Europe.[148] Topics covered in the curriculum included personal data protection; e-mail phishing and scams; netiquette; online communication and collaboration; risks on social networks; responsible use of mobile devices; sharing and authors' rights; identity theft; digital footprints; e-portfolios and online presence; evaluation of information on the internet; and prevention of violence, including but not limited to bullying, and hate speech.

**Figure 3: Example from textbook from the Petzanet project**




*Source:* http://petzanet.hr

Along with printed textbooks, students, teachers and their parents could use versions in PDF format, as well as digital e-books. Teachers' guides provided lesson plans with summaries and learning outcomes as well as suggestions for technology, equipment and other resources that teachers could use. The guides for parents included short explanations and additional family activities that parents and children could do together at home, corresponding to each lesson from the student's textbook. As a result, parents were able get a clear picture of what their children were being taught in each lesson and why. Multimedia and digital resources were created for all lessons in the form of websites, computer games, board games, interactive quizzes, cartoons and animated stories. Audio and video clips gave students the opportunity to learn individually through games and problem-solving activities. The purpose of this was for children to identify with real life characters and their peers in different situations as well as to explore, check and practise what they had learned. More than 800 learning resources were organised in a database and made freely available on the project website.[149]

**Figure 4: Virtual classroom from the Petzanet project**




Source: http://petzanet.hr

## Curriculum piloting and testing

The school curriculum was tested and evaluated by the participating schools and external advisers. Pilot testing was performed with 220 students (aged 7 to 14) and 220 parents, representing two classes from each participating school. In every class, 10 lessons were delivered in the weekly schedule. Two lessons took place each week. Testing of the curriculum was monitored by using pre-test and post-test questionnaires created especially for the project with age-appropriate language and design. Teachers' diaries and focus groups with students and parents were also used after the curriculum was delivered. The questionnaire consisted of three groups of questions: general, e-safety and digital skills, and satisfaction with learning resources. Figure 5 provides a picture of how early children begin to use the internet.

**Figure 5: Question – How old were you when you started using the internet?**

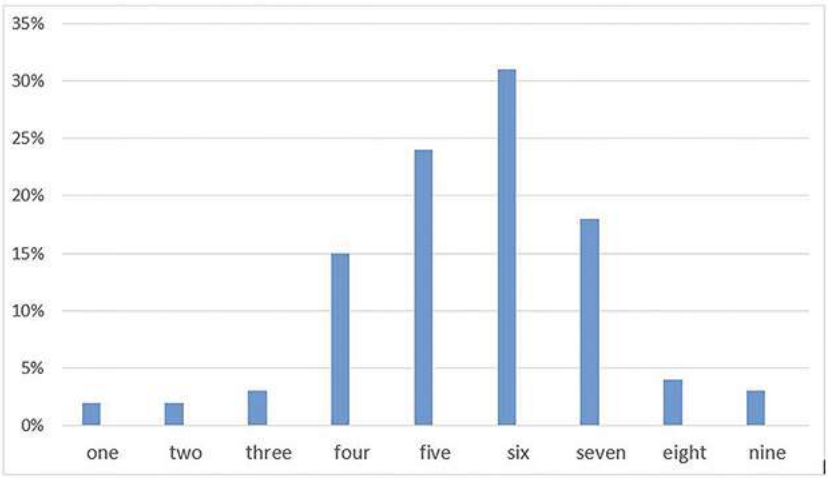


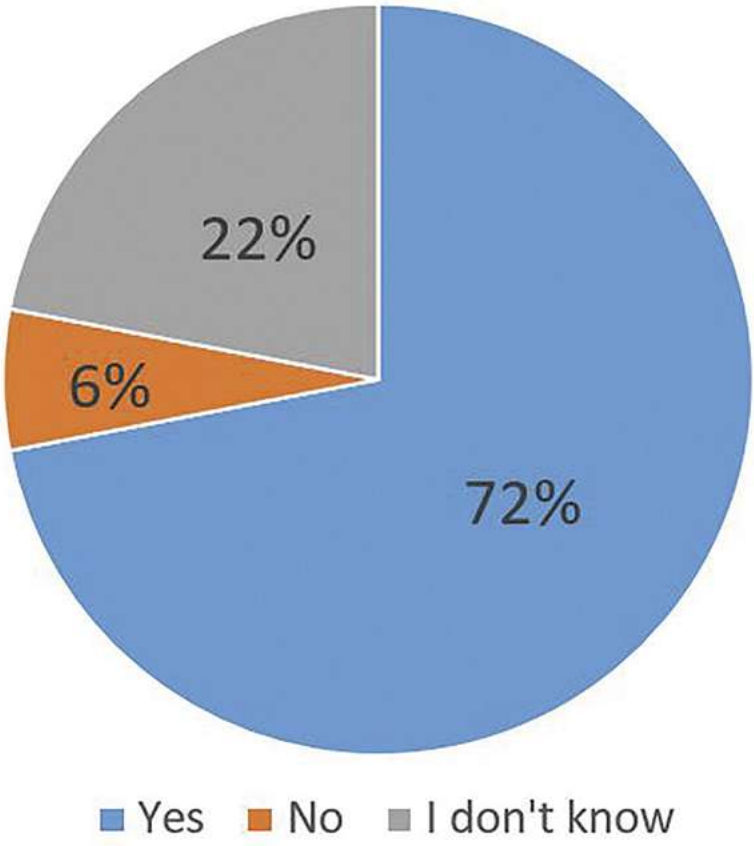
Table 3 presents some comparisons of students' answers prior to and after implementation of the pilot project.

**Table 3: Students' answers before and after the pilot project**

| Before | After |
|---|---|
| 93% of students said they did not believe everything they read on the internet | 100% said the same |
| 63% of students knew that they were leaving a digital footprint every time they used the internet | 83% knew this |
| 71% of students agreed that the content that you post on the internet can be stolen by someone else and portrayed as their own work | 90% agreed |
| 65% of students disagreed that the information you find on the internet can be used without mentioning the source | 83% disagreed |
| 79% of students thought that the victims of online violence should not hide the fact and wait for the abusers to stop | 81% thought this |
| 50% of students agreed or strongly agreed that creation of a hate group on social networks and posting in it was as bad as hitting someone in real life | 71% agreed |
| 56% of students disagreed that one should not interfere on behalf of a victim of cyberbullying and be a silent bystander | 73% disagreed |
| 66% of students thought that different rules of behaviour apply on the internet than in real life | 40% thought this |
| 13% of students agreed that it was OK to disclose their personal data on the internet | 3% agreed |

Figure 6 provides data on the need for more information for children on the advantages and disadvantages of the internet.

**Figure 6: Question – Do you think that your friends need additional knowledge about the use of the internet and its good and bad sides?**




The last part of the questionnaire contained questions regarding students' satisfaction with the learning resources. In general, students were very satisfied with the lessons delivered during the project (92% to 97%) and they would like to have them the following year too (67% to 80%). Such high results showed that the learning resources had fully satisfied students' expectations and that the team of authors had successfully implemented modern strategies in curriculum and resources creation. When it came to satisfaction with different kinds of learning resources, students gave animated stories and videos an average mark of 4.9; games and worksheets, 4.8; e-books, 4.7; and textbooks, 4.3.

## Impact

The Children's Safety on the Internet project directly targeted teachers, students and parents. During the project, 15 teachers attended two study visits, 25 teachers participated in five-day workshops twice, and 218 teachers were trained in the area of e-safety. The project was disseminated to approximately 2 500 teachers,

participating in 50 County Teacher Councils across Croatia. Two hundred and twenty students, aged 7 to 14, were directly involved in a curriculum testing while approximately 2 700 students were involved in the awareness-raising campaign and school curriculum implementation over the successive school years that the project took place. The parents of the students involved in the pilot project also took part and gave feedback. Approximately 2 700 parents were reached when the project results were implemented in all classes of the partner schools.

To accompany the school curriculum and establish a stronger connection between educational institutions and the local community, awareness-raising campaigns were run. These included workshops, exhibitions, lectures, interactive round tables, articles, radio and TV shows, all targeted at a local, regional and national level. Project publicity and dissemination activities were synchronised with the campaign so every event served to both raise awareness and disseminate information about the project.

## Conclusion

During the 2014/15 school year, alongside the original five pilot schools, around 20 other schools started to use the learning resources and in the 2015/16 school year that number rose to over 50. The Children's Safety on the Internet learning resources and school curriculum – known under the short name "Pet za net" – have now found their place in the new national curriculum for the cross-curricular subject called "Use of ICT" as well as in the curriculum for Informatics (Computer Science) for all primary and secondary schools in Croatia.

The school curriculum, the four courses and all associated teaching/learning materials are also now freely available on the project web page (www.petzanet.hr) for all interested schools, teachers, parents and students. In many ways, this project has paved the way for the implementation of the ENABLE project that is now under way in Croatian schools, and a continuation of the work begun in many areas related to responsible internet use.

Chapter 9

# Denmark: group chat techniques with vulnerable teens

*Signe Sandfeld Hansen*

In January 2016, the Centre for Digital Youth Care in Denmark held a digital campaign that focused on bullying among children and young people. The digital campaign emphasised that bullying can be experienced in a variety of ways and entail different consequences. In this context, young people were invited to share their experiences, thoughts and emotions on bullying. This chapter argues that the group chat conducted by Cyberhus, the online socio-educational club house that is run by the Centre for Digital Youth Care, may be considered a community of practice in which SEL takes place. We also examine how the campaign may be beneficial to youth in other aspects of their lives.

## Summary of the campaign

The campaign took place on Cyberhus's website,[150] which is an anonymous counselling and information platform for vulnerable young people between the ages of 9 to 23. Cyberhus offers a range of features that give youth the opportunity to anonymously seek information or share their experiences, thoughts and emotions across geographical areas and age groups. Users also have the opportunity to receive personal counselling from adult volunteers at Cyberhus.

Bullying formed the overall theme of the campaign and each week we focused on a particular topic associated with bullying. The topics were based on the anti-bullying concept contained in ENABLE's 10 modules of well-being, which we will examine in the section, "Group chat". The campaign used Facebook advertising in order to welcome young people to Cyberhus, with the advertisements targeting young people between the ages of 13 to 18.

The primary tools that Cyberhus used for the campaign were blogs, group chat, "The word is yours" texts, and articles. Out of these four primary features, Cyberhus's group chat played the biggest part in the communication with young people. The following sections summarise the way these four features were used.

## Blogs

Blogging gives people the opportunity to verbalise their experiences, thoughts and emotions. Young people, as well as adults, are able to write blog posts and in many ways writing posts is similar to writing a journal. During the campaign, the counsellors responsible had their personal blog at Cyberhus, which was used to introduce the topic of the week and afterwards to summarise what the chat session addressed. The campaign resulted in 159 unique page views of the blog posts, and the post receiving most page views (30) was the one entitled "How can we stop bullying?"

## The word is yours

This feature invites young people to share text labelled "realities" or "life hacks", up to a maximum of 150 characters. It is not possible for counsellors or young people to interact with other people's texts. So this feature provides a space to share something even if the person is not used to verbalising their thoughts and feelings. The feature is also quite manageable for young people visiting Cyberhus and is therefore considered a good starting point for those entering Cyberhus for the first time. During the campaign, "The word is yours" was featured as the landing page, and users were redirected to the page if they clicked on a specific Facebook advertisement. Overall, 260 "realities" or "life hacks" were created. The landing page also provided the option of navigating to other campaign-related content on Cyberhus such as articles, blogs and group chat.

## Articles

Nine articles on bullying were written, (e.g. "What is bullying?" and "What is digital bullying?") as well as a personal account from a previous victim of bullying. The right sidebar of "The word is yours" landing page on Cyberhus also linked to those articles, which represented the most information-heavy part of the campaign's communication: the articles were read 188 times during the campaign. The article that received most visitors (100) was the one entitled "Sex bullying": the set is now part of Cyberhus's collection of articles under the category "When it hurts deep inside".

## Group chat

Cyberhus's group chat is open on Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. The group chat normally does not deal with a specific, overall theme but instead allows young people to decide what they would like to talk about. Young people's choice of topics often relate to challenges or problems in their lives such as mental illness, difficulties at school, bullying, sexuality or loneliness. A counsellor continually moderates the chat according to the chat room's social and ethical guidelines. This allows the counsellor to make sure that young people feel safe and welcomed in the chat room, which has the capacity to host 15 participants simultaneously.

The group chat was chosen as a pedagogical tool during the campaign because it provides young people with the opportunity to anonymously share experiences and information. They are able to share sensitive or unpleasant experiences without having to expose themselves, and at the same time they can receive support from their peers. Our aim was to create an anonymous and open room, encouraging young people to reflect on their emotions, thoughts and behaviour related to bullying both in and out of school. The group chat was highlighted in the right sidebar of Cyberhus's landing page and through posts on Cyberhus's Facebook page. The primary counsellor in the group chat, during the campaign, had a Master's in Psychology and was experienced in digital group moderation. A total of 71 young people participated in Cyberhus's group chat.

During the campaign, Cyberhus's group chat focused on four topics related to bullying based on the anti-bullying concept in ENABLE's 10 SEL modules.

## Thursday 7 January 2016 – What is bullying?

The first group chat dealt with the issue of how to define bullying and what happens when you are bullied or if you bully someone else. Our aim was to encourage young people to verbalise their personal experience of bullying, identify the different roles in a bullying situation, and express related emotions.

Young people in the group chat positively embraced this topic. They reflected on and discussed how a certain topic could be sensitive to some people and not sensitive to others; how you can talk about sensitive issues in a constructive way; why it is difficult to fight bullying even if someone gets upset; and what motivates someone to bully others.

An anonymous young person in the group chat on bullying stated: "As a victim of bullying, you get a sense that it's your own fault, or that others won't believe or understand you if you tell someone, for instance, your parents, or teachers."

## Thursday 14 January 2016 – What is digital bullying?

The group chat on digital bullying drew on the fact that many people's lives are digitised, and numerous social interactions, including bullying, happen online. Our aim was to encourage young people to reflect on how digital communication may result in both positive and negative consequences, and what you can do if you become a victim of digital bullying. Jonas Ravn, from the Centre for Digital Youth Care, participated as a guest expert. Jonas speaks on digital well-being at elementary schools and he is also part of the ENABLE project.

Most participants in the group chat had, at some point or another, experienced digital bullying. Discussion focused on the concept of "faceless communication" and its consequences, particularly in terms of the ability to read people's emotions. The group addressed issues such as why it is difficult to escape digital bullying; what you can do if you, or someone you know, experiences digital bullying; and why it is hard to intervene. Participants also took the opportunity to ask Jonas specific questions.

## Thursday 21 January 2016 – Violent bullying

This group chat topic was chosen because one of the young people in the group had previously stated that violence is generally a taboo subject, and that it entails very serious consequences that should be spoken about. Our aim was to encourage young people to reflect on the matter of when to classify bullying as violence; the difference between mental and physical violence; bullying as an imbalance in power relations; and what consequences violent bullying may lead to for the victim as well as the attacker.

Several young people shared their dramatic personal stories and spoke about how bullying can express itself mentally as well as physically, and may have serious consequences. Participants also expanded their focus to address the issue of how to fight bullying. In this way, they took ownership of the topic, and initiated a discussion on the role of group dynamics, and practical advice on how to prevent bullying. They emphasised that change requires credibility, sensibility and emotion, and that anti-bullying programmes should focus more on increasing people's understanding of their own feelings and the consequences of bullying. Participants agreed that initiatives to prevent bullying should be a group activity, not just a dialogue between the directly involved parties. "We have to unite and change the group culture in order to do something about bullying. It can't be cool to bully," declared a young person in the group chat on bullying.

## Thursday 28 January 2016 – How can we stop bullying?

Although touched on in the previous session, this group chat focused specifically on solutions, and participants were invited to examine their own and other people's efforts to stop bullying. Our aim was to encourage young people to reflect on peer-to-peer support; how to assume accountability as a young person; the challenges to overcome in order to change behaviour; whether one can control one's emotions or how to handle them; and what specific things can be done in a situation related to bullying.

Participants had various opinions on the topic. Some people believed that a degree of punishment might be necessary to make people stop and to prevent certain types of behaviour. Others felt that schools and parents should acquire tools to help deal with bullying, and particularly that students should be equipped with some sort of tool box that could help them manage difficult situations, including bullying. It was felt that these tools should aim to foster alternative practices among young people, teaching them constructive ways to react, rather than just focusing on how to not react. People agreed that it might be unrealistic to expect everyone to collaborate in the fight against bullying. Participants felt this would require a change in group mentalities, as a whole, in order to create a united approach to deal with bullying. As a youth said during the group chat on bullying, "One lion is more dangerous than a thousand sheep."

## Group chat as a community of practice

Generally, the purpose of the campaign was to communicate information on bullying, create a reflective dialogue with young people, and articulate the human

consequences that bullying may lead to. The campaign was based on the belief that young people should learn something about the topic as well as about themselves and others, both in relation to strengthening their empathy and their ability to be attentive to their own thoughts and emotions.

According to social learning theory, learning among people happens when they participate in so-called communities of practice. Thus, learning is a social act, or a social process, that occurs in a dynamic interaction among people. According to Etíenne Wenger, there are three dimensions to the formation of a community of practice that must be fulfilled so that learning occurs in a social process: united activity, mutual dedication and united repertoire.[151]

United activity occurs when young people log onto a group chat to talk about bullying. This activity depends on young people sharing something of interest, in order that they participate in the first place. The identity of a particular community of practice is therefore defined by a shared domain that people know something about, or with which they have some personal experience.

Mutual dedication expresses itself when young people actively participate in dialogue, share experiences, support one another, and are open to new perspectives. Even though people do not know each other prior to a specific group chat, the mutual dedication means that social relations are built up, which allows people to learn from each other.

United repertoire means that participants not only share an interest in the topic, they also share a united repertoire of resources that they bring to the social practice, such as experiences, stories, advice or ways to handle issues. This is particularly manifested when young people share personal experiences and practices in relation to bullying, and when they interact within the same frame of reference in order to keep their social practice organised. This happened particularly during conflicts in the group chat. For example, if one youth was rude to another youth, instead of logging off they tried to resolve their conflict and, as a result, helped clarify the united social boundaries and rules in the chat room.

## The campaign from a learning perspective

Based on the results from the group chat and feedback from Cyberhus's counsellors, it can be argued that the group chat manifested itself as a community of practice, and that learning occurred in the social interaction among participants (young people). Our aim with the campaign was to create various types of digital and formal elements of learning (e.g. articles, blogs), and provide young people with opportunities to participate in an open and honest dialogue (the group chat). It was apparent that both formal and informal learning occurred during the campaign.

Formal learning is characterised by set content, where learning occurs in a structured and focused manner. The content of the campaign was the theme of bullying. The articles and blogs represented structured communication media, the purpose of which was to promote information on bullying. For example, this applied to the articles on the definitions of various types of bullying, what to do when faced with

situations of bullying, and feelings associated with bullying. Equally, blog posts and reflective questions stimulated young people's thought processes on bullying. In the group chat, formal learning occurred when the counsellor answered questions and when guest experts were invited to talk about subjects such as "Digital bullying". However, although our guest was an expert, it should be noted that he assumed a more neutral position and helped facilitate mostly peer-to-peer rather than youth-to-counsellor communication.

Informal learning is more unstructured and random. During the campaign, "The word is yours" and the group chat were particularly notable for inviting a relaxed exchange of information among young people. The informal learning that occurred resulted in two main benefits. First of all, it appears that social skills training occurred, with participants being able to moderate each other and speak out if their boundaries were breached. In this way, they expressed their preferences in a social context. Although these may appear to be basic social qualities to most "well-adjusted" people, a lot of young people who experience bullying have a hard time sensing their own, and other people's, boundaries. As a community of practice, the group chat opened up a social context of learning that facilitated a safe environment wherein young people could explore their own thoughts and emotions, as well as achieve a degree of social mirroring of other young people.

Second, it appears that emotional learning occurred as a result of people being taken seriously. Many young people who visit Cyberhus have little or no experience of being taken seriously – be it by other young people or adults. As a result, they often experience a growing insecurity regarding their faith in their own emotions and thoughts. At Cyberhus, they are taken seriously, and in the group chat, they receive sympathy and respect from their peers. This may also promote emotional mirroring, strengthening the feeling that their experience of reality is allowed. Indeed, the group chat may have helped young people to trust their own ability to express themselves because their personal experiences were treated as a sort of "expertise" by other young people. The community of practice in Cyberhus' group chat perhaps also helped develop the empathy of young people and their ability to recognise their own thoughts and emotions.

## Perspectivation

The campaign on bullying aimed to inform about bullying, and also create a dialogue with young people. Bullying is a difficult topic to communicate about, because defining incidents of bullying is very subjective. To address this, young people were viewed as experts in the group chat and no thought, emotion or experience was considered wrong. Young people were viewed as resourceful in their participation in the community of practice on bullying. Feeling appreciated and like an important contributor is something a lot of vulnerable young people may never have had the opportunity to experience. Especially vulnerable young people are often viewed as socio-economically disadvantaged by their social environment. This could mean that they internalise their environment's perception and, without adequate support, start viewing themselves as weak. Offering someone the opportunity to participate in a community of practice in which they actually feel they have something to offer

may help them feel a greater sense of worth. It may also help someone to learn how to verbalise their inner reality and communicate that reality to others in an appropriate way. It may even help someone to view their own opinions or feelings as important the next time bullying is discussed, whether at home or at school. In this way, the group chat may be one of several options that help break down the taboo of bullying and help train young people to articulate such issues to themselves, their peers and adults.

## Conclusion

Bullying is a real problem that young people face in their everyday lives, and the personal stories that emerged from Cyberhus's group chat show that bullying is very damaging and has far-reaching consequences. At the Centre for Digital Youth Care and Cyberhus, we will continue our effort to create dialogue on bullying, and give youth opportunities to reflect on their behaviour, offline as well as online. In practical terms, we will facilitate future campaigns on bullying and continue to use the group chat to address the topic. The issue of how to stop bullying proved to be of particular interest, as well as how groups should collaborate on solutions. In the future, it would be interesting to invite young people to submit practical ideas on how a group culture can be changed, and share their views on the practical initiatives contained in the ENABLE modules.

The design and organisation of the campaign provided young people with opportunities to talk to each other across age and geographical boundaries. In this regard, it would be interesting to examine the effect of the group chat as a community of practice, the degree of formal and informal learning involved, and how a future campaign on bullying might be designed to optimise both forms of learning.

The group chat also encourages a two-way dialogue where young people can learn about bullying and adults can learn from young people's real experience of the issue. Not until we involve young people can we begin our journey towards a better school and leisure environment, now as well as later in life.

Overall, the campaign has been an exciting and informative process that has had a positive impact on young people. At the same time, the campaign has managed to create the intended dialogue on bullying. It has also proved to us that if we want to initiate targeted and successful action against bullying, we must work with young people in order to understand their reality, and facilitate a framework that allows learning. Despite the campaign's success, we still face a long road ahead before we will be able to fully come to grips with bullying.

Chapter 10

# Australia: tackling bullying through whole-school actions

*Donna Cross, Amy Barnes and Natasha Pearce*

Australian young people face one of the highest rates of bullying in countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). A quarter of those aged 8 to 14 years report they are bullied frequently (every few weeks or more), and 9% frequently bully others.[152] The emergence of bullying behaviours perpetrated online and through mobile phones – environments in which young people, increasingly, spend considerable time – have heightened the ease and impact of antisocial peer interactions in Australia, with 15% of young people reporting they have been cyberbullied.[153] Bullying contributes directly to mental health problems including anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, self-harm, impaired social and emotional adjustment, poor relationships and increased loneliness, with severe and long-lasting consequences.[154]

Significant research has determined some effective ways to reduce child and adolescent bullying. This research has typically focused on enhancing policy and practice in schools and building the capacity of parents and teachers to prevent and manage student bullying experiences. In Australia, a 16-year translational pipeline of bullying prevention research (1999 to 2016), under the Friendly Schools (FS) initiative, involved more than 27 000 Australian primary and secondary school students (see Table 4). It has contributed to a robust scientific understanding among researchers, policy makers, practitioners and educators of strategies to enhance social and emotional development and reduce bullying among school-age students. Each longitudinal project, building on the preceding research, addressed particular areas of need (e.g. cyberbullying prevention) or vulnerable groups of young people, including students transitioning to secondary schools and Aboriginal children. In briefly describing three of these studies, this chapter will examine how whole-school, parent, classroom, student leader and student-level interventions were developed and evaluated, as well as how stakeholders, policy makers and target groups were involved in the research process.

The chapter concludes with a synopsis of how the findings from our eight intervention studies are being used and translated into policy and practice. It also describes the school-based actions and capacity building that has enhanced this process, from our five-year translational research project, Strong Schools Safe Kids. This study focused on building the capacity of school staff, students and their parents to enhance the quality and fidelity of the FS intervention implementation.

**Table 4: Pipeline of bullying prevention research (2000-2017)**

| | Project | Year(s) | Design RCT (randomised control trial) | Age of students targeted (in addition to their teachers and parents) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Friendly Schools | 2000-2002 | RCT – 29 metropolitan primary schools | Students aged 9-11 |
| **2** | Friendly Schools Friendly Families | 2002-2004 | RCT – 20 metropolitan primary schools | Students aged 6-12 |
| **3** | Supportive Schools | 2005-2007 | RCT – 21 metropolitan secondary schools | Students aged 12-14 |
| **4** | Solid Kids Solid Schools | 2006-2009 | Quasi-experimental control trial – 12 regional schools | Aboriginal students aged 12-16 |
| **5** | Childhood Aggression Prevention | 2006-2008 | RCT – 24 metropolitan primary schools | Students aged 4-5 |
| **6** | Cyber Friendly Schools Project | 2010-2012 | RCT – 35 metropolitan secondary schools | Students aged 12-14 |
| **7** | Beyond Bullying | 2014-2017 | RCT – 16 metropolitan secondary schools | Students aged 13-15 |
| **8** | Preventing Anxiety and Victimisation Education | 2014-2017 | RCT – 105 metropolitan primary schools | Students aged 9-11 |
| **9** | Strong Schools Safe Kids | 2011-2014 | Multi-site case studies – metropolitan and regional secondary schools | Students aged 12-15 |

## Three case studies from the Friendly Schools research pipeline

### Case study 1: whole-school actions to prevent bullying among middle school students (9 to 11 years)

The FS project (2000 to 2002) was one of the first randomised control trials to develop, implement and evaluate a whole-school intervention to prevent and reduce bullying

in Australian primary schools.[155] Drawing on a synthesis of published and formative research, a multilevel intervention targeting individual, school and family factors was developed to build schools' capacity to respond to bullying, and to empower teachers, parents and students to cope more effectively with bullying situations. The intervention provides advice and resources across three broad areas: school organisation, policy and ethos; formal curriculum, teaching and learning; school, home and community links (see Table 5). A curriculum was designed to provide 18 hours of classroom teaching and learning activities, aiming to encourage: students' understanding of bullying; their ability to talk about bullying; adaptive responses to being bullied; pro-social behaviours and conflict resolution skills; peer support; and peer discouragement of bullying.[156]

**Table 5: Friendly Schools project whole-school actions to prevent bullying**[157]

| Organisation, policy and ethos | Formal curriculum, teaching and learning | School-home-community links |
|---|---|---|
| Create staff team to co-ordinate and support actions to prevent bullying<br><br>Assess prevalence and awareness of bullying in the school<br><br>Promote common understandings of bullying<br><br>Develop/revise methods of managing bullying incidents to ensure they are proactive and positive<br><br>Develop/revise a whole-school bullying policy<br><br>Develop/maintain a school ethos conducive to anti-bullying messages (e.g. caring environment, facilitating reporting)<br><br>Utilise health and behaviour management services (e.g. school psychologist)<br><br>Assess and monitor the physical environment (e.g. supervision, safe areas) | Provide professional development for staff and parents<br><br>Provide appropriate resources and learning activities to develop students' social and emotional skills<br><br>Provide learning activities involving co-operative learning, active engagement and positive experiences<br><br>Foster appropriate behaviour and provide post-behaviour management | Include parents and the community in whole-school bullying policy development<br><br>Communicate whole-school bullying policy to school community<br><br>Provide information about bullying, school responses to bullying, and parent strategies via school assemblies and newsletters<br><br>Provide information about bullying and strategies for parents in take-home activities<br><br>Foster links to community agencies and supports<br><br>Pursue co-operative actions between staff and parents<br><br>Ensure ongoing positive contact with parents |

FS's efficacy was evaluated using a three-year group randomised control trial involving 1 968 school students aged 9 to 11 years and their parents, from 29 government primary schools in metropolitan Perth, Western Australia. Students in Grade 4 (aged

9 years) were selected and followed for three years in this study to track the development of bullying behaviour through middle childhood, a time in Australian schools when more children are bullied and bully others than any other age.[158] Intervention schools selected staff to co-ordinate their whole-school responses to bullying. These staff received training, support and manuals to guide the review, implementation and monitoring of the actions described above. Data was collected on four occasions over three years using self-report questionnaires (that is baseline and three post-tests).[159]

After one year, students in the comparison group were found to be one and a half times more likely to be bullied than those in the intervention group. Furthermore, at every post-test during the three-year study, the intervention students were approximately one and a half times less likely than the comparison students to report seeing another student their age or younger being bullied. Finally, at every time point, comparison students were more likely to have told no one if they were being bullied.[160] However, there was a need to enhance the schools' capacity to implement and sustain whole-school approaches to bullying prevention, and especially their ability to partner with parents and families in doing so.[161] This finding led us to conduct the Friendly Schools Friendly Families (FSFF) follow-up study, described below.

## Case study 2: whole-school programme plus parent intervention for middle school students

The FSFF study (2002 to 2004) extended the FS study by also including and evaluating a family capacity-building component, which comprised training and resources to help school teams engage families in awareness-raising and skill-building activities.[162] These strategies encouraged and empowered parents to actively engage in conversations with their children about bullying, including helping them to respond as a witness or a target if bullying occurred.

This study also engaged more students actively in the intervention as the FS study found that empowering only Grade 4 students, while necessary, was not sufficient to sustain change across the whole school. Hence, three cohorts of students in Grades 2, 4 and 6 were recruited from 20 randomly selected Australian primary schools to participate in the FSFF study. Each year group was tracked for three years, along with their parents and teachers, until the three cohorts of students were in Grades 4, 6 and 8 (aged 9, 11 and 13).

Schools were randomly allocated to one of three conditions, and subsequently exposed to three capacity building-related levels of whole-school intervention: high, moderate or low levels of intervention (See Table 6). Data was collected via self-report questionnaires in March 2002 (baseline), November 2002 (post-test 1), October 2003 (post-test 2) and October 2004 (follow-up).[163]

**Table 6: High, moderate and low-dose intervention components by school level**

| Level | Low dose | Moderate dose | High dose |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Whole-school** | Whole-school manual describing general actions to reduce bullying | - school team capacity building:<br>6 hours/year whole-school implementation training<br>ongoing staff support<br>- audit school implementation capacity and feedback<br>- whole-school implementation manual and tools<br>- audit, development, implementation and monitoring of:<br>▶ policy<br>▶ ethos (social environment)<br>▶ physical environment<br>▶ management of bullying incidents | - school team capacity building:<br>6 hours/year whole-school implementation training<br>ongoing staff support<br>- audit school implementation capacity and feedback<br>- whole-school implementation manual and tools<br>- audit, development, implementation and monitoring of:<br>▶ policy<br>▶ ethos (social environment)<br>▶ physical environment<br>▶ management of bullying incidents |
| **Classroom** | Standard curriculum (<2 hours/ year) | - teacher training (2 hours/ year)<br>- curriculum: at least 2 60-minute activities taught each year | - teacher training (2 hours/ year)<br>- curriculum: at least 2 60-minute activities taught each year |
| **Family** | Standard parent-school contact | - awareness raising (25 newsletter items) | - awareness raising (25 newsletter items, 25-page parent booklet, 5 scripted assembly items, and referral information)<br>- 3 hours/year project team parent engagement training<br>- 2-hour parent workshop<br>- 4 6-page parent-child communication sheets (2002)<br>- 6 classroom-home activities (2003) |
| **Individual** | Standard state behaviour management practice | - restorative techniques for bullying management<br>- 3-hour training for school behaviour management staff<br>- links encouraged with relevant professionals (e.g. school psychologists) | - restorative techniques for bullying management<br>- 3-hour training for school behaviour management staff<br>- links encouraged with relevant professionals (e.g. school psychologists) |

Results indicated that the high-dose intervention was more effective than the moderate- and low-dose intervention for both Grade 4 and 6 cohorts. In particular, high-dose students in the Grade 4 cohort were significantly less likely to report being bullied compared to the low-dose group, and significantly less likely to bully others frequently than the moderate-dose group (at post-test 2) and low-dose group (follow-up). High-dose students in the Grade 6 cohort were significantly more likely than low-dose students to tell someone if they were bullied at post-test 1 and 2.[164] This study was followed by a randomised control trial called Supportive Schools that tracked students from primary school into secondary school to discourage bullying post-transition. In Australia, the second highest prevalence of bullying behaviour occurs post-transition to secondary school, so this study was designed like the FS study to ameliorate this increase in bullying behaviour.

## Case study 3: preventing cyberbullying among adolescents (13 to 15 years)

In response to the lack of research on how to prevent and manage cyberbullying in Australian schools, the Cyber Friendly Schools Project (CFSP, 2010 to 2012) group tested with a randomised control trial the effectiveness of an innovative school cyberbullying prevention programme that actively engaged young people in its development and implementation.[165] The project was conducted in 35 non-government Perth metropolitan schools, with 19 schools randomised to an intervention and 16 to a comparison group. The Year 8 cohort in 2010 were recruited to the project and tracked for two years into Year 10. A whole-school and curriculum intervention, which included involving Year 10 students as "cyber leaders" in each year, was delivered in 2010 and 2011 in the intervention schools. The intervention materials were adapted and disseminated, with training, to the control schools in 2012.

The CFSP intervention comprised three components targeting the whole-school community, students and parents (see Table 7). It included the development of teaching and learning resources as well as a website resource for students, families and teachers. Extensive training was also provided to staff and students in the participating schools.

**Table 7: Aims for each component of the CFSP**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Whole-school component** | Ensuring consistent understanding of cyberbullying |
| | Implementing strategies to support students' social and emotional development |
| | Developing and implementing policy relating to cyberbullying and technology use |
| | Developing a positive school ethos and culture |
| | Ensuring positive behaviour management |
| | Implementing pastoral care initiatives |
| | Enhancing school-home-community links |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Student component** | Teaching adaptive coping with cyberbullying |
| | Enhancing positive communication, self-management and social responsibility |
| | Building capacity to help other students |
| | Developing pro-victim attitudes |
| | Training student "cyber leaders" to raise awareness, partner with school staff in school actions, and support peers |
| **Parent component** | Building capacity to help children use technology more safely |

Data was collected from the student cohort (over 3 000 Grade 8 students) at baseline, at post-test and at follow-up. The intervention was associated with steeper declines in new cases of cyber-victimisation and cyber-perpetration from the baseline in Year 8 to the first post-intervention data collection in Year 9, though not for the subsequent period between Year 9 and Year 10. The effectiveness of the intervention was likely attenuated by poor implementation of the classroom activities by teachers, who reported finding it difficult to fit the intervention into their usual teaching programme.[166] Evaluation of the cyber leader programme indicated positive effects for leaders' feelings of agency, belonging and competence, while allowing them to make important and relevant contributions to their schools' actions to prevent cyberbullying.[167]

## Elements required for effective and sustainable intervention

These three case studies and others from our pipeline of research found that multidimensional school-based programmes, incorporating both prevention and intervention elements, are the most effective way to address the occurrence of all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying, especially through ages when prevalence is higher.[168] These whole-school approaches were designed to be collaborative and systematic, with strategies targeting all levels of a school's ecology, including students, parents, teachers and other school staff, as well as the wider community.[169]

Because bullying is a systemic problem including multiple associated factors, single level programmes only addressing the classroom curriculum or interventions only engaging higher risk young people, while necessary, are not sufficient to provide an effective and sustainable response. The findings from our studies and others[170] suggest that to effectively reduce bullying and cyberbullying a whole-school approach needs to:

- enhance the school social climate by building positive relationships and behavioural expectations that will reduce harm associated with bullying and other antisocial behaviour among the whole school community (students, staff and families);
- establish clear and consistent proactive school policies and practices to reduce and respond to bullying, and ensure all members of the school community understand and are aware of these;
- implement teaching and learning curricula to enhance students' SEL to help them respond to and prevent bullying and other forms of conflict and aggression;

- encourage and partner with parents to prevent and manage student bullying behaviour;
- build the self-efficacy of staff, students and their families to engage in positive relationships and to reduce bullying behaviour.

## Strong Schools Safe Kids project: translational research to build school capacity to reduce bullying

While our ongoing research demonstrates that effective school bullying interventions require a whole-school approach, we found few schools had the "capacity" to effectively embrace these strategies. School principals and teachers, faced with limited resources and the lack of a comprehensive school framework, tended to only partially implement interventions, focusing primarily on "overt" physical and/or verbal aggression. While well intentioned, these strategies may have encouraged students to use more covert forms of aggression and bullying to avoid detection.[171] In light of this finding, we developed and led a four-year study under the Strong Schools Safe Kids project, conducted from 2011 to 2014. This aimed to translate into more sustainable real world school practice our empirical evidence of whole-school actions to reduce student bullying behaviours.

The study built on the World Health Organization's model of capacity building by acknowledging that school capacity goes beyond the development of knowledge, skills and self-efficacy among individuals. It should also incorporate assessments of structures, processes, resources and leadership within the school system, and enable teachers, parents and students to develop actions that are sustainable in the longer term.

This multi-site case study project engaged six schools in metropolitan and regional areas of Western Australia, and supported their implementation of the Friendly Schools Plus programme (the whole-school programme developed from our pipeline of research, hence the addition of "Plus" to the title). The study aimed to understand:

- how schools in different contexts translate evidence-based practices from the Friendly Schools Plus (FS+) programme to reduce bullying and social aggression, into real world practice;
- how schools' capacity to implement the FS+ evidence-based practices can be strengthened to promote sustainability and positive student outcomes for wider translation.

Schools' perceptions of the facilitators and barriers to successful implementation of the programme were investigated, and each school's process and experience of capacity building explored as they planned, prepared for and implemented the Strong Schools Safe Kids intervention. Students' social and emotional outcomes, including experiences of bullying, were measured throughout the study, to examine how these outcomes relate to other implementation and capacity-building processes in each school.

Mixed methods were utilised to measure the study outcomes. These methods included interviews with the school leadership team, staff and parents, student focus groups, school observations and online surveys collecting data from students and staff. A key

output of this research was the development and testing of mechanisms that assist schools to take evidence-based action to prevent social aggression and bullying, and effectively implement these into real world practice.

The project therefore comprised two levels of intervention: FS+ intervention components (delivered by the schools to their school communities) and FS+ implementation intervention components (delivered with an implementation support system), which aimed to build the capacity of schools to implement the whole-school intervention in an effective and sustainable way.

The Strong Schools Safe Kids project focused on supporting the case study schools to implement evidence-based practices using a systematic planning, implementation and evaluation process. Leadership teams in each case study school were engaged in a planning and action cycle based on their school needs and context. Case study schools were visited to coach staff and support their planning as well as to provide feedback and collect data. Case study schools also received copies of the FS+ curriculum and whole-school resources.

Analysis of project student and staff outcomes indicated significant reductions in bullying and changes in school and staff capacity in all six case study schools over four years.[172] The following factors were associated with the success of schools' implementation efforts:

- providing a clear link between the school vision and a supportive culture and positive climate;
- embedding the FS+ approach into the pastoral care structure;
- providing time for staff to support students and attend regular team meetings;
- flexibility to select appropriate staff and allocate roles and time to various responsibilities;
- having an experienced and committed leader/co-ordinator who has dedicated time available for planning and supporting other staff;
- having a principal who is actively engaged and supportive, and who models distributed leadership;
- providing regular information and professional learning to foster common understanding among staff;
- using a systematic implementation process to assess, plan, implement and review actions using local school data;
- sharing school data with all staff to encourage their ownership of actions to reduce bullying;
- embedding a school culture that shows that staff and students care about each other;
- encouraging a preventative rather than reactive approach to student bullying behaviour.

Overall, our translational research found that to effectively implement a whole-school approach to bullying prevention it was necessary to build positive relationships between staff and students and between students and students, including across age groups. Furthermore, these actions need to be embedded within actions taken by the whole-school community to enhance the school ethos/climate. Our translational research also found bullying can be reduced by building the capacity of schools

to integrate their policy and practice into their strategic planning and framework of action for student well-being/pastoral care. This embedding of the policy and practice process led to a more collaborative, co-ordinated, whole-school approach using developmentally appropriate and evidence-based strategies.

Finally, the Strong Schools Safe Kids study demonstrated how both "pull" and "push" research translation strategies are necessary. These were vital to ensure all components of a whole-school approach to build social and emotional skills and reduce bullying (as for the FS+ intervention) were relevant (by using local school data) and easy to implement by school staff, classroom teachers, parents and students.

Chapter 11

# Europe: implementing ENABLE

*Andrew Williams*

ENABLE aims to tackle bullying in a holistic way, helping young people at home, at school, in class and in their community. It provides a set of lesson plans, peer-supported materials, parent resources and self-directed training resources. Developed from a research phase, which highlighted the importance of SEL, the resource aims to improve the resilience of young people and enable them to be more responsible in their online and offline interactions. The resources were developed and piloted before being shared with a group of selected "ambassadors".

In October 2015, 20 ambassadors from five EU countries took part in a two-day initial training that introduced them to the approach, concepts and materials developed within ENABLE. From there, the ambassadors were able to use ENABLE in their schools and could also share the resources with other schools in their region. As the resources were initially written in English, albeit with considerable input from focus groups in all participating countries, the very earliest adopters were English language schools, with non-English schools becoming involved later.

The four schools that feature in the following case studies were identified by the in-country ambassadors in Greece, Croatia, England and Northern Ireland. Interviews were conducted over Skype for Greek and Croatian teachers, and face to face for the UK schools.

What follows is a summary of the conversations with these schools and the journey each school took in their approach to ENABLE.

## 4th Gymnasium Alimos, Greece

The 4th Gymnasium Alimos decided to adopt ENABLE after hearing about it at a presentation. The school felt it was ready as it had been implementing a peer mediation programme since 2013 and had established a peer mediator team in 2014. The two teachers leading the ENABLE project in the school, one teaching English and the other Greek as their main teaching subject, both share responsibility for the ENABLE programme in Greece. Together, they planned to share the delivery of the 10 lessons between them in a creative use of the curriculum. With the support of the senior leadership team, the lessons have been delivered as part of "project work", in English lessons and through drama. By leading through example, the pair have now begun to bring in other subject areas and spread the teaching of ENABLE across a wider range of staff.

At this relatively early stage of adoption, the school has already been able to identify some positive impacts, while recognising that challenges remain. Although one of the teachers admits that bullying remains an issue, staff report that overall children feel happier and more secure. They believe that this is due to the core ENABLE message that children can report any issues, safe in the knowledge that someone will do something about it.

Schools in Greece follow a curriculum and set of expectations established by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion. Some feel these expectations are constraining or restrictive. However this school, working within the ENABLE regime, is seen as unique and forward thinking. It is here that the support of the senior leadership team has been central to the success of ENABLE. By providing a supportive culture for the staff, the senior leaders have empowered them to use the ENABLE approach within lessons. Furthermore, in acting as a buffer between the school and state, the leadership team has ensured that the needs of the children remain the focus.

One lesson (Lesson 4 in the series of 10 SEL lessons)[173] presented the staff with the biggest opportunity and quite a surprise. The current climate in the school does not provide many opportunities for group work and, as a result, the students are not used to working this way. The students and staff members had to physically move the classroom into a layout more suited to group work at the beginning and end of every session. However, over the course of the lessons – run in slots of 30 minutes – the staff began to notice a shift in group dynamics. The students became more "sensitised" to emotions and became more willing to share and discuss them. As more sessions were run, staff also became aware of a sense of anticipation among the students as well as a desire to talk about the lessons and the learning undertaken.

The staff members leading ENABLE have maintained a sensitive and supportive partnership throughout the project, modelling the behaviour they also want others to display. The school hopes that the ENABLE approach will help develop a stronger relationship between staff and students in place of the previously low levels of trust.

A final area of real strength was the "Cinderella, after the marriage" performance put together by the students. It aimed to challenge the attitudes of parents and some teachers who may have felt that sensitivity is a negative state of mind. Annually, the school creates a performance around feelings. This year, inspired by the ENABLE programme, it took the decision to base the play around the families of the students involved. The students were asked to report on how feelings and emotions were expressed at home, and from these reports an original piece of dramatic work was produced. This performance, put on by the students and using their reports, really provided a focus for emotions and the ENABLE project. This has now created a stable platform from which to speak with parents about the value of parenting and the value of the ENABLE programme.

## Kajzerica Primary School in Zagreb, Croatia

The Kajzerica school for 7- to 14-year-olds was built just one and a half years ago. The students came from a range of different schools and some of them have remained in the same class groups that they were in previously. This has made it a little more

difficult to integrate these groups of students, but it has not had a significant impact on the occurrence of bullying. The school employs a counsellor who regularly sees the students, delivers workshops and tackles issues arising within the student population. The school also has a peer support group of eight students.

At the time the interviews were taking place, in April 2016, the school had delivered just three ENABLE sessions, having only recently been introduced to the programme.

The school has been careful to present the sessions to the students as a positive, challenging and fun experience, introducing the students to the notion that they are not alone in suffering from negative behaviour because students in other countries experience the same thing.

Five teachers have been chosen to deliver the sessions in the subject areas of English, German, Croatian and design technology, and in the primary school section as well. All teachers have previous experience teaching personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) issues and use 45-minute time slots for form tutors to deliver the sessions. Although ENABLE targets 11- to 14-year-olds, it is exciting to hear of a school that is experimenting with the adaptation of these sessions in the primary school section too. The school reports that all teachers are finding the sessions and materials straightforward to access, adapt and deliver. The school is already in discussions with local and state level education teams to more fully incorporate the programme into the curriculum.

A particular feature of the school's implementation is the involvement of the guidance counsellors in the programme. At this early stage, the teachers have already identified the willingness of children to open up and share confidential information and in some cases make disclosures to the staff. As most teachers are not trained counsellors, the teacher leading ENABLE is involving the school counsellor in ENABLE sessions and looking for ways in which to train staff members to better support children who disclose sensitive or confidential information. As with the Greek programme, this school is also benefiting from a supportive senior leadership team that is actively encouraging involvement in ENABLE.

The school now plans to work in more detail with the peer supporters. The existing peer support group was not initially selected with ENABLE in mind, which may mean that certain expectations related to being an ENABLE peer supporter are somewhat challenging for them. To tackle the challenge at this level of the school ecosystem, additional time will be spent working through the peer support sessions to train the peer supporters further.

## Wellington School in Trafford, England

Wellington School is a humanities specialist school for 11- to 18-year-olds. The school has had, for some time, a group of anti-bullying ambassadors led by the Deputy Head, who also leads on pastoral care. The school was first introduced to ENABLE through the regional ENABLE ambassador and could immediately see the potential for its use in the school. It openly accepts that bullying happens among

students, and incidents that take place both in and out of school time are tackled by the school in the same way.

Deputy Head Elizabeth Copeland notes, "If they (the students) don't feel safe and secure … then they won't be able to access the curriculum." The school is passionate about ensuring that all children receive a positive educational experience.

The existing anti-bullying ambassadors are already well skilled, but are receiving additional messages from the ENABLE sessions. The school has decided to focus the lesson plans on Year 7 students who, at 11 and 12 years of age, are the youngest in the school. In the school's own words, "the resources don't take time to prepare because this has already been done for you". However, the PSHE staff have created a new scheme of work based on the ENABLE resources, which stretches across Year 7 and will become an embedded part of the Year 7 curriculum.

One of the first activities the school undertook was the optional questionnaire (L9R1),[174] which all students and staff were encouraged to complete. No time limit was placed on the activity, which ensured that all could participate. This was seen as an extremely positive starting point, with students and staff members learning more about themselves as a consequence of undertaking the activity. Staff and students were encouraged to share what they found out about themselves. The students were then encouraged to use the Moodlytics app, which provided further opportunities for them to discuss their moods and the reasons behind their feelings.

Although the existing anti-bullying ambassadors are well established, the school is keen to ensure that this is a sustainable position. To that end, they are already exploring the option of including more young pupils and staff members in this work. In fact, the school is committed to developing the ENABLE approach within catchment primary schools to further improve the emotional intelligence of their students.

The next phase planned is the evaluation, which the school will undertake in partnership with students. One challenge already identified is the gender difference and the level of preparedness of boys in particular to speak out about their emotions. ENABLE is already helping to break down this gender difference, but more work remains to be done.

Ultimately, the school believes that ENABLE will empower students to notice others who are showing signs of distress and bring about change. The hope is that these students will feel able to reach out to help those individuals, making all students more proactive in resolving negative situations.

## Ballyclare High School, Northern Ireland

Ballyclare High School's mission statement is focused on "Developing lifelong learners in a caring, creative community" and this statement perfectly encapsulates why this school chose to implement ENABLE. The school recognises that in order for children to achieve, they must attend, and attendance can only be raised by nurturing a caring, learning environment.

The school has already been working on anti-bullying messages for some time. For example, an annual anti-bullying week is held in November and a number of staff have completed Master's modules based on anti-bullying research. The school has been working hard to establish and maintain a positive climate, and it recognises that bullying behaviour is detrimental to this and also has links to low self-esteem.

The school already has a number of well-established pupil leader groups: students who act in a responsible way and support their peers and the school. For this reason, it was felt that the peer supporter aspect of ENABLE would perfectly complement this existing approach, and immediate steps have been taken to introduce peer supporters into the school culture. Clearly, this is a new group of students and the school is realistic about the effect they may have in the short term. In the medium term, as students become more used to peer supporters, the school expects that they will gain in recognition and credibility.

Currently, the two teachers leading the pilot are non-specialists, as in the other case study schools. However, as the Principal of Ballyclare is keen on developing resilience in students, both teachers have the full backing of the senior leadership team. For its piloting of the resources, the school decided to target Year 10 students (aged 13 to 14 years) as research suggests that transition years are a vulnerable point in bullying situations. Two Year 10 classes were selected, with 32 pupils in each. Overall, the staff felt that the ENABLE resources were written appropriately, were easy to understand and placed very little planning burden upon them.

Initial feedback from staff and students would suggest that the most successful aspect of the pilot so far has been the impact the programme has had on initiating conversations between students and with staff around bullying and negative behaviour. The sessions have provided strong opportunities for the staff to challenge preconceptions that the students had and for them to understand more about their own strengths. The work on "triggers" was felt to be particularly successful as this provoked a range of responses from the students that led to an interesting discussion. As with Wellington School, girls appeared to find it easier to talk about emotions than the boys, although there are early signs that this is already changing.

## Conclusions

It is clear from these four case studies that the ENABLE resources have had an immediate impact on how young people perceive themselves and their relationships with others. The resources are providing structured discussions that help staff to break down the status quo and look for alternative solutions that can empower students.

A strong feature in all of the schools is the preparedness of the senior leadership team to support the ENABLE programme in their school. This is clearly a critical factor in achieving successes with the programme. All the teachers spoken to expressed their gratitude for this senior-level support and research reviewed early in the project substantiates its importance. Recognising the link between achievement, positive self-image and well-being is also key in order for young people to succeed.

Finally, all staff members spoke well of the structure, approach and ease of use of all the ENABLE resources. The programme is detailed enough that non-specialists feel confident in using it, but open enough that specialists can mould the resources to fit their own skillsets.

We would like to thank the schools involved for their openness, honesty and enthusiasm during the piloting of the ENABLE programme.

Section 3

# Insights

Chapter 12

# Social and emotional skill learning – An antidote to bullying?

*Eleni C. Tzavela and Artemis K. Tsitsika*

This chapter aims to shed light on the bullying phenomenon by juxtaposing children's perceptions with scientific evidence and posing a series of questions: what is bullying? What is the impact of bullying? Why does it happen and continue? What do children need to cope with bullying?

As with the rest of this book, the chapter embraces a child-centred approach by giving children and teens the right to voice their opinions, experiences and needs, which is fundamental to ENABLE's skills development approach.

## Children define and differentiate bullying

Despite 40 years of bullying research, there is still no adequate definition of the broadly accepted term "bullying". Disagreement about how to define bullying not only hinders a full understanding of the phenomenon and the advancement of prevention efforts, but also makes involving children in the evolving definition of bullying a priority. For this reason, and to facilitate a needs assessment before launching its programme, the ENABLE team began by researching children's understanding of the constructs of bullying.

Children's definitions were elicited both in school classes, in the context of SEL lessons, and from student focus groups conducted at the beginning and end of the ENABLE programme. In class, most children used formal definitions: using key words from media, previous awareness-raising campaigns or class lessons. In the focus groups, children were instructed to steer away from learned definitions and to openly describe personal images or feelings that came to mind when they heard the word "bullying". The defining constructs of abuse, defencelessness or helplessness, and imbalance (younger v. older, one v. many) emerged as the most salient characteristics of bullying. The children told us, for example, that "the word bullying brings to mind a child being abused by other children … mostly in adolescence. This child cannot defend himself because a whole crowd surrounds him, hitting him, beating him."

Bullying is a way to exert power:

> "Bullying … when I hear this word I understand that someone is afraid of someone else or of a gang. He may not be able to express his opinion, he does not want to speak up because he is afraid that they may hurt him."

> "The word bullying brings to mind the image of a young child, who is beaten by a gang of older children and this isolates him from his friends."

The defining constructs that emerged from the analysis are in line with prevailing definitions such as the Anti-Bullying Alliance's use of intentional hurting and power imbalance.[175] They also highlight that many children define bullying based on its emotional impact:

> "For me bullying is anything that hurts the other person, anything you say or do, anything that hurts and makes that person feel bad and inferior."

> "[The victim experiences] pain because she has no friends, while she sees other kids hanging out with others, playing and being happy. And she is sad because she does not have the life like others do."

## Explaining social pain

As voiced by the 7th graders above, many adolescents define bullying solely in terms of its emotional impact. In one middle school in which bullying was prevalent, the word "pain" as well as its synonyms "hurtful" and "painful" were repeatedly used by students in the focus group. One 12-year-old boy from this school described his victimisation experience: "It hurts very much, it is like being stabbed in the heart, I know because I have been bullied."

These strong adverse emotional responses are not difficult to understand. Social bonds have adaptive value for humans, stemming from primary attachment systems that keep the young close to their caregivers. In a nutshell, social ties promote survival. Attachment is the development of a mutual bond in which the primary caregiver serves as a secure base that is used for exploration and learning. At the same time, the infant forms the necessary skills of self-control, intimacy and trust, which serve as a basis for all future relationships.

Starting in childhood, humans have a core need for social inclusion, as captured in Baumeister and Leary's "The need to belong"[176] and Rudolph, Caldwell and Conley's "Need for approval and children's well-being".[177] In adolescence**,** relationships and acceptance by the peer group become increasingly important and in this period peer acceptance constitutes a pivotal developmental task that is closely linked with well-being and self-esteem. As adolescents seek autonomy from their parents, they turn to peers for social support. Peer rejection or lack of peer support constitute risk factors for adolescent psychosocial adjustment, while friendships (dyadic process) and peer acceptance (group process) are crucial for an adolescent's positive development and school adjustment.[178]

Moreover, adolescents are especially sensitive to social cues and prone to fear of humiliation, making them vulnerable to social anxiety and an array of negative emotions. When adolescents are socially excluded, social pain is experienced: a response neurologically akin to the affective component of physical pain.[179] Human neuroimaging literature suggests that physical and social pain overlap in their underlying neural circuitry. Eisenberger et al. (2011)[180] have shown the neurological connection between social pain and social goals. They argue that a certain neural network (social pain network) serves as a neural alarm system, alerting individuals to discrepancies between their desired social goal of social acceptance and their current social status of social rejection.

What children tell us and converging neuroimaging evidence enrich our understanding of the impact of bullying and make a persuasive argument for promoting emotional awareness and emotional management skills to contain the negative emotional impact.

## The cycle of violence

How is bullying maintained? What reinforces it? In focus groups, children described such aggression as a "vicious cycle" because some victimised children react by turning into bullies themselves, which then spurs more bullying and perpetuates maladaptive behaviours and norms.

> "A few years ago, in primary school, one of our classmates was teased for his height. Now he has started doing the same to others."
>
> "Yes, about this kid, I agree with Harry. It is now in his character and he now uses this [bullying] as self-defence. Actually, it is not self-defence. Because he has experienced it, he now reactively does the same to other kids who do nothing to provoke him. I think that all kids that bully have been bullied themselves. Now they bully so as to show that other kids should be afraid of them and not attack them."
>
> "In some cases, he who bullies does so to get back at someone on some issue."
>
> "Bullying is a cycle that goes on and on."
>
> "For some kids it has turned into a routine. They take it for granted; they say 'let's go tease'. Some kids bully out of boredom. They have nothing better to do."

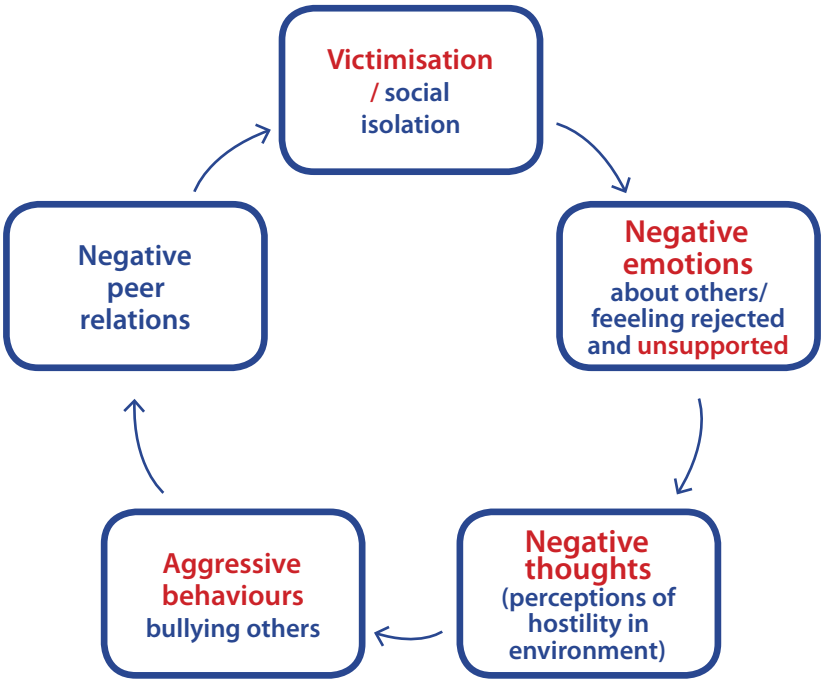
These comments are in line with social learning theory,[181] which posits that the external environment contributes largely to acquiring and maintaining aggression. Some children learn from role models, both peers and important adults, to use aggressive means to achieve their social goals. Middle school students primarily described peer influences, while primary school students discussed parental influences. It is well recognised that parents model behavioural patterns and condition their children in forming and maintaining relationships. Parents also introduce and reinforce behavioural attitudes and norms. Lereya, Samara and Wolke (2013)[182] have shown that victims, as well as those who both bully and are victims (bully/victims), were more likely to have been exposed to negative parenting behaviour, including

abuse, neglect and maladaptive parenting. For example, parental and family conflict at home and maltreatment have been consistently linked with bullying behaviour. Baldry's (2003) study of a sample of Italian youth found that both boys and girls who witnessed violence between their parents were significantly more likely to bully their peers.[183] On the other hand, overprotection may hinder the development of a sense of autonomy, necessary for obtaining and maintaining status in their peer group.

Positive parenting – including good parent-child communication, warm and affectionate relationships, parental involvement and support, and parental supervision – was found to be protective against peer victimisation. ENABLE reaches out to parents, involving them in the needs assessment phase and in promoting their skills development. In addition to social learning, cognitive processes contribute to the vicious cycle of violence. Some children tend to misinterpret ambiguous social situations and attribute hostile intent to others,[184] spurring a chain of aggressive behaviour. This cognitive process was described by children in focus groups as the way in which one "takes in" an incident, either interpreting it as having threatening or vicious intent or more benignly, taking it as a "joke". This is in line with social information processing theory[185] and contributes to the vicious cycle of violence, as captured in Figure 7. Moreover, reactive aggression surfaced as a key process in the maintenance of the aggression cycle.

A need to "break the cycle" was voiced by children and teachers alike, emphasising the importance of intervening at every level of the cycle (emotional, behavioural, cognitive and interpersonal) by teaching alternative adaptive strategies and skills.

**Figure 7: The cycle of violence**



## Observers' emotions and hesitancy

Observers often play a crucial role in the vicious cycle of violence: they know what is going on yet do not react. Fear of being attacked appears to be a primary reason behind observers' non-involvement, as narrated in focus groups.

> "We know, he has the power and we say [to ourselves] 'don't want to go against him 'cause I will be hit'."

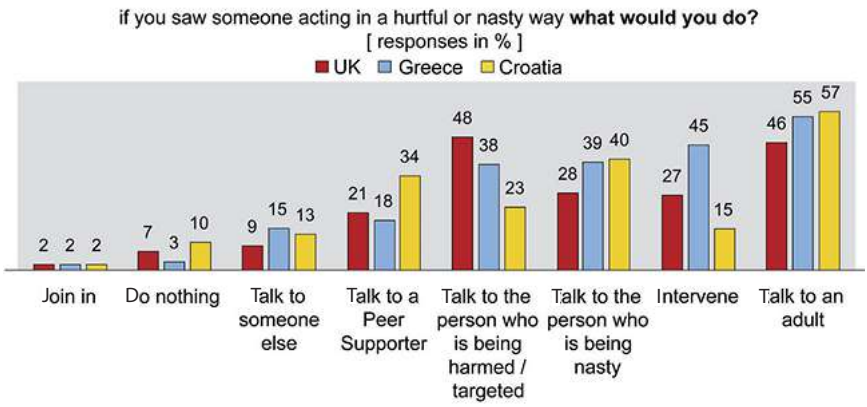
> "Observers know. It has happened to me. You see a kid being hurt and you try to intervene but you can't. You don't have the courage to do so. What can I do? Tell my mom 'hey mom they are teasing someone and we need to do something'?"

> "The whole school knows. All kids know what is happening but they are afraid to speak up, afraid to approach teachers. They are afraid because if they tell, then they will be targeted. This is bad. And nobody tells."

> "When we witness we hesitate … maybe you would be attacked by the bullies."

Similarly, in ENABLE's survey of children with an average age of 12, common response patterns in witnessing bullying were observed among Greek, UK and Croatian students, as illustrated in Figure 8. The most common response was to talk to an adult and the second most common was to talk to the person being harmed. In Croatia and Greece, talking to the perpetrator was also commonly reported, by about 40% of students. Intervening was less common, in line with the students' comments about their fear of the perpetrators.

**Figure 8: Projected reactions to witnessing bullying**




*Source*: ENABLE

## Social and emotional difficulties

In the pre-assessment survey conducted by ENABLE, about one in three young people in early adolescence admitted to experiencing difficulties in self-control when

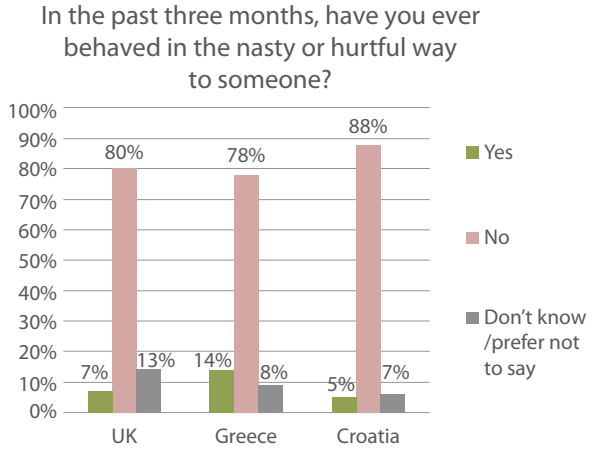
upset (37% in the UK and 31% in Greece). Emotional awareness difficulties were also reported: about half of children (41% in the UK and 58% in Greece) reported being unable to differentiate between being sad, scared and angry when they were upset. In terms of social awareness only 27% of UK students and 15% of Greek students reported being able to understand how others were feeling before being told. Social skills deficits were also alluded to in the focus groups, particularly the difficulty that victims had in asserting themselves.

> "I could have spoken to him so as to express in a nice way that 'what you are doing bothers me and please stop it'. He would have had the option to accept it or not accept it. If he had not accepted it, then I would have gone to someone older."

> "I have experienced this … and I kept it all inside … while I should have spoken up to the kid who was bullying me, and then should have spoken to an older person so as to minimise the chances of being bullied and to make this stop sooner."

Significant differences were apparent between countries when it came to the self-reported prevalence of bullying others: the highest rates were reported in Greece (14%), while in the UK and Croatia the figure was less than half of this (7% and 5% respectively: see Figure 9). Figures from Greece were similar to the European average as surveyed by EU Kids Online (in 2011) for 13- to 14-year-olds (13%), while UK and Croatian children reported lower rates than the EU Kids Online average (12%).

**Figure 9: Self-reported prevalence of bullying others**




Many students stressed the importance of developing their communication skills, promoting positive peer relations and social problem solving.

Obviously, what helps is discussing it, what we are doing here now. This could be a class in school: talking openly helps us develop. We open up, we feel more at ease with our classmates, and we can work out our differences. We can understand that what we do is not right.

In the ENABLE student survey, about one in three children reported self-control difficulties. Alarmingly, emotional self-awareness difficulties (difficulty differentiating negative emotions) were reported by about half the children (40% to 57%) involved

in the study, with the highest rates found in Greece (57%). Such difficulties have been shown to cause interpersonal problems and need to be addressed with emotional self-awareness training.

Our needs assessment suggested significant lack of social and emotional skills and significant involvement in bullying, along with a voiced need for change. Pre-adolescence and adolescence constitute a period of intense socio-cognitive change and represent an opportune time to build skills and resilience. Schools are an ideal setting to implement skills promotion. Best practice in anti-bullying prevention requires the promotion of social and emotional skills to safeguard against the harmful impact of bullying and to promote positive youth development. School-based SEL programmes serve this objective by promoting skills such as effective communication, emotional awareness and empathy, and by explicitly teaching social skills, emotion management and goal achievement.

The ENABLE programme has embraced the SEL movement and has developed a set of 10 lessons for teachers to use in the classroom. The lessons explore a range of SEL skills derived from the core social and emotional competencies that SEL programmes address: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relationship management. SEL programmes have a person-centred focus on skills development and an environmental focus. They can foster educational and social conditions that make bullying far less likely because bullying cannot flourish in a safe and caring learning environment.[186] Each lesson has clear learning objectives and a key question, both of which are intended to be shared with learners at the beginning of each lesson. By the end of the programme students should be able to:

- understand emotions and how they fit into social and emotional life;
- understand the impact that emotions can have on the self and on others;
- have a greater understanding of how relationships can be managed.

## Promoting a culture of support

> "I have been bullied, in previous years of primary school, first of all it's very difficult for a kid to speak up. The kid needs someone to encourage him, someone who sees the bullying. 'Cause you know that eats you up, going home and suddenly thinking of all that happened that day, and you're not in the mood for anything, it's a really awful feeling."

As this 12-year-old Greek girl describes, victimisation can be stressful and can contribute to internalising symptoms ("awful feeling"), endangering healthy development. For some children, victimisation can even be traumatic and can lead to symptoms of PTSD. Nonetheless, not all victimised children experience adverse effects or mental health problems, and some children appear to be more "resilient" despite exposure to violence: a pattern also known as "adaptive success".

Perceptions of social support, a process that interacts with risk factors in reducing the probability of negative outcomes, are known to be important protective factors. Promoting favourable coping and peer support is a widely used anti-bullying strategy in both primary and secondary schools. Naylor and Cowie (1999)[187] surveyed 2 313 secondary school pupils and 234 teachers in 51 schools that had peer support systems. They found that while peer support systems do not always reduce the incidence of

bullying, they can be an effective preventive measure. Importantly, peer support systems reduce the negative impact of bullying on victims and make reporting easier. Moreover, the researchers found that the existence of a peer support system is perceived as beneficial to the school as a whole.

Many studies have shown that focusing on the development of a culture of support and reporting are the most effective interventions. Cowie and Wallace (2000)[188] found that young people need to be given opportunities to work together outside friendship groups, which helps reduce prejudice and foster trust across gender and ethnic groups. Where schools have an active prevention programme – including clear policy and a culture of supporting the victim, developing empathy within classrooms, supporting students to be peer mentors, and engaging with parents – the outcomes are very positive. Building on these findings, ENABLE focuses on peer mentoring and support for young people, parents and teachers to improve relations among the groups that constitute the school ecosystem. In particular, the programme works to improve social and emotional skills as a means of developing greater empathy. As a result, ENABLE has developed a set of 10 peer support sessions to train and empower young people to become peer supporters, who then actively work to prevent bullying in school and the wider community.

## Conclusion

Our needs assessment shows the importance of teaching children the core principles of emotional intelligence through structured SEL instruction at school. Developing children's empathy, emotion regulation and problem-solving skills are key learning objectives of the ENABLE lesson plans. The programme pairs a skills enhancement approach with a peer support scheme, aiming to build a culture of support. Importantly, ENABLE reaches out not only to teachers and students but also promotes good working relationships between schools and families so as to foster two-way communication with a common objective: student growth and development.

Chapter 13

# When bullying crosses the screen

*Sónia Seixas, Tito de Morais and Luis Fernandes*[189]

Young people perceive the internet as a natural way to gain experience and meet their need for social contact and communication through digital means. However, it has also provided a new context for children and young people to intimidate and harass their peers, with serious consequences for their daily lives as well as their physical and mental health. In this sense, cyberbullying has emerged in many countries as a growing concern in terms of health and well-being.

Bullying behaviour is generally defined by three criteria: intentionality, repetition and uneven power. By extension, cyberbullying should also be defined by the same criteria, the main difference being that the phenomena occurs through the use of online technologies. However, due to the specificities of the use of technology, some bullying characteristics may become ambiguous in cyberspace, making it harder to agree on a consensual definition. Notwithstanding these difficulties, any definition of cyberbullying should be an extension of the definition of bullying. In this sense, it can be defined as the misuse of digital technologies to deliberately and repeatedly act in a hostile manner, with the intention of causing damage to another. Taking into account the variety of actions that cyberbullying can encompass and the diversity of possible content as well as the multiple forms of dissemination involved, cyberbullying behaviour is much more complex and varied than standard bullying.

In this chapter, we intend to reflect on the difference between bullying and cyberbullying, as well as the main factors that facilitate the occurrence of the latter or the transition from one to the other. But first, we need to look at the characteristics of communication mediated by screens and how this can facilitate aggressive behaviour. These characteristics include not only disinhibition, anonymity, the illusion of invisibility and a lack of tangible feedback, but also other features and technical properties of screen-mediated communication. It is important to take these into account, since they characterise the environment where young people predominantly socialise and communicate. The majority of these characteristics are interconnected and co-dependent, in particular in terms of the replicability, searchability and scalability of content.

The chapter will also discuss different anti-cyberbullying actions and the various forms of dissemination. Finally, we identify preventive and interventional approaches to cyberbullying, including regulatory, educational, parenting and technological approaches.

## Characteristics of communication mediated by screens

### Disinhibition

Having a screen that separates us from the other person facilitates a certain disinhibition between the interlocutors. We often observe cases of individuals who behave in a more open, relaxed and less constrained way in the digital world than they do in the real world. The presence of a screen may facilitate the emergence of behaviour that would never arise in face-to-face interactions, such as more hostile, aggressive or provocative communication that easily degenerates into episodes of cyberbullying.

### Anonymity and the illusion of invisibility

The internet allows users to remain anonymous and escape their responsibilities, since it may be difficult to identify them. They experience the illusion of invisibility, since in this type of communication the user does not see the other party (unless they use a webcam). Thus, people often behave as if talking to a screen and not a real person. This illusion also facilitates greater disclosure of personal information than in face-to-face situations.

### Persistence of contents

One of the technical properties of screen-mediated communication is the persistence of digital content, whether text, image, sound or video: "once on the internet, forever on the internet". Everything we publish online is automatically recorded and archived, irrespective of whether we want it to be or not. Consequently, it can be repeatedly retrieved, allowing anyone to find almost all content that has been published in a digital environment. This characteristic is particularly important in cases of cyberbullying, when subjects intentionally seek and disseminate content pertaining to others.

### Replicability

Another property is the replicability of digital content. What we say online is no longer under our control once we have said it. This can be true for a conversation between friends, the comments that are made on a blog or the photos that are uploaded onto a social network. This information can be copied by anyone else and spread over the internet in several ways, including through e-mails, instant messages, profiles, blogs, social networks or file-sharing. Even if a user deletes a particular piece of content after it has been published, there is nothing to say that it has not already been copied or captured with a screen grab and shared. There are countless cases of cyberbullying in which this happens.

### Searchability

As a result of the above characteristics, from the moment that digital content is available online, anyone can find it and reuse it in any way, including reposting it elsewhere. Young people are not always aware that what they publish today may be embarrassing in 10 or 20 years' time or even later, or that these items can be viewed elsewhere.

### Scalability

The scalability of digital content relates to its potential visibility. After the publication of content on a public digital network, the number of people who can view it is potentially huge and this can reach exponential proportions, as in the case of content that "goes viral".

### Lack of tangible feedback

The reduction or absence of physical, social and visual communication signals in most online interaction results in a lack of tangible feedback. When interacting via a screen or keyboard, people do not communicate with their body and all of their senses as they do in face-to-face communication. It is more difficult to know the mood of our interlocutor, especially how they feel after receiving a message that could amuse but also hurt or upset. Our attention is focused exclusively on the message without being contextualised by other non-verbal stimuli, including voice tone and facial expression. As a result, signals are lost, resulting in confusion that in turn may cause cyberbullying behaviour.

Given the indirect nature of online communication, in most cases cyberbullies cannot observe the victim's reactions in real time. Since the offender does not see the effects and consequences of his or her actions immediately, this can minimise any feelings of regret, remorse or empathy for the victim. In fact, for some offenders, their victims are no longer seen as people with feelings but become a simple computer screen that does not feel or suffer. Furthermore, when aggression is intentional, the lack of feedback provides no immediate reward, which can cause greater frustration and a desire to persist in the cyberbullying behaviour.

## Bullying and cyberbullying

The comparison of face-to-face communication and communication that is mediated by technology highlights some important differences between bullying and cyberbullying. For example, the three main criteria used to define bullying may not be so evident in cyberbullying behaviours.

With regards to intentionality, in bullying, the aggressor has the intent to harm the victim, while in cyberbullying a lot also depends on the victim's perception of the action, and whether it was intended in jest and without malicious intent. An initial action may occur without malicious intent but the absence of non-verbal indicators, like the tone of voice, obfuscate the true intent behind the action. Beyond this, the

intentionality can also be misinterpreted by onlookers who take advantage of the initial action.

As regards the characteristic of uneven power, in bullying, this disparity is usually related to the distinguishing characteristics of the actors in the real world, namely differences in physical, psychological or social power. In cyberbullying, uneven power also becomes virtual as it may be based on a higher level of skills with technology, the characteristics of the content published on the internet, or the anonymity that the devices used may allow. The lack of support for victims may also stem from the fact that they cannot act upon the aggression because they are often unable to delete the content from the internet or identify the aggressor.

Finally, while bullying implies the repetition of behaviour over time, the repetition of cyberbullying can depend on the characteristics of the technology itself, regardless of the aggressor's initial intention. One single act of aggression like publishing a hurtful photo can be seen and shared several times by third parties, resulting in a continuous and repeated humiliation that may or may not have been the original intention.

Using Nancy Willard's[190] description as a starting point, types of cyberbullying behaviour can be categorised as follows:

- flaming: a discussion that may have started in person or online can evolve into aggressiveness on the internet, including sending and receiving inflammatory, rude, irate or obscene messages, in private or in public. This may degenerate into veritable "message wars" or commentary that can be dubbed "flame wars". This type of behaviour is often initiated after an exchange that becomes progressively more aggravated, where insults beget insults;
- harassment: repeated sending of messages of an abusive nature, aiming to annoy, threaten or alarm the recipient;
- cyberstalking: the persistent sending of threats or highly intimidating and intrusive messages that cause fear and threaten the victim's privacy;
- denigration: publishing false statements or broadcasting rumours and hearsay about the other person through the internet, with the goal of causing damage to their reputation or relationships;
- impersonation: pretending to be another person in cyberspace, or using their cell phone and then sending or publishing messages to potentially endanger or embarrass that person, causing damage to their reputation or relationships;
- outing: publishing or issuing public or private messages to expose another person's sensitive, private, intimate or embarrassing information;
- trickery: employing deception or scamming someone, with the purpose of obtaining secrets or embarrassing information, which can then be shared or broadcast online;
- exclusion: intentionally and cruelly excluding a person from an online group.

In terms of dissemination methods, cyberbullying can occur through a variety of platforms and devices, including:

- e-mails (asynchronous communication sent to an individual or a group);
- blogs;

- discussion groups (asynchronous communication of a group around a topic);
- chat rooms (group asynchronous communication) on the Web;
- instant messaging software (synchronous private communication);
- messaging apps for smartphones, such as Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, Snapchat and others;
- text/multimedia messages;
- groups and social network communities (very common among teenagers);
- online multiplayer games, be these MMOGs (massive multiplayer online games) or not, Web-based and/or played through computers, video game consoles, smartphones or tablets.

One of the most important aspects of cyberbullying concerns the continued risk of exposure. In "traditional" bullying, students are usually targeted by attacks during their time at school or travelling to and from school, which would mean from approximately from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., 5 days a week. In such circumstances, victimised students may be able develop avoidance or protection mechanisms, such as skipping class, arriving late, asking to leave early with the excuse of some commitment they cannot postpone, asking the teacher for clarification or remaining close to other adults during breaks. However, cyberbullying is extremely difficult to avoid. Victims can receive messages on their phone, computer, tablet or other technological device wherever they are, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Consequently, students that are victims of cyberbullying find themselves in a position of greater and constant exposure, which may amplify feelings of increasing vulnerability, anguish and suffering.

Furthermore, in cyberbullying the variety of roles that observers play is much more complex. Given that attacks can take place asynchronously, the observer may be with the aggressor or the victim when the action is initiated, but they may also be alone when receiving something that was shared, or when visiting a specific website or accessing a social network. In "traditional" bullying, observers are usually physically present as instigators, supporters of the aggressor, defenders of the victim or simply onlookers. However, there is greater ambiguity in the roles that observers of cyberbullying can play. If they choose to join in, they can make comments to encourage or discourage an attack, for example by placing a "like" on a post. Alternatively, if they choose not to show themselves they can nevertheless decide whether or not to spread or forward the messages or eliminate the disagreeable content, which may be part of the solution as it can help prevent the contents from spreading to a wider audience.

Another peculiarity of cyberbullying is the size of the audience. Digital technologies reach a particularly broad and unlimited audience (especially if the aggressions occur in the public domain), in contrast to the small group of peers that are often present in "traditional" bullying. Very rapidly, the dissemination of a video or an image crosses geographical and linguistic borders. With a simple click, the same content can be viewed in Greece, the United States or Australia, and content sometimes goes viral within seconds of its release. The humiliation felt by knowing that we are being watched and scrutinised by hundreds, if not thousands of people, assumes proportions that are vastly different, compared to the limited audience that we would be subjected to in a face-to-face context.

This rapid dissemination of aggression, and the multiplicity of places where it can be viewed, commented upon and recorded, gives these attacks a permanence, as opposed to bullying that takes place in a real location and cannot be reproduced or "revisited". Indeed, this aspect of cyberbullying relates directly to the searchability and permanence of digital content.

To summarise, while cyberbullying is a behaviour that is mediated by digital technologies, its manifestation and the way it is experienced by all those involved is considerably different from "traditional" bullying. It is crucial that young people be aware of the particularities of screen-mediated communication so they are able to anticipate the eventual repercussions and potential abuse that may arise from what they publish on the internet. It is essential to empower children, teens, parents and school professionals with the necessary skills, and also consider regulatory, educational, parental or technological approaches to combating cyberbullying.

## Regulatory approaches

Regulatory approaches can take the form of legislation, self-regulation or parental rules. Legislation can be used to define and criminalise certain behaviour and conduct related to cyberbullying, either at the national, regional or international level. Examples of self-regulation can include terms and conditions of usage, privacy policies or reporting channels such as internet hotlines or helplines. Parental rules can also be established at the family level.

## Educational approaches

There are many things schools can do to prevent, intervene against and combat cyberbullying. Teachers and the school community as a whole can be helped if the school as a whole adopts and implements anti-cyberbullying strategies, including integrating the topic in the school curriculum and raising awareness among all educational agents.

A current trend in many countries is to produce legislation that encourages schools to adopt policies, systems and procedures to deal with cyberbullying. Often the problem in schools is that cyberbullying is considered the responsibility of no one in particular. Setting up a team is the first essential step. This may include teacher representatives, other school staff, students, student associations, parents and legal guardians.

One of the first tasks of the team is to evaluate how big the problem is at the school and assess the needs of the whole school community. Based on the results gathered, the workgroup can then develop an appropriate action plan. This plan may include training and awareness, policy and procedures, and guidelines for responding to incidents.

Training in and awareness raising of prevention and intervention strategies should be directed at the whole school community including teachers and staff, students from all grades, and parents and legal guardians. Schools need to define clear, unequivocal policies and procedures that show that this sort of antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated. This can be achieved through clearly defined internal regulations or

specific policies relating to the use of ICTs within school grounds. These rules and the consequences of disobeying them – including disciplinary action and procedures – must then be communicated not only to students, but also to their parents and legal guardians. These policies should include a reporting system for victims and/or onlookers, as a means of preventing incidents of cyberbullying.

Although not many countries include cyberbullying in the school curriculum, there are already some useful resources available.[191] These are generally organised per teaching grade, and in accordance with the educational standards of each country. Examples of cyberbullying prevention programmes for schools are available in the final pages of this publication.

Beyond teaching, it is important to have students reflect on and demonstrate what they have learned. There is no better way to do this than by using appropriate ICTs; the article "60 things students can create to demonstrate what they know"[192] provides a variety of creative suggestions. Another way to get students involved and lead them to reflect on the topic of cyberbullying is to challenge them to take part in initiatives focused on the theme, such as contests, thematic weeks or school projects.

## Parenting approaches

Parents and legal guardians can adopt a wide variety of approaches to tackle cyberbullying. First, it is extremely important to establish rules about the use of ICTs. It is recommended that parents and legal guardians put together with the child(ren) or teen(s) in their care a written document that clearly establishes what can and can't be done, and why. Once signed, this "contract" should define the rights and responsibilities of both parties. Broadly speaking, be it in relation to online or offline life, these will spell out the "3 Rs": be responsible, be respectful and be respectable.

Another fundamental parenting approach is promoting dialogue and debate in order to establish solid lines of communication and strengthen trust so that children feel comfortable asking parents for help if they encounter a problem. Hinduja and Patchin of the Cyberbullying Research Center have published a document that will help parents know how to ask the "right questions" about technology in general, and cyberbullying, sexting and social networks in particular.[193] Parents also need to know about and use the devices, sites, platforms and applications used by their children, so as to be able to approach this issue with prior knowledge.

A further preventive action for parents is to discuss with their children what they are saying on the internet and what is being said about them. To that effect, parents can run a search on Google using the names of their children, or even set up a Google Alert on the name of their child.

Helping children to handle adversity and promoting resilience will also help prevent cyberbullying because it gives victims the tools to deal with the situation and encourages passive onlookers to intervene to put a stop to cyberbullying. There are many online resources to guide parents and professionals in helping children and teens to acquire resilience skills (some of which are included at the end of this publication).

"Think before you post" is a popular piece of advice, and when it comes to deciding what to think about when publishing or sharing online the "THINK" acronym is particularly useful: is it True? Is it Helpful? Is it Inspiring? Is it Necessary? Is it Kind?[194]

There are several steps that parents can take if they fear that their child is being cyberbullied.

- Keep calm. Control your emotions and avoid reacting in emotionally exacerbated ways, assuring the child that the priority is to support and help them get through the situation, rather than blaming or punishing them.
- Assess the situation. Seek information that helps you understand the type or form of cyberbullying in question; who the aggressor is; the source of the conflict; where it occurred (e.g. in which social network site, app or forum); what was said or done to the victim; how long it has been going on and who else knows about the situation.
- Secure the evidence. Performing screen captures, printing or taking pictures of the message(s) that demonstrate the act of cyberbullying which may eventually allow you to identify the aggressors and provide evidence of the cyberbullying.
- Block/report the aggressors. If it is possible to identify the aggressors, you can block and/or report their profiles or messages.
- Report the case and request collaboration. Depending on the kind of situation and who may be potentially involved, you may consider reporting the incident to an appropriate organisation such as your child's school, school community, club or association. Administrators of these organisations have the duty to provide a safe environment, ascertain the facts with an investigation, and decide on an adequate means of response.
- Contact the authorities. In very serious situations that involve, for example, threats of violence, blackmail/extortion attempts or encouragement to self-harm or suicide, do not hesitate to contact the local police authorities.
- Get specialised help. Sometimes children may need to go beyond the help their parents can give them and talk to a relevant expert. For example, in some cases the help of a mental health professional can be very useful. It is important to present the child with all the options.[195]

## Technological approaches

There are several levels of technology that can help to prevent situations of cyberbullying or intervene in them. These include operating systems, programs, websites, platforms and apps, as well as specialised online help and technological solutions. There are countless functions on operating systems, for example, designed to protect and safeguard the security and privacy of users. Not using such functions such as setting up user and guest accounts to protect access can often make cyberbullying worse.

Programs, websites, platforms and apps provide many features, too, that help, even if they have not been designed specifically to prevent cyberbullying. These include computer reset systems, which are particularly useful for shared computers; features to automatically close all sessions, platforms and apps on all devices once a user session is over; programs that help create and manage strong passwords; authentication

mechanisms based on double authentication; functions enabling users to set their preferred level of security and privacy; and mechanisms to report and block users.

Finally, there are online help and technological solutions especially designed to prevent and intervene in cyberbullying incidents. There are a range of anonymous reporting and incident management systems, mainly geared towards schools, which readers can find online. These include sites and platforms such as CyberBully Hotline, Safe2Tell, StopBullies, STOPit, TextSomeone and the BullyBøx. There are a number of programs and apps too that have been designed for a similar purpose, including CyberBullyRadar, Delete Cyberbullying, KnowBullying (an app from the samhsa.gov store) and ReThink (see URLs in the final pages of this publication).[196]

## Conclusions

When we take a closer look at the differences between bullying and cyberbullying behaviour and the characteristics of screen-mediated communication, it seems safe to say that cyberbullying may have more serious and insidious repercussions for young people than other forms of bullying. Indeed, cyberbullying may trigger more intense and troubling health-related symptoms as well as greater physical, psychological and social risks.

Whether in the private or the social domain, images and the written word can have an enormous impact on young people because victims can re-watch and re-read the offensive content, thus reliving the experience over and over again. We therefore recommend that every effort be made to deploy an encompassing strategy that combines all four approaches – regulatory, educational, parental and technological – to tackle cyberbullying and enable our children to reap the full benefits that online communication can offer them.

Chapter 14

# Social literacy for preventing, healing and empowering – Research insights

*Anne Collier*

In late November 2011, social media researcher danah boyd (who spells her name in lower case) emailed four people with different perspectives on bullying and peer victimisation. They were school psychology professor Susan Swearer, youth victimisation researcher Lisa Jones, social literacy specialist Mia Doces and myself, an internet safety specialist who had long written about these and other scholars' work on bullying prevention. Dr boyd wanted to know if we would help her and John Palfrey, Director of Harvard University's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, develop the conceptual grounding for the Born This Way Foundation, which Lady Gaga and Cynthia Germanotta, her mother, would be launching at Harvard the following February. We quickly dug in, and – after a number of long conference calls, drafts and rewrites over the ensuing two months – published a set of papers that distilled the latest thinking and scholarly research on social aggression, "Meanness and cruelty".[197]

Those words were carefully chosen. This work was not just about bullying – or even the full spectrum of antisocial behaviour (that is, from meanness to cruelty). As Lady Gaga stated at her foundation's launch event in Harvard's Sanders Theatre on 29 February 2012, this was not meant to be "a bullying prevention foundation. This is a youth empowerment foundation."[198] Our work with the Berkman Center correlated with that much broader spectrum. Phase 2 of the Kinder & Braver World Project research series ("Meanness and cruelty" comprising Phase 1) took a fresh look at youth activism for social change.[199]

The research, it seemed, was meaningful to everyone involved, and not just because of all the visibility a person with global celebrity would bring to the work. Palfrey and boyd had brilliantly engineered a project that represented a departure in a number of ways because it would:

- take bullying in context, including the spectrum of antisocial behaviours;[200]
- distil insights gleaned from both research and diverse perspectives on youth well-being into papers accessible to educators and parents;
- model the multidisciplinary, collaborative approach to addressing bullying that research has consistently documented;

- send the message that youth participation is vital to multidisciplinary teamwork;
- with its second phase, suggest that the goal goes beyond preventing social cruelty and even beyond social and emotional well-being to efficacy and empowerment of young activists in co-creating "a kinder, braver world".

Empowering – or enabling – youth participation and even activism online and offline requires social-emotional safety and literacy as a baseline. Social cruelty silences targets and disables learning, while social-emotional learning enables it.[201]

Three years before the Born This Way Foundation launch, the 2009 report of what came to be called the Berkman Task Force[202] – a national Internet Safety Technical Task Force that met at Harvard over the course of 2008 – included a review of the youth online risk literature through that year. This was the most comprehensive review in the US since the emergence of social media. Among the report's top-line findings are: harassment and bullying are the most salient online risks for youth, and a youth's psychosocial make-up and home and school environments are better predictors of online risk than any technology the individual uses. These findings strongly suggest that safety from cyberbullying – described by researchers at the University of New Hampshire (whose work was cited throughout the report) as a subset of bullying – is largely emotional, or psychosocial, safety. We know that bullying, which affects more youth than cyberbullying, affects emotional as well as physical well-being.[203] Furthermore, we know that people, including the young, cannot learn, thrive and lead without some degree of emotional safety. So if we are to empower, or enable, youth to participate effectively and successfully in a digitally networked world, social-emotional learning, or social literacy, is foundational.

Over the past decade, many other research projects and findings in the US have supported or complemented this hypothesis. In the following sections, some of the important milestones in the corroboration of this hypothesis are laid out.

## Welcome definition

Public discussion in the US about "cyberbullying" has evolved since the advent of social media in the middle of the last decade. The early perception was that cyberbullying or "electronic bullying" was a whole new social problem that parents, educators and policy makers had no preparation for addressing. Even as late as 2011, nearly half of school social workers felt ill-equipped to deal with this form of peer aggression,[204] though they had been well trained to address offline forms of the behaviour. The work of researchers in the youth victimisation field is helping to change that perception by placing cyberbullying in the context of peer victimisation as a whole.

Researchers at the University of New Hampshire's Crimes Against Children Research Center (CCRC) gave several reasons for the need to place bullying and cyberbullying in the context of peer victimisation. Perhaps the most important was that focusing strictly on the established definition of bullying and cyberbullying – as involving

repeated aggression and a psychological or physical power imbalance – limits schools' responses. "While it excludes trivial conflicts among peers, [the established definition] also excludes very serious acts of aggression", such as single, rather than repeated, acts of violence and sexual assault.[205]

## Social cruelty, social rivalry

A series of studies carried out in schools in North Carolina, in the US, shed more light on social rivalry as part of the peer victimisation spectrum. The research echoed other studies, finding that "about a third of students experience social aggression", but where it shed new light was on the finding that "most teenage aggression is directed at social rivals" – peers a little more or a little less "popular" than the target, "rather than the kid who is completely unprotected and isolated".[206] This is not to say that minority youth (that is those with disabilities, different sexual orientations, religious beliefs or gender identity) do not suffer more than less socially marginalised youth: they do, in many cases. However, it does train the spotlight on the predominance of social rivalry in the context of teen social aggression and the importance of helping our children develop the literacy that enables them to marginalise bullying and the resilience that helps them cope with it.[207]

## Levels of attention, prevention

One of my key takeaways from our Born This Way work was a finding shared with us by psychologist Susan Swearer during our group's early discussions: that SEL – teaching children the five competencies of social-emotional literacy[208] – is the major part of bullying prevention.

According to Dr Swearer, the only part that SEL does not address is the very important component of mental health care. Indeed, a little over a year later, the Director of the US Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention concluded his remarks at a national summit about bullying prevention with the statement that youth exhibiting bullying behaviours should be screened for trauma.[209] This was important guidance from the federal government's authority on juvenile justice. Bullying behaviour is a symptom of problems in troubled youth that needs care, not just discipline. If we were to apply the public health field's three levels of prevention, as proposed by risk prevention specialist Patricia Agatston to another national task force,[210] instruction in the three indispensable literacies of today's very social digital media – digital literacy, media literacy and social literacy – would represent baseline, universal prevention education. Similarly, mental health care for traumatised youth would involve tertiary-level prevention and intervention for youth with established patterns of risk in their online and offline lives (secondary-level prevention would be tailored to a specific incident or "teachable moments" at school), most probably in the form of specific bullying prevention work.

## Online, offline and mixed

According to the authors of 2015's groundbreaking research from the CCRC, a widely shared hypothesis that technology "amplifies" harm from social aggression has never been empirically tested, largely because bullying and cyberbullying have typically been studied separately.[211] The CCRC study tested that hypothesis, examining the level of impact that aggression had on targets in three forms: in person, online or mixed (social aggression experienced both online and in person at school).

As in other studies, they found that about a third (34%) of youth had experienced harassment of some kind over the previous year, and 54% of incidents involved no technology, 15% involved only technology and 31% involved both technology and in-person elements. As for the negative emotional impact of digital harassment, they found it to be "significantly lower" than that of in-person harassment. Tech-only harassment was "less likely to involve multiple episodes and power imbalances" than the in-person kind and was "seen by victims as easier to stop and had significantly less emotional impact." Importantly, they also found that the emotional impact of in-person harassment was significantly lower than that of mixed incidents (those that involve both digital and in-person harassment). But even in incidents of both digital and in-person harassment, they wrote, "it appears likely that it is less something inherent about the technology itself, and more something about the relational nature of mixed harassment incidents that make them so upsetting."

The data suggests that the root of the problem is social rather than technological, so the solution is social as well, as the authors observe:

> Our research suggests that those seeking to prevent the most detrimental forms of peer harassment might focus less on cyberbullying per se and instead [consider] prevention programmes that teach youth to handle negative feelings and to de-escalate tensions … These skills are the focus of a growing number of social-emotional learning programmes and comprehensive school-based bullying prevention programmes that are increasing in sophistication.

## The power of social norms

The discourse around bullying prevention and intervention rarely discusses what has been learned from social norms research, which shows that perception about behavioural norms within a community changes behaviour within that community. So when behaviour in a school community is shown to its members to be largely positive, behaviour conforms to that reality. For example, research conducted at five diverse public middle schools (Grades 6 to 8) in New Jersey found that when students were made aware that "most people in our school" do not bully, behaviour changed in direct proportion to the changed perception, conforming to the new understanding: "The most common (and erroneous) perception among students in the schools studied is that most kids engage in or support bullying."[212] This points to the importance of telling youth the truth about their peers and communities, rather than exaggerating the problem, as the news media have done.

## Insights from digital ethics

The result of six years of surveys and interviews with tweens, teens and young adults by the 14 researchers of Harvard University's Good Play Project, the 2014 book *Disconnected: youth, new media, and the ethics gap*[213] focuses on youth and "the moral and ethical sensibilities [they] bring, or fail to bring, to their participation on the internet". The researchers developed a "framework of ways of thinking that we used to analyse young people's narratives about online life". This framework consisted of three levels: consequence thinking, in which "the sense of responsibility is narrowly focused on the self"; moral thinking, which considers the impact on "known others", such as friends and family; and ethical thinking, which considers the impact on "distant, unknown individuals", including one's community as a whole. The researchers found that "more often than not, the young people we interviewed were principally, if not exclusively, concerned with their own interests when making decisions online".

That comes as no surprise after more than a decade and a half of internet safety education focused largely on consequence thinking. However, what is remarkable about this research group's findings is the link between ethics – employing the full complement of ethical thinking – and well-being for all participants in social environments, online and offline. In other words, focusing safety solely on consequences to oneself fails to ensure safety in social environments.

## Most bystanders try to help

Interestingly, research from the CCRC last year indicates that youth understand this. The authors zoomed in on witnesses to harassing behaviour, finding that most were not focused solely on themselves: "In most incidents, kids really try to support victims."[214] Key findings included the fact that bystanders are present for 80% of harassment incidents. In about 70% of those incidents, the target said a bystander tried to make them feel better. Negative bystander reactions – for example laughing or joining in – were "considerably less frequent", but "still occurred in nearly a quarter of incidents and were associated with a significantly higher negative impact on the victim", the authors reported. In 60% of cases, adults were notified (a much higher percentage than in research from the last decade). An earlier research milestone on bystanders found that "bystanders are significantly affected by the bullying they witness or hear about, so much so that they may be at an increased risk of self-harming behaviour".[215]

## Digital citizenship and social literacy

There has been increasing interest in (as well as news headlines containing) the term "digital citizenship". In the US, it seems to be thought of as a term more palatable to youth and perhaps educators than "internet safety" and a subject that basically blends digital literacy and media literacy and has elements of "netiquette" and "classroom management", or behavioural control. There is little in the mix to inspire the "citizens", however, and little clarity or consensus as to its definition. So it has been refreshing to engage with educators at the Internet Governance Forum and

other venues in other countries and discover that "digital citizenship" has included civic engagement in definitions and practices.

A 2015 study from the CCRC offered a simple definition for "digital citizenship",[216] with three recommendations to educators:

- separate digital citizenship from digital literacy (internet and technical skills) and cyberbullying prevention, which are important topics but more about preventing harm than growing "specific online social skills";
- define and simplify it to two elements: online respect and online civic engagement;
- align it with youth citizenship goals (e.g. participating in community activities and addressing social injustices). A key aspect of youth citizenship the authors highlighted in the scholarship on it – one that invokes the Harvard digital ethics findings – is "the ability to move beyond one's individual self-interest and to be committed to the well-being of some larger group of which one is a member".

Most relevant to the topic of social literacy was the CCRC study's finding that citizenship reduces antisocial behaviour. To help "operationalise" good digital citizenship education, they conducted a study of nearly 1 000 middle and high school students (ages 11 to 17) to test the relationship between online harassment and the two-part definition of digital citizenship. Among other things, they found that "both online respect and civic engagement were negatively related to online harassment perpetration and positively related to helpful bystander behaviours".

This research suggests direct links between psychosocial well-being, social literacy and agency, or the capacity to effect change.[217] Having social opportunities reduced for the sake of "safety" (or less bullying) not only creates the potential for social marginalisation but also restricts the hope and capacity to "be the change" in social situations where change is greatly needed. A term even newer than "digital citizenship" is "digital leadership". The term, which might be seen as a blend of youth citizenship and student leadership, is taught in every California public high school, and in social-emotional learning.[218]

Something I observed a few months after the Born This Way Foundation launched, at a summit for its first Youth Advisory Board, was a certain belief or disposition these young activists shared. Many in this diverse group under the age of 24 had faced and were still healing from bullying and social cruelty, but a theme emerged as they told their stories: they were deriving strength from helping others. They seemed to know that leadership was a work in progress, and they were there to celebrate their vulnerability as well as diversity, growing their resilience and leadership not just in a very social, but a very socially literate way.

Chapter 15

# The quest to develop skills for an increasingly digital life

*Jorge Flores Fernández and Urko Fernández*

## Life skills-based education[219]

In 1993, the Mental Health Division of WHO launched an international initiative called Life Skills Education in Schools.[220] In this chapter, we will take a closer look at those skills, more particularly how such skills can help young people become more resilient to bullying and cyberbullying, and improve their interactions with peers and others.

The purpose of the Life Skills Education initiative is to encourage training worldwide in a group of 10 human skills designed to promote the psychosocial competence of children and adolescents, and enable them to deal more effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Life Skills Education aims to improve the ability of young people to live a healthier and happier life and to participate actively in the construction of a more just, caring and equitable society. Although there are different ways of classifying life skills, the proposed classification by WHO is recognised for its flexibility and applicability, and includes the following set of 10 core skills:

- self-knowledge;
- empathy;
- assertive communication;
- interpersonal relationships;
- decision making;
- problem and conflict solving;
- creative thinking;
- critical thinking;
- the management of emotions and feelings;
- handling of tensions and stress.

## Digital life skills v. digital skills for life

When we address the new skills that are needed in our everyday reality in a networked world, the focus is often on issues such as digital and media literacy: the need to learn knowledge, procedures and attitudes associated with the digital world.

To take the example of adolescents and the issue of privacy – efforts to promote privacy on social networks have often concentrated on teaching teenagers how to configure privacy settings and how to ensure that their digital footprint does not affect a future job selection process. However, neither of these issues should be our main concern. To begin with, it is doubtful that a 14-year-old teenager would be interested in imagining themselves in a future selection process. The key thing is not teaching adolescents how to configure the privacy settings of a social network, but encouraging them to want to do it. Life skills help convince the user that it is advantageous to keep some of their information private as well as providing them with the skills to find out for themselves how to do it and to check if their actions were successful.

In short, we must not get carried away with secondary issues just because they are presented in a new way. In this digital and interconnected society, education in life skills is equally or even more necessary. Nevertheless, we should not forget that life today differs a lot from that which existed in 2000, before the popularisation of the internet, or even from life in 2010, before internet access from mobile phones was widespread. It is necessary to analyse our lives as they are now in order to judge what life skills are more necessary or important now.

## Digital life

Analysing how life at present is affected by recent changes brought about by our digital networked society will allow us to identify the life skills that should be strengthened in particular.

## More choice

There is no doubt that the internet has allowed us to choose from many more sources of information. It also allows us to access different service providers and new services, and gives us the freedom to interact with a greater number of people. This suggests that critical judgment in making these choices has greater importance than previously.

## Ever-changing

We live in constant evolution due to the rapid and profound changes brought about by the internet and its social, economic and technological implications. As a result, creative thinking may be particularly important to enable us to take advantage of these changes and know how to handle the tensions that can sometimes arise from them.

## Abundant relationships

New and changing tools, different generations, different abilities and different cultures are constantly coming together online. In order to deal with so much diversity, a high capacity for empathy will be necessary, especially when so many human interactions are mediated by a screen rather than face to face.

## Challenges and risks

With greater opportunities also come greater challenges, and we should not forget that the internet has the power to cause damage and suffering. Aside from empathy and resilience, emotion and stress-management skills are essential to properly handle problems.

## Fast-paced life

The advent of mobile internet has led to an increase in the frequency of our actions and relationships. Everything can be acted on almost instantly and there is social pressure to live in a permanent state of connection. This pressure can sometimes become chronic and lead to compulsive behaviours. For this reason, it is necessary to develop self-knowledge and self-awareness. It is also vital to have assertive qualities that allow a person to cope with situations that do not fit their needs or preferences. We must be able to manage emotions and adopt reflective thinking as an antidote to a context that requires quick answers.

# Life skills as key to prevent and cope with bullying and cyberbullying

## Self-knowledge

Knowing ourselves better allows us to identify the abilities and resources we have at our disposal to assess and overcome challenging situations. When people are being victimised, they need to be able to step back and analyse their personal abilities, skills and knowledge, which can help them resolve the issue. Both the victim and bystanders in incidents of harassment will need to use all the skills they have in order to end such complex situations.

## Empathy

Usually, when people are able to resist internal or external pressures on them to become aggressive, it is because their convictions or feelings dictate that they should do so. To activate those convictions or feelings, you have to be able to appreciate the suffering of the victim. If you do not see or feel the suffering of others, you cannot trigger compassion. As studies have already shown, empathy is vital to reduce conscious and repeated violence towards another person.[221] Technology complicates the situation since it allows us to have relationships with so many people, but at the same time it limits the depth of human interaction. Observers would have more inclination to act on behalf of the victim if they could better understand his or her suffering. Equally, a victim who has developed empathy will be able to assess and better manage the situation in relation to other people involved such as parents, friends or teachers.

## Assertive communication

In situations of bullying and cyberbullying, assertiveness on the part of observers is vital since they are neither victim nor perpetrator and have to decide for themselves whether or not to actively or passively participate in the harassment process. Being able to say "yes" or "no" when appropriate will prevent a person from succumbing to peer pressure and enable him or her to take an active stance against violence.

## Interpersonal relationships

Being able to establish and maintain positive relationships means that we are capable of greater social acceptance and support, which in turn will help prevent bullying and cyberbullying and serve as a defence where such behaviour occurs. It also helps maintain a healthy level of self-esteem in situations that otherwise could be seriously damaging.

## Decision making

Life is a permanent decision-making process that becomes even more burdensome and difficult for people when they are being victimised and are less able to adapt to an ever-changing reality. Knowing how to formulate different courses of action and being able to weigh up the consequences is very important for all three groups involved in bullying – the victim, the perpetrator and the bystanders. In cyberbullying, people outside of these groups, often parents and educators, may also become involved or affected.

## Problem and conflict solving

In bullying and cyberbullying situations, resilience becomes a key quality because it enables the victim to deal constructively with problems and to recover from the experience more quickly.

## Creative thinking

While bullying is an old problem, cyberbullying has revealed just how many different forms bullying can take. The digital trends and developments that we see emerging increasingly rapidly offer just a glimmer of how important it is to be able to adapt our needs and interests in an imaginative way. Unfortunately, in many cases collective creativity is at the service of bullying and other forms of harassment, and finding new and inventive ways to hurt. To respond to such challenges, we have to be capable of pitching our creative intelligence in with that of others in an even more effective way.

## Critical thinking

Critical thinking, together with assertiveness, is one of the skills that bystanders can use to deal with bullying and cyberbullying, breaking down the barrier of silence

and complicity. Being able to critically analyse information and actions will also facilitate empathy, and vice versa, overturning the common notion that bullying and cyberbullying are ordinary and inevitable evils that we have to learn to deal with. In the digitally assisted reality in which we live, we cannot do without critical thinking. The so-called "intuitiveness" of platforms and social services providers that try to anticipate our wishes do nothing but reduce our field of vision and push us into a new, increasingly rapid, "convenient" reality. There is no time for frustration or criticism; our ability to think critically is chronically numbed as we get used to having others choose for us.

## The management of emotions and feelings

Being aware of our own emotions and feelings, and being able to identify them and know how they affect the attitudes and actions we take, is a first step on the road to proactively managing them for our own well-being. In cases of peer violence, victims are exposed to intense and unpleasant emotions that, mismanaged, can only worsen the situation.

## Handling tensions and stress

Tension and stress are two words that, to a large extent, define what a victim of bullying or cyberbullying usually feels. If these two factors can't be correctly dealt with, then life becomes unmanageable and progressively and systematically all of our capabilities, our relationships and even our health will suffer.

## Good practices for education in digital life skills

Educating in digital life skills can be done in a number of ways, described in the following sub-sections.

## Strengthened sense of community, the internet as an environment of positive coexistence

When PantallasAmigas was founded in 2004, its slogan was "for safe and responsible use" because we were mainly dealing with technology and the content and services that users were consuming. However, with the rise of social networks and mobility along with decreasing internet access costs, we are now not only living through the internet, but also inside it. In 2009, PantallasAmigas chose a new slogan: "for responsible digital citizenship". We are all actors in this new context that we are building every day; it is a context with no precedent and no boundaries, and where sometimes the law is difficult to enforce. The internet is therefore mostly what the people that use it make of it. It is a community of neighbours where everyone needs to respect the generally accepted rules of coexistence, while at the same time making sure that others can see what they are doing.

The internet is not other people and it is not just "me": we all are the internet. The internet is not created, we are building it, and as creators we share responsibility for the result. To enjoy this environment, we have to be actively involved. The internet

is also about not considering minors simply as people to protect, and pushing them to centre-stage as protagonists and managers. This is a context that is completely natural to them, a context where they are "spending" more and more – and not just their time. It is a challenging environment to manage, where coexistence and privacy continue to evolve intensively in quite diverse ways. But it is nevertheless an environment where each of us needs to be actively aware of our roles and responsibilities. In September 2010, the education programme "Netiquette yourself: youth netiquette for social networks"[222] was launched as a practical exercise to get people to work together to define the rules of cyber-coexistence.

## Search spaces to share, learn and work alongside children and teens

Accompanying is key, sharing is the attitude we have to take, and listening is a necessary condition to this. Overreacting or, on the contrary, ignoring what is going on, does not help in any way. And it doesn't help either to try to teach children and teens how to act, or to get them to ask us for help when they run into a problem. You have to choose the right moments, the right activities, and even the right excuses that allow us as adults to be together with children and teens in the digital environment, removing the barriers that are every bit as hard to scale as the physical walls at home. Through sharing, we can teach and learn, guide and influence, advise and redirect, identify any sign of risk and anticipate problems. Because the internet is so accessible and the devices to access it so easy to move around – and not least because children are online at an increasingly early age – we have to start talking to our children about the internet from earliest childhood. To complicate matters further, the independence that mobile devices offer makes it increasingly difficult to help our children overcome the challenges they encounter online.

While education in digital life skills does not require much specialised knowledge, it is by no means an easy task. Not everyone who should be responsible for helping children develop these skills has the sensitivity or the ability to do so. Furthermore, many adults lack the technical knowledge that would make such education for life on the Web more efficient and meaningful. Below, we will share with readers three good practice examples in two aforementioned areas: taking a leading role and actively participating in one's children's activities.

## Cybermanagers: service-learning and peer learning

Cybermanagers is an educational programme, the first pilot of which took place between January and May 2010. It was presented publicly at the International Digital Citizenship Conference co-organised by PantallasAmigas.[223] Cybermanagers is a "service-learning" experience that incorporates the benefits of peer learning and, of course, places young people at the heart of the process. In brief, the aim of the programme was to train high school students about technology and the safe use of the internet so that they, in turn, would train, teach and mentor primary school students and adults, mostly parents. The results were extraordinary. Due to their whole-hearted involvement and the dynamics the project generated, the participating teens were enabled to develop a number of the life skills outlined above.





## Shared workshops for parents and their children

Impressive results were also obtained by setting up activities that spontaneously brought together parents and their children to share views, needs and experiences on internet usage and what their digital experiences mean. Both children and adults openly expressed their thoughts and fears, and listened not only to what the other generation had to say, but also what their peers had to say. Such an activity places the focus on listening and speaking, and being able to share and adapt to the views of the other. This is an exercise in knowledge and reflection, and sometimes also negotiation. It could even be said to function almost as group and family therapy since it helped both parents and children to shed the narrow, reactive and biased perception that they may have had on the use, but also on the risks and abuse, of the internet and smartphones. The methodology for running workshops like this can

range from lively debates to more game-based activities, including video games that look at aspects related to the healthy use of ICTs. Getting older and younger people to play simple video games together provides a great platform that harnesses the excitement of playfulness in opening the window of communication.





## Using video games

In this case study, we were able to create a successful methodology by building on the natural attraction of audio-visual interaction and fun. Without going into competition with the international interactive entertainment industry, there is certainly room today to design and develop serious educational and awareness-building video games that do not require exorbitant investment. There is a growing trend towards gamification in many areas, so including play activities when you are educating children should not be ruled out. There are many opportunities in this field, and

PantallasAmigas has adapted developments whenever appropriate, moving from developing Adobe Flash games for the Web to taking the opportunity to bring such games to portable devices (phones and tablets) in app format.




PantallasAmigas has tested even more daring strategies with the video game "Peter and Twitter", which promotes "cyber-coexistence and equality".[224] This game uses a Microsoft Kinect device, and can therefore be played in public using an intuitive interactive interface based on hand movements. This type of interaction suits players who are less used to manipulating the controls of video game consoles. The game has been used at a number of events and conferences, as well as in training activities to educate teens to prevent and fight gender-based cyberviolence. While in no way detracting from the playfulness of the medium, this methodology turns the video game into a catalyst for discussion.



Through game-playing based on challenges and tests, players are led to reflect on various issues both individually and collectively. A series of short messages (tweets) appear on the screen and players have to categorise them one at a time into one of four categories (positive, neutral, risky, negative). These messages change dynamically and even include messages that the players have created themselves prior to the game.

Players must examine the message from different points of view. For example, consider a message like this: "Congratulations to Mary, today she goes on vacation so she will get a break from household chores." In theory, it carries a certain emotional charge (for Mary), has a good intention, and from the point of view of coexistence could be qualified as "positive". However, analysing the message from the perspective of equality, it could contain a risky or negative message. It could be classified as negative or risky too, if it is examined from a privacy point of view.



In conclusion, educating in digital life skills is fundamental for children and young people, and the more immersive the experience the more impactful it will be. We have to learn to put children and teens at the heart of the experience that, in turn and through strategically guided activities, will raise not only their attention but also their passion.

Chapter 16

# Mobilising peers to challenge bullying

*Helen Cowie*

Research into school bullying has traditionally focused on the actual protagonists – the perpetrators and the targets. Consequently, we know a great deal about the psychological characteristics of bullies and victims and the consequences of bullying in undermining the emotional well-being of both targets and perpetrators. While an understanding of the personal aspects of the bully–victim relationship is important, it only addresses part of the issue. Bullying is experienced within a group of peers who adopt different participant roles and who experience a range of emotions. In this chapter, I argue that bullies do not act alone but rely on reinforcement from their immediate group of friends as well as the tacit approval of the onlookers. I also make some suggestions about interventions to empower bystanders to take action against bullying through, in particular, such interventions as peer support.

## The nature of bullying

The most widely used definition of school bullying is the one originally proposed by Olweus (1993),[225] which identifies three core components:

- there is an intent to harm or upset another student;
- the harmful behaviour is done repeatedly over time;
- the relationship between bully/bullies and victim/victims is characterised by an imbalance in power.

Since then, researchers have identified differences in how bullying is perceived and defined, depending on the age of the child, young person or adult. Young children have less differentiated perspectives on bullying and are more likely to focus on physical bullying rather than psychological or indirect bullying (Smith et al. 2002).[226] Furthermore, there appear to be wide cultural differences in how bullying is defined, interpreted, encouraged or discouraged by children and young people[227] and by adults in the workplace.[228]

More recently, cyberbullying has emerged as a disturbing phenomenon among young people. Like traditional face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying involves the deliberate intent to hurt a person or persons through the electronic transmission of messages and images that target the victim(s) repeatedly over time.[229] However, as Purdy and York (2016) point out, there are some differences between the definitions of cyberbullying used,[230] so it can be difficult to make comparisons across studies. Nevertheless, one consistent finding is that cyberbullying rates are lower

than those of traditional face-to-face bullying with a large overlap between the two, both for bullies and victims. In other words, those who are bullied face to face are at heightened risk of also being cyberbullied. Cyberbullying potentially reaches a much larger audience (through, for example, social networking sites) and postings can be viewed repeatedly, with extremely disturbing consequences for the targets, including insomnia, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, self-harm and, in rare cases, suicide.[231] The anonymity of the cyberbully is a powerful component. Kyriacou and Zuin (2016)[232] argue that this anonymity results in desensitisation of pro-social values and empathy towards another person, and ultimately in a process of moral disengagement since the cyberbully does not meet face to face with his/her target. Thus there is less likelihood that the cyberbully will experience social disapproval or intervention on the part of bystanders.

Salmivalli (2010; 2014) has highlighted the social nature of bullying by identifying a range of participant roles that go beyond the relationship between bully and victim to locate bullying within the wider setting of peer group dynamics as a whole.[233] She points out that to a large extent, bullying is a social phenomenon since bystanders are usually present during an episode of bullying, whether online or offline. These bystanders often supply the bully with social rewards such as laughing and cheering at the victim's discomfort and humiliation. In this way, whether wittingly or not, the bystanders reinforce the bullying behaviour in their role as spectators of the "drama".

There are a number of reasons why bystanders do not intervene to help the victims.[234] First, bullies are often perceived positively by the peer group so bystanders worry that they may become victims themselves if they intervene. Second, a form of bystander apathy comes into play since, if no one else is intervening to help bullied peers, there may be a perception that the majority approve of the bullying behaviour. Finally, those who bully usually select vulnerable targets, such as those who have low status within the group, so there may be little perceived benefit in going to the assistance of this particular peer. Salmivalli (2014) indicates the potential power that the bystanders have to reduce or prevent bullying since frequently they feel that bullying is wrong.[235] At the same time, Salmivalli et al. (1996) found that around 17% of school pupils had the participant role of defender.[236] These were children who felt empathy for victims and wished to do something to support them. Salmivalli argues that it may in fact be more productive to mobilise the peer group rather than try to change the bullies, as she and her colleagues have done successfully in schools in the Finnish KiVa anti-bullying programme.[237]

## Does peer support offer a solution?

The practice of peer support is widely used as a method for mobilising the defenders and perhaps motivating some of the bystanders to take action against bullying, so giving direction to the idealistic desire of some young people to be active citizens in their school.

Peer support systems are generally defined as flexible frameworks within which children and young people are trained to offer emotional and social support to fellow pupils[238] through appropriate training in such skills as mentoring, active listening,

conflict resolution, befriending and representation of young people's issues in school councils. Primary school schemes generally adopt a buddying/befriending approach[239] or a conflict resolution approach while secondary schools report using mentoring followed by befriending. Schools that have been running peer support over a long time also report using mixed methods simultaneously.[240] In addition, some primary schools incorporate other activities for peer supporters such as organising co-operative games, supporting reading through peer tutoring and carrying out one-to-one peer counselling work with vulnerable pupils who find it hard to make friends.[241] Secondary school schemes typically train peer mentors to build on the methods adapted for younger age groups. This may involve running a lunchtime club, being available in a "drop in" room, facilitating workshops in tutor groups, or mentoring younger pupils in need. They also make use of a more sophisticated range of active listening and problem-solving skills.[242]

More recently, peer support systems have become internationally popular as anti-bullying interventions[243] in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.[244] Thus, peer support may act as both a bullying prevention method and as an intervention. The adoption of peer support within a whole-school policy has been shown to create opportunities for young people to be proactive in challenging bullying when they encounter it and to support its victims, as well as contribute to a school ethos in which bullying is less acceptable.

The Diana Award was set up as a lasting legacy to Princess Diana's belief that young people have the power to change the world. The Diana Award Anti-Bullying Campaign equips young people, professionals and parents with the knowledge, confidence and skills to effectively tackle all forms of bullying in their schools and communities, both online and offline. Through its campaign and its anti-bullying ambassadors, ENABLE and other resources, young people, professionals and parents feel inspired, educated, confident and empowered to tackle all forms of bullying within their schools and communities.

A survey of 240 schools in England (130 primary and 110 secondary) found that around 62% had developed some form of peer support system.[245] These systems were perceived as being beneficial in promoting emotional health and well-being in the schools (Houlston et al. 2011). Cowie et al. (2008) demonstrated that peer support systems have the capacity to improve pupils' sense of feeling safe from aggression and bullying at school.[246] The research (a survey of 931 pupils) was carried out in four secondary schools, each with a well-organised pastoral care system and an active anti-bullying policy. Two schools that had already developed a peer support system were matched with two schools that had yet to commence their peer support training. Those students who were aware of their school's peer support system reported feeling significantly safer at school and were more likely to feel able to talk about negative things that had happened to them than similar students in the control schools. In other words, for those students, the observation or experience of the helpfulness of peer support had led them to view sharing of worries and anxieties as a positive coping strategy.

Research studies consistently find that peer supporters benefit from their training and practice, reporting enhanced feelings of confidence in their capacity to communicate

and to offer effective help.[247] They also report a sense of doing something useful for their school community and pride in the value of their peer supporting role. Houlston et al. (2011) has documented measurable gains in self-esteem for peer supporters.[248]

Those who make use of the peer support systems mainly report that it is helpful to them and that they would recommend it to fellow students who are experiencing interpersonal difficulties, such as being bullied, although a minority report that they did not find it helpful.[249] The reasons given by satisfied users typically refer to the helpfulness of having someone who listens and of being able to explore a range of coping strategies with an understanding peer.[250]

With regard to the school ethos, most of the research is qualitative and largely indicates satisfaction with the systems and a perception that the school climate improves following the introduction of a peer support system.[251] However, the evidence also indicates that a proportion of pupils remain sceptical about the impact of peer support on the ethos of the school and about its power to reduce rates of bullying and increase pupil perceptions of safety. By secondary school stage, positive perceptions of improvements in school ethos tend to decline with the age of the students.[252] In situations where the system is not well-advertised throughout the school, Cowie et al. (2008) found that pupils in their control group (schools with no system of peer support) reported feeling safer than did pupils in the schools with peer support.[253] The positive effects were only felt by those who were aware that their school had a peer support system in place. In their international review of peer support research, Cowie and Smith (2010) concluded that peer support systems that are widely promoted in the school are generally viewed in a positive way.[254] The head teacher and the staff who run the schemes play a substantial part in integrating peer support systems into the wider school policies on children's emotional health and well-being.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, there is some evidence that peer support can be an effective means to enhance children and young people's social relationships and the emotional climate of schools. It provides a structure within which children and young people can develop strategies for addressing real life issues in their school communities. There is a growing body of evidence to indicate that school bullying happens in social contexts in which other pupils adopt a range of participant roles, some of which facilitate bullying behaviour and some of which challenge it or provide support for victims.

If we fail to understand the complexity of peer group relationships and the dynamics of the social settings where bullying flourishes, then interventions will remain largely ineffective. Initiatives that involve young people themselves have much more potential to address the problem of bullying. Dialogue is essential here to challenge the inaction of bystanders. Young people in focus groups in the study by Purdy and York (2016) reported that often the issue of cyberbullying was "a closed door subject" and they also admitted that during an episode of bullying it is often easier to "go with the crowd" since they are afraid that the bullies will turn on them.[255] In contrast to such feelings of hopelessness, Salmivalli's research[256] shows consistently that there is a proportion of young people who wish to take positive

action against bullying. So key elements in the process of developing interventions to address bullying must be an understanding of the ethos of the particular school (and even the surrounding community) and a willingness to develop interventions in consultation with all members of the school community, including the children and young people themselves.

The mental health difficulties experienced by both victims and bullies are well-documented,[257] so there must also be a willingness to provide therapeutic support for the individuals most affected by bullying. Further, Kyriacou and Zuin (2016) point to the process of moral disengagement that characterises bystanders' apathy in the face of an episode of bullying:[258] bystanders who do nothing or who actively rejoice in the victim's humiliation and distress demonstrate that they have become desensitised to pro-social values and seem to have suppressed feelings of empathy towards the bullied peer.

The success or otherwise of interventions to prevent bullying depends on the extent to which pupils respect the values of their school and have regular opportunities to discuss why bullying happens, what motivates people to engage in it and why bystanders find it amusing to witness the humiliation and distress of a peer. It is essential for schools to teach and demonstrate pro-social values right across the curriculum with a strong specific emphasis on considering why and where young people become morally disengaged from others.[259] In view of the continuities of bullying across time, it is essential to take action to challenge cruel, antisocial behaviour when it appears so that it does not persist from childhood through adolescence into adulthood. Where better than school to help children develop strategies for challenging moral disengagement when they encounter it?

# Conclusions

*Janice Richardson*

It is in education that the great secret of human nature's perfection lies.

– Kant

Through the pages of this publication, we have looked more deeply into the multi-faceted challenges of bullying through the eyes – and the voices – of teachers and psychologists, medical researchers and parents, social media creators and users, and children themselves, including those with special educational needs that make them more vulnerable to bullying. All of these people, adults and youth alike, have put forward their perspectives and those of the children and young people they work with. They have invited us into their work place to share their practices and learn from the case studies they describe, and given us a deeper understanding of certain issues by sharing their experience and knowledge. Through all of these voices, regardless of country or background, several clear messages emerge both in terms of challenges and solutions. Our authors have taken us on a journey of discovery from the US to Australia and from Portugal to Denmark and Croatia, while maintaining a focus on Europe, where the added challenge of linguistic and cultural diversity complicates an already highly complex topic.

What has emerged is a very clear message that well-being in today's technologically rich world is almost impossible to achieve without:

- a solid understanding of our rights and responsibilities;
- a sense of respect for each other and for the ecosystem in which we live;
- the resilience to bounce back from adversity, misfortune or change.

These three qualities are cited by several authors as the essential "three Rs" of today. They could also be seen as the cornerstones of democracy, intercultural understanding and active citizenship, as well as an antidote to violence and radicalisation. All three qualities encompass a vast palette of knowledge, skills and awareness of the core values on which our society is based. Yet they do not often figure among the learning objectives of school and parents do not always know where to begin. The old saying "It takes a village to raise a child" is certainly truer than ever today, as it also takes a digital community to raise a digital citizen.

## Social and emotional learning – A sine qua non in today's society

The contributors to this publication raise a number of issues that society will rapidly need to come to grips with on the bumpy road ahead. Just as many parents are at last beginning to overcome the disenfranchising refrain that their lack of technological knowledge prevents them from playing an active role in the online life of their children, another unruly monster is rearing its head: virtual reality. In "Perspectives", we get a glimpse of the vast opportunities that VR can open up, but also the risks it may pose. What level of social and emotional skills will we require as we switch between two different realities where "what you see is not what you get"? What will be the impact on bullying and hate speech, and how can we counteract this?

Technology is also opening up exciting new possibilities that allow many children with special needs to interact more than ever before both in and out of school with their "mainstream" peers. Yet how can we protect them from being the butt of jokes that so easily morph into bullying and hate speech? And in a world where privacy has lost a lot of its former sense, and graphic extremism is becoming common fare, what education can we give our children to help them learn to embrace diversity and reject intolerance?

Over the past two years, the ENABLE team has investigated three main lines of action in an effort to better prepare young people to positively contribute to society: social and emotional skill development; peer support; and a holistic approach engaging the whole community, parents, teachers, young people and other stakeholders alike. It goes without saying that there is no easy fix to complex issues such as bullying, violence, radicalisation and the many other social pressures that children, teens and young adults face nowadays. We cannot sufficiently emphasise the importance of placing much greater focus at school and at home on ensuring that young people have the tools, skills and space to learn "to be" and "to live together". To provide these essential components, perhaps the key lies in communication and in putting down our own digital tools for a moment to listen more carefully to what young people are saying. Children need the support of parents and teachers if they are to succeed in piercing through their action-filled world of fast-moving sounds and images to begin shaping their own life rather than being shaped by trends and technology.

In the tech-based ecosystem in which we live today, we are all journalists, filming the most beautiful but also the most horrific scenes at the touch of a screen, and spreading our story to all and sundry in a stunted 140-character media release. The ripple effect of our thoughts and actions are grossly magnified by the speed and reach of our mobile devices. While professional journalists are guided by a code of practice, today's neo-journalists can only draw on the set of values inculcated in them by their family, school and peers. Hence, being empowered to manage emotions and social interactions, and being capable of empathy, can have a broad impact on society. If this is not integrated as a core subject at school, along with reading, writing and the other core subjects that enable young people to take their rightful place as active citizens, where else will such skills be developed and when? Social and cultural literacy is proving every bit as important as functional (reading,

writing and maths), digital and media, or informational literacy, if current world events serve as any indication!

## Give me a child until he is 7 … I will show you the man

Little mention has been made of very young children throughout this publication, mainly because ENABLE has, in its initial two-year phase, worked mainly with 11- to 14-year-olds. This is usually seen as a transitional period for children both physically and socially as they move to secondary school and heed more what they hear from peers than from their parents. In most countries this age is also referenced as that when most bullying occurs. Our second recommendation, following on from the urgency to integrate social and emotional skill development in the school curriculum, is to integrate this learning and the notion of values from the very first class at school, and even from pre-school onwards.

Aristotle is credited with having said "Give me a child until he is 7 and I will show you the man", an adage that was later taken up by Francis Xavier, becoming a central pillar of Jesuit education. Our neural connections multiply at a far greater rate in early childhood than at any other period of our life, and research on mirror neurons suggest that these may be the key to developing empathy and can only develop through "real life" interactions, primarily before age 5.[260] Where does this leave us in a period when parents proudly inform us that their children are online from the cradle onwards, almost certainly to the detriment of face-to-face interactions and "real" play?

Research is beginning to emerge, at least in Europe, suggesting the need to include social and emotional skill development in the curriculum from the earliest age. However, little guidance exists in this area for parents, or for pre-school or primary school teachers. Even fewer useful learning resources exist. We continue blithely giving our children apps and online games – the ideal babysitter for parents in many social situations – without really understanding the potential pedagogical and sociological implications. Our second recommendation concerns the need for more research, more information for parents and teachers, and more relevant pedagogical resources for young children to develop social and emotional skills. Indeed, if we were to develop and implement a version of ENABLE for those under 7 years old, perhaps we could solve a number of issues that appear in later childhood and early adolescence.

## Peer support – Paying more than lip service

One of the central threads of the ENABLE approach is the training of peer supporters and the development of "bright ideas" and campaign materials for them. We are only too aware that for most young people their chief learning source is their peers; and increasingly so as the era of face-to-face communication becomes buried under an era of WiFi, mobile phones and tablets. Yet this avenue has been insufficiently researched in education. Almost half a century ago, Ivan Illich suggested "deschooling society"[261] by setting up peer-matching educational webs that "heighten the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of his living into one of learning, sharing, and

caring". Without going so far as "deschooling", empowering young people to support their peers is proving a very strong element in bullying prevention.

We can learn a lot from young people if only we learn how to heed what they say. To use the words of a 14-year-old encountered some years ago, "You are always asking us our opinion, but you never tell us how you use our ideas … if you do use them!" And from another youth of a similar age: "We are your future, so shouldn't you be working with us to create the future we all want?"

The Diana Award has successfully led this strand within the ENABLE approach over the past two years. It has long been advocating peer-led activities and is producing particularly promising results, not only in combating bullying and hate speech but also in encouraging young people to embrace diversity and reject intolerance in all of its forms. Early findings from ENABLE nevertheless underline that the success of peer engagement depends very much on the strength of support provided by senior leadership in schools. It is also proving more difficult to involve boys than girls, especially when more "formal" peer support relating to social interactions and emotions is involved.

Peer support is also relevant for parents. Although only one or two chapters in this publication are dedicated to putting forward the perspective, practices and insights of parents, it goes without saying that many of the authors are speaking from the point of view of parents as well as experts. Moreover, one of the most frequently downloaded resources that has been created within ENABLE is the parent pack. Peer support among teachers has progressed considerably over recent years, but much less is being done in the realm of using peer support techniques with parents. According to a recent study by the European Social Network,[262] pre-school centres are in an ideal position to coach parents and bring parents into contact with each other and thus help to prevent bullying from occurring. However, here too we get the proverbial have/have not divide. In countries where the child-staff ratio is lower, for example in Scandinavian countries, pre-school staff are able to play an important role in tackling social and cultural inequalities. In other countries where the ratio is higher, there is simply no time to play this role.

Childhood is the moment when we set the scene for adulthood, and hence shape the environment and the social, economic and cultural conditions for all. Intolerance is not inborn, nor is it fully nurtured. Home, school, friends and media all play a major role in shaping the individual. The focus of this publication, and indeed of ENABLE, has been bullying, in part because we now know from longitudinal research that being involved in bullying during childhood can have a dramatic impact on health, income and well-being in later life too.[263] However, many of the practices and insights discussed can be applied to other issues such as violence, hate speech and radicalisation. The path from childhood to adulthood has always been strewn with complex challenges to which there are rarely easy solutions, and particularly today, when the whole world is within reach of a teenager's fingertips. Nevertheless, we can help young people safely and responsibly tread the path to adulthood by giving them every opportunity to develop sound social and emotional self-management skills from earliest childhood, and by encouraging them to support each other in "being" and "living together" well.

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– Raising resilient children and teens: www.psychologytoday.com/blog/raising-resilient-children-and-teens
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Reporting and incident management platforms (all accessed 22 November 2016):
– Cyberbully Hotline: www.cyberbullyhotline.com
– Safe2Tell: http://safe2tell.org
– StopBullies: www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQwfKAJHHIO
– STOPit: http://stopitcyberbully.com
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Bullying seems to be part of human nature and has been with us since ancient times, but that is no reason to accept it fatalistically as "natural" and, for children, part of growing up. Only in the 1970s was research first undertaken to explore the phenomenon and to attempt to understand why it takes place and its impact on individuals and societies. With the emergence of the internet and social media, bullying has taken a more sinister turn, becoming more relentless, constant and inescapable for victims.

This book aims to explain to both experts and the interested layperson what is known about bullying, its causes, effects and, crucially, how it can be reduced, in particular by fostering social and emotional skills in young people. Authors from more than a dozen countries have contributed to this publication, presenting widely differing perspectives, practice and insights on how they are tackling or think we should be tackling modern societal issues such as bullying and hate speech. While some chapters focus more specifically on case studies and what the research tells us, others look at issues related to bringing up and educating children for the world we live in. This publication also provides information on the work of the ENABLE network and aims to introduce readers to the psychologists and researchers, teachers, parents and social media innovators that have helped to shape it.

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