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# **What is this thing called bullying? Using sociocultural framing to interpret research on defining school bullying**

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# Overview

- Background to school bullying research
- Introduction to sociocultural perspectives
- Wenger's Communities of Practice
- Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System
- The problem of defining bullying
- Using sociocultural framing to explain research findings
- Conclusions and implications

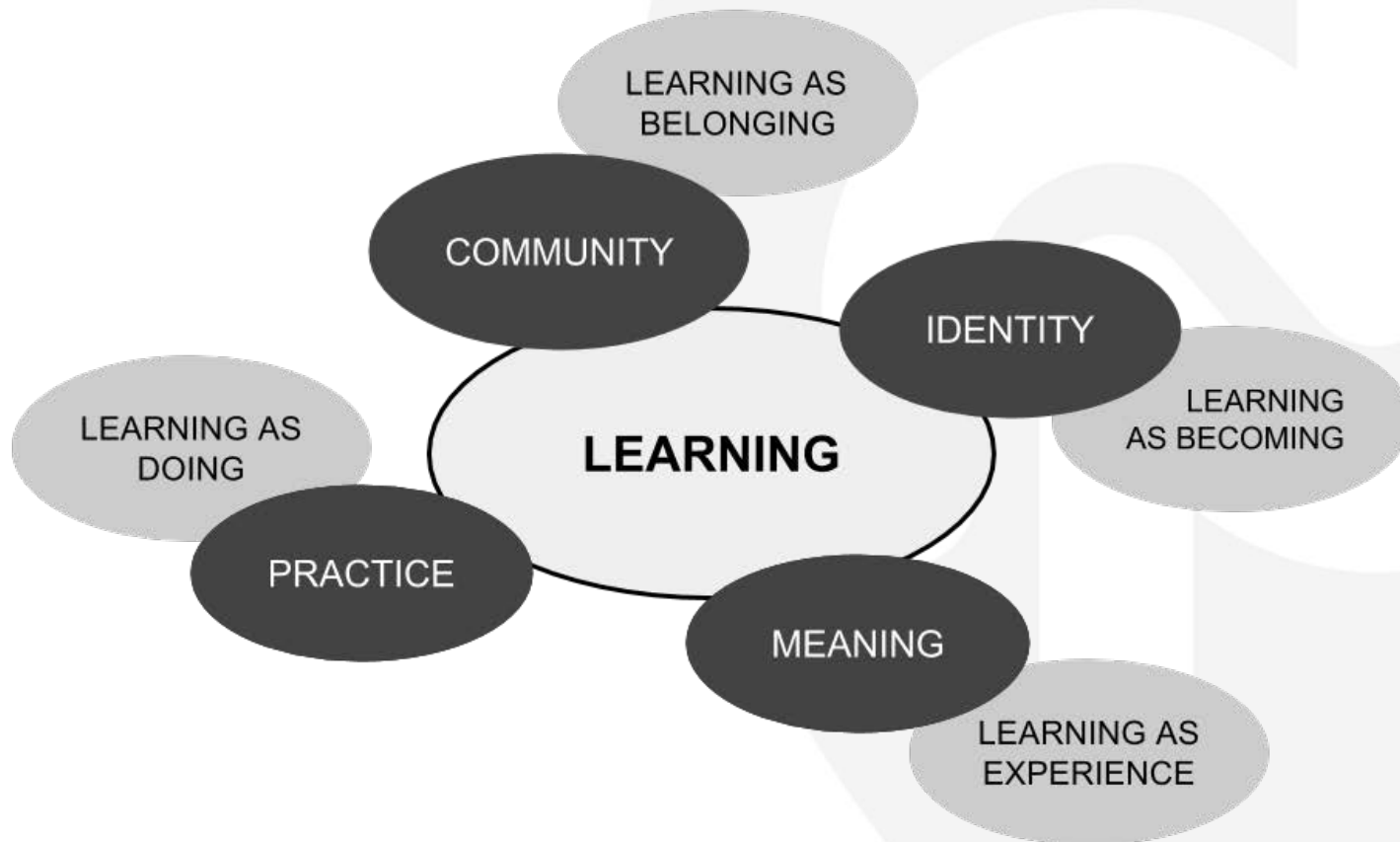
# Bullying in school

- The nature and extent of bullying in schools (Monks et al, 2009; Rigby & Smith, 2011)
- Short and long-term effects on mental health and well-being (Arseneault et al, 2010; Skrzypiec et al, 2012; Zwierzynska et al, 2013)
- Policy framework (DfE; 2013)
- Talk-based interventions common: Reporting; mediation; relationship skills (Thompson & Smith, 2011)
- Link between beliefs and intervention (Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier, 2008; Ellis & Shute, 2007; Yoon & Kerber 2003; Yoon, 2004)

# Sociocultural Perspectives

- Vygotsky (1978)
- Development as contextual
- Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice Framework
- Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System (1979)

# Communities of Practice



Adapted from Wenger, 1998, p5



# Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System

Image redacted - available from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/figures/1471-2458-8-223-1-1.jpg>

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# The problem of defining bullying

- Variety of meanings:
  - Conceptual elements
  - Behaviours
  - Bullying 'types'
- Pupils vs teachers (Boulton et al, 2002; Naylor et al, 2006; Maunder et al, 2010; Menesini et al, 2002)
- Age of pupils (Smith & Levan 1995; Smith et al 1999; 2002)
- School differences (Maunder et al, 2010)
- Contextual interpretations (Maunder & Tattersall, 2010)

*Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. (DfE, 2013)*



## How can this be explained?

- Differing interpretations between groups and contexts
- Negotiated meanings within communities
- Bullying as a practice
- Learning through experience (meaning)
- Multiple systems intersecting
- Interactions in the mesosystem

# Conclusions and implications

- Bullying is contextual
- Listening to pupil reports
- Talking about definitions
- Move from bully-victim dyad to contextual influences
- Importance of whole-school approaches

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