

*Coolabah, No.13, 2014, ISSN 1988-5946, Observatori: Centre d'Estudis Australians, Australian Studies Centre, Universitat de Barcelona*

## *The World of Bullying: An Overview and Reflexion*

**Gerard Martínez-Criado**

**Copyright©2014 Gerard Martínez-Criado. This text may be archived and redistributed both in electronic form and in hard copy, provided that the author and journal are properly cited and no fee is charged.**

**Abstract:** The issue of bullying is of growing concern in developed countries. Considerable effort has been carried out to understand the problem and implementation programs have been launched to deal with this issue. In this paper we aim to define the concept of bullying and to present some data in relation to causes of bullying which have been highlighted by different researchers around the world. We aim to shed some light on the question of how to fight against bullying. Our conclusions stress the difficulties in conceptualising and researching bullying derived from cultural/social factors and from factors that relate to adolescence as a transitional and vulnerable period in life.

**Keywords:** bullying environment, resisting, bullying, adolescence

### **1. Introduction**

There has been a considerable effort to understand and fight the phenomenon of bullying. The implementation of intervention programs has been a priority but there are still some questions that deserve to be discussed. The concept of bullying needs to be understood from the theoretical framework of social interaction and the many ways of relating within a social group. In this paper we focus on child and adolescent peer relationships but we also take into consideration adult society as a whole. Indeed an adult society with some underlying aggressive behaviours is a behavioural model against intervention programs targeting bullying (Farrington, 1991). For adolescents peer acceptance is crucial and they focus on being liked. Failure to be accepted could have negatives consequences for their psychosocial development.

This paper was originally conceived of as a comparison of international research contributions in the field of bullying, measuring coincidences and discordances in research outcomes. We discuss this research highlighting the importance of the social environment.

### **2. Studying Bullying**

Pioneering work on the topic of bullying was carried out in Scandinavia by Dan Olweus, who is considered the most important authority on bullying worldwide (Macklem, 2003). After the suicide of two young people in 1982, the Social Service specialist concluded that a longstanding situation of being bullied was the reason for their deaths. In February 1983, the first stage of his study started with the National Survey and 80.000 boys and girls in grades 2nd to 9th answered a questionnaire. With the Bullying Prevention Program, Olweus assumed the responsibility of Norway's National Campaign against Bullying. After a presentation of the statistics, the second stage of the study (The Janus Project) started, which tried to analyze behaviour problems, including bullying, and the connection between leaderships and the social structures in the classroom, with the aim to create a more positive atmosphere among students in schools (Olweus and Limber, 2003).

Research programs since then have followed the same model launched by Olweus, and therefore they have looked for data on the magnitude of the problem as a justification for the intervention plan. However, countries may place different degrees of attention to certain aspects of bullying than others. For example in Australia there is a tendency to focus on beliefs and attitudes linked to psychological health whereas in Canada there is more emphasis on promoting sociocultural change to eliminate violence at school.

## 2.1. Defining bullying

We are talking about an important issue that has generated a lot of research. We present here some information to define bullying which comes primarily from two frameworks. The definitions proposed highlight some underlying issues that are not fully apparent in the first instance.

“Bullying is the abusive treatment of a person by means of force or coercion. It is aggressive behaviour repeated over time, is intentionally harmful and occurs without provocation” (Pertersen, 2001). A governmental study adds other essential points for us: “Bullying is unwanted, takes place commonly among school aged people and involves a power imbalance” (Stopbullying, 2012).

We will comment the main features identified.

2.1.1. Bullying is considered *aggressive behaviour*. This notion includes many behaviours (fights, robbery, provocation, defiance, etc.) and targets (adults, facilities, furniture, etc.) The aim in this case is not only teasing or diminishing another person but acting in a deviant antisocial way. Some bullying behaviours could be harassment or assault. Although bullying behaviour can cross a legal line, it must not to be confused with overall criminal or illegal action.

2.1.2. This aggressive behaviour is *abusive* because it involves a real or perceived *power imbalance*. Children get their power from a physical advantage such as size and strength or from a social advantage such as a higher social status in the peer group. The social status comes by the acceptance (e.g., popular versus rejected), number of peer and friend groups (e.g. group of children bullying a solitary child), knowledge about another's vulnerability (e.g. obesity, learning problems, sexual orientation, family background) and/or social conditions (e.g. racial or cultural groups, sexual minorities, economic disadvantage, disability).

The potential bully has a higher social status in a peer group, which translates into acquiring a social strength not always easy to perceive. When the bully is older (e.g. a boy of a more advanced grade) bullying behaviours may be more easily identifiable, but most of these episodes happen among children within a similar age group. For diverse reasons it can be problematic to identify that bullying is occurring. For example, children are reluctant to report bullying and the adults in charge can mistake aggressive behaviour for rough play, or bullying for simple fun. The key is to determine whether the aggressor aims to hurt, control, enjoy, make fun or threaten the victim. This is not always evident to the adult.

2.1.3. There is no provocation in a bullying episode and it is unwanted behaviour. The aggression is not reactive. The victim does not apparently incite the aggressor. However, following the theory of processing information, the aggressor could perceive certain social situations or scenarios as provocative or threatening and respond consequently (Camodeca and Goossens, 2005). The terms “unprovoked” and “unwanted” are ambiguous in an aggressor-victim situation. It is unlikely that victims provoke a challenging situation in the first place. It is almost certain that it is “unwanted” behaviour for the victim and in most cases the aggressor does want to hurt the victim.

Nevertheless, we would like to highlight that it is possible to try and explain the aggressor-victim relationship adopting a psycho-clinical approach. The bully act could be considered *compulsive* behaviour, that is, the bully acts irrationally doing something that he or she really does not want to do.

2.1.4. Bullying is *potentially repetitive*. Aggressor and victim maintain a dysfunctional relationship within the peer group. People not belonging to the group cannot be aware of this maladaptive situation. The social context consolidates a way of relating to each other and some specific roles of behaviour. A bully has more power than the children they victimize with each repeated incident.

Having identified the main features of bullying, it can be argued that bullying involves a destructive pattern of relating to one another (Craig and Pepler, 2007; Lamb, Pepler and Craig, 2009). Bullies learn to use power and aggression to control and distress others. Victims become increasingly powerless and unable to defend themselves.

Taking the bullying act as a social situation with at least two characters playing opposite roles, we can conclude in a nutshell that bullies are aggressive, have an aim (harmful intention) and they have the strength (excess of power). Victims do not provoke, are not aggressive, are weak and/or have a low social status.

As has been proposed, those who are bullied and also those who bully others may have serious subsequent problems (Campbell, 2005; Ladd and Sechler, 2013; Rigby, 2000; Stopbullying, 2012).

### 3. Research findings

What follows is an example of the information gathered over the last four decades in different countries. The research is presented with the aim of shedding light into the aggressor-victim relationship.

Research on victimization has found that both males and females who have been bullied can suffer from depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms (headaches, sleep or feed problems) and have interpersonal difficulties, higher school absenteeism and lower academic competence (Forero, McLellan, Rissel and Bauman, 1999). Victims are more likely to harm themselves (hurt themselves without intending to die), have high levels of suicidal thoughts and attempt suicide. Aggressors on the other hand tend to be involved in antisocial and problematic behaviour, delinquency, substance abuse, have a negative attitude towards school with higher dropout rates from school, hold beliefs supportive of violence that translate into behaviour such as bringing weapons to school, and have thoughts in relation to suicidal ideation or even attempt suicide.

3.1. *Types of bullying.* To control and harm victims, bullies use many forms or strategies against the victimized children. Some strategies are (i) *physical*: kicking, hitting, punching, shoving and spitting; (ii) *verbal*: gestural or written communication involving browbeating (intimidating) language such as teasing, ridicule, sarcasm, insults, threats (also gestural and verbal), name-calling, graffiti, notes or drawing; (iii) *social* or relational behaviour to harm the reputation and relationships of a targeted child, such as rumour-spreading, social isolation of peers (or exclusion), actions against their properties such as damage, hide, theft or destruction of other property; (iv) *cyberbullying* or bullying using technology (computer or mobile phone), posting embarrassing images online, calls, SMSs. Cyberbullying is intensively studied today, though the general concepts and behaviours common to bullying apply to this more modern way of victimization (Campbell, 2005; Limber, 2003; Mora-Merchan and Ortega-Ruiz, 2007).

Other times bullying is presented as two main types (Nansel, *et al.*, 2001). The first type is *direct bullying*, defined as an overt expression of power and can include physical and verbal aggression (insults, racial or sexual harassment, or threats). The second type is *indirect bullying* (or relational aggression), which is the covert manipulation of social relationships to hurt (gossiping, spreading rumours) or exclude the individual being victimized.

This division allows the differentiation of specific bullying behaviours at school apart from the more usual behaviours including verbal assault, teasing, ridiculing, sarcasm (Campbell, 2005; Slee and Rigby, 1993).

Table. 1. Percentage for Types of Bullying at school (Stopbullying, 2012)

---

Name Calling/Insults	80 %
Shoving/Hitting	39 %
Threats/Intimidation	38 %
Spreading Rumours	29 %
Cyberbullying	27 %
Involving friends/peers	24 %

Homophobic comments	20 %
Fighting	16 %
Sexual comments	16 %
Leaving out	14 %
Cell phone messages	13 %
Racist comments	11 %
Damaging property	9 %
Stealing	6 %
Weapon Related	4 %
N/A	4%

---

It is worth mentioning that for a variety of reasons, the statistics published are not always consistent across research.

3.2. *People implicated.* If we focus on age, bullying increases during elementary grades, peaks in early adolescence, and decreases somewhat in high school grades. Anonymous self-report surveys of children and youth indicate that the likelihood that they will be bullied decreases steadily through middle school and high school. From 11-12 to 14-15 years old is the age range when bullying can occur. In general statistics show a greater number of victims than aggressors.

If we focus on *gender*, there are not vast differences in the percentages of boys and girls who are bullied. A recent analysis of 82 studies found that boys bully a proportion of 1.7% more than girls (Lipsett, 1998; National Crime Victimization Survey, 2009; Stopbullying, 2012). There are similarities and differences in the types of bullying that boys and girls experience: Both genders show a similar engagement in verbal bullying, threats and damage of victim propriety but boys use more physical strength and girls more rumour-spreading, exclusion and cyberbullying (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2009). Using the bigger categorization (above exposed), direct bullying (threats, physical harm, rejection, name-calling and taking of personal belongings) happens more among boys, while indirect bullying (gossips, spreading rumours, excluding others) happens more among girls.

It is considered that 2/3 of all students witness bullying. Additional statistics confirm that over 70% of peers are aware of bullying taking place. According to Stopbullying (2012) data, bullying acts are witnessed by few people; 44% of the time and many people 27% of the time. These witnesses (who are sometimes referred to as "bystanders") may play a variety of roles as well. They may support the bullying that they observe through laughter or smiles, or body language; others may watch but feel disengaged; they may dislike the bullying that they observe but feel reluctant to take action against it; they may also try to help in some way.

In a study by Boulton and Underwood (1992), middle-school students responded to the question, "What do you do when you see a child of your age being bullied?", in the following manner: 49% said they tried to help in some way; 29% said they did nothing, but thought that they should try to help, and 22% said they would not help because it was none of their business.

In a more recent study, Camorera and Goossens (2005), inform about the percentage of bystanders in acts of bullying but without distinguishing between outsider and

defender. The percentages are as follow: bully (9.3%); victim (15.5%); follower (16.8%); outsider or defender (21.2%); and not involved (14.2%).

The outsider and uninvolved person are important role figures in maintaining bullying in school. It seems reasonable, therefore to assume that bullying may perhaps cease to exist without audience. Participants as an audience may not become involved because they are afraid of becoming the next victim. They often feel powerless and show a loss of self-respect and self-confidence, so even approximately 1 out of 3 bystanders could suffer some negative consequences such as personality problems due to being immersed in a bullying environment. (Harris and Petrie, 2002; cit.Campbell 2005).

3.3. *Prevalence.* The review of data shows that face-to-face bullying in school is a frequent experience.

Table. 2. Percentage for prevalence (StopABully, 2012)

17%	<i>at least once</i>
50%	<i>lasting only one week</i>
40%	<i>at some time during their schooling</i>
15% -17%	<i>longer term (bullying of 6 months or more)</i>
20%	<i>of high school students aged 14-18 years old at least once in the previous 12 months</i>
28%	<i>of high school students aged 12-18 years old had been bullied at school during one year (the 2008/2009 school year)</i>

The percentages for permanency or duration of bullying throughout time are the following: for years (11%); for months (41%); for weeks or days (18%); and only once (12%) (StopABully, 2012):

Data about prevalence is difficult to interpret due to lack of consistency across studies. Sometimes they refer to participants: bully, victim or bully-victim. These are the main figures, whereas other participants do not usually score in statistics of prevalence. Nevertheless, other variables such as definition of bullying, age of participants, research questions raised and time frame influence the data on prevalence obtained. It is very important to note if the study is based upon short-term estimation of the frequency (during a week or a month) rather than its chronicity (across a grade, levels or years) (Juvonen and Graham, 2001). The estimation of the duration of bullying practices throughout time is also important.

These issues are vital because study results may not inform in detail about age, or time span, or type of behaviours and consequently can lead to having a rough and biased picture of the bullying phenomenon. Therefore referring to time (last term, last month, and last days or weeks); and frequency of bullying (one or twice, more than twice, sometimes or repeatedly) is as important as the role figures (bully, victim, both, or others implicated in different ways).

An observation of the results presented in various studies allows the identification of two bullying contexts. In the first context, there are usually more victims than bullies who pass unnoticed (DeVoe, Bauer and Hill, 2011; National day of action against Bullying and Violence, 2012; Rigby and Slee, 1991; Slee and Rigby, 1993; Smith, 1997). In the second context, there are more bullies than victims (Nansel *et al.*, 2001).

Harassment situations like this should be easily detected by the adult and should not continue, however the influence of diverse cultural environments could affect the identification of bullying behaviours in this second context, which may lead to differences in bullying prevalence.

3.4 *Where does Bullying Occur?* Data from Great Britain (The National Survey, 2006) show that these acts happen in the playground (30%); classroom (25%); corridors (21%); lunch queue (14%); or toilets (7%), These scenarios are ‘bully social contexts’ within which there are many players (victims, bullies, bully-victims and other students with various attitudes and roles, besides teachers and/or other adults in charge). The main find in other geographical areas such as Europe, America, or Australia is that bullying happens basically outside the classroom.

Japanese research on bullying started at the same time as the Scandinavian pioneering research, but the results obtained are not the same. Olweus (1983) argued: “it is the younger and weaker students who reported being most exposed” and “a considerable part of the bullying was carried out by older students”. However Japanese researchers have their own diverging views based on *where* bullying occurs and *who* the bully is.

Table 3. Where did you get bullied at school? (Morita 2001)

	Classroom	corridors	playground	gymnasium	somewhere
Japan	76.4	30.3	12.6	9.9	9.1
Great Britain	52.6	30.0	56.2	4.0	12.7
Holland	52.9	39.8	41.5	18.1	16.8
Norway	37.9	26.5	74.1	17.0	11.6

Data from Japan shows that both older and younger students are bullied by contemporaries in a shared classroom. As a consequence, reinforcing adult supervision during break periods would not be as important as Olweus considers. Taki (2001) also adds that there are differences even among European countries. Taki suggests that bullying in the West is more widely-spread and more physical than that in Japan. He looks at the relation among many different concepts of bullying such as aggressive behaviour (which includes differences in bullying behaviour for males and females), violence and Japanese bullying (*Ijime*) that differ from bullying behaviours in the west.

According to their results, “*Ijime* can happen at any time, at any school and among any children”. *Ijime* does not consist of specific behaviours carried out perhaps by children with problematic backgrounds. Typical *Ijime* such as isolating, ignoring, calling names occurs constantly. Only one in seven Japanese children have never been bullied by others - for three years; only one in four have never been bullied for three years, and one in two children have joined in bullying others at least once a year (N.I.E.R., 2001).

Research from Japan, incorporates the cultural variable as essential in the study of bullying.

3.5. *Reasons to bully or to be bullied.* At the top of this section, we have mentioned some consequences or symptoms in victims and aggressors. The causes of bullying are unclear. It might be interesting to look at what young children have said about bullying

(Bullyingnoway, 2012): *it's fun, it makes the bully popular or cool, a bully feels more powerful or important, a bully is trying to fit in with a group, it is a fearful reaction of other children's differences, it comes from jealousy, unhappiness and, finally, it is an imitation or has occurred previously.* These responses do not appear to reflect bullying as a non-desirable behaviour by children instead they tap into what some children could consider desirable.

Researchers (Lippset, 1998) consider that bullying is linked to physical appearance (44%); student's language difficulties (41%), clothes worn (41%), skin colour (31%); race (29%) or religion (27%).

The three sets of influence are physical, psychological and social. Children are often teased for deviant external characteristics (obesity, wearing glasses, speech problems, clumsiness, and obvious physical disabilities). Personal attributes and/or external characteristics are a cause of bullying at school (Olweus, 1978). Children with special health needs and children with chronic behavioural, emotional, or developmental problems and/or with problematic relationships with peers and conflictive familiar experiences have been seen as targets of bullying. However, it is still unclear if these symptoms are antecedents or consequences of bullying. Thus the direction of causality may be both ways, for example such features may cause low self-esteem in the victim leading to a behaviour that invites abuse. For some, physical weakness is less important, although physical strength gives confidence. From this point of view, influential factors in bullying are psychosocial aspects (self-concept, social skills, or reaction to teasing).

We can conclude that there is not a single cause or factor that can explain bullying. It results from a complex interaction between individuals (health, physical, psychological, social attributes) and their broader social environment, including families (parental conflict, education, abuse) peers (acceptation, participation in group dynamics), school (climate, implication), and community (safe neighbourhoods, responses to bullying), besides the pointed cultural issues. Nevertheless, it is essential to be aware of the risk profiles of becoming a bully or a victim. Besides those commented, some groups of youth are at a particularly high risk of being bullied (socially isolated youth and the LGBT collective -lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered- Cf. Stopbullying, 2012).

3.6. *How to fight against bullying?* Society is combating bullying through programs focusing on one or more of the following areas: helping victims, raising awareness among bystanders to not perpetuate the situation, ensuring that teachers, parents and other adults in charge are aware of the problem, boosting whole school policies and beyond the school, being aware of the use of technology and encouraging children to talk about any cyber bullying situation. This last point deserves special attention.

Children and youth tend not to report bullying behaviour, especially to adults. Most studies suggest that 50 to 75% of children and youth who have been bullied have not told an adult at school. This means that only one in three children talk to adults about their problem. Some may have told their parents, but many remain silent. Rigby (1997) provides us with the following data: victims inform about being bullied to siblings/friends (52%); parent/guardian (28%); teacher (24%); and principal/counsellor (12%). The likelihood that a child will tell someone about their

bullying experiences varies by age and gender. Older youth and boys are less likely than younger children and girls to report that they have been bullied.

Why children and youth are reluctant to report being bullied? Some reasons given were: concern about retaliation; gender stereotypes and lack of confidence in adults' actions. Boys may feel pressure to try to deal with bullying on their own so as not to appear as 'weak', or vulnerable.

Different reasons have been pointed out to understand why young people do not tell adults (Petersen and Rigby, 1999). For example, they feel too humiliated and embarrassed and think that either their report will not be believed or that the incident will be trivialised by adults, or that they will be made to feel responsible for being bullied. They also do not have much faith that adults can solve the problem and fear that adults might make it worse. Older students are less likely to perceive that adults can be helpful in stopping bullying. As a result, it is critical that adults respond quickly, effectively, and sensitively when bullying is reported to them and that they are vigilant to possible bullying that is not reported, particularly among older youth and boys.

*3.7. Intervention programs.* Although it is widely recognized that bullying in schools has long term negative consequences, many schools respond to incidents as they arise rather than taking a systematic approach. When this is the case, physical bullying may be addressed but indirect bullying may remain (Soutter and McKenzie, 2000). Intervention programs are crucial for preventing bullying behaviours.

The final aim of research on bullying is intervention (Craig and Pepler, 2007; Olweus, 1993; Petersen and Rigby, 1999). It is often mentioned that such behaviour has similar causes and consequently similar interventions would be effective. But social and cultural differences should be taken into consideration. Three main points have been included in intervention plans in Western countries: (i) increasing the awareness of bullying, (ii) school policies, and (iii) supervision. These are essential points but the main difficulty lies in implementing successful intervention programs for each culture, community or individual school.

One of the first steps in any prevention program is to ensure that people are aware of the problem. A difficulty with preventing bullying in schools has been (and in some cases still is) that schools deny any incidence of bullying. Teachers, parents and students need to be made aware of bullying, what bullying is, the methods used and the real consequences of severe and continuous bullying.

The school must develop a policy of intervention itself depending on specific circumstances. It is known that adult supervision in the playground decreases the incidence of face-to-face bullying. Schools that increase the number of adults who are watchful in the playground and who intervene on any suspicion of bullying reduce the incidents of bullying in their school. However, parents and other social agents need to be involved when facing bullying behaviours. In addition, the whole policy adopted at school must be tested regularly (Limber and Small, 2003).

As we know, supervision in the playground or other spaces where bullying can occur could not be so important. But targeting bullying based on a specific cultural and social environment is also crucial. Taki (2001) has developed a program that is best suited to Japanese culture. The Japanese Peer Support Program (JPSP) is inspired by the

Japanese tradition of group work activity and consists of two parts. The first part is basic social-skill training. The second one involves school activities for older children to help others, which is considered a main process to develop social ability. Although there are many styles of *peer support* in the world, the JPSP is more available in Asian countries with a tradition of collectivism rather than an individualistic tradition more prevalent in European or Western countries.

Researchers from Canada (Craig and Pepler, 2007; StopABully, 2012) have provided one of the more ambitious intervention proposals. They focus on the environment where behaviour happens. The most important factors are the scenario (institutions, situations, social beliefs and costumes) and the players (persons playing roles). The programme entitled "Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence" (Prevnet, 2012) aims to provide tools to fight against bullying. It is addressed to all adults who interact with children and youth where they live, work, and play. Adults are responsible for creating positive environments that promote children's capacity and competencies for healthy relationships. Craig and Pepler (2007) argue that the channels that researchers have used for disseminating this intervention programme have been inadequate for such a broad purpose and a novelty of work. The systemic perspective focuses on the social dynamics surrounding bullying. Research has highlighted the central role of peers in bullying. The systemic perspective not only highlights the need to reshape the behaviours and attitudes of peers, but also sheds light on the need for change among adults, such as teachers and parents, who are essential in supporting children involved in bullying and/or victimization.

#### **4. Conclusions**

To conclude we want to highlight and discuss some of the methodological and conceptual points previously mentioned.

A) Studies sponsored by major multinational organizations worldwide bring results that are sometimes surprising and somewhat inconsistent with other studies. We think that it is possible that depending on the countries, cultures, or social settings/environments, people may have different ideas about bullying which will be reflected in both qualitative and quantitative data obtained. Cross-cultural comparison studies must therefore comply with clearly defined contexts in which the results are meaningful and applicable for intervention. When asked about a bullying episode, young adults and children from different cultural and social backgrounds may have a different view among themselves and future studies should take this into consideration addressing methodological issues to account for misunderstanding or ambiguity in instruments/measures employed.

B) When researching bullying we focus on the transition period from childhood to adolescence (ages under observation are usually 8-9 to 16-17). Pre-teenagers have an almost adult capacity to think in a rational-logical way. In some ways they are like adults but their responsibilities are less and they do not behave in the same way as an independent adult, although children and adolescents also imitate adult society.

Pre-teenagers are not only in a stage of intellectual changes. It is well-known that adolescents are looking for a personality, an identity. They exhibit deep and passionate positive emotions such as love, altruism or friendliness and cooperation but they also

exhibit negative emotions such as rage, envy or hate that can lead to bullying others. One interesting research question to address is how far the victim is hated by the bully or the bystander group (when they think “he/she can rot”); or plays the role of a scapegoat (which explains group behaviour in ancestral societies).

C) Likely, adolescents form a society not so different from the adult one at least in some aspects. In adult society there are myths about bullying that are perpetuated in school. For example, some people hold that bullying is a normal part of growing up (a ‘right of passage’) or that it is just teasing and play, or that bullying is in fact ‘character-building’. Limber and Small (2003) remind us that historically bullying has not been seen as a problem that needed attention, but rather has been accepted as a fundamental and normal part of childhood. Moreover many adults think that whatever happens within a group of children cannot be very serious.

Competitive behaviour (win at all costs) and contempt of a loser are current practices in adult society. Most children and youngsters have negative feelings about bullying and feel sympathy for bullied peers. Almost all primary children said they felt sorry for students who are bullied, but children at middle and high school expressed less sympathy for bullied students (Olweus and Limber, 2010). As we know, the acceptance of violent behaviour is not foreign to our society (adult and children society).

As part of the conclusion we would like to highlight a series of studies carried out in Australia that looked into engagement in bullying aggression and attitudes toward victims (Rigby, 1997; Rigby and Slee, 1991; Slee and Rigby 1993). They found that girls tended to be more supportive but as age increased, attitudes toward victims became slightly but significantly less supportive. A last factor analysis yielded three factors that play a role in bullying situations: a) tendency to despise the victims of bullies; b) general admiration for school bullies; and c) avowed support for intervention to assist the victim.

In sum, intensified efforts are needed to understand how children and adolescents think, behave and feel in front of bullying behaviours, and to explore to what extent such antisocial attitudes, feelings and behaviours are a replica of our adult society. Bearing in mind different conceptualizations and attitudes towards bullying depending on the cultural and social environment is also a key factor to advance future research into bullying.

### **Works cited**

- Boulton, M. J. and Underwood, K. (1992). Bully/victim problems among middle school children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology* (62), 73–87.
- Bullyingnoway (2012). *National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence*, 16th March. (Cf. [www.bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)).
- Campbell, M. A. (2005). Cyber bullying: An old problem in a new guise? *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling* 15 (1), 68-76.
- Camodeca, M. & Goossens, F.A. (2005). Aggression, Social cognitions, anger and sadness in bullies and victims. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46 (2), 186–197.

- Craig, W.M. & Pepler, D.J. (2007). Understanding Bullying: From Research to Practice. *Canadian Psychology*, 48 (2), 86-93.
- DeVoe, J. F., Bauer, L. & Hill, M. R. (2011). Student Victimization in U.S. Schools. *School Crime Supplement. National Crime Victimization Survey 2009*. U.S. Dept. of Education.
- Forero,R., McLellan,L., Rissel, C. & Bauman, A. (1999). Bullying behaviour and psychosocial health among school students in New South Wales. *Australia: cross sectional survey. BMJ* 319:344
- Farrington, D.P. (1991). Childhood aggression and adult violence: Early precursors and later-life outcomes. In D. J. Pepler & K. H. Rubin (Eds.). *The Development and Treatment of Childhood Aggression*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 5-29.
- Juvonen, J., & Graham, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Peer harassment in school: The plight of the vulnerable and victimized*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Ladd, G. W. & Sechler, C. M. (2013). Young Children's Peer Relations and Social Competence. In O. N. Sarancho & B. Spodek (Ed.) *Handbook of Research on the Education of Young Children*. New York: Ruledge (33-66)
- Lamb, J., Pepler, D. J. & Craig, W. (2009). Approach to bullying and victimization. *Canadian Family Physician*, 55, 356-360.
- Limber, S. P. (2003). Efforts to address bullying in U.S. Schools. *Journal of Health Education*, 34, 23-29.
- Limber, S. P. & Small, M. A. (2003). State laws and policies to address bullying in schools. *School Psychology Review*, 32, 445-455.
- Lipsett, A. (1998). A New British Council Survey. *Education Guardian*. 29/2/1998.
- Macklem, G. L. (2003). *Bullying and Teasing: Social Power in Children's Groups*. San Francisco: Springer.
- Mora-Merchán, J. A. & Ortega-Ruiz,R. (2007). Las nuevas formas de bullying y violencia escolar. In R. Ortega, J. A. Mora-Merchan & T. H. Jäger, (Eds.) *Actuando contra el bullying y la violencia escolar. El papel de los medios de comunicación, las autoridades locales y de Internet*. Landau: Verlag Empi. Pedag. (Spanish version on line).
- Morita, Y. (2001). *The Comparative Study on Bullying in four countries (Ijime no Kokusai Hikaku Kenkyu)*. Tokyo: Kaneko Shobo.
- Nansel, T. R.; Overpeck, M.; Pillar. S.; Ruan, W. J.; Simons-Morton, B.; & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying Behaviors Among us Youth. Prevalence and Association with Psychosocial Adjustment. *JAMA*, 285(16), 2094-2100.
- National Crime Victimization Survey (2009). (Cf [www.icpsr.umich.edu](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu)).
- National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence (2012). (Cf. [www.bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)) .
- N.I.E.R (2001). *The Attempt for Guidance and Counselling with Stress Check List*. Tokyo: The National Institute for Educational Policy Research of Japan.
- Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in the schools: Bullies and whipping boys*, Washington: Hemisphere Publ.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at School: What we know and what we can do*. Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Olweus, D & Limber, S. P. (2003). The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: Implementation and Evaluation over Two Decades. In S. R. Jimerson, S. M.. Swearer, & D. L. Espelage (Ed.). *The International Handbook of School Bullying*. New York: Routledge.
- Petersen, L. (2001). Anti-bullying programs. Avoiding bullying. *Promoting well being, AGCA Conference Proceedings*. Brisbane.

- Petersen, L. & Rigby, K. (1999). An evaluation of an anti-bullying intervention in Toronto schools. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 13*, 95-110.
- PREVNET (2012). *Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence* (Cf. www.prevnet.ca).
- Rigby, K. (1997). *Bullying in Schools: And What to Do About It*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publ.
- Rigby, K. (2000). Effects of peer victimization in schools and perceived social support on adolescent well-being. *Journal of Adolescence, 23* (1), 57-68.
- Rigby, K & Slee, P. H. (1991). Bullying among Australian School Children: Reported Behavior and Attitudes toward Victims. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 131* (5), 615-627.
- Slee, P. T. & Rigby, K. (1993). Dimensions of interpersonal relation among Australian children and implications for psychological well-being. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 133* (1), 33-42.
- Smith P. K. (1997). Bullying in Schools: The UK Experience and the Sheffield Anti-bullying Project. *Irish Journal of Psychology, 18*, 191-201.
- Soutter, A. & McKenzie, M. (2000). The use and effects of anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies in Australian schools. *School Psychology International, 21* (1), 96-105.
- StopABully (2012). *Canada's Anti-Bullying Reporting Program*. (Cf. www.stopabully.ca).
- Stopbullying (2012). *U.S. Department of Health & Human Services*. (Cf. www.stopbullying.gov).
- Taki, M. (2001). Japanese School Bullying: Ijime. A survey analysis and an intervention program in school. Understanding and Preventing Bullying. An International Perspective. *Personal communication*. Queen's University, Canada. 19<sup>th</sup> October.
- The National Survey (2006). (Cf. www.bullying.co.uk).

**Gerard Martinez-Criado** has a PhD in Psychology. He has taught developmental psychology at the University of Barcelona since the nineteen eighties and has researched on development and education. His approach is ecological, considering the situational and cultural variables that influence the development and behaviour. For years he has studied children's games and peer group relationships. For the last ten years he has coordinated the Group for Research in Child and Adolescents (GRIA) that has studied emotional and sexual practices of young people and, especially, antisocial behaviour in adolescence. He has published books for teaching and research mainly in Catalan and Spanish.