

Institution: BRUNEL UNIVERSITY (H0113)
Unit of Assessment: 25 – Education
Title of case study: Anti-Bullying: Promoting Inclusion in Schools
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Combatting bullying in schools, and more especially the bullying of minority groups, is a priority both nationally and internationally. Prof Rivers’ research on homophobic bullying and bystander wellbeing has directly influenced the development of school-based intervention programmes, teacher education, and government policy in the US, Australia, Canada, and UK. It has been cited widely by policy makers internationally and has been used as evidence of the need to develop and promote anti-bullying initiatives.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Prof Rivers’ current research builds upon 20 years of applied work in the field of bullying behaviour and anti-bullying interventions. His on-going research on homophobic bullying and LGBT pupil wellbeing continues to lead the field in terms of methodological rigour and incorporates approaches that include surveys, quasi-experimental methods [case-control studies], cohort and longitudinal data collection techniques as well as qualitative data analysis. The outcomes from this research have informed policy and interventions in the US, Australia and Canada, national union initiatives in the UK including those developed by the NUT, NASUWT and UNISON, and they have supported international anti-homophobia campaigns such as ‘It Gets Better’.</p> <p>Since his arrival at Brunel in 2008, working collaboratively with researchers from the UK (Nathalie Noret, York St John University) and the US (Paul Poteat, Boston College; Joseph Robinson and Dorothy Espelage, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), Rivers has published a series of applied studies that have had a significant impact upon educational and social debates internationally. This work has led the field in terms of our understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development and nature of text and email bullying among UK school pupils (Rivers & Noret, 2010); • The prevalence of homophobic bullying within the English school population (Rivers, 2011); • The mental health and wellbeing of pupils who witness bullying (Rivers et al., 2009; Rivers & Noret, 2013); • The developmental and school experiences of young people who identify as being same-sex attracted when compared to a matched sample of peers who identified as opposite-sex attracted (Rivers & Noret, 2008); • Developmental trends in bullying and emotional distress among LGB and heterosexual youth (Robinson, Espelage & Rivers, 2013). <p>Rivers’ research on the wellbeing of bystanders has attracted significant international attention as it challenges the early work conducted in Finland, and more traditional studies of bystander behaviour from social psychology. His 2009 article published in <i>School Psychology Quarterly</i> was the very first to explore the interactive effects of own and others’ experiences of bullying on mental health and has been cited by policy leaders in the US [see Sources 1 and 2]. It has demonstrated that bullying is a whole-school phenomenon and, at secondary school level in particular, more than 60% of pupils regularly witness bullying taking place and are affected by it - exhibiting symptoms associated with depression, anxiety, potential suicide ideation, drug and alcohol abuse. His study of the interaction of helplessness and suicide ideation among bystanders was published in an issue (S. 1) of the <i>Journal of Adolescent Health</i> (Rivers & Noret, 2013) sponsored by the US Department of Education and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).</p> <p>His most recent work on homophobic bullying incorporates longitudinal data collected on behalf of the UK Department for Education. The resultant article (published in <i>Pediatrics</i>) is the first to demonstrate developmental trends in experiences of peer victimisation and emotional distress among lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) and heterosexual young people, and, notably, that it does</p>

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get better for LGBT youth.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Rivers, I. (2011). *Homophobic bullying: Research and theoretical perspectives*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Rivers, I., & Noret, N. (2008). Well-being among same-sex and opposite sex attracted youth at school. *School Psychology Review*, 37(2), 174-187.
<http://www.nasponline.org/publications/spr/index.aspx?vol=37&issue=2>

Rivers, I. & Noret, N. (2010). 'I h 8 u': Findings from a five-year study of text and e-mail bullying. *British Educational Research Journal*, 36(4), 643-671.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411920903071918>

Rivers, I. & Noret, N. (2013). Potential suicide ideation and its association with observing bullying at school. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53 (S. 1), S32-S36.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.10.279>

Rivers, I., Poteat, V.P., Noret, N., & Ashurst, N. (2009). Observing bullying at school: The mental health implications of witness status. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 24(4), 211-223.
<http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/handle/2438/3990>

Robinson, J.P., Espelage, D.L. & **Rivers, I.** (2013). Developmental trends in peer victimization and emotional distress in LGBT and heterosexual youth. *Pediatrics*, 131(3), 423-430.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2012-2595>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Since 2008, Prof Rivers has led developments in applied bullying research, monitoring and intervention internationally. In March 2011, his work with Paul Poteat (Boston College) on challenging homophobic epithets was cited at the first ever White House conference on bullying attended by the President of the United States, the First Lady, the US Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services [see **Source 3**]. Subsequently, in the same year he served on two US Department of Education sponsored expert panels to advise on (i) the determination of a uniform definition of bullying behaviour to be incorporated into public health surveillance for 9th-12th grade students in US high schools (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System; YRBSS - **see Sources 4 and 5**) and (ii) understand better the relationship between bullying and suicide-related behaviours among American youth, supporting the CDC's strategic direction on suicide prevention at a national level. As part of the expert panel to develop a uniform definition of bullying, and provide items that represent constructs of bullying for the YRBSS (which is conducted in the majority of states in the US), together with co-panellists, he argued for a definition that includes single incidents that have the potential to be repeated. This represents a significant departure from existing definitions of bullying used in the majority of states, and challenges legislation introduced by some states that require a pattern of behaviour to be evidenced before the term 'bullying' can be used. This approach assists teachers in taking preventative action when 'bullying' behaviour is first identified. The short definition now used by the US Department of Education (stopbullying.gov) in promoting its national anti-bullying strategies is based upon that devised by the expert panel (**see Source 6**).

Rivers' work (conducted in the UK) on bystander wellbeing continues to build momentum and has led to significant media interest worldwide. This research now informs part of the US Government's federal education priorities for creating safe schools (**see Source 7**) and has been showcased by members of the current administration in promoting 'the Washington Agenda'. For example, on 2 June, 2011, his work was incorporated into a presentation entitled 'Understanding Bullying' by Kevin Jennings (Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director of the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, US Department of Education) to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) (**see Source 1**). Subsequently, it was cited by the US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, in a speech he gave at the 2nd Annual Federal Partners' Summit on Bullying in Washington, D.C. on 21 September, 2011:

Ian Rivers' research on students' mental health shows that students who witness bullying are more likely to use tobacco or alcohol, to be depressed, and to miss or skip school [see Source 2].

Beyond the school context, this research is changing the way that discrimination is understood in the context of anti-bias and anti-genocide education. For example, Beth Lilach, Senior Director of Education & Community Affairs at the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center in New York state, has incorporated the findings from his research published in *School Psychology Quarterly* into anti-discrimination training for the following groups of practitioners in the state: law enforcement personnel (cadets and commanders); parents; educators; school administrators; school support staff; faculty and students at Nassau Community College, Dowling College, Long Island University, Adelphi University and Hofstra University (Sorority and Fraternity Leaders); the US Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps; the Immaculate Conception Seminary; North Shore-Long Island Jewish Hospital; holocaust educators & tolerance facilitators (see Source 8).

Since 2012, Rivers has written a regular column on school behaviour for the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES Professional) highlighting how the findings from his own and others' research can be used by parents, teachers, governors and leadership teams in schools to combat all forms of bullying. His series of articles provides guidance to education professionals on approaches to combat bullying and discrimination (see Source 9). As of 27 September 2013, the TES has over 2.7 million online users in over 275 countries and territories (see Source 10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [1] Presentation by US Assistant Deputy Secretary Kevin Jennings to the American Federation of Teachers, 2 June, 2011: <http://www.aft.org/pdfs/tools4teachers/bullywebinar060211.pdf>
- [2] Speech by US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, at the 2nd Annual Federal Partners' Summit on Bullying in Washington, D.C. on 21 September, 2011: <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/we-will-not-fail-our-children>
- [3] http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/lgbt/white_house_conference_materials.pdf
- [4] YRBSS in brief: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/brief.htm>
- [5] Letter received from a Behavioural Scientist (received on 16 May, 2013) confirms that:
 ...Dr. Rivers was part of a 12-person expert panel that was convened by the United States Department of Education and the United States Centers of Disease Control and Prevention in 2011 to create a uniform definition of bullying for surveillance and measurement. Creating a uniform definition of bullying for measurement is a critical step in supporting the assessment of the problem, targeting interventions and assessing the impact of interventions. The work of Dr. Rivers and the panel was critical in writing the current definition of bullying used and posted on the federal government's website: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/definition/index.html> . A larger document describing the definition will also be published in 2013 or 2014.
 We deeply appreciate Dr. Rivers' contribution and work on this issue.
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
- [6] Definition of bullying used by the US Department of Education
Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems
<http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/definition/index.html>
- [7] Presentation by US Assistant Deputy Secretary, Kevin Jennings to the National Conference

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on Bullying, Orlando, Florida, 14 February,2011

<http://safeschools.cves.org/partnersplace/TaskforceAgainstBullying/Jennings%20SSAC%20Orlando%20Final.ppt>

- [8] Contact Beth Lilach, Senior Director of Education and Community Affairs, Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Centre, New York
- [9] TES articles: <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/sse/education/staff/professor-ian-rivers>
- [10] TES <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storyCode=6000208&navCode=285>