

Institution: University of Roehampton
Unit of Assessment: Panel A, UoA Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience
Title of case study: Understanding and Preventing Bullying Amongst School Children
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The research underpinning this case study focuses on understanding the nature of school-based bullying and the effectiveness of systems to address it. Through practitioner-orientated books, training schemes and websites, this research has been widely used in a range of government and NGO publications and resources. In addition, through the research focus on bullying as a systemic problem and understanding how peer support schemes can combat it, Cowie has contributed to bringing about change in the way schools in the UK deal with bullying. This is evidenced by the widespread use of peer mentoring, peer mediation and advocacy schemes, which can be seen on school websites and in government reports.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Professor Cowie's work on school-based bullying, undertaken at Roehampton (1994 to 2003), was pivotal in underpinning key features of a number of user-oriented publications and related interventions. This research set out to understand the nature of school-based bullying and to explore the potential of pioneering peer-tutoring schemes. The research was characterised by the use of a range of research methods, such as standardised questions (Naylor & Cowie, 1999), structured interviews (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000), participants' responses to vignettes, and judgements about pictorial stimulus material (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefoghe, 2002). This approach was complemented by involving a wide range of participants: primary and secondary school children and teachers, from a mixture of schools, including some in profoundly disadvantaged areas with problems of severe bullying. The substantial body of research provided a rich variety of data and a cross-national perspective. Results contributed substantially to our knowledge of bullying and evidenced-based interventions to counteract it. Centring on the social context of bullying, the benefits of peer support, and the need for restorative practices in schools, Cowie's key research findings were:</p> <p>[1] There were dramatic gender differences regarding peer support in bullying situations, with girls greatly outnumbering boys (typically 80% girls, 20% boys), despite the fact that boys could be just as skilled as girls in offering support to vulnerable peers (Cowie, 2000). A major difficulty was that boys experienced greater peer pressure <i>not</i> to engage in peer support as it was perceived as being 'unmanly'. This was mirrored in the gender imbalance of the teachers in charge of managing systems of intervention (Naylor & Cowie, 1999).</p> <p>[2] There were important differences in children's understanding and definitions of bullying, at different ages. For example, 14-year-olds distinguished between fighting and physical bullying, and between verbal bullying and social exclusion, whereas 8-year-olds did not. These findings are important in terms of grasping the developmental trends in children's understanding of bullying. In addition, these findings generalised across a range of different countries (Smith et al., 2002).</p> <p>[3] The repeated nature of bullying and the imbalance of power between bullies and their victims mean that bullying needs to be distinguished from aggression (Smith et al., 2002).</p> <p>[4] Peer support schemes can involve a change in the relationships between, and responsibilities of, adults and young people. While some adults and young people find this approach challenging, some are inspired, some become discouraged and others are impelled to sabotage the process (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000). Consequently, schemes can be met with hostility or obstructiveness from both adults and young people (Cowie, 1998; Naylor & Cowie, 1999).</p> <p>[5] Whole-school approaches and peer support systems have benefits for users of the scheme, peer supporters themselves, and their schools (Cowie, Naylor, Talamelli, Chauhan & Smith, 2002; Naylor & Cowie, 1999). The most frequent advantages reported by peer supporters were an increase in self-confidence, a sense of responsibility and a belief that they were making a positive contribution to school community.</p> <p>[6] There are important differences between non-victims, escaped victims, continuing victims and new victims. For example, new and continuing victims of bullying were less likely to use peer</p>

support coping strategies (e.g. report talking to someone about specific incidences of bullying) than non-victims. Differences were also reported in emotional responses (including guilt, shame and pride as well as capacity for empathy) (Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor & Chauhan, 2004).

3. References to the research

- Cowie, H. (1998). Perspectives of teachers and pupils on the experience of peer support against bullying. *Educational Research and Evaluation: An International Journal on Theory and Practice*, 4, 108-125. DOI:10.1076/edre.4.2.108.6958
- Naylor, P., & Cowie, H. (1999). The effectiveness of peer support systems in challenging school bullying: the perspectives and experiences of teachers and pupils. *Journal of Adolescence* 22, 467-479. DOI:10.1006/jado.1999.0241
- Cowie, H. (2000). Bystanding or standing by: Gender issues in coping with bullying in English schools. *Aggressive Behavior*, 26, 85-97. DOI:10.1002/(SICI)1098-2337(2000)26:1<85::AID-AB7>3.0.CO;2-5
- Cowie, H., & Olafsson, R. (2000). The role of peer support in helping the victims of bullying in a school with high levels of aggression. *School Psychology International*, 21, 79-95. DOI: 10.1177/0143034300211006
- Smith, P. K., Cowie, H., Olafsson, R., & Liefooghe, A. (2002) Definitions of bullying: a comparison of terms used, and age and sex differences, in a 14-country international comparison, *Child Development*, 73, 4, 1119-1133. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8624.00461
- Cowie, H., Naylor, P., Talamelli, L., Chauhan, P., & Smith, P.K. (2002). Knowledge, use of and attitudes towards peer support: a 2-year follow-up to the Prince's Trust survey. *Journal of Adolescence*, 25, 453-467. DOI:10.1006/jado.2002.0498
- Smith, P.K., Talamelli, L., Cowie, H., Naylor, P., & Chauhan, P. (2004). Profiles of non-victims, escaped victims, continuing victims and new victims of school bullying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74, 565-581. DOI: 10.1348/0007099042376427 (based on data collected at Roehampton)

Cowie published more than 10 peer-reviewed articles in this area during her eight-year period at Roehampton, some in collaboration with Professor Peter Smith (Goldsmiths). A further four peer-reviewed outputs based on data collected while at Roehampton appeared later. These fourteen outputs have been cited (SCOPUS) more than 800 times, with over 600 of these citations since 2008. This work was supported by £213,000 external funding including: *The causes and nature of bullying and social exclusion in schools and the workplace*, (EU Training and Mobility of Researchers, 1998-2001: £80,000), *Evaluating counselling as an intervention in schools*, (Wates Foundation, 1999-2000: £10,000), *Changing attitudes towards mental health issues*, (PPP Medical Healthcare Trust, 2000-2001: £82,000), 'Provision for children and young people with mental health difficulties', (DfEE, 2001: £31,000), 'Peer Support Networker: dissemination' (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2001: £10,000).

4. Details of the impact

Cowie's research has had national and international impact through the development of strategies to address bullying, through informing the training of teachers and other professionals, and through shaping anti-bullying guidelines. This research provided key findings to inform evidence-based programmes of prevention and support as well as providing a platform for subsequent research. The impact started in the period prior to 2008, during which Cowie's research informed her writing of two accessible and much cited publications:

Cowie, H., & Wallace, P. (2000). *Peer support in action: From bystanding to standing by*. London: Sage Publications.

Cowie, H., Jennifer, D. & Sharp, S. (2001). Violence in schools: the United Kingdom. In P. K. Smith (Ed.), *Violence in Schools: the Response in Europe*. London: Routledge.

plus a further book published in the current period:

Cowie, H., & Jennifer, D. (2008) *New Perspectives on Bullying*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

These works informed NSPCC guidelines concerning bullying, underpinned training for the

Impact case study (REF3b)

ChildLine in Partnership with schools programme (CHIPS), and informed a Children's Commissioner's report. The impact of Cowie's research while at Roehampton has continued and been further developed since 2008.

The work by Naylor and Cowie (1999) and Cowie et al. (2002) showing that the effectiveness of peers in providing support for children affected by bullying has directly contributed to the wide use of these strategies, which have been successful in both primary and secondary schools in England. For example, according to a 2011 report for the DFE (RR098), peer support schemes to tackle bullying were rated by school staff as positive or very positive across 1273 mainstream schools in 47 different local authorities, and furthermore, peer support schemes were perceived as having a positive, preventative effect. Case study school staff viewed these schemes as "the foundation of the school's anti-bullying work" (Secondary assistant headteacher) [1, p. 36]. A distinctive component of peer support, identified by Cowie's work, and also emphasised in the report, is the engendering of a sense of responsibility and belonging, which remains a crucial component of the effectiveness of these schemes. This was echoed by case study school staff: "It's about encouraging pupils into positions of responsibility and to be responsible for other pupils" (Primary headteacher) [1, p. 37].

The impact of the CHIPS programme since 2008 is demonstrated by testimonials asserting that it has had a positive impact on children ("I am really glad I went to see a peer supporter because it gave me the confidence I need to go into school clubs and meet new friends. Now I am really enjoying school and having friends around.") [2, p. 3]), on individual schools, and on the management of anti-bullying programmes ("The impact of the peer support at our school has been amazing!" [2, p. 4]). This programme has extended into other forms of peer support. For example one headteacher described how, following work in partnership with CHIPS, she developed an extensive and successful peer support scheme [3]. From 2011, the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation has incorporated CHIPS into its programme of activities, and Cowie's work continues to be an important resource in its school-based peer support work [4,5]. For example, CHIPS' *Primary School Peer Support Resource Pack* (2008) [5] is informed by Cowie and Wallace (2000), which has been described by Andrew Mellor from the Anti-Bullying Network as "the best source of information" regarding the use of peer support methods for tackling bullying [6].

Cowie's work has also been used by UK local authorities. For example, the bullying prevention information provided by Hammersmith and Fulham Local Authority and London Borough of Greenwich is informed directly by Cowie and Jennifer (2008) [7], stemming from earlier work carried out at Roehampton. Cowie's research has had an impact on the strategic recommendations made in guidelines aimed to make transformative changes to the Pupil Referral Units in every London borough. These specifically draw on Cowie and Wallace (2000) in recommending the need for a culture change in the management and implementation of interventions to prevent school-based bullying. For example, the emphasis on the active participation of children and young people often involves a major shift in adults' ways of relating to them as competence partners whose contribution should be valued [8].

At an international level, the materials generated by Cowie and colleagues in the EU-funded VISTA project (*Violence in Schools Training Action*, <http://www.vista-europe.org/>), including face-to-face and online training resources aimed at reducing violence in schools, constituted one of the key resources for a further European-funded project, VISTOP (2006-2008) [9], which developed a series of on-line modules for teachers, parents and policy makers. For the period 01/2008 – 04/2009, presentations and workshops in Spain, Portugal, Germany and Ireland reached over 1850 teachers, parents, policy makers, educators, social workers, psychologists, counsellors, paediatricians, politicians, IT professionals, whilst the internet portal has reached 300-500 users per day. Cowie's research has been a resource outside academia beyond Europe. For example, Cowie et al. (2001) is drawn on in a current Canadian Public Safety website, which specifies that peer support programs for secondary school pupils are an effective intervention for dealing with bullying, particularly when part of a whole school intervention [10]. In addition to being a key reference in the scientific literature, the definition of bullying advanced by Smith et al. (2002), has been used beyond academia. For example a 2011 report over-viewing bullying in schools for the US Department of Justice (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency

Impact case study (REF3b)

Prevention) makes use of this definition as part of a demonstration of the pervasiveness of bullying [11].

Professor Cowie's research-based expertise in anti-bullying interventions is much sought after. Since 2008 she has given 11 keynote presentations to non-academic audiences, including the Teachers' Summer School (Hiroshima), and more recently she joined the Advisory Group of the Anti-Bullying Ambassadors programme, which trains young people in over 600 schools across the UK to be anti-bullying ambassadors both in their schools and their communities. Through its impact on guidelines, training and implementation, Cowie's research in this Unit is widely recognised as having an on-going and pervasive impact beyond academia in informing the understanding and skills of children, teachers and policy makers in addressing and preventing bullying [12,13,14].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Thompson, F., & Smith, P. K. (2011). *The Use and Effectiveness of Anti-Bullying Strategies in Schools*. DFE-RB098 ISBN 978-1-84775-886-6 April 2011
2. <http://www.childline.org.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/CHIPS/Chips Chat Summer 09.pdf>
3. <http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/benefits-peer-support-and-student-participation-5458>
4. The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation. (2012). *Setting up and managing a peer mentoring or peer support programme in schools and colleges*.
http://www.mandbf.org/wp-content/files_mf/settingupapeermentoringorsupportprogramme2012interactive.pdf
5. The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation. (2008). *Lean on Me! Primary School Peer Support Resource Pack*.
6. Andrew Mellor. Anti-Bullying Network
<http://www.antibullying.net/knowledge/questiontwoe.htm>
7. Hammersmith and Fulham Local Authority (2011). *Bullying Prevention Strategy*.
http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Images/BullingPreventionStrategy_tcm21-165862.pdf
8. <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/children/schools/pru/backontrack/default.htm>
9. VISTOP. Final report. Project number: 129352-CP-1_DE-Comenius-21.
<http://iamnotscared.pixel-online.org/index.php>
10. <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/blng-prvntn-schls/index-eng.aspx>
11. Seeley, K., Tombari, M.L., Bennett, L.J., & Dunkle, J.B. (2011). *Bullying in Schools: An Overview. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.
12. A senior administrator, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, State of Victoria, Australia.
13. A Peer-tutoring Consultant and Trainer.
14. A bullying researcher and former school-based learning mentor.