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The Wesley Report

Give kids a chance:
No-one deserves to
be left out



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Foreword

For almost 200 years Wesley Mission has had a strong commitment to ensuring that children grow and prosper. Every child deserves the opportunity to reach their potential and to lead a fulfilling life. Yet too often the experience of rejection and exclusion in childhood can leave deep emotional scars that last into adulthood.

In 2007, Wesley Mission's report *Beyond adversity: Giving kids a chance to shine* offered insight into the enduring qualities that enable some young people to transcend the pain of childhood trauma. This report, which was grounded in Wesley Mission's research, set forth several clear policy recommendations which were based on an integrated approach to the provision of services.

The purpose of Wesley Mission's work in *Beyond adversity* was to contribute to a future in which every child receives the best opportunity to lead a healthy, positive, productive life. The personal and social cost of neglecting this goal is enormous.

Wesley Mission has expanded on this first report by undertaking a second major analysis, *Give kids a chance: No-one deserves to be left out*. This research focuses upon the development of social skills in children who are victims or perpetrators of bullying and how this experience has affected them in adult life.

Much of the popular literature and debate about bullying focuses on distinct identities of perpetrator and the victim but our research suggests that many victims become bullies themselves. It is emotional bullying that perpetuates pain, causing depression and negative behaviour in adult life. We must never let a name be a life sentence. Bullies carry a burden too: many carry guilt into their adult life.

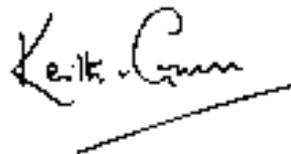
Too often children stand idly by as an individual or group bullies a child. This kind of peer abuse is not uncommon. We must always remember that saying "no" to bullying is everyone's business. For Wesley Mission, that means assisting bullies, victims and people in their communities so they can lead encouraging and rewarding lives.

While individual responses and the development of good social skills are important, as a Christian mission we also believe in an integrated, systematic and whole-of-life approach to the problem.

Schools, families and community groups all have a vital part to play. Appropriate programs can be

developed within the context of the school, drawing upon the network of support within a community. This not only prevents bullying but lays the foundations of restored relationships, trust and understanding among all parties.

Wesley Mission believes primary changes must be made to very deep-seated problems that have been part of our culture for too long. Our policy response should always draw in the entire community. That is why we brought together experts from the community sector, government, education and academia to discuss the way forward. I thank all those who participated in our policy forum, especially our convenor and facilitator, Dr Kim Oates, Emeritus Professor of Paediatrics at the University of Sydney. I also thank our Wesley Mission staff in the formulation of the report. We believe that *Give kids a chance: No-one deserves to be left out* will contribute to breaking the bullying cycle and encourage the development of social skills in young people to prevent involvement in the bullying experience.



Rev Dr Keith V Garner
Superintendent/CEO, Wesley Mission



Executive summary

School bullying in Australia has become a focus of attention by researchers only in recent years, with major work starting in the 1990s. Against the background of continual tragedies linked to school bullying, numerous studies have emerged since that time, driven by the need to expose and understand the nature of bullying. Taking up the charge was Professor Ken Rigby, with works that sought to explain the behaviour patterns that constitute bullying and the roles involved (2007).

While there are now numerous definitions of bullying from which to choose, it is Rigby's definition that is largely accepted, which states that bullying is the:

... repeated oppression, psychological or physical of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons.

Research on school bullying which has focused on the social skills that characterise the roles within the bullying experience is of particular interest to Wesley Mission because of its involvement with support services for children. These services are largely focused on building and restoring the social skills of children subject to forms of abuse, conditions that make them vulnerable to the bullying experience as victims or perpetrators.

The seriousness of the problem is demonstrated in statistics released by Kids Helpline (2004: 1) which found school bullying to be the fourth most common reason for seeking advice from counsellors. When these results were restricted to children aged 10 years and under, bullying became the second most common reason.

The issues highlighted in this report show the damaging consequences of bullying, with victims reporting significant levels of withdrawal and isolation which inhibit their social skills development and lead to insecurity even in adult life. Wesley Mission also understands the importance of healing bullies (many of whom have suffered victimisation themselves) as well as victims. These insights guided the naming of this report: *Giving kids a chance: No-one deserves to be left out.*

About the research

The report seeks to advance knowledge of school bullying in Sydney by assessing the social skills that influence the bullying experience. The report also sets out to identify the interplay between these skills and the impact of school bullying in adult life.

The project began with an online survey of 1200 respondents, with questions designed to extract both quantitative and qualitative data about the role and experience of each respondent in schoolyard bullying and the impact of their experience in adult life. The responses were analysed against five key social skills — self-esteem, assertiveness, empathy, co-operation and anger-management — that govern an individual's ability to handle life and relationships confidently and successfully.

In this report, the roles in the bullying experience are labelled broadly — bullies and victims — as well as in sub-sets: victims who go on to bully others are referred to as bully-victims; those who are unambiguously victims are called pure victims; those in the corresponding category are termed pure bullies.

Policy workshop

Selected staff from Wesley Mission centres involved in child and family care and representatives from government, universities and the nonprofit sector provided comprehensive advice to be fed into the formulation of the report's policy recommendations. The workshop was facilitated by Professor Kim Oates, Emeritus Professor of Paediatrics at the University of Sydney, who commands wide respect for his knowledge of children's issues.

Pack bullying

An issue highlighted by the findings is the significance of pack (group) bullying to victims and perpetrators and the intensity it brings to the bullying process.

Pack bullying, according to victims in the Wesley Mission survey, occurred mainly in high school and happened more frequently than bullying by individuals: 56 per cent of respondents said pack bullying occurred at least two or three times a week compared to 29 per

Executive summary

cent who said that bullying by individuals took place at the same frequency.

Pack bullying went on for longer than bullying by individuals: 34 per cent of victims said pack bullying lasted more than a year compared to 16 per cent who said that individual bullying lasted more than a year.

Victims were only willing to report pack bullying when it occurred most days (35 per cent) and lasted more than a year (39 per cent).

Victims of pack bullying scored lower than the generally acceptable level of self-esteem in comparison with those who were bullied by individuals.

Pure victims suffered pack bullying more often and for a longer period than did bully-victims.

Victims of pack bullying reported the lowest level of assertiveness with reference to three particular indicators which were:

- I looked like an unhappy person (43 per cent).
- I kept to myself and did not really interact with others (43 per cent).
- I generally felt more comfortable in the company of teachers or other adults than with kids of my own age (44 per cent).

These indicators of a lack of assertiveness were associated with almost all the forms of emotional bullying mentioned, mainly:

- being teased in an unpleasant way in the playground
- being called hurtful names
- having possessions moved or hidden
- being left out of things on purpose.

Pack bullies reported a lower level of empathy with their victims than did individual bullies. Bully-victims, when they bullied in packs, seemed to have a higher level of empathy with victims than pure bullies did in the same activity.

Emotional bullying

Another area of interest depicted in the findings related to the differential experiences of exposure to physical bullying and emotional bullying, the latter being where verbal tactics are employed, or insidious means such as ostracising or deliberately excluding people from group activities.

The most frequently cited forms of emotional bullying were being:

- teased in an unpleasant way in the playground (30 per cent)
- called hurtful names (30 per cent)
- left out of things on purpose (25 per cent)
- avoided or ignored by other students on purpose (25 per cent).

Female victims reported more emotional bullying than males: 85 per cent reported being left out of things on purpose compared to 77 per cent of male victims.

The longer bullying lasted the more frequently it involved emotional forms: for example, 49 per cent of victims who were bullied for more than a year reported being called hurtful names on most days.

Victims of pack bullying reported being subject to high rates of emotional bullying in school: 87 per cent reported being left out of occasional peer group activities.

Victims were only willing to report emotional bullying when activities such as being aggressively teased in the playground or being excluded from group activities lasted for a long time (58 per cent and 54 per cent respectively).

Having possessions moved or hidden or knowing that the teacher was ignoring classroom bullying were examples of emotional bullying that had a marked effect on a victim's self-esteem with even the slightest increase in frequency of the adverse actions.

The more frequent the emotional bullying, the lower the level of assertiveness exhibited by victims. One finding shows a high degree of isolation and loneliness ensuing: 49 per cent of victims who were left out of things on purpose reported keeping to themselves when they were in school. (Withdrawal behaviour also occurred over physical bullying, with 46 per cent who were often hit or kicked keeping to themselves.)

Victims were less likely to display positive assertiveness characteristics where they reported emotional rather than physical bullying e.g. 42 per cent of victims who were often avoided or ignored said they were unable to stand up for themselves when bullied. In contrast, 46 per cent who reported being hit or kicked even sometimes said they would fight back.

There was a significant association between emotional bullying and low self-esteem in pure victims: two-fifths of these respondents scored 11–15 on the Rosenberg scale when they were even sometimes:

- left out of things on purpose
- avoided or ignored by other students
- had their possessions moved or hidden.

The 30-point Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale does not have a discrete cut-off for low self-esteem as this is dependent on the population sample. For the purposes of this report a score between 16 and 25 was considered within the acceptable range for self-esteem.

There appears to be a clear interplay between self-esteem, assertiveness and aggressiveness linked to emotional bullying, particularly when the bullying took the form of exclusion.

Although more difficult to determine, it appeared that perpetrators of emotional bullying had lower levels of self-esteem and capacity for anger management than bullies who used physical tactics.

Almost half (48 per cent) of individuals who said they bullied in order “to show others they were the boss” felt ashamed of their behaviour.

Bullies who often engaged in emotional bullying reported a lower level of self-esteem than those who did it only sometimes: 46 per cent of bullies who admitted to often “giving soft kids a hard time” scored 11–15 on the Rosenberg scale.

Impact in adult life

More than four-fifths of respondents (85 per cent) reported that the school time bullying experience had affected the way they had developed as adults.

Negative effects

Low self-esteem and lack of assertiveness were listed as the primary negative effects in adult life. This was followed by difficulties in building relationships of trust. Other problems included aggression and difficulty controlling anger.

These were all found to be interrelated to some extent. Respondents who reported low levels of self-esteem also tended to report low levels of assertiveness (feeling withdrawn or isolated from society).

This had an impact on their ability to build various levels of trust within their relationships. This difficulty was reported with reference to:

- building trust in personal relationships
- building trust in a general social setting
- trusting too easily for want of attention or affection.

Frustration regarding low self-confidence, isolation and failure to trust led to the development of aggression and anger in some respondents. This involved:

- anger at the school for not protecting them effectively
- anger with themselves for not being assertive when bullied
- anger with the individual by whom they were bullied by and the desire to retaliate aggressively.

Other respondents linked their lack of self-esteem to the mental health issues they experienced in adult life.

Positive effects

The positive effects were almost a mirror image of the negative effects. Respondents reported:

- becoming more assertive
- having more self-esteem or self-confidence
- becoming more understanding and empathetic.

Once again there appeared to be an interrelation between assertiveness and self-esteem. Respondents who reported a higher level of one usually also mentioned an improvement in the other. There seemed, however, to be an association between these skills and the victims’ understanding of the bullying experience.

Understanding was developed in two ways:

- by shifting the focus of blame from the victim to the bully
- understanding the predicament of the bully (empathy).

More victims displayed empathetic tendencies than would have been expected. However, there were a number of bullies who reported genuine remorse for their actions and the intention to refrain from such behaviour.

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Victims who are parents took care to build positive social skills in their children at a young age.

The main difference between the negative and positive effects in adult life was the concept of fear. Respondents who experienced low social skills development in adult life tended to be fearful of the school, their social environment and the individuals by whom they were bullied. The positive effects were associated with an overcoming of that fear.

Advice sought

Advice was mainly sought from a professional. While there seemed to be a large positive attitude to the advice being consequently received, some respondents mentioned their annoyance with the advice. This was mainly due to their impression that the advice given exacerbated the bullying.

Action taken

Many sought professional help and most of those who had done so were prescribed medication.

An indication of positive social skills development was that some action involved enrolling in educational courses to learn more about the experience of bullying. This served the purpose of self-development or a desire to assist others with similar experiences.

Action was also taken by bullies in terms of recognition that their behaviour constituted bullying, leading to a resolve to change their behaviour.

Reasons for not seeking help

Two-fifths (41 per cent) of the sample did not seek advice or take action in response to bullying when they were of school age. The primary reason was that those victims felt they could manage the issues on their own.

There was a portion of respondents that reported feeling too embarrassed or ashamed to label themselves victims of bullying. Their problems of self-esteem and assertiveness are arguably exacerbated by the decision to further isolate themselves.

Other respondents stated they were unaware of available services. However, a closer look suggests that if they had been aware of the assistance, they feared these services would be too costly.

Policy recommendations

Wesley Mission's work among children has helped identify a range of initiatives that can be usefully undertaken to prevent bullying in schools. This knowledge, has fed the recommendations for policy reform that are set out in full on p.74. A summary of the recommendations is given below. To protect children from the damaging effects of schoolyard bullying, Wesley Mission urges:

1. **Improved identification of bullying**, with specific questions built into routine existing assessments of children by teachers and services providers and in teacher-parent contact.
2. **More programs to build up social skills in children in the early years**, at pre-school classes and "soft" early intervention points such as the Breakfast Club and literacy programs run by Wesley Mission for pre-school and primary school children.
3. **A clear line-of-sight reporting regime in schools** from the first report of bullying to the resolution of the problem, with schools meeting criteria within a universal accreditation system such as SunSmart and Asthma-Friendly Schools.
4. **Accredited anti-bullying and resilience programs at primary and secondary school** with emphasis on transition points at the start of primary and secondary school where childhood vulnerabilities are high, within an unambiguous culture of respect. Funding for adequate in-school ancillary services in recognition that teachers have a full workload.
5. **The introduction of funding for children suffering from abuse**, including bullying, so that they can rely on extra support in school.
6. **The extension and tailored family therapy programs** so that parents learn to recognise when children are involved in bullying and can be taught to build up key social skills.
7. **Support programs for adults** who are suffering from the effects of childhood bullying such as unresolved problems of guilt, distrust and aggression.

Introduction

Bullying developed as a topic of social research with the work of Olweus (1978) in his study of this behaviour among Scandinavian boys in the 1970s. His research was gradually adopted in other parts of Europe and Britain before drawing the attention of Australian researchers such as Rigby and Slee (1993).

Mounting interest in this field has seen the evolution of important viewpoints in understanding the impact of bullying on the different individuals involved.

For instance, Salmivalli (in Kirkham and Moore, 2001: 270) found that people who bully had a negative view of their family environment, academic performance and emotional wellbeing. Other researchers have suggested that if the bullying is left untreated a likely consequence is that the behaviour would continue from adolescence into adulthood (Farrington in Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2004: 36). Rigby (2003: 1) adds that children who are bullied repeatedly also experience adverse effects on their health and wellbeing.

School bullying is an issue of particular interest to Wesley Mission on both a research and community services level. The previous report *Beyond adversity: Giving kids a chance to shine*, examined the requirements for the building of resilience in adulthood in the face of adversity that was experienced as a child. The results achieved from this research served to affirm the need and quality work of the child and family services provided by Wesley Mission. The growing concern regarding bullying in schools and the previous research conducted in this area encouraged a return to the child and family topic.

Aims of the research

The current research report titled *Giving kids a chance: No-one deserves to be left out* focuses on identifying the roles involved in the bullying experience and the social skills associated with these roles. There is also some reference to the resilience of respondents through an examination of the impact of childhood bullying in adult life.

The current research seeks to:

1. examine the interplay of social skills associated with the bullying experience in schools, and
2. identify the effects of bullying later in life for all parties involved.

What is bullying?

There are, unsurprisingly, numerous definitions of bullying given the growing concern with its impact on everyone involved. However, a closer look at each of these definitions allow for common elements to be extracted and fused to form a common understanding of what bullying entails.

Olweus (1994: 1173) argued:

A student is being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students.

Research by O'Moore and Kirkham (2001: 272) draws on the previous definitions by Olweus and Whitney and Smith though is much more detailed. They define bullying thus:

We say a pupil is being bullied or picked on when another pupil or group of pupils say nasty and unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a pupil is hit, kicked, threatened, locked inside a room, sent nasty notes, when no-one ever talks to them or things like that. These things can happen frequently, and it is difficult for the pupil being bullied to defend himself or herself. It is also bullying when a pupil is teased repeatedly in a nasty way. But it is not bullying when two pupils of about the same strength have the odd fight or quarrel.

Based on these two definitions, there appears to be some agreement that bullying is a negative action which can be carried out by an individual or group of individuals, that it is repetitive behaviour and that it causes distress to the person being bullied.

The definition provided by O'Moore and Kirkham (2001: 272) expanded on these similarities by arguing that only specific negative behaviour traits can be considered bullying. Furthermore, they said, bullying occurs where there is an imbalance of power between the students involved.

Introduction

This argument was also apparent in other research such as that of Rigby (1996) in his publication; *Bullying in schools: What to do about it*. His definition of bullying is one of the most frequently cited as it provides all the elements of an accepted definition of bullying. Rigby (1996) defines bullying as:

... repeated oppression, psychological or physical of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons.

This Wesley Mission report defines bullying in accordance with these definitions together with an additional statement based on O'Moore and Kirkham (2001) in order to provide an understanding of the types of actions that constitute bullying. The Wesley Mission survey defined bullying as follows:

Bullying includes situations when someone is hit, kicked, threatened, tormented, locked inside a room, sent insulting notes, deliberately ignored and purposely excluded from group activities. It is also bullying when a student is teased repeatedly in a nasty way. But it is not bullying when two students of about the same strength have the occasional fight or quarrel.

What are social skills?

The literature defines social skills as:

Socially acceptable learned behaviours that enable a person to interact effectively with others and to avoid socially unacceptable responses.

As previous research investigating the social skills has largely been based on the topics of choice for particular studies, no definitive list of social skills has been determined (www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index_whichskills.html).

For instance, Campbell, Tuttle & Knapp (2009) examined the social skills needs of youth at risk. While within the topic of bullying Larke & Beran (2006) hypothesised that bullies engaging in direct bullying tended to have fewer social skills than those who took part in indirect bullying. This was based on the argument that indirect bullying required good social skills in order to convince other children to exclude someone from a group. However, the results actually revealed that bullies had fewer social skills regardless of the form of bullying they were involved in.

The social skills chosen for the Wesley Mission study into bullying in schools are identified as the following:

1. self-esteem
2. assertiveness
3. empathy
4. co-operation
5. anger management

The choice of these life skills was determined by the fact that these are the skills that commonly flow through the existing literature on school bullying. However, the results presented will largely concern the interplay of self-esteem, assertiveness and empathy with reference to the bully, bully-victim and victims.

Focus of the research

The vast array of literature on this topic has produced a wealth of information in areas such as the types of bullying experienced (Craig et al., 2000), their effects on the victim (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2001) and bully (Ma, 2002), the reason it occurs (Frisen et al., 2007) and the influences of school and family (Braithwaite and Ahmed, 2004).

As a result, there has been an increased awareness of bullying involving more than just the bully and victim. Analysis has also included the perspectives of bully-victims (Frisen, 2007: 752). Bully-victims are referred to as school children who were once victimised and went on to become bullies themselves (Frisen, 2007: 752).

A common argument presented in much of the literature is the belief held by victims that their personal characteristics such as appearance or race makes them a target of bullying (Frisen, 2007: 755). Other research has highlighted the fact that students with a high academic or socio-economic status in school were more likely to be bullied (Ma, 2002: 77).

Rigby (2003: 2) mentions that bullies tend to engage in this behaviour as a means of asserting social dominance over others. This behaviour is further understood through the work of Braithwaite and Ahmed (2004: 45) which found that a more authoritarian parenting style existed in households from which bullies came. This is supported by anecdotal evidence from Wesley Mission caseworkers who found that the experiences in the home played some role in behaviour of the bully in school.

It is also known that bullying can take both direct (physical) and indirect (emotional) forms.

Craig et al. (2000: 27) argues that the playground is more conducive to the direct forms of bullying while the classroom setting tends to produce more cases of indirect bullying. Rigby and Bagshaw (2001: 40) argue that “indirect” (emotional) forms of bullying such as being avoided or ignored are likely to cause the greatest distress to the victim than “direct” (physical) bullying.

The link between bullying and the social skills of people involved is apparent in much of the research. Most of these studies make reference to the lack of self-esteem on the part of the victim as a result of bullying involving acts such as isolation or alienation by their peers (Rigby & Slee, 1993: 280).

There is much debate surrounding the self-esteem of the bully. Researchers such as Rigby and Slee (1993: 275) argue that bullies exhibit a façade of power and popularity to compensate for their lack of self-esteem whereas others are of the opinion that bullies have high self-esteem as they require sound minds in order to manipulate their victims or other students (Ma, 2002: 65).

Co-operation, anger management, assertiveness and empathy are other life skills that are mentioned in existing literature about bullying.

Using the co-operativeness scale they devised, Rigby, Cox and Black (1997: 365) found that lower levels of co-operation exhibited by students had an influence on whether they later became bullies or victims. These students seemed unhappy with their school, had fewer friends and possessed lower levels of self-esteem.

The majority of studies in this area tend to focus either on the influence of individual life skills or the interrelation between two of these skills. For instance, a study by Fox and Boulton (2005: 314) points out that victims who lack assertive skills generally looked scared or unhappy. It also highlighted the aggressiveness and anger management issues experienced by the majority of victims.

The Wesley Mission report goes a step further by investigating the interrelation between five life skills involved in the bullying experience rather than one or two. This study will add value to the existing research as it will provide a deeper analysis of the influence of social skills on the roles involved in the bullying experience. A further point of difference from the previous research is that an examination of this association will involve a retrospective approach. This will provide a point of comparison to existing research: it is expected that, with more time to think

about their involvement in bullying from a past school life, the participant’s responses may vary from similar questions asked in other surveys. Finally, with this retrospective study, the Wesley Mission report seeks to contribute to the limited knowledge of the effects of bullying in adult life.

Methodology

This study was based on an online survey with both quantitative and qualitative components. Respondents were asked to reflect on their involvement in bullying when they were in school and how they perceived themselves during this time. Respondents were also asked a number of open-ended questions about the after-effects of their bullying experience in adult life (Appendix 2: Life skills and the bullying experience survey, page 84).

The sample for the study was collected from the statistical sub-division of Sydney as listed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A complete list of councils that were included can be found in the Appendix 1: About the research, page 82.

The majority of survey questions were borrowed from existing literature in order to ensure reliable results. Validated scales were used to test both self-esteem and co-operativeness of respondents. Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The level of co-operativeness was assessed using the co-operativeness scale developed by Rigby, Cox and Black (1997). More detailed information regarding the methodology is found in the “About the Research” section.

The sample

This Wesley Mission report incorporated a random sample of 1200 respondents aged 18–44 years. The age limit was determined by the assumption that older respondents might have some difficulty in clearly recollecting school bullying experiences. To ensure a representative sample was obtained, both age and gender quotas were set in line with 2006 Census data.

In order to ensure a reliable sample, a number of qualifying questions were placed prior to the commencement of the survey. Respondents were asked their age and if they resided in Sydney. Furthermore, to ensure they fit within the survey criteria, respondents were also asked for their postcode.





Chapter

Profile of respondents

Chapter 1: Profile of respondents

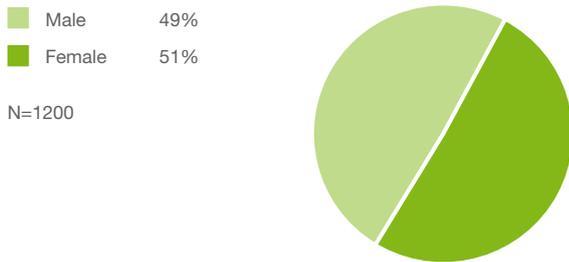
Demographics

Gender

The gender breakdown of respondents was representative of the population of greater metropolitan Sydney.

- 49 per cent male
- 51 per cent female

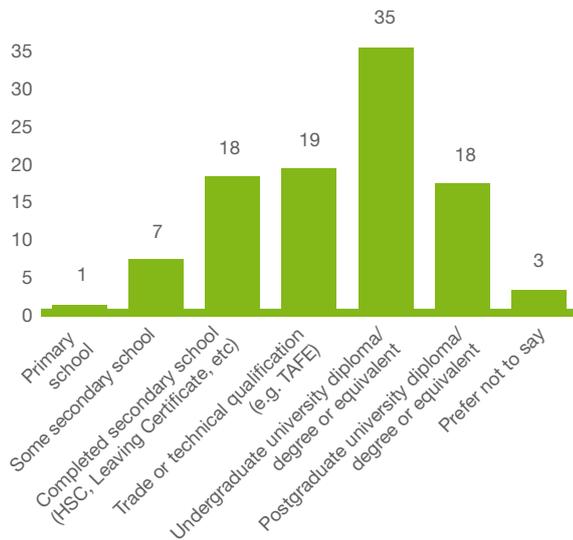
Figure 1.1: Gender (%)



Education level

The majority of respondents attained advanced education levels: 71 per cent moved on to tertiary studies.

Figure 1.2: Education level of respondent (%)

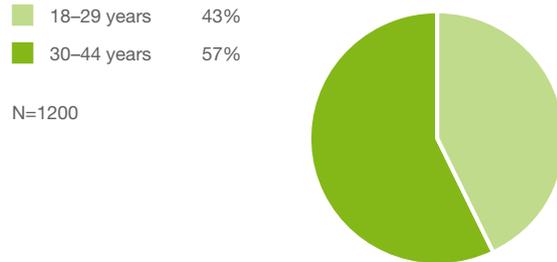


N=1200 % may not equal 100 due to rounding

Age

Most respondents were aged between 30 and 44 years. The quantities of respondents in the 18–29 and 30–44 age groups were representative of the population of greater metropolitan Sydney.

Figure 1.3: Age of respondents (%)

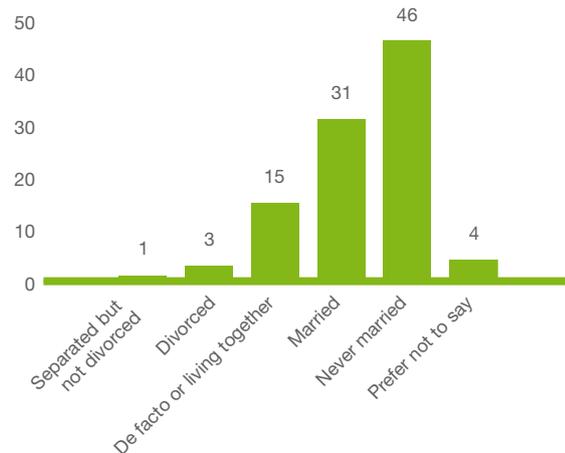


Marital status

Given the age groups involved in the study, most respondents fell into the “never married” or “married” categories.

- 46 per cent never married
- 31 per cent married

Figure 1.4: Marital status of respondents (%)



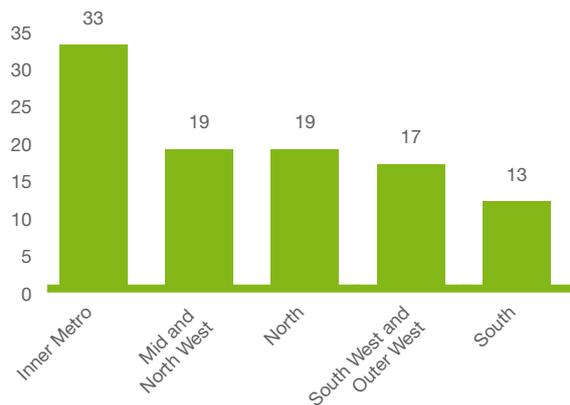
N=1200 Widowed=0.4; too small to include in chart % may not equal 100 due to rounding

The bullying experience

Postcode breakdown

The majority of respondents came from the inner metropolitan suburbs of Sydney (33 per cent) followed by an even number from the north (19 per cent) and mid and north-west (19 per cent)

Figure 1.5: Respondents by postcode (%)



N=1200 % may not equal 100 due to rounding

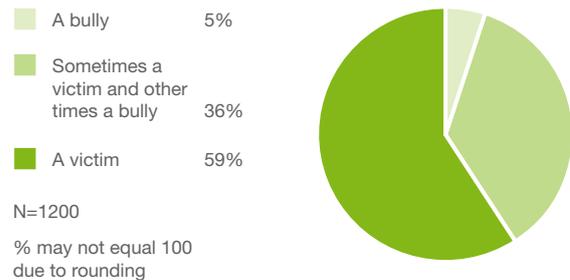
The victim

Role in bullying

The majority of respondents in the survey were found to be victims of bullying, with the second-largest group being bully-victims. Only 5 per cent of the sample claimed to have been pure bullies in school.

Previous research has generally found a greater proportion of bullies showing up in surveys, in some cases even more than bully-victims (Frisen, 2007). Anecdotal evidence from employees at Wesley Mission Child and Family Services suggested that bullies might have learned their behaviour at home. As such, they may be considered as bully-victims who were initially victimised in the home prior to entering school. This may serve to explain why Wesley Mission's research returned a far smaller proportion of bullies to bully-victims.

Figure 1.6: Role in the bullying experience (%)

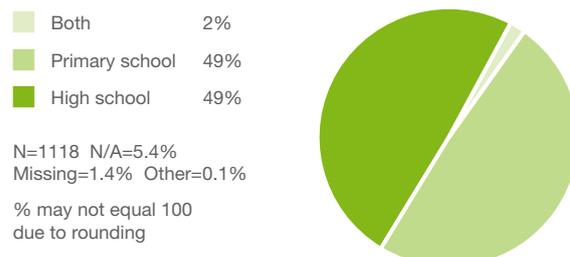


When were people bullied most?

There appeared to be no difference in response to the level of schooling at which victims experienced bullying most.

- 49 per cent primary school
- 49 per cent high school
- 2 per cent both

Figure 1.7: School level at which most bullying was experienced (%)

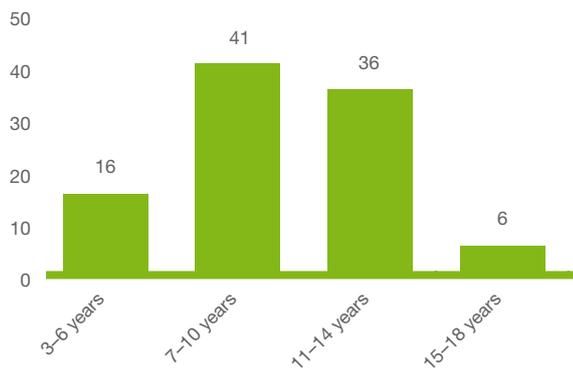


Chapter 1: Profile of respondents

Age when first bullied

Respondents suggested that most of their bullying occurred during the ages of seven to 10 years. This echoes research by Frisen (2007: 753) which also incorporated a retrospective examination of school bullying and found most bullying to occur between the ages of seven and nine years.

Figure 1.8: Age at which first bullied (%)

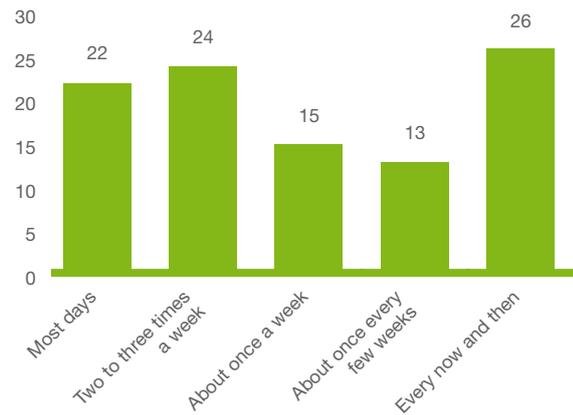


N=1118 N/A=5.4% Missing=1.4%
% may not equal 100 due to rounding

Frequency of the bullying experience

The research discovered a varied amount of bullying reported by victims. A quarter of victims stated they were bullied every now and then. However, almost a quarter also admitted to being bullied two to three times a week.

Figure 1.10: Frequency of bullying (%)

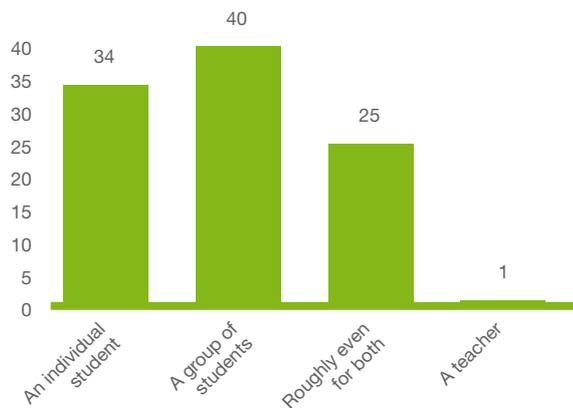


N=1135 N/A=5.4% % may not equal 100 due to rounding

Who were the bullies?

A greater proportion of victims reported being bullied by a group of students rather than an individual student. Although quite a small percentage, it was interesting to find that some victims believed they were bullied mainly by teachers.

Figure 1.9: Who bullied respondents (%)

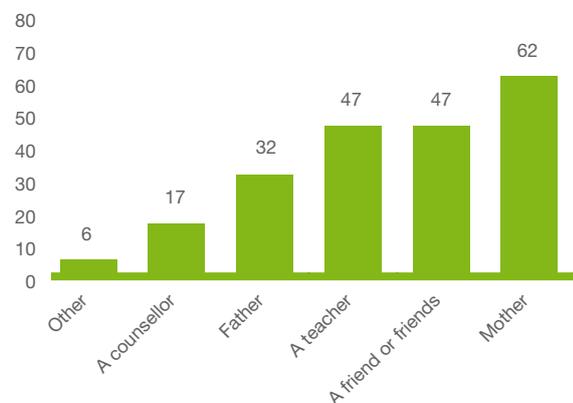


N=1135 N/A=5.4% % may not equal 100 due to rounding

To whom the bullying was reported

Of the victims who did report a bullying incident, the majority had initially turned to their mothers. Intriguingly, fathers were often not the next best option. Rather, it was friends and teachers that – victims preferred turning to apart from their mothers.

Figure 1.11: Reporting the bullying (%)



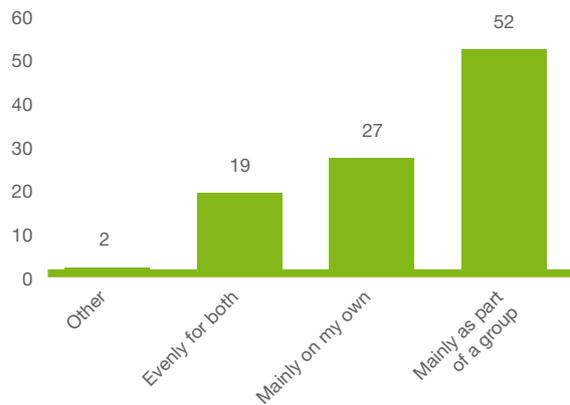
N=561 N/A=53.3% % may not equal 100 due to rounding

The bully

Engaging in bullying

Both bullies and victims expressed in common the view that bullying was mostly carried out in groups (packs). However there was a greater difference in the proportion of respondents that bullied as part of a group compared to those that acted on their own (52 per cent v. 27 per cent).

Figure 1.12: How was the bullying conducted (%)

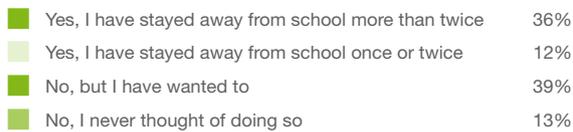


N=498 N/A=58.5% % may not equal 100 due to rounding

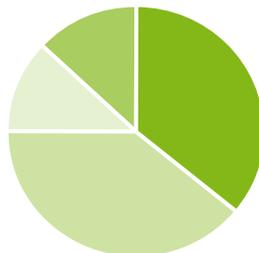
Staying home from school due to bullying

While 75 per cent of victims stated that they had not stayed at home due to bullying, a large proportion admitted they considered it (39 per cent). More disturbing is the fact that a quarter of victims admitted to staying at home at least once due to their experience of bullying.

Figure 1.13: Did victim ever stay home from school due to bullying? (%)



N=1135 N/A=5.4%



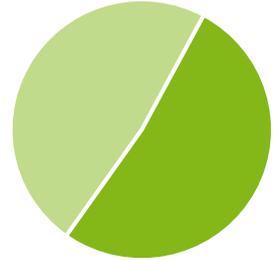
Action taken

The report found that in instances where victims reported the bullying, action was taken in just over half these cases. This is a disturbing finding as it implies that almost half the time (48 per cent), bullying proceeded with impunity.

Figure 1.14: Action taken on bullying (%)



N=561 N/A=53.3%



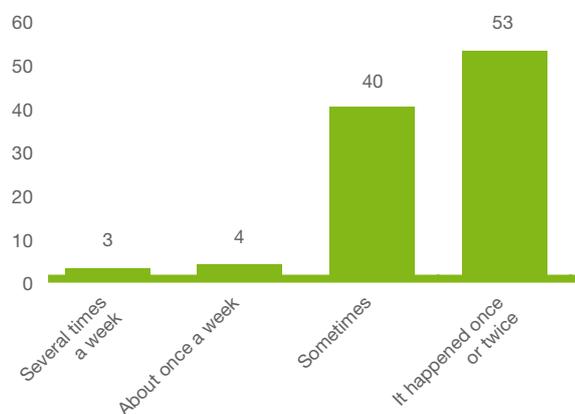
How often respondents bullied people

Most bullies in the study reported only engaging in this behaviour once or twice for the entirety of the period in review. Only seven per cent admitted that they had bullied on a more regular basis.

There is a disparity in the accounts of bullying frequency. While 53 per cent of bullies confessed to bullying once or twice, 44 per cent of victims reported being bullied at least two to three times a week. This may suggest a difference in opinion regarding the definition of bullying as bullies might not be aware of the implication and force of their behaviour towards others.

A collection of self-esteem related questions were also asked to provide some weight to the data retrieved from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Most respondents said they sometimes had an inferior perception of themselves. There were two categories that most respondents stated never having experienced: a lack of attention by teachers or by parents (see Table 1.1).

Figure 1.15: How often did you bully others (%)



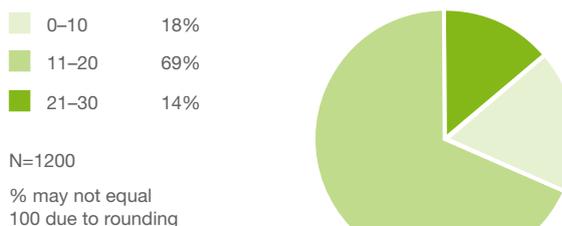
N=498 N/A=58.5%

Social skills

Self-esteem

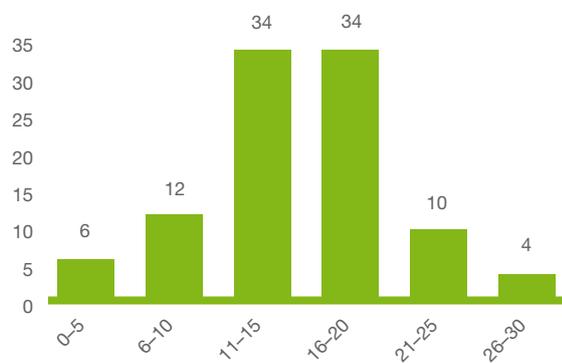
Most respondents were found to have low to moderate self-esteem scoring between 11 and 20 out of a possible 30 on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).

Figure 1.16: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale for all respondents (a) (%)



It was interesting to find that even when this group was split in half, an even percentage of respondents scored 11 to 15 and 16 to 20.

Figure 1.17: Rosenberg self-esteem scores elaborated (b) (%)



N=1200 % may not equal 100 due to rounding

Table 1.1: Issues that respondents dealt with in school (%)

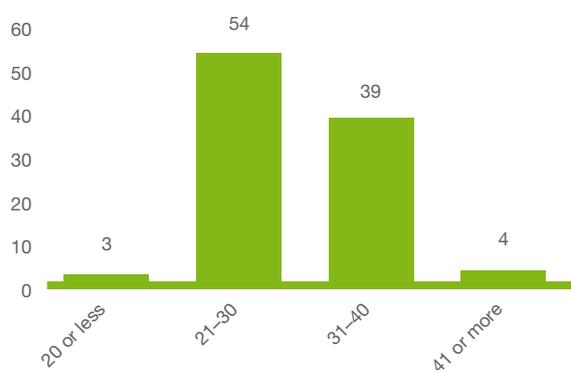
	Having no friends	Feeling lonely at school	Being rejected by other students	Parents checking up on me	Being ignored by parents	Being picked on by teachers	Doing worse in schoolwork than I had expected	Arguments or disagreements in the home involving me	Uncomfortable or awkward talking to other students	Difficulty excelling in school
Never	40	25	16	45	54	50	33	34	18	36
Sometimes	47	53	62	42	37	45	53	50	57	49
A lot of the time	13	22	22	13	10	6	13	17	25	16

N=1200 % may not equal 100 due to rounding Source: Wesley Mission Life Skills and Bullying survey

Co-operativeness

Most respondents scored 21–30 on the co-operativeness scale developed by Rigby, Cox and Black (1997) which is less than half the total score possible (72). This is somewhat understandable, though, as Rigby, Cox and Black argue that low levels of co-operativeness are linked to an individual student’s involvement in bullying, whether it be the victim, bully or bully-victim (1997: 365).

Figure 1.18: Co-operativeness of all respondents (%)



N=1200 % may not equal 100 due to rounding

Empathy

Respondents were fairly split in responses to the empathy related questions. As indicated in Table 1.3, next page, 51 per cent reported feeling ashamed of their actions when they were in school. On the other hand however, 43 per cent of respondents reported that people should toughen up and learn to take a blow.

Assertiveness

The results provided in Table 1.2 suggest that respondents generally perceived themselves as having a low level of assertiveness during their time in school. Only one question on assertiveness produced a positive response as 44 per cent of respondents believed that they had not kept to themselves when they were in school.

Table 1.2: Assertiveness of victims (%)

	Teased in the playground (%)			
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My demeanour appeared timid	16	48	31	5
I gave in to the bully too easily	15	46	34	6
I became tearful when I was picked on	16	44	33	8
I fought back when picked on	9	41	41	9
I stood up for myself when teased by other kids	10	42	40	9
I was not bothered when other kids tried to pick on me	4	26	49	21
I backed off when I was teased by other kids	11	55	29	5
I looked like an unhappy person	13	39	41	7
I spoke very quietly	17	45	34	5
I kept to myself and did not interact with others	12	38	44	6
I was overly apologetic when faced with confrontations	13	42	38	8
I felt more comfortable in the company of adults	17	39	37	6

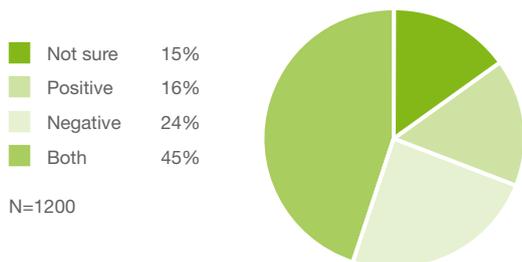
Sig: .000 N=1135

Impact on later life

Effects of bullying

The results in Figure 1.19 suggest that respondents generally experienced both negative and positive effects in adulthood. A higher proportion of respondents, however (24 per cent), reported purely negative effects as opposed to the positive (16 per cent).

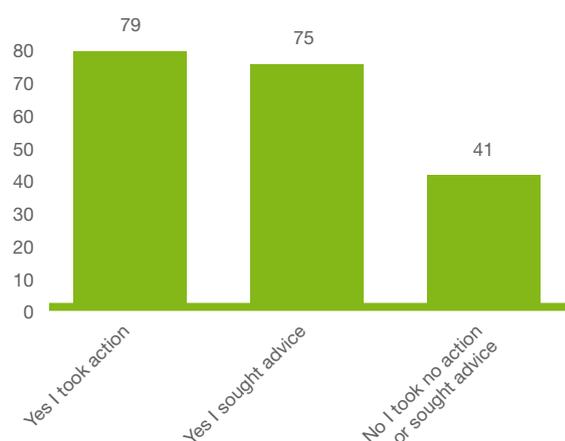
Figure 1.19: Effects of bullying in adult life (%)



Action v. advice

It was interesting to find that a large proportion of respondents took a combination of action or advice to deal with their experiences of bullying when in school. However, 41 per cent had sought neither which suggests that children who experience bullying during their school years face significant problems.

Figure 1.20: Action taken v. advice sought by respondent (%)



N=8287 N/A=31% % may not equal 100 due to rounding

Table 1.3: Issues that respondents dealt with in school (%)

	I felt ashamed of myself	I wished I could've hidden away from everyone	I blamed myself for what had happened	I felt like making the situation better	I blamed others for what had happened	I felt angry about what happened	I felt like I could do it again without feeling remorse	People should toughen up and learn to take a blow	I felt a thrill at seeing how far someone could get pushed
Strongly agree	16	11	1	12	8	14	8	9	7
Agree	51	45	42	62	48	62	41	43	36
Disagree	29	36	42	24	38	22	42	36	39
Strongly disagree	5	8	7	3	6	2	1	11	17

N=498 N/A=58 % may not equal 100 due to rounding Source: Wesley Mission Life Skills and Bullying Survey

Eminent author and poet Rodney Hall was installed in boarding school within days of migrating to Australia from England in 1947. In this extract from *Six Weeks Off School* Hall describes how, then aged 13, in a new country and lonely without his family, he waited anxiously to meet his new schoolmates.

Next day, new arrivals began bursting in. A senior boy announced himself as the dorm prefect and chose a bed next to the door. When I tried asking him if we could use the showers just when we felt like it, he told me to shut up. The place soon filled with raucous voices. Friends, meeting again after the holidays, talked each other down, scrapped playfully and quarrelled over who would sleep where. One of them threw himself on the bed next to mine. He might have been my age but he was a good four inches taller.

“Bullock,” he stuck out his hand. “G’day.”

“Hullo,” I said, “how are you?”

Instantly, Bullock’s face hardened. He glowered at me.

“Hey!” he called out over his shoulder and rose slowly from his bed, “I reckon we might have a Pom among us.”

The boys came crowding round. The prefect pushed his way to the front.

“Say something,” the prefect demanded.

I shook my head dumbly.

“Bloody talk when I tell you. That’s an order.”

Nothing. Uprooted, I was empty of everything but my longing to escape the fears of the past and the heartache of the loneliness. So much had hung on the promise of Australia as an escape from the war, the fear of bombs whistling down, of booby traps and gas attacks. This was what I had looked forward to all through my childhood. This was the new “home” my mother had promised us, a place where we could expect a better life.

“Start with your name. You’ve got a name, haven’t you?”

“Rodney.”

“Rodney what?”

“Rodney Hall.”

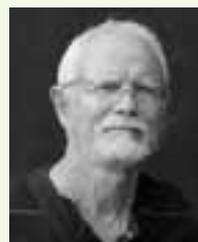
Bullock flamed with triumph.

“What did I tell you? A Pom. And sleeping right next to me!”

His fist came from nowhere. The tremendous impact took me totally by surprise, smack against my cheek. Stars sparked behind my eyes. The crowd closed round me in a ring while I staggered, clutching at my cheek and withdrawing into myself.

“This is a bloody good school,” the prefect told me. “When you get hit, you hit the bastard back.”

But right then I felt too damaged to move.



Rodney Hall’s story *Six Weeks Off School* is taken from *School Days*, edited by John Kinsella and published by Fremantle Arts Centre Press, and this extract is

reprinted with the kind permission of the author and publisher. Hall, described in the *US Saturday Review* as “one of the greatest writers of our time”, has twice won the Miles Franklin Award and been short-listed for the Booker Prize. He is a former chair of the Australia Council. He left school at the age of 16 but later returned to study at the University of Queensland.



Story

Healing one little thug

Two-year-old Jake* felt the air shake with his father's rage. He watched his mum squeeze her eyes shut at the filth and abuse that poured like lava from her husband's mouth. "Stop!" he cried at last, "stop!" And as his father swung towards him, he wet himself.



In his earliest years Jake was witness to daily conflict between his parents. When his sister was born, he thought that his mother had abandoned him. “When Sarah-Jane came along, Jake got put aside every time she cried,” his mother Linda said. “I was told to fix her up. He’d swear at me – ‘... shut her up!’. I felt horrible about it but he had me under his control.”

Jake became sure of only one strategy: anger worked. Attack and intimidation worked. Nothing else mattered and nothing existed except violence.

“The only way Jake showed his feelings was through anger,” Linda said. “When he was sad he burst out, not crying but in a rage. The anger was mostly at me.”

By the time he went to preschool at age three or four, he had his behaviour template already formed by his father’s example.

“He found it hard to make friends,” his mother said. “He became more and more aggressive with the other kids. He had no friends. One day he’d be OK and the next he’d be a monster. Anything set him off. If you say, ‘No, that goes here,’ that wound him up.” He found it hard to play with the other children because he had no social skills, a developmental assessment found.”

Jake began hitting the teacher, trying to hurt her. Towards the end of last year, Linda had to stop going to TAFE and pull her son out of preschool. “It was just unbearable,” she said.

Linda and the teachers looked at what could be done. She was advised to apply to Brighter Futures, the early intervention program developed by the NSW Department of Community Services for children in troubled circumstances. Wesley Mission is the lead agency in Brighter Futures programs run in the major western and north-western regions of Sydney and outer Sydney.

A Wesley Mission case-manager, Bonny Cotter, took on the troubled little boy and his family. (By then, Jake’s father had left home.) Jake’s teacher, mother and Bonny operated as a focused unit. Jake was examined by a paediatrician and diagnosed with ADHD. He is on medication and his mother’s relief at his improved condition is palpable.

It is hard to imagine this delicate-faced, slim, golden boy as an ugly, friendless bully.

“He gets really upset about having no friends,” Linda said. “I say to him, ‘Would you like it if someone always hurt you?’ and he says, ‘No’, and

I say, ‘Well, that’s why they don’t want to play with you, because you hurt them – you punch them and you kick them. Until you stop doing that they won’t want to be your friend.’ He goes, ‘Oh ... okay’.”

And then, heartbreakingly, he mutters, “My brain tells me to do those things”.

The medication is a boon, Linda says, but beyond that, Jake must learn co-operative habits.

The playground is the bear-pit of a child’s life and this is where Jake still comes to grief. To limit the damage he causes to others and himself, his teacher allows him half his lunch-hour to play; for the rest of the break he sits in the library or at a computer. “We did colouring today. I coloured in a picture for you, Mum,” he said.

Bonny, the case-worker, says that he is learning to make genuine friendships without seeking attention by bullying. She has enrolled him in the Seasons for Growth program where children who have experienced trauma learn to make positive choices. Wesley Mission will stay with Jake for at least two more years, building up his social skills, mixing him in company with other children in collaborative arenas such as his weekly music group so that he learns to give and take with good humour.

The little fellow who was unable to make friends in pre-school or in his street, and who spent his first months in school frustrated because he could not force friendships, is taking steps into a social world.

Jake took 22 cupcakes to class to celebrate his sixth birthday. He was also attending Monkey Mania with a few friends for further celebrations. “Who’s going with you? Braden?” his mother prompted. “Yes!” he said. Who else? He thought hard. “Marcus,” he whispered. “And Isabella, and Talia. But Grant can’t come ‘cause he can’t have egg cup-cakes,” he told his mother gravely. She looked at him with love: there is hope.

– Dinoo Kelleghan

* Names changed.



2

Chapter

Pack bullying





Chapter 2: Pack bullying v. bullying by individuals

This chapter is presented in two parts. The first seeks to build profiles of victims and bullies who were involved in pack bullying when they were in school. The latter part will examine the association between social skills and pack bullying from the perspective of the victims, bullies and bully-victims.

Profile: victims of pack bullying

The study found a significant difference in the experience of pack bullying when compared to the age of respondents. As indicated in Table 2.1, victims aged 30–44 said they had been more often pack bullied than their 18–29-year-old counterparts. This latter group reported equal experiences of both pack and bullying by individuals (hereafter referred to as individual bullying for the purpose of simplicity).

Table 2.1: Victims' current age and type of bullying faced

		Age (%)	
		18-29	30-44
Bullied by	An Individual	50	42
	A group of students	49	58

Sig: .013 N=840

A significant difference was also discovered when analysing the incidence of pack bullying and the level of schooling at which victims felt they were most bullied. Table 2.2 reveals a greater likelihood of pack bullying where victims were mostly bullied in high school (60 per cent). In contrast those victims mainly bullied in primary school reported a greater frequency of bullying by an individual student.

Table 2.2: Victims' school level and type of bullying faced

		Level of schooling (%)	
		Primary	High
Bullied by	An individual	51	40
	A group of students	50	60

Sig: .011 N=824

As indicated in Table 2.3 and 2.4, pack bullying was found to severely affect not only the frequency of bullying but also the overall length of time it lasted. For instance, 55 per cent of victims who were bullied by an individual student reported that it occurred no more than about once every few weeks whereas 57 per cent of respondents bullied by a group of students mentioned being bullied at least two to three times a

week. This is extremely disturbing since 27 per cent of respondents had stated they were bullied most days. In comparison, only 12 per cent of respondents bullied by individual students reported it occurring most days.

Table 2.3: Type and frequency of bullying

		Bullied by (%)	
		Individual	Group
Bullied	Most days	12	27
	Two to three times a week	17	30
	About once a week	17	13
	About once every few weeks	17	12
	Every now and then	38	19

Sig: .000 N=841

With reference to the length of time the bullying lasted, the study found that 42 per cent of victims bullied by an individual said that the bullying lasted only a few days. In comparison, a third of respondents who stated being victimised by a group of students reported their bullying lasting more than a year (34 per cent). This point is illustrated in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4: Type and duration of bullying

		Bullied by (%)	
		Individual	Group
Bullied	A few days	42	19
	A week	4	5
	A few weeks	12	12
	A month	2	2
	A few months	11	16
	More than a few months but less than one year	14	12
	More than a year	16	34

Sig: .000 N=841

Despite these results, victims, particularly those of pack bullying, were not willing to tell anyone about their ordeal. In fact, 54 per cent of victims bullied by both parties refused to tell anyone about the incident (see Table 2.5). This result is supported in the work by Tucker (2008: 2) who provides anecdotal evidence from a teacher to suggest that this is a common occurrence in most schools. "In about 90 per cent of cases, it's a parent, another teacher or a friend who brings it to our attention ... rarely does the kid being bullied ever bring it to us."

Table 2.5: Type of bullying and willingness to report

Bullying reported		Age (%)	
		Individual	Group
	Yes	46	46
	No	54	54

N=841

The willingness of victims to report bullying was assessed with reference to the frequency and duration of their school experiences. An interesting finding emerging from this analysis was that victims of pack bullying were only willing to report the incident once it had reached a critical point. That is, where they had been bullied most days. However, the pack bullying victim's dire situation is made clearer through a closer examination of respondents who did not report the bullying. Even though the majority of these victims admitted to being bullied two to three times a week they were not willing to report this incident. Hence this would imply that pack bullying victims were only willing to report the incident due to frustration arising from their prolonged torment.

In comparison, respondents who were bullied by individual students were willing to report the bullying incident even if it occurred infrequently.

Table 2.6: Willingness to report measured by bullying type and frequency

Bullying reported	Frequency	Bullied by (%)	
		Individual	Group
Bullying reported – yes	Most days	17	35
	Two to three times a week	19	28
	About once a week	19	11
	About once every few weeks	15	11
	Every now and then	30	14
Bullying reported – no	Most days	7	20
	Two to three times a week	15	31
	About once a week	16	15
	About once every few weeks	18	12
	Every now and then	44	24

Yes Sig: .000 N=384
No Sig: .000 N=457

The results presented in Table 2.7 regarding the duration of the bullying episodes highlighted a similar relationship to the previous table. As such, it seems that victims of pack bullying are only willing to report the bullying as an absolute last option. The implication here is that the effects of pack bullying are much more

acute than individual bullying as respondents are likely to tolerate it until it becomes unbearable.

This is further exhibited through a closer look at the responses of pack bullying victims who did not report the incident. It appears that the majority of these victims were also bullied most days. An inference can be made linking the results regarding the frequency and duration of bullying. That is, victims of pack bullying seemed to display a combination of lower assertiveness and self-esteem than those bullied by individual students. This is supported when considering that victims bullied by individual students were willing to report the incident even though the majority were bullied infrequently. Meanwhile the behaviour of pack bullying victims appeared to be more a measure of desperation than a display of assertiveness and self-esteem.

Table 2.7: Willingness to report measured by bullying type and duration

Bullying reported	Duration	Bullied by (%)	
		Individual	Group
Bullying reported – yes	A few days	37	18
	A week	6	5
	A few weeks	12	12
	A month	2	1
	A few months	10	15
	More than a few months but less than a year	12	10
	More than a year	21	39
Bullying reported – no	A few days	46	21
	A week	1	4
	A few weeks	12	12
	A month	2	2
	A few months	13	17
	More than a few months but less than a year	15	14
	More than a year	12	30

Yes Sig: .000 N=384
No Sig: .000 N=457

The results from this analysis generate a particularly large concern for victims of pack bullying. This concern relates to the association between pack bullying and the victims' perception of their social skills when they were in school.

Story

No respite from ridicule

Some victims of bullying remember a time or incident when they were the subject of peer harassment. Others are more unfortunate; they live out their school days under a constant barrage of attacks. How does it feel when there is no respite from ridicule?



Nicholas is in Year 6 and has just turned twelve. He can't remember a time in his primary school years when he wasn't bullied. He is still bullied every day and it is mostly, he says, because of how he looks. Nicholas is by no means alone.

Schools are filled with kids who are teased for being too tall, too short, too thin, too fat, or any other outstanding feature their specific gene pool happens to fling their way.

For Nicholas, it began as young as kindergarten but at such an early age, it didn't register as malicious.

"In kindergarten I just thought they were joking around but since I've gotten older I've realised they're not joking around, they're being serious about it," he said. "I notice they always pinpoint things about you when they bully you.

"I used to think, 'I don't understand why they're bullying me. What is it about me?' It does sink in after a while. It used to upset me a lot when I was in Grades Two, Three and Four. After that I sort of didn't care at all."

Nicholas says he has learnt to ignore the bullying, turn a deaf ear to the taunts, walk away when he is approached by notorious bullies and rely on his group of friends (also the subjects of bullying) for friendship and support.

For such a tender age he's also pretty cluey about why bullies do what they do. Having been the subject of constant peer harassment for as long as he can recall, he would be excused for deeming bullies as nothing more than malicious thugs but Nicholas sees right through the tough veneer he so often encounters.

"They do it because they feel bad. They make themselves feel better by picking on other people because there's somebody else who bullies them and they're trying to be big and tough," he said. "The kids that do it are usually the really, really tall people.

"I've heard one bully say that it's because his mum picks on him. He said, 'My Mum picks on me and it must get through to me that I must pick on other people too'.

"He's realised what's happening. I think he's been on so many detentions that it's starting to get through to him. He isn't bullying anybody anymore. People have complimented him on being nicer."

Unlike the reformed bully, Nicholas' home life is a refuge of peace, love and support. He is in one of Wesley Mission's foster care homes and has been with his foster parents since he was four years old. During the past eight years they have nurtured and

loved Nicholas. When he comes home from school miserable, he says, they make everything better. Admiration and appreciation streak across his face as he talks of their support.

Nicholas' school is not blind to the prevailing bullying issues and have started to take action. He says the students have been involved in role play, watched DVDs on the subject and had discussions about bullying.

"Since we've been doing this bullying program at school, I think it's getting through them. Some kids in my school actually told them that they were bullies.

"I've heard they said, 'Yeah, yeah, whatever'. They don't really care — but when the principal is organising stuff like the bullying programs, I think it is actually starting to sink in."

Next year he faces high school. This is a daunting, nerve-racking prospect that fills Nicholas with mixed emotions. He's looking forward to a fresh start but is unsure about the new environment.

Ceaseless bullying has taken its toll on how Nicholas views going to school. Steps are being made in the right direction but for kids like Nicholas, the battle is not yet over. It will be a difficult to transform what Nicholas feels is his appointed schoolyard lot in life.

"I feel like, 'These people are going to bully me again. It's most likely going to happen every day so I might as well ... I'm most likely going to get bullied so I think, 'Just get it over and done with, get out of school as soon as it's over'."

– Linda Barclay



Profile: bullies' involvement in pack bullying

It should be stated at the outset that the results presented here might be one-sided as the sample of bullies included in the following analysis was made up of a disproportionate number of bully-victims. As such, in this section of the analysis the term “bully” will be used to imply both the bullies and bully-victims in the sample. However, the original labels will be used to present the findings with regard to the involvement of social skills.

As in the case of victims, no gender differences were discovered with reference to the involvement in pack bullying as opposed to individual bullying. However, unlike the victim statements, there was no relationship found between age of respondents at the time of the survey and their participation in pack bullying.

Table 2.8: Bullies' current age and type of bullying activity

		Age (%)	
		18-29	30-44
Bullying enacted	Mainly on my own	35	34
	Mainly as part of a group	65	67

N=395

An interesting comparative result was discovered when examining the frequency of bullying by respondents acting on their own or as part of a group. There was no significant difference between the frequency of bullying engaged in by individuals or group participants. However, both suggested that the bullying happened only once or twice. Meanwhile, the results from the victims' experience suggest that pack bullying occurred more frequently than bullies seem to believe.

Table 2.9: Type and frequency of bullying activity

		Type of bullying (%)	
		On my own	Part of a group
Bullying enacted	Once or twice	51	59
	Sometimes	41	37
	About once a week	3	3
	Several times a week	4	2

N=395

Social skills and pack bullying

Self-esteem and the victim

A significant association was discovered through a cross-tabulation of self-esteem scores and pack bullying. The results suggested that victims recalling experiences of pack bullying reported lower self-esteem than those who were bullied by an individual student. As such the study found 41 per cent of respondents bullied by an individual scored 16–20 on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) while 37 per cent of victims bullied by a group of students produced a score between 11 and 15.

Table 2.10: Type of bullying and self-rated Rosenberg score

		Bullied by (%)	
		Individual	Group
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	0–5	3	5
	5–10	10	13
	11–15	27	37
	16–20	41	34
	21–25	13	8
	26–30	6	3

Sig: 0.001 N=840

In an effort to further explicate the effects of pack bullying on the self-esteem of victims, elaboration models were constructed. These models allow for the inclusion of additional criteria as controls within the analysis. As a result, the study uncovered a significant association between self-esteem, the type of bully and age of the respondents at the time of the survey. The results in Table 2.11 suggested that the 30–44 year-old victims of pack bullying who reported lower self-esteem than their 18–29-year-old counterparts. This is understandable as this was also the group that reported higher instances of pack bullying in school.

Table 2.11: Current age, self-esteem and type of bullying faced

			Bullied by (%)	
			Individuals	Group
Age: 18-29	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	0 to 5	3	7
		5 to 10	9	11
		11 to 15	30	34
		16 to 20	37	37
		21 to 25	12	8
		26 to 30	9	4
Age:30-44	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	0 to 5	3	4
		5 to 10	11	14
		11 to 15	25	39
		16 to 20	44	33
		21 to 25	13	7
		26 to 30	4	3

18-29 Sig: 0.090 N=346
30-44 Sig: 0.009 N=495

The study has already established an association between self-esteem and pack bullying. This association was more apparent where respondents were unlikely to report the bullying incident: 42 per cent of pack bullying victims who scored 11–15 on the self-esteem scale did not report the bullying when they were in school.

Table 2.12: Willingness to report, self-esteem and type of bullying faced

			Bullied by (%)	
			Individuals	Group
Reported — yes	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	0–5	1	6
		5–10	8	15
		11–15	31	32
		16–20	39	34
		21–25	15	10
		26–30	7	4
Reported — no	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	0–5	5	5
		5–10	12	11
		11–15	25	42
		16–20	43	35
		21–25	11	6
		26–30	6	2

Yes Sig: 0.021 N=384
No Sig: 0.002 N=457

Self-esteem and the bully

A similar examination of self-esteem was conducted from the perspective of the bully participating in pack bullying. The study did not uncover any significant difference in the self-esteem scores of bullies who engaged in either individual or pack bullying. This also seemed to be the case with reference to gender and age of respondents. This is not surprising as the study has already established that the victims in the sample reported the lowest levels of self-esteem.

Assertiveness and the victim

A cross-tabulation of the assertiveness measures against the experience of pack bullying highlighted three specific indicators that had a greater association with reference to victims. These were:

- I looked like an unhappy person.
- I kept to myself and did not really interact with others.
- I generally felt more comfortable in the company of teachers or other adults that with kids of my own age.

Table 2.13: Assertiveness indicators and type of bullying faced

		Bullied by (%)	
		Individuals	Group
Unhappy person	Strongly agree	11	13
	Agree	32	43
	Disagree	47	39
	Strongly disagree	10	4
Sig: .000 N=841			
Kept to myself	Strongly agree	9	12
	Agree	32	43
	Disagree	51	40
	Strongly disagree	9	5
Sig: .000 N=841			
More comfortable in the company of teachers and adults	Strongly agree	9	20
	Agree	34	44
	Disagree	47	32
	Strongly disagree	10	5
Sig: .000 N=841			

Chapter 2: Pack bullying v. bullying by individuals

These indicators were incorporated in elaboration analyses examining the differences with reference to the types of bullying experienced by victims.

The study found a link between admissions of looking like an unhappy person and being teased in the playground. This association was more significant for the victims of pack bullying. Respondents who were bullied by individual students agreed that they looked like an unhappy person where they were continuously bullied in the playground. However, the damaging effects of those who were pack bullied are highlighted with the majority of respondents looking unhappy with even the slightest experience in a playground setting. This was also found to be the case with being called hurtful names (see Table 2.14).

Meanwhile, similar results were found between victims bullied by individuals and those who were pack bullied with reference to being left out of things on purpose and having their possessions moved or hidden. Both groups agreed with looking like unhappy people when this bullying occurred more frequently.

The following analyses tested the propensity of victims to keep to themselves based on the type and forms of bullying they experienced in school. The results indicated the harmful effects of pack bullying. Each form of bullying bar physical, was significantly related to the victims recalling their intent to keep to themselves (see Table 2.15).

Table 2.14: Capacity for assertiveness measured by the types and forms of bullying (1)

			Frequency of various forms of bullying—teased in an unpleasant way in the playground (%)			
			Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Bullied by individual	Kept to myself	Strongly agree	10	8	13	19
		Agree	23	31	35	48
		Disagree	54	49	47	29
		Strongly disagree	13	13	5	5
Bullied by group	Kept to myself	Strongly agree	12	9	10	26
		Agree	26	44	49	51
		Disagree	54	42	38	30
		Strongly disagree	9	4	4	4

Individual Sig: 0.000 N=384
Group Sig: 0.000 N=457

Table 2.15: Capacity for assertiveness measured by the types and forms of bullying (2)

			Frequency of various form of bullying—left out of things on purpose (%)			
			Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Bullied by: individual	Kept to myself	Strongly agree	5	5	17	29
		Agree	26	33	44	59
		Disagree	59	53	32	38
		Strongly dsagree	10	8	8	5
Bullied by: group	Kept to myself	Strongly agree	13	7	11	22
		Agree	30	40	51	48
		Disagree	54	45	36	28
		Strongly dsagree	3	8	2	2

Individual Sig: 0.000 N=384
Group Sig: 0.000 N=457

In contrast, the only form of bullying regarded as significant by victims of individual bullies was the frequency with which they were ignored or avoided when in school.

The results from the final assertiveness indicator revealed much the same results. Essentially, victims of pack bullying reported feeling more comfortable in the company of teachers in circumstances where they were at least sometimes bullied (see Table 2.16).

This study does not seek to downplay the effects of individual bullying on the victim. This chapter simply aims to identify the associated impacts of pack bullying on the life skills development of respondents in Sydney.

Empathy and the bully

A comparison of the empathetic nature of bullies in relation to their engagement in either individual or pack bullying revealed two significant associations. An equally large percentage of pack and individual bullies reported an inclination to making the situation better. However, in comparison to individual bullies, a greater proportion of pack bullies disagreed with this statement.

An interesting result was discovered with reference to the sentiment that children subject to bullying should learn to “toughen up and take a blow”. Although the majority of bullies who engaged in both forms of bullying agreed with this statement, an equally large proportion of pack bullies disagreed. As such, it would seem that pack bullies report a higher level of empathy than individual bullies (see Table 2.17).

Table 2.17: Empathy and type of bully

		Type of bullying (%)	
		On my own	Part of a group
Making the situation better	Strongly agree	18	9
	Agree	62	62
	Disagree	17	26
	Strongly disagree	4	3

Sig: 0.026 N=396

Toughen up and learn to take a blow	Strongly agree	14	7
	Agree	44	41
	Disagree	29	41
	Strongly disagree	14	11

Sig: 0.026 N=396

The inclusion of gender and age within the analysis of the empathy of bullies produced a significant result with reference to age and the feeling that people should “toughen up and learn to take a blow” when they are subject to bullying. A greater proportion of pack bullies aged 18–29 years agreed that this was their opinion of the victim when they were in school. The 30–44-year-olds on the other hand were less inclined to agree.

This is an interesting result as it can also be argued that the latter age group had more time to reflect deeply and feel remorse about their actions in school and that this might have had some influence on their response to this question. Another point to consider may be that during this time they no longer had the support of their peers, which may have affected the way they felt about their school years. This is made further apparent with the fact that the majority of both age groups that bullied individually also believed that victims should toughen up and learn to take a blow (see Table 2.18).

Table 2.16: Capacity for assertiveness measured by the types and forms of bullying (3)

			Frequency of various form of bullying—avoided or ignored by other students on purpose (%)			
			Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Bullied by: individual	Kept to myself	Strongly agree	4	6	20	35
		Agree	24	39	34	35
		Disagree	58	48	34	22
		Strongly disagree	14	8	11	9
Bullied by: group	Kept to myself	Strongly agree	9	12	26	38
		Agree	32	43	53	38
		Disagree	53	39	18	24
		Strongly disagree	7	4	4	1

Individual Sig: 0.000 N=384
Group Sig: 0.000 N=457

Table 2.18: Capacity for empathy measured by type of bully and current age

			Age (%)	
			18-29	30-44
Bullied mainly on my own	Toughen up and learn to take a blow	Strongly agree	18	10
		Agree	44	44
		Disagree	27	30
		Strongly disagree	12	16
Bullied mainly as part of a group	Toughen up and learn to take a blow	Strongly agree	13	2
		Agree	42	41
		Disagree	36	45
		Strongly disagree	9	13

mainly on my own Sig: 0.021 N=384
 mainly in a group Sig: 0.002 N=457

Social skills and pack bullying – the bully-victim experience

The results provided thus far have solely focused on the reported impact of pack bullying experienced by pure victims and undertaken by pure bullies. This section attempts to take the analysis a step further by examining the experience of pack bullying reported on the bully-victim.

The inclusion of this additional variable allowed for some very intriguing results. For instance, bully victims were found to mainly experience individual bullying while pure victims were the major targets of pack bullying.

Table 2.20: Pack bullying and victim type

	Victim type (%)		
	Pure victim	Sometimes victim/ other times bully	
Bullied by individual	Never	42	51
Bullied by group	Sometimes	58	49

Sig: .000 N=1135

Other social skills results:

Pack bullying and co-operativeness

A significant result was identified when the co-operativeness level of the victim was compared to their experience of bullying. Most victims bullied by an individual and group of students scored less than half on the co-operativeness scale. A greater proportion of these victims was bullied by a group of students. Most victims who scored 31–40 were bullied by an individual student than a group of students. It would therefore appear that victims bullied by an individual were more likely to possess, on their own valuation, a higher level of co-operativeness than those bullied by a group of students.

Table 2.19: Capacity for co-operativeness and type of bully

		Bullied by (%)	
		Individual	Group
co-operativeness	20 or less	1	5
	21-30	49	58
	31-40	45	35
	41 or more	4	3

Sig: 0.001 N=841

The analysis found a significant result with regard to the frequency of pack bullying experienced by the victim and bully-victim. While most of victims in the study reported being pack bullied most days, a disproportionate number of bully-victims stated that it occurred only every now and then. There was no significant difference in the case of being bullied by an individual; respondents from both groups equally reported it having occurred “every now and then”.

Table 2.21: Victim type, frequency and type of bullying

		Victim type (%)	
		Pure Victim	Sometimes a victim/ other times bully
Bullied by individual	Most days	17	5
	Two to three times a week	20	12
	About once a week	19	15
	About once every few weeks	16	18
	Every now and then	28	50
Bullied by group	Most days	35	11
	Two to three times a week	32	26
	About once a week	11	16
	About once every few weeks	8	18
	Every now and then	14	30

Individual Sig: .000 N=384
 Group Sig: .000 N=457

A similar result was achieved with reference to the duration of bullying. The data provided in Table 2.22 highlights the hopeless situation experienced by pure victims of pack bullying. While 42 per cent of pure victims fell prey to pack bullying for more than a year, only 21 per cent of bully-victims experienced it for the same length of time. The majority of bully victims said that their experience of pack bullying lasted only a few days.

Table 2.22: Victim type, duration and type of bullying

		Victim type (%)	
		Pure victim	Sometimes victim/other times bully
Bullied by individual	A few days	29	59
	A week	2	5
	A few weeks	12	11
	A month	1	4
	A few months	14	8
	More than a few months but less than a year	18	8
	More than a year	24	6
Bullied by group	A few days	14	28
	A week	3	8
	A few weeks	9	18
	A month	1	3
	A few months	17	15
	More than a few months but less than a year	14	9
	More than a year	42	21

Individual Sig: .000 N=384
Group Sig: .000 N=457

From these results it seems that it is the pure victims who are most affected by pack bullying.

In the case of pure bullies, the results were not able to be interpreted as the sample size was skewed towards the bully-victim. Furthermore, the cell counts from the cross-tab were greater than 20 per cent: such an analysis does not meet the criteria for using cross-tabs.

Self-esteem

There were no significant differences in self-esteem between the pure victim and bully victim in the sample. Both scored relatively low on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale regardless of whether they were reported bullying by an individual or group of students.

Assertiveness

There were a number of significant differences in the reported assertiveness measures of pure victims and bully-victims. Interestingly, two of these results incorporated the same measures mentioned earlier. These were:

- I looked like an unhappy person.
- I kept to myself and did not really interact with others.

The results revealed that a greater proportion of pure victims felt that they looked like unhappy people in school when they were bullied by a group of students. However, bully-victims were found to only consider themselves to be unhappy when they were bullied by an individual student. This is understandable since the majority of bully-victims claimed they were most frequently bullied by students acting on their own.

These results are once again mimicked with reference to respondents keeping to themselves when they were in school. However, the difference with these results was that the majority of both pure victims and bully-victims did not feel the need to keep to themselves where they were bullied by individual students. This serves to highlight the destructive effects of pack bullying on the perceived assertiveness of victims, particularly pure victims.

Table 2.23: Capacity for assertiveness measured by the victim and bullying type (1)

		Bully type (%)	
		Kept to myself	Sometimes victim/other times bully
Bullied by individual	Strongly agree	12	5
	Agree	35	29
	Disagree	49	53
	Strongly disagree	5	14
Bullied by group	Strongly agree	12	11
	Agree	48	34
	Disagree	36	48
	Strongly disagree	3	7

Individual Sig: .002 N=384
Group Sig: .010 N=457

However, the results were much different when comparing the pack bullying experiences of victims and bully-victims to the perception of their overly apologetic nature. In this instance, victims were found to report being overly apologetic regardless of the type of bullying they were subjective to. In contrast, the majority of bully-victims reported the opposite. That is, they disagreed with this statement whether they were bullied by an individual or pack of students.

Chapter 2: Pack bullying v. bullying by individuals

The results show that bully-victims demonstrated greater assertiveness than pure victims did when they were faced with either a pack bullying or individual bullying situation in school. This is further supported by the results with reference to the inclination of both groups to fight back or stand up for themselves. A greater percentage of bully-victims reported standing up for themselves and in some instances even fighting back whether the situation involved an individual bully or group of students. In comparison, victims reported feeling less inclined to stand up for themselves or fight back irrespective of the situation.

Table 2.24: Capacity for assertiveness measured by the victim and bullying type 2.

	Stood up for myself	Victim type (%)	
		Pure victim	Sometimes victim/other times bully
Bullied by individual	Strongly agree	7	10
	Agree	33	61
	Disagree	51	28
	Strongly disagree	9	1
Bullied by group	Strongly agree	10	15
	Agree	35	52
	Disagree	43	33
	Strongly disagree	12	1

Individual Sig: .000 N=384
Group Sig: .000

Empathy

There was much difficulty in obtaining a significant relationship between empathy and pack bullying due to the sample size of the bully. Therefore, the results presented in this section are based purely on the data within the cross-tabulation. They serve to provide an indication of the difference in self-reported empathy between bullies and bully-victims within the sample specifically.

An analysis of the difference in the level of empathy between these groups found bully-victims to be more inclined to make the situation better where they engaged in pack bullying. It was interesting to find that the majority of pure bullies only felt like making the situation better on occasions when they bullied on their own. It is possible that the group mentality which exists in pack bullying may serve to comfort the pure bully against feelings of guilt for his or her actions. The research conducted by Salmivalli et al., (1996: 11) assists in supporting this argument. Their research found that reinforcers within the group serve to assert the bully's dominance over the victim in a positive way.

Bully-victims, having been a victim themselves, might understand the plight of the victim more than do pure bullies.

Interestingly, only a small proportion of pure bullies felt angry about their actions. Rather, they tended to display a lack of remorse and empathy about bullying other students as part of a group. Bully-victims on the other hand reported feeling angry about their actions more often.

The lack of empathy displayed by the pure bully becomes more distinct with findings that a greater proportion felt that they could continue to engage in pack bullying without feeling remorse. More bullies than bully-victims also reported gaining a thrill from seeing how far someone could be pushed when they were in school.

Table 2.25: Capacity for empathy measured by bully type and bully/bully-victim status 1.

	Make the situation better	Bully type (%)	
		Pure bully	Sometimes victim/other times bully
Bullied by individual	Strongly agree	35	14
	Agree	44	66
	Disagree	13	18
	Strongly disagree	9	3
Bullied as part of a group	Strongly agree	8	9
	Agree	39	65
	Disagree	42	24
	Strongly disagree	12	2

As Individual Sig: .038 N=137
As part of a group Sig: .007 N=260

Capacity for empathy measured by bully type and bully/bully-victim status 2.

	Felt angry about what had happened	Bully type (%)	
		bully	Sometimes victim/other times bully
Bullied by individual	Strongly agree	22	17
	Agree	57	67
	Disagree	13	15
	Strongly disagree	9	2
Bullied as part of a group	Strongly agree	4	12
	Agree	39	65
	Disagree	46	22
	Strongly disagree	12	1

As Individual Sig: .285 N=137
As part of a group Sig: .000 N=260

Other social skills

The inclusion of questions regarding the form of bullying behaviour into the analysis produced two significant results about the differences in aggressiveness of victims, bullies and bully-victims.

Bully scenario

This scenario involved a bullying situation where another student pushed in front of the victim in a canteen line with an excuse that seemed patently false. Respondents were asked to reflect on their time in school and suggest the level of importance they would attach to certain indicators such as retaliating or forgetting the incident. The result showed that a larger percentage of bully-victims compared to pure victims would find it important to retaliate against the bully when they had been they were previously pack bullied.

Table 2.26: Anger management measured by the victim and bullying type

	Importance placed on retaliation (victim scenario)	Bully type (%)	
		Pure victim	Sometimes victim/other times bully
Bullied by individual	Very important	8	11
	Important	30	51
	Unimportant	51	33
	Very unimportant	11	5
Bullied by group	Very important	7	11
	Important	36	42
	Unimportant	41	40
	Very unimportant	15	7

Individual Sig: .000 N=384
Group Sig: .046 N=457

Victim scenario

This scenario targeted the bullies and bully-victims in the sample. It involved a classroom setting where the bully had just received a marked class test paper from the teacher. The bully finds out that s/he has once again scored low while a particular student at the front of the class had, as always, done well. Analysis of responses to this scenario revealed that bullies generally found it much easier to take their frustrations out physically if they were supported by a group of students than if they bullied as individuals.

Table 2.27: Anger management measured by the bully type and bully/bully-victim status

	Relative difficulty in responding physically (bully scenario)	Bully type (%)	
		Bully	Sometimes victim/other times bully
Bullied by individual	Very easy	9	4
	Easy	35	25
	Difficult	39	32
	Very difficult	17	39
Bullied as group	Very easy	12	3
	Easy	42	17
	Difficult	15	30
	Very difficult	31	50

Individual Sig: .251 N=137
Group Sig: .002 N=260

The interplay of social skills

This section seeks to provide a better understanding of the association between the various social skills and their influence on the reported incidence of pack bullying.

The victim

The analysis here involved cross-tabulating self-esteem scores of pack bullying victims against the assertiveness indicators. The results highlighted a number of significant associations between these two social skills and pack bullying.

The general trend of the analysis was the same for each relevant assertiveness measure. With pack bullying, the level of self-esteem reported by victims was fairly low in circumstances when they had also agreed that their demeanour looked timid.

This was found to be the case with a number of other assertiveness measures, listed below:

- I became tearful when I was picked on.
- I looked like an unhappy person.
- I kept to myself and did not really interact with other peers.
- I was overly apologetic when faced with confrontations.
- I generally felt more comfortable in the company of teachers.

Chapter 2: Pack bullying v. bullying by individuals

Table 2.28: Assertiveness and self-esteem measured by the bullying type

	Looked like an unhappy person (%)				
	Rosenberg Scale	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Bullied by individual	0-5	17	2	1	3
	5-10	24	15	6	10
	11-15	34	36	24	28
	16-20	22	38	46	41
	21-25	0	8	17	12
	26-30	2	1	6	6
Bullied by group	0-5	23	4	1	0
	5-10	26	15	6	10
	11-15	25	47	33	10
	16-20	16	28	46	50
	21-25	8	4	11	15
	26-30	1	3	3	15

By individual Sig: .000 N=384
By group Sig: .000 N=457

Table 2.29: Anger management and self-esteem measured by the bullying type 1.

	How you felt about the individual (%)				
	Rosenberg Scale	Not bothered	Bothered	Angry	Very angry
Bullied by individual	0-5	3	5	4	7
	5-10	10	15	18	11
	11-15	26	31	26	21
	16-20	33	39	29	43
	21-25	13	7	20	18
	26-30	15	2	4	0
Bullied by group	0-5	4	3	4	17
	5-10	10	14	16	24
	11-15	31	38	40	32
	16-20	35	35	34	13
	21-25	13	7	3	13
	26-30	6	2	3	2

By individual Sig: .014 N=384
By group Sig: .001 N=457

Anger management and self-esteem measured by the bullying type 2.

	How you felt about the situation (%)				
	Rosenberg Scale	Not bothered	Bothered	Angry	Very angry
Bullied by individual	0-5	3	5	4	8
	5-10	11	14	16	15
	11-15	26	31	29	15
	16-20	31	41	35	27
	21-25	14	7	14	31
	26-30	14	3	2	4
Bullied by group	0-5	5	4	3	16
	5-10	9	16	12	26
	11-15	27	37	42	33
	16-20	39	34	35	13
	21-25	14	7	5	11
	26-30	7	2	3	2

By individual Sig: .008 N=384
By group Sig: .001 N=457

A closer look at these indicators revealed a major similarity with the earlier discussion of assertiveness. That is, even with the inclusion of self-esteem within the analysis the same assertiveness indicators were found to be significantly associated with pack bullying. It became evident that respondents who reported being pack bullied in school were generally affected in specific areas related to their level of assertiveness.

A comparison of self-esteem and aggressiveness in terms of pack bullying returned a significant result with reference to Scenario 2. Respondents were asked to comment on their level of anger over being the only student in their class excluded from a popular student's birthday party.

Once again, respondents who were pack bullied during their time in school tended to report lower self-esteem as they became angrier over having been excluded and with the individual.

In order to explore further the interplay of social skills in victims of pack bullying, a comparison of assertiveness and anger management was also conducted. A significant result was discovered with the canteen scenario (Scenario 1). Victims of pack bullying who reported fighting back and standing up for themselves when picked on were also found to attach a greater importance to retaliation. However, this result also applied to victims who were bullied by individual students.

The bully

Analysis regarding the interplay of life skills for the bully yielded little reliable information. This was largely due to the small sample size of pure bullies.

Further analysis highlighted the great the harm caused by pack bullying. Although this issue was tested retrospectively, the uniform nature of the responses indicated how intense the recollections of bullying were. For example, in looking at the assertiveness of pack bullying victims, the same indicators re-appear throughout the analysis. The results of the study based on retrospective responses are consonant with previous studies which largely involved respondents of school age answering questions about their bullying experiences presented in this report are supported by the existing literature despite it requiring respondents to reflect on their experiences.

The results suggest that pack bullying had a greater impact on pure victims because they were found to generally have the lowest level of social skills in comparison to the other groups in the study. This is disturbing as pack bullying was found to occur more frequently and also to last a longer duration.

Although it was difficult to discuss pack bullying from the perspective of the bully an important point emerged, namely, bully-victims engaging in pack bullying generally reported more empathetic feelings towards their victims than did pure bullies.

Table 2.30: Assertiveness and anger management measured by the bullying type

		Fought back when picked on (%)			
	Importance attached to retaliating	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Bullied by individual	Very important	39	9	4	9
	Important	32	46	35	39
	Unimportant	23	41	52	43
	Very unimportant	7	4	9	8
Bullied by group	Very important	24	9	5	8
	Important	44	48	28	39
	Unimportant	20	38	53	41
	Very unimportant	11	5	14	12

By individual Sig: .000 N=384
By group Sig: .000 N=457

Analysis highlighted the great harm caused by pack bullying. Although this issue was tested retrospectively, the uniform nature of the responses indicated how intense the recollections of bullying were.







3

Chapter

Emotional bullying

Chapter 3: Emotional bullying

This chapter seeks to examine the differences in the self-reported impact of emotional and physical bullying. A major aspect of this analysis involves identifying the way in which the various social skills are associated with these forms of bullying. The chapter will begin with a discussion of the general incidence of emotional and physical bullying against the victim and by the bully. This will be followed by a look into the influences on the social skills of the victim, bully and bully-victim. The chapter will conclude with a presentation of the results regarding the interplay of social skills associated with reports of emotional and physical bullying.

Emotional v. physical bullying

For the purposes of analysis, emotional bullying was taken to involve all forms of indirect bullying such as being called hurtful names or being excluded or ignored. Physical bullying referred to direct forms of intimidation such as being threatened with harm, hit or kicked.

The victim

The results provided in Table 3.1 indicate that there was a greater incidence of emotional bullying. Most victims said physical bullying occurred infrequently or not at all. Emotional bullying occurred with a greater frequency and caused the greatest pain.

For example, a large proportion of victims reported often experiencing the following types of emotional bullying:

- teased in an unpleasant way in the playground (30 per cent)
- called hurtful names (30 per cent)
- left out of things on purpose (25 per cent)
- avoided or ignored by other students on purpose (25 per cent).

Based on this table, it appears that being called hurtful names was the most common form of emotional bullying. This related to the fact that it had the greatest percentage of respondents who reported it occurring most of the time.

Table 3.1: Frequency of emotional bullying (%)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Teased in the playground	10	41	30	19
Teased in the classroom	22	48	19	11
A teacher ignored the bullying incident in the classroom	35	34	17	13
Left out of things on purpose	19	42	25	15
Avoided or ignored by other students on purpose	16	44	25	15
Threatened with harm	42	41	12	5
Hit or kicked	53	34	9	4
Possessions were moved or hidden	32	45	16	6
Called hurtful names	6	36	30	28

N=1135 % may not equal 100 due to rounding

Gender

By applying a gender comparison to the analysis, significant associations were discovered with the types of emotional bullying mentioned above. Female victims were found to generally report experiencing more emotional bullying than males. For example, 85 per cent of female victims in the sample reported being left out of things on purpose at least sometimes. In comparison, 77 per cent of male victims reported the same incidence.

Table 3.2: Gender and emotional bullying (exclusion)

		Gender (%)	
		Male	Female
Left out on purpose	Never	23	15
	Sometimes	45	39
	Often	22	27
	Most of the time	11	20

N=1135

However, the results were reversed when considering the physical forms of bullying. That is, a greater proportion of males to females reported being threatened with harm and hit or kicked at least sometimes.

Table 3.3: Gender and physical bullying

		Gender (%)	
		Male	Female
Threatened with harm	Never	33	51
	Sometimes	46	35
	Often	17	8
	Most of the time	4	6

Sig: 0.000 N=1135

		Age (%)	
		Male	Female
Hit or kicked	Never	42	63
	Sometimes	40	28
	Often	13	6
	Most of the time	5	3

Sig: 0.028 N=1135

These results are supported by the existing literature which suggests that female students tend to use more verbal or indirect forms of bullying while boys employ more physically aggressive means of bullying their victims (Frisen et al., 2007: 750). The report notes the anecdotal evidence of Wesley Mission caseworkers of a changing trend, with more girls now engaging in physical acts of bullying as well as continuing to employ emotional bullying tactics. This is supported in the study by Rigby and Bagshaw (2001: 38) who found that verbal aggression was a common feature of both genders.

Age

In terms of age differences, the study found a number of significant results relating to both the emotional and physical form of bullying. One example was that a greater proportion of respondents aged 18–29 years reported never being hit or kicked when they were in school. That appeared to be more characteristic of the 30–44-year-olds who also reported being called hurtful names more often than their 18–29-year-old counterparts.

Table 3.4: Age and emotional bullying (name-calling)

		Age (%)	
		18-29	30-44
Called hurtful names	Never	8.8	4.7
	Sometimes	39.2	33.2
	Often	25.5	33.6
	Most of the time	26.5	28.5

Sig: 0.001 N=1135

		Age (%)	
		18-29	30-44
Threatened with harm	Never	45.5	39.4
	Sometimes	40.8	40.5
	Often	9.5	14.1
	Most of the time	4.2	6.1

Sig: 0.028 N=1135

Frequency of bullying

The study sought to determine if the frequency of bullying projected an influence on each of the emotional and physical forms to which victims were exposed. The results were found to be significant for the majority of these analyses. Respondents who were bullied more frequently during school reported that much of this bullying was emotional. For example, 45 per cent of victims who reported being bullied “most days” reported that most of this bullying took the form of being “teased in the playground” (see Table 3.5).

Chapter 3: Emotional bullying

With reference to physical aggression, it appeared that even with a constant bullying experience the majority of respondents reported physical harm occurring only sometimes. For example, 35 per cent of victims who reported having been bullied on most days stated that they were only sometimes threatened with harm (see Table 3.6).

Duration of bullying

The analysis involving the duration of bullying produced results that were markedly different to the analysis of frequency. There were no significant relationships discovered between the physical forms of bullying and the duration that these experiences

lasted. However, emotional bullying came out strongly with regard to being teased in the playground and called hurtful names (see Table 3.7).

With reference to being called hurtful names, the results suggested that a gradual increase in the duration of bullying was associated with victims reporting a greater frequency of verbal abuse. That is, the longer this form of bullying lasted the worse it became. This result is disturbing as it serves to highlight the greater impact of emotional bullying, particularly over extended periods of time. This fear is heightened when considering the findings from previous research which argue that emotional bullying is likely to cause the most hurt to the victim (Rigby and Bagshaw, 2001: 40).

Table 3.5: Volume of emotional bullying

		Frequency of bullying (%)				
		Most days	Two to three times a week	About once a week	About once every few weeks	Every now and then
Teased in the playground	Never	6	8	7	11	19
	Sometimes	18	29	46	55	60
	Often	31	43	33	23	17
	Most of the time	45	20	14	11	5

Sig: .000 N=1135

Table 3.6: Volume of physical bullying

		Frequency of bullying (%)				
		Most days	Two to three times a week	About once a week	About once every few weeks	Every now and then
Threatened with harm	Never	29	36	38	49	56
	Sometimes	35	42	49	41	37
	Often	22	15	12	9	3
	Most of the time	14	6	1	1	2

Sig: .000 N=1135

Table 3.7: Duration of emotional bullying

		Duration (%)						
		A few days	A week	A few weeks	A month	A few months	More than a few months but less than one year	More than a year
Teased in the playground	Never	18	18	7	14	6	14	5
	Sometimes	56	46	58	45	44	32	22
	Often	19	13	27	28	39	33	36
	Most of the time	8	23	8	14	11	20	37

Sig: .000 N=1135

		Duration (%)						
		A few days	A week	A few weeks	A month	A few months	More than a few months but less than one year	More than a year
Called hurtful names	Never	11	3	5	17	4	10	2
	Sometimes	55	46	50	31	35	26	17
	Often	22	26	30	38	41	32	32
	Most of the time	12	26	15	14	20	31	49

Sig: .000 N=1135

Pack bullying

Victims of pack bullying reported a greater frequency of emotional bullying than victims bullied by individuals. In some instances, the difference in this frequency was quite large. For example, 87 per cent of pack bullying victims reported at least occasionally being left out of things on purpose. This was the case for 69 per cent of victims bullied by individual students. The results for physical bullying did not yield any significant results.

Table 3.8: Bully type and emotional bullying (exclusion)

Left out of things		Bully type (%)	
		Individual	Group
	Never	31	13
	Sometimes	46	39
	Often	17	28
	Most of the time	5	20

Sig: .000 N=842

Reporting bullying – emotional v. physical bullying

Most victims in the sample seemed to be only willing to report emotional bullying when it persisted more than “often”. This is a disturbing result as it implied that victims were willing to put up with being ignored, teased and taunted until the bullying reached an unbearable point. This is highlighted in Table 3.9 below.

Table 3.9: Willingness to report varying forms of emotional bullying

Reporting of bullying		Teased in playground (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
	Yes	38	44	47	58
	No	63	57	53	42

Sig: .0009 N=841

Reporting of bullying		Left out on purpose (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
	Yes	43	44	48	54
	No	57	56	52	46

Sig: .0216 N=841

Conversely, victims appeared to be willing to report physical bullying as soon as it occurred. As demonstrated in Table 3.10, respondents who recalled being threatened with harm even slightly voiced their willingness to report the incident.

Table 3.10: Willingness to report varying forms of physical bullying

Reporting of bullying		Threatened with harm (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
	Yes	37	51	59	61
	No	63	50	42	40

Sig: .006 N=841

Action taken

Victims of emotional bullying reported that action was taken when they were “occasionally” victimised. However, the results suggested a lack of appropriate response to the bullying where it occurred more than occasionally. For example, 53 per cent of respondents who were often teased in an unpleasant way in the classroom recalled that no action was taken after they reported it.

This presents some concern with regard to the perception of support held by victims when they were in school. On the one hand, most victims did report emotional bullying to an authority, but only when it reached an intense level. On the other, most of the action taken seems to be during the early stages of bullying. Therefore a suggestion that can be made from this finding is that victims should report emotional bullying in its early stages.

Table 3.11: Action taken in response to reported emotional bullying

Action taken		Teased in classroom (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
	Yes	61	53	47	41
	No	39	47	53	59

Sig: .039 N=561

The bully

An analysis of the emotional bullying tendency of bullies found a significant association with the frequency with which they engaged in this behaviour. As indicated in Table 3.12, respondents who admitted bullying more frequently also reported “giving soft kids a hard time”. However, a closer look at the table below reveals that it is only as the frequency increases from “sometimes” to “about once a week” that bullies admit to giving soft kids a hard time at all. In comparison, the victims’ recollections of their bullying experiences seem to be much more intense and serious.

Further comparisons of this result with the pressures respondents might have felt when they were in school served to highlight the problematic impacts of emotional bullying.

Social skills and emotional bullying

Self-esteem, emotional bullying and the victim

The self-esteem scores obtained from victims in the sample were compared to the various forms of emotional and physical bullying they experienced. The result for this analysis revealed a significant relationship with all these types of bullying. As provided in Table 3.13, there appeared to be an associated drop in the reported self-esteem of victims who were emotionally or physically bullied more than “sometimes”.

However, a closer look at this table highlighted two specific emotional bullying types which, with any increase in their frequency saw a drop in the victims’ self-esteem. These were when:

- a teacher ignored the bullying incident in the classroom
- possessions were moved or hidden.

Table 3.13: Self-esteem and emotional bullying (exclusion) A

		Left out of things (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Rosenberg Scale	0-5	2	3	5	18
	5-10	6	9	19	21
	11-15	28	35	37	31
	16-20	39	40	29	22
	21-25	16	10	6	6
	26-30	9	3	3	2

Sig: .000 N=1135

Self-esteem and physical bullying A

		Threatened with harm (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Rosenberg Scale	0-5	5	6	4	16
	5-10	11	13	14	26
	11-15	30	25	45	26
	16-20	38	34	27	20
	21-25	10	9	7	8
	26-30	5	4	3	3

Sig: .000 N=1135

As such, 24 per cent victims who recalled never having had their possessions moved when they were in school scored 11-15 on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. However, with just the slightest increase in frequency from “never” to “sometimes”, this percentage increases to 38 per cent.

A similar result was also found when the victim was threatened with harm and hit or kicked, namely, while 29 per cent of respondents who reported never being hit or kicked scored 11-15, a single incident of this kind saw the percentage rise to 37 per cent.

Table 3.12: Extent of emotional bullying as stated by bully

		Frequency (%)			
		It happened once or twice	Sometimes	About once a week	Several times a week
Gave soft kids a hard time	Never	60	41	32	29
	Sometimes	36	48	36	36
	Often	2	9	18	14
	Most of the time	3	2	14	21

Sig: .000 N=498

Table 3.14: Self-esteem and emotional bullying (exclusion) B

		Possessions moved or hidden (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Rosenberg Scale	0-5	4	5	8	18
	5-10	13	11	16	13
	11-15	24	38	41	32
	16-20	39	36	27	18
	21-25	14	8	5	10
	26-30	6	2	4	9

Sig: .000 N=1135

Self-esteem and physical bullying B

		Possessions moved or hidden (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Rosenberg Scale	0-5	6	6	6	9
	5-10	12	13	11	23
	11-15	29	37	43	38
	16-20	37	33	31	23
	21-25	12	7	8	4
	26-30	4	5	1	2

Sig: .024 N=1135

As such, on a holistic level it would appear that both the emotional and physical forms of bullying certainly lower self-esteem in victims of bullying.

Self-esteem, emotional bullying and the bully

While the ratio of reported pure bullies is low, making it difficult to reach findings of significance to set against the total population of Sydney, some issues stand out.

The self-esteem of bullies was directly associated with their involvement in emotional bullying. For example, 46 per cent of bullies who often gave soft kids a hard time scored 11-15 on the self-esteem scale. Meanwhile, 41 per cent of bullies who sometimes engaged in this behaviour scored 16-20.

Table 3.15: Self-esteem and extent of emotional bullying as stated by bully

		I gave soft kids a hard time (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Rosenberg Scale	0-5	3	2	0	0
	5-10	8	7	7	6
	11-15	30	37	46	88
	16-20	41	40	36	0
	21-25	12	10	7	0
	26-30	6	4	4	6

Sig: .016 N=498

However, a comparison of physical bullying to self-esteem did not produce a significant association. Therefore, it could be argued that respondents who recalled engaging in emotional bullying when they were in school also reported a lower level of self-esteem during this time.

Assertiveness and emotional bullying

In order to properly understand the association between the assertiveness of respondents and their experience of emotional bullying, a cross-comparison was conducted against each of the indicators involved. The results achieved from this analysis provided an important insight into the influence of this social skill on the respondents' perceptions of their bullying experience.

One indicator of assertiveness was whether the respondent recalled becoming "tearful" when picked on in school. Upon comparison of this indicator, a number of similarities appeared in relation to responses regarding emotional bullying. Becoming tearful was significantly associated with the same types of emotional bullying that were mentioned in greatest frequency at the start of this chapter. These types were being:

- teased in an unpleasant way in the playground
- left out of things on purpose
- avoided or ignored by other students
- called hurtful names.

As can be seen in Table 3.16, respondents reporting any instance of the above-mentioned types of bullying were found to also say they became tearful when targeted. However, they only reported their disagreement with this indicator when they recalled never having experienced these forms of bullying.

Table 3.16: Negative indicator of assertiveness and emotional bullying

		Teased in the playground (%)				Left out of things (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
I became tearful when picked on	Strongly agree	12	8	20	28	9	12	17	31
	Agree	31	46	48	41	36	48	43	44
	Disagree	44	39	28	22	45	33	32	17
	Strongly disagree	13	8	5	8	9	7	7	8
Sig: .000 N=1135					Sig: .000 N=1135				
		Avoided or ignored by others (%)				Called hurtful names (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
I became tearful when picked on	Strongly agree	8	12	20	30	11	10	15	25
	Agree	32	46	48	44	33	43	50	42
	Disagree	50	34	27	20	48	39	31	34
	Strongly disagree	10	8	6	8	8	8	5	9
Sig: .000 N=1135					Sig: .000 N=1135				

The results from the comparison to physical bullying were more difficult to interpret. For example, respondents who reported never being hit or kicked also reported becoming tearful when they were picked on. This may imply that it was not only the physical factors that brought victims to tears but a combination of the two forms of bullying (see Table 3.17).

The results found that the more frequently victims reported emotional bullying, the more likely they were to agree with these negative indicators of assertiveness. For example, respondents who recalled “often” being excluded also tended to report an inclination to keep to themselves (see Table 3.18).

Table 3.17: Negative indicator of assertiveness and physical bullying A

		Hit or kicked (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
I became tearful when picked on	Strongly agree	16	13	19	34
	Agree	44	45	44	40
	Disagree	35	33	30	13
	Strongly disagree	6	9	8	13

Sig: .006 N=1135

Table 3.18: Negative indicator of assertiveness and emotional bullying (exclusion)

		Left out of things (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Kept to myself	Strongly agree	8	7	11	31
	Agree	28	37	49	37
	Disagree	56	48	35	31
	Strongly disagree	9	8	4	2

Sig: .000 N=1136

With further analysis of other assertiveness indicators, the study found a significant association with the same behaviours of emotional bullying as previously mentioned. These indicators include:

- I looked like an unhappy person
- I kept to myself and did not interact with other peers
- I generally felt more comfortable in the company of teachers or other adults than with kids of my own age.

However, upon further examination of the data, it became apparent that the level of assertiveness perceived by respondents may have also been influenced by physical bullying. A comparison of the above-mentioned assertiveness indicators to the victim’s recollection of physical bullying produced significant associations for each indicator. Therefore, a large percentage of victims who recalled being hit or kicked were also found to state a preference to keep to themselves (see Table 3.19).

Table 3.19: Negative indicator of assertiveness and physical bullying B

		Hit or kicked (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Kept to myself	Strongly agree	10	12	18	26
	Agree	37	40	46	47
	Disagree	48	43	34	21
	Strongly disagree	7	5	3	6

Sig: .000 N=1135

On the basis of these findings it could be argued that victims who reported experiencing both emotional and physical bullying when they were in school tended to be of the belief that they had a low level of assertiveness. A more specific inference can be made here: namely, a combination of the forms of bullying these people remember experiencing reflected the level of happiness they felt about themselves in school. This may be linked to the disclosures that they shied away from peer interactions and found comfort in the company of teachers.

In order to maintain continuity with the existing analysis, the same types of bullying mentioned earlier were compared to the more positive assertiveness indicators. These were:

- I stood up for myself when I was teased by other kids.
- I fought back when I was picked on.

The results were significant and differed with reference to whether the type of bullying experienced was emotional or physical.

An increase in the frequency of emotional bullying was associated with a decrease in the number of respondents that were willing to fight back and stand up for themselves. For example, respondents who reported being avoided or ignored on a regular basis when in school were also less likely to stand up for themselves. However in circumstances where this occurred only “sometimes”, respondents reported a greater inclination to positively assert themselves (see Table 3.20).

Table 3.20: Positive indicator of assertiveness and emotional bullying (exclusion)

		Avoided or ignored by others (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
I stood up for myself	Strongly agree	9	10	12	8
	Agree	46	48	37	29
	Disagree	40	37	42	42
	Strongly disagree	5	5	10	21

Sig: .000 N=1135

The result in relation to physical bullying presented a reversed victim viewpoint. Those who reported any instance of physical bullying conveyed a greater tendency to stand up for themselves or fight back. For example, 46 per cent of victims who recalled being hit or kicked, even sometimes, also reported a willingness to fight back against this behaviour (see Table 3.21).

Table 3.21: Positive indicator of assertiveness and physical bullying

		Hit or kicked (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Fought back when picked on	Strongly agree	6	9	17	23
	Agree	37	46	41	40
	Disagree	48	35	30	26
	Strongly disagree	9	10	12	11

Sig: .000 N=1135

These results serve to draw attention to the severe effects of emotional bullying on the reported assertiveness of victims. While this study cannot disregard the impact of physical bullying, victims did seem to display a somewhat positive recollection of assertiveness where physical bullying was concerned. Conversely, their responses to emotional forms of bullying were associated with a lower level of assertiveness.

Chapter 3: Emotional bullying

Empathy and emotional bullying

Emotional bullying was found to have a greater link to the empathy of bullies than did physical bullying. However, this relationship was only discovered with reference to four indicators of empathy.

These indicators were:

- I felt ashamed of myself.
- I wished that I could have just hidden away from everyone.
- I felt that people should toughen up and learn to take a blow.
- I felt a thrill at seeing how far someone could get pushed.

The results were found to be almost similar for both positive and negative measures of empathy. Bullies who reported “sometimes” or “often” engaging in emotional bullying agreed that they felt ashamed but also reported a thrill in seeing how far someone could be pushed. Bullies tended to display stronger empathetic tendencies or lack thereof when they engaged in emotional bullying most of the time. These results are highlighted in Table 3.22 below.

Table 3.22: Capacity for empathy and bullying action

		Show other that I was boss (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Felt ashamed of myself	Strongly agree	18	11	19	28
	Agree	50	55	48	24
	Disagree	29	30	27	12
	Strongly disagree	3	3	7	36

Sig: .000 N=498

		Part of a group that teased (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Wished to hide away	Strongly agree	11	8	17	35
	Agree	42	50	38	40
	Disagree	41	34	35	10
	Strongly disagree	6	8	10	15

Sig: .006 N=498

		Liked to make others scared (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Felt that people should toughen up	Strongly agree	6	8	12	50
	Agree	35	56	53	23
	Disagree	44	39	29	14
	Strongly disagree	14	7	6	14

Sig: .000 N=498

Other social skills

Anger management

This section involved comparing both the victims’ and bullies’ self-reports of emotional and physical bullying with their reactions to the various aggressive scenarios within the survey.

Responses to the first scenario were significantly associated with the victims’ experiences of emotional bullying in school. However, an interesting facet to this analysis was the recurrence of three out of the four emotional forms of bullying mentioned throughout this chapter.

Victims who recalled being emotionally bullied often or most of the time were found to be more likely to report being “angry”, rather than “bothered”, with the individual responsible for the bullying. This result was found to be significant where the victim was:

- teased in an unpleasant way in the playground
- left out of things on purpose
- called hurtful names.

Table 3.23: Emotional bullying and anger management (victim scenario)

		Teased in the playground (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
How you would have felt about the individual	Not bothered	9	7	6	6
	Bothered	39	46	39	33
	Angry	39	37	44	34
	Very angry	13	10	12	28

Sig: .000 N=1135

		Left out of things (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
How you would have felt about the individual	Not bothered	8	7	5	6
	Bothered	44	42	39	34
	Angry	37	40	40	36
	Very angry	11	11	16	25

Sig: .002 N=1135

		Called hurtful names (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
How you would have felt about the individual	Not bothered	8.2	8	4	6
	Bothered	44	45	40	35
	Angry	37	37	44	36
	Very angry	11	10	12	23

Sig: .000 N=1135

While emotionally bullied victims reported being angry with the individual bully, it was the physically bullied victims who found it important to retaliate. This is understandable given the finding that fighting back was associated with physical bullying. However, it must be mentioned that it was only those respondents who reported being hit or kicked who placed an importance on retaliating in the victim scenario.

Table 3.24: Physical bullying and anger management (victim scenario)

		Hit or kicked (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Retaliate against bullying	Strongly agree	6	8	17	17
	Agree	34	42	40	43
	Disagree	47	39	36	28
	Strongly disagree	12	11	8	13

Sig: .000 N=1135

With reference to the aggressiveness of bullies, a significant association was discovered when their engagement in emotional and physical bullying was compared to scenario four. These results were only relevant where bullies stated an emotional response to the scenario for bullies. Hence, the study found, respondents who reported frequently making others afraid of them tended to consider it easy to retaliate emotionally to this scenario. This is outlined in Table 3.25 below.

Table 3.25 : Emotional bullying and anger management (bullying scenario)

		Make others scared of me (%)			
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Take it out emotionally on student	Strongly agree	3	5	6	9
	Agree	25	34	43	27
	Disagree	37	42	37	14
	Strongly disagree	36	19	14	50

Sig: .000 N=498

Emotional bullying and the bully-victim

This section of the chapter seeks to further dissect the results in order to ascertain the differences in emotional bullying for bully-victims compared to pure victims.

Pure victim v. bully victim

Pure victims and bully-victims were found to differ only where one particular form of bullying occurred, that of being called hurtful names. It appeared that pure victims felt that they experienced this all the time. Bully-victims, on the other hand, reported that they only experienced this sometimes.

Table 3.26: Victim type and emotional bullying

		Victim type (%)	
		Pure victim	Sometimes victim, other times bully
Called hurtful names	Never	5	9
	Sometimes	27	50
	Often	32	27
	Most of the time	36	14

Sig: .000 N=1135

The study sought to elaborate on the demographic differences discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This was done by taking the existing results and dividing them into the experiences of the pure victim and bully-victim.

The results achieved from a cross-examination with gender suggested that pure victims were worse off than bully-victims in terms of emotional bullying. Of these pure victims, females tended to recall experiencing emotional bullying more often than males. This can be seen in the two examples provided in Table 3.27 on page 56.

Story

Monsters in the playground

Moving to the new school was like going from *The Wizard of Oz* to a horror film, says Jonathan Denny.

Content, confident and happy, Jonathan thrived at the country primary school he attended in Tamworth. He assumed things would be the same wherever he went: making friends was easy, school was fun and he was popular amongst his peers. A move to a private school on the coast in Year 6 left him dumbfounded.

There was this kid named Tom. Every day he'd have a go at me. He'd shove me, call me fat, call me stupid, call me dumb, call me this, call me that. At that age, when you're 12, you've got no mental capabilities of being able to assess a situation; you don't come up with anything better than tears.

I think it was because I was the new kid and I was trying to fit in. He was at the top of the chain and I'm pretty sure he was letting me know my place.

Every lunchtime I just dreaded going out there in the playground, simply because I knew I'd go out there, and I knew he'd be waiting for me. I'd go home in tears. Mum had to take me out of school at lunchtime so I didn't have to face the playground. My concentration was affected because that was all I could think about: what's he going to dish up next? How is he going to get to me next?

I told the teachers. The teachers don't do anything. They all think 'Oh, they're kids, they're just mucking around'. They don't understand that just because we're children, it doesn't mean that everything has to be fun and games all the time. We do cry, we do feel upset, we do get depressed. It doesn't matter how young you are.

The hidden heart of the bully

As soon as we moved from Year 6 to Year 7 he was no longer at the top of the chain. He was a little kid in Year 7, running around with people who were five times his size and would look down at him. It was all different. He had gone from being the big fish in a small pond, to being the small fish in a ginormous pond. He was a no-one.

One day I actually saw him get pushed around by some of the kids in Year 10. He walked through their handball game and they just jumped on him, and he was like, 'No, get off me' and he was almost in tears. I was watching that and thinking, 'Wow, how tough's this kid? He toys with others the whole year and now he's on the ground on his back.'

That's when I had the epiphany that bullies are just weak. They're just weak people who have been conditioned like that.

The only reason that I think he was like that is because of his home life — because of his brother. He's got a brother called Alex and Alex is extremely successful. He's a fantastic football player. Tom's nothing. Tom works in a fish-and-chip shop and he's not going anywhere. It's been like that his whole life. He has been second best all his life.

I think his older brother constantly let him know that he was second best; that he was never going to be as good as his brother.

I still know the kid who bullied me today and he's just a normal kid. There's no way he would bully me now, there's no way he would do anything to me.

How bullying runs its brutal course

I didn't have much self-confidence in Year 7.

I was very wary about my connections with people because I didn't just want to throw my trust out there in case I got hurt again.

Then I started doing stupid stuff, and the more that I acted up and the worse it got, the better I felt. I put myself out there.

It was sort of bizarre because it just happened so rapidly and by the time I was 14 I wanted to go out and start drinking. By the time I was 15, I was going out and drinking. I'm 16 now.

I did get into some bad habits because, of course, you do what your friends do. It really went from there. The bad choice became a bad habit.

World's Strictest Parents reaps rewards

Being a part of the *World's Strictest Parents* program was like, pushing the reset button and saying, 'Okay, you've got a second chance — go. Who do I want to be? How do I want to do it? How do I want people to perceive me?'

That mother was just phenomenal. When I told her I'd been living on the streets in Brisbane she said, 'Look, my son did what you're doing, the only difference is that you're sitting here right now and he's dead.' He died from doing what I did.

I could never imagine the rest of my mum's life without her.

The hardest lessons stay with you

I've finally realised now, because I've had that life experience with bullying, that it's not all sunshine and roses. There's always going to be pain in your life. You're always going to have to overcome that, and keep moving forward.

Putting yourself back into your own shell to block yourself from everything that's going on outside is a good short-term solution. Put yourself in your shell for a long time, and you're missing out on all the good things in life as well.

– Linda Barclay

Table 3.27: Emotional bullying measured by victim type and gender

			Gender (%)	
			Male	Female
Victim type: Pure victim	Teased in playground	Never	8	8
		Sometimes	38	31
		Often	34	32
		Most of the time	20	30
Victim type: Bully victim	Teased in playground	Never	16	12
		Sometimes	50	54
		Often	26	23
		Most of the time	7	12

Pure victim Sig: 0.015 N=702 Bully victim Sig: 0.286 N=433

			Gender (%)	
			Male	Female
Victim type: Pure victim	Left out of things	Never	22	15
		Sometimes	42	28
		Often	23	31
		Most of the time	13	26
Victim type: Bully victim	Left out of things	Never	25	15
		Sometimes	48	58
		Often	21	20
		Most of the time	7	7

Pure victim Sig: .000 N=702 Bully victim Sig: 0.071 N=433

On the other hand, the responses of bully-victims mainly involved physical bullying. However, while male bully-victims tended to report being hit or kicked, most females stated that they had never experienced this behaviour.

Table 3.28: Physical bullying measured by victim type and gender

			Gender (%)	
			Male	Female
Victim type: Pure victim	Hit or kicked	Never	42	63
		Sometimes	38	27
		Often	15	6
		Most of the time	6	5
Victim type: Bully victim	Hit or kicked	Never	41	64
		Sometimes	44	30
		Often	11	6
		Most of the time	4	1

Pure victim Sig: 0.000 N=702 Bully victim Sig: 0.000 N=433

By dividing the victim responses regarding pack bullying, a significant result was found with reference to the emotional bullying of pure victims. Once again, there was a difference between pure victims and bully-victims in the experience of being called hurtful names. Pure victims tended to recall being subjected to this more often by a group of students than an individual. Bully-victims recalled being called hurtful names more often by an individual student.

Table 3.29: Emotional bullying measured by bully type and victim type

			Bullied by (%)	
			Individual	Group
Victim type: Pure victim	Hurtful names	Never	9	4
		Sometimes	38	26
		Often	29	30
		Most of the time	24	40
Victim type: Bully victim	Hurtful names	Never	14	5
		Sometimes	58	43
		Often	17	35
		Most of the time	1	17

Pure victim Sig: 0.000 N=512 Bully victim Sig: 0.000 N=328

There was relatively no difference in the reporting patterns of victims and bully-victims. Both groups stated positive intentions to report the bullying at any instance. A significant difference was only found with two forms of bullying, both of which were emotional. These were being:

- called hurtful names
- teased in an unpleasant manner in the playground.

The majority of pure victims recalled reporting these types of behaviour only once they had reached a more frequent or constant level. As such, the results indicated that they were more likely to put up with the behaviour if it occurred infrequently.

Table 3.30: Emotional bullying measured by victim type and willingness to report

		Reporting the bullying (%)		
			Yes	No
Victim type: Pure victim	Teased in the playground	Never	8	13
		Sometimes	33	41
		Often	35	38
		Most of the time	24	19
Victim type: Bully victim	Teased in the playground	Never	14	16
		Sometimes	53	50
		Often	19	29
		Most of the time	14	5

Pure victim Sig:0.024 N=512 Bully victim Sig:0.024 N=512

		Reporting the bullying (%)		
			Yes	No
Victim type: Pure victim	Called harmful names	Never	4	8
		Sometimes	28	34
		Often	30	29
		Most of the time	37	29
Victim type: Bully victim	Called harmful names	Never	7	11
		Sometimes	52	50
		Often	24	27
		Most of the time	17	12

Pure victim Sig: 0.074 N=512 Bully victim Sig: 0.031 N=328

Of all the forms of emotional bullying analysed, it appears that being called hurtful names is of most concern. This is largely due to the fact that it seems to emerge in much of the results presented so far.

Pure bully v. bully-victim

Unlike in the case of victims, there appeared to be no significant differences in the forms of emotional bullying engaged in by pure bullies and bully-victims. However, it should be mentioned that this may only be due to the dramatically smaller sample size of bullies in comparison to bully-victims. This was also found to be an issue when comparing duration with the various forms of emotional bullying.

The social skills comparison

Self-esteem

The study found significant differences in the self-esteem level of victims and bully-victims with reference to their involvement in specific forms of bullying.

These forms included:

- being left out of things on purpose
- being avoided or ignored by other students on purpose
- having possessions moved or hidden.

Once again, it is within the arena of emotional bullying that the largest differences in self-esteem are discovered. The results found that pure victims generally scored lower on the self-esteem scale where they recalled the bullying persisting longer than just “sometimes”. Although bully-victims seemed to display a similar trend, the association between these factors was not significant (see Table 3.31).

Table 3.31: Self-esteem measured by emotional bullying (exclusion) and victim type

		Left out of things (%)				Avoided or ignored (%)				
		Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time	
Victim type: Pure victim	Rosenberg self-esteem total recoded	0-5	4	4	7	19	4	4	8	19
		5-10	7	12	19	23	8	12	19	23
		11-15	29	37	36	28	27	37	33	31
		16-20	37	36	28	21	32	38	30	17
		21-25	17	9	7	7	21	7	8	8
		26-30	7	3	2	2	9	2	3	2
Victim type: Bully victim	Rosenberg self-esteem total recoded	0-5	0	3	2	13	0	2	3	11
		5-10	5	5	19	13	1	8	14	11
		11-15	26	34	39	42	24	31	51	40
		16-20	41	44	32	26	45	45	25	31
		21-25	16	11	3	0	21	9	3	3
		26-30	12	4	5	3	9	5	4	3

Pure victim Sig: .000 N=702
Bully victim Not Sig. N=433

Pure victim Sig: .000 N=702
Bully victim Not Sig. N=433

Chapter 3: Emotional bullying

Assertiveness

The primary variables identified from a cross-comparison of assertiveness and the forms of bullying were once again employed. The analysis sought to determine whether there were any differences in the experience of victims and bully-victims.

The results suggested that there was a general perception of low assertiveness with reference to the forms of emotional bullying mentioned in earlier discussions of assertiveness. These results were similar for pure victims and bully-victims: respondents recalling a greater frequency of bullying tended to also match themselves with negative assertiveness indicators. Therefore, this analysis suggested that respondents who were (see Table 3.32):

- teased in the playground in an unpleasant way
- left out of things on purpose
- avoided or ignored, and
- called hurtful names

tended to also recall:

- looking like unhappy people
- keeping to themselves and not really interacting with others, and
- generally feeling more comfortable in company of teachers.

These similarities were also found with reference to physical bullying. The only point of difference lay in the response to whether physical bullying was experienced frequently. Pure victims generally recalled feeling more strongly about their lack of assertiveness where the physical bullying was persistent.

Empathy, co-operativeness and anger management

There appeared to be no significant differences between the victim, bully or bully-victim with reference to these social skills and emotional bullying.

Interplay of social skills and emotional bullying

The victim

The results presented so far have highlighted the respondents' perceptions of regarding the emotional and physical forms of bullying they experienced in school. Based on their recollections of school years, certain social skills were found to relate to these forms of bullying.

There appeared to be some common trends in the analysis of emotional bullying experienced by victims. Certain forms of emotional bullying were found to significantly relate to more than one social skill.

Table 3.32: Assertiveness measured by emotional bullying (exclusion) and victim type

			Left out of things (%)			
			Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Victim type: Pure victim	Unhappy person	Strongly agree	9	10	14	30
		Agree	31	42	44	45
		Disagree	51	44	38	22
		Strongly disagree	10	4	4	4
Victim type: Bully victim	Unhappy person	Strongly agree	12	7	6	39
		Agree	30	34	51	23
		Disagree	44	50	37	32
		Strongly disagree	15	10	7	7

Pure victim Sig 0.00 N=702 Bully victim Sig 0.00 N=433

			Threatened with harm (%)			
			Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
Victim type: Pure victim	Kept to myself	Strongly agree	8	10	12	21
		Agree	32	37	49	41
		Disagree	59	50	26	35
		Strongly disagree	0	3	4	4
Victim type: Bully victim	Kept to myself	Strongly agree	8	7	4	18
		Agree	18	32	37	31
		Disagree	56	50	52	40
		Strongly disagree	18	11	7	11

Pure victim Sig 0.001 N=702 Bully victim Sig 0.032 N=433

For example, the greater frequency with which a victim was called hurtful names was not only linked to a lower level of assertiveness but also a more aggressive response to everyday social situations.

The results from the analysis of self-esteem revealed associations with a different set of emotional types of bullying. However, these share a common aspect with the assertiveness results. They broadly involve ostracism and exclusionary practices against the victim. For example, the act of a teacher ignoring a bullying situation in the classroom was likely to make the victim feel isolated and alone as it showed that the student's support network was proven to be flawed. As a result, victims become more susceptible to emotional forms of bullying that are inherent in the classroom situation.

The four major types of emotional bullying mentioned throughout this chapter all possess primary elements of isolation and exclusion. For instance, respondents who reported being avoided or ignored or left out of things on purpose provide prime examples of the exclusionary practices carried out in school. Being teased in the playground and called hurtful names serve to isolate the individual through the label that is developed by their bully and supported by other students in the playground. It is understandable, therefore, that these forms of bullying would be present where there are low levels of self-esteem and assertiveness, largely because it is the emotional forms of bullying that cause the most hurt and withdrawal.

It was more difficult to determine a common thread with reference to respondents' recollection of physical bullying when they were in school. Physical bullying was significantly associated with both self-esteem and assertiveness but in different ways.

Respondents who reported physical bullying tended to score just as low on the self-esteem scale as those who were emotionally bullied. However, it seemed that a large proportion were more assertive than their emotionally bullied counterparts when it came to a physical altercation. For example, the study found that a greater percentage of respondents who were hit or kicked tended to stand up for themselves or even fight back whereas victims who were called hurtful names were less likely to behave in this way.

It became evident that both physical and emotional bullying was strongly linked to assertiveness and aggression. This serves to explain why respondents who would stand up for themselves or fight back were also more willing to retaliate with reference to a hypothetical scenario.

The bully

The results regarding the bully's involvement in emotional and physical bullying made it more difficult to ascertain common ground with the social skills analysis. As mentioned already, the relatively small sample size for this group contributed to this difficulty.

However, an interesting argument can be made here with reference to emotional bullying. Bullies who engaged in emotional bullying were found to have a lower level of self-esteem and find it easier to retaliate in a hypothetical scenario. This concept seems to also be projected in the result regarding empathy. On the one hand bullies were found to show remorse or guilt about their actions and this may be linked to their lack of self-esteem. On the other hand they were also found to display a self-gratifying tendency which may stem from their aggressive perceptions of their immediate social environment.

The act of a teacher ignoring a bullying situation in the classroom was likely to make the victim feel isolated and alone.



Story

A mother's fight for her son

The brutal game of bullying makes losers of all players: those who instigate and force the combat; those who are quickly caught up in the warfare, joining the mob and selling their soul to the sordid sport's promise of heroism; those who high-kick and cheer on the sidelines, goading others into even more degrading behaviour, and those who, unwillingly, terrifyingly, find they are the hapless, hunted prey in this cruel hunt.



A mother fights for her son

Imagine standing at the perimeter, paralysed in gut-wrenching stupor as the child you love – the baby you nursed, the son you raised – is taunted and terrorised, plucked of all dignity and left wounded, bereft of all childhood joy.

Lyndal Denny reflects back on her second son, Jonathan's, early primary school years with warmth. He was an outgoing, sociable, self-confident child with lots of friends and a lust for life. For Lyndal a change of job to Wesley Uniting Employment in Ballina meant a new school for Jonathan. He began his final year of primary, Year 6, at a private school in Ballina, a transition that, for a child of Jonathan's calibre, thought Lyndal, would be fine. It wasn't.

"He walked into that school and for some reason the head boy – the one at the top of the pecking order – decided that Jonathan wasn't going to have an easy year. And, of course, all the other boys fell in behind him to please him," Lyndal said.

From the outset, Jonathan was subject to a steadily escalating spate of senseless and relentless bullying that seemed to be devoid of rhyme or reason other than he was the new guy.

"I was never, ever able to identify whether he felt that Jonathan was a threat, or whether he just looked like he had 'pick on me' written on his forehead. There was a little bit of pushing and shoving but it wasn't so much physical bullying, it was emotional. It was laughing at him, excluding him, calling him names, that type of thing," said Lyndal.

After about a month at the new school Jonathan became more and more withdrawn. He told his mum he didn't have any friends, nobody wanted to be friends with him, nobody liked him. He didn't want to go to school, said he was sick. On weekends she would take him to visit his friends from his old school but every Sunday afternoon there was a notable shift in his demeanour at the thought of school the next day. It was completely out of character for her son.

"I've got a million photos of wonderful days and lovely play with the kids from the other school," she said. "He always picked up his bag and ran for school."

Lyndal and Jonathan sat down and talked about it. In a bid to free her son from the shackles of daily torment, Lyndal tried to give him some coping strategies but soon realised the futility of her seemingly sound advice.

"Telling a child not to let someone upset you – well, you do get upset, you know. All of that stuff – 'Don't let them get on top of you, ignore what they are saying', – that's hard for an adult, let alone as a child," she said.

Lyndal was acutely aware that as a parent the situation would need to be handled with the utmost delicacy so as not to create more problems for Jonathan. She was his mother but she was also aware that she could be a fervent and formidable advocate for him. The first step was to inform his teacher who would be able to mediate appropriately for Lyndal. The teacher's response still burns.

"She said to me, 'Look Lyndal, I've got three boys. This is character-building; they go through it to toughen up. You're mollycoddling him. If I were you I'd build a bridge and get over it'," Lyndal said.

Full of self-doubt, inexperienced in the best way to handle such a matter, Lyndal went away wondering if she was over-protective, hoping the situation would resolve itself. But when Jonathan continued to deteriorate she decided she couldn't stand on the side-lines any longer. By this stage she was taking her son away from school for lunch every day, just to provide him with respite from the adverse environment he faced.

She made an appointment with the deputy principal.

"Jonathan's teacher hadn't told him I'd been to see her," she said. "I explained that this behaviour was going on at his school and he needed to be aware of it. I told him that it was very difficult as a mother to step in for her son because of the risk of exacerbating the problem and placing him in a worse situation. He told me he'd take care of it immediately.

"I came home that afternoon and Jonathan was in tears. The deputy had dragged all the bullies into his office and told them that Jonathan's mother had been in and said they were bullying Jonathan. So that made it worse; now Jonathan was a mummy's boy as well."

Lyndal's final attempt to get the school to see the severity of the problem was another conversation with Jonathan's teacher.

"I felt like she had a pad of sticky notes and was sticking them all over me saying, 'You're a typical older, single parent. You are overly protective. You're not allowing him to experience what he needs to. You won't let him grow up.'

"I told her I'd had enough and was going to see our local Member to see if anything could be done that way.

'Because,' I said, 'I'm standing here watching my child wilt before me'."

Lyndal feels from that time on there was an attitudinal change at the school and the bullying soon ceased. It was not long before it was time for Jonathan to begin high school. He would leave behind him the torment of Grade 6, free from the shackles of his social pain, and start afresh. Lyndal longed to see the spark and cheer return to her melancholy child. Little did she know how deeply and fiercely the bullying sword would penetrate.

"We had a very quiet Year 7," she said. "It was probably Year 8 when the teachers started to phone me and say they needed to see me because of something Jonathan had done. It was never violence or disrespect; it was things like accidentally setting the home economics kitchen alight, turning on the fire hose.

"Other kids were pretty impressed and would say, 'Did you hear Jonathan's done this or Jonathan's done that? Wow, look at him!'

"It gave him the attention he craved and the recognition he wanted. There was almost a perceptible behaviour modification process within him where he just learned that if he did high-risk stuff he would be noticed. I guess for kids it doesn't matter if it's good or bad attention – it's attention."

During the next 18 months, despite Lyndal's best efforts to control and redirect her son's path, he took an increasingly destructive route. Higher-risk behaviour led to more attention. Jonathan could smoke the most bongos, could drink the most and still stand, had been picked up from school by an ambulance because he had fallen and was paralysed (a repeated stunt that Lyndal soon learned was performed to gain attention).

He defied Lyndal's attempts to reason with him and told her he wanted to do what he wanted, when he wanted and didn't want her getting in the way. He ran away from home and left school; he was a young man in crisis, involved in dangerous situations.

In December last year Lyndal applied for Jonathan to be involved in Channel 7's *World's Strictest Parents* program. He was accepted and six months of filming began. He travelled to South Africa, living with a family and experiencing their loving, unwavering

commitment to his betterment. It wrought a remarkable change in Jonathan. He returned home to live with Lyndal and started back at school.

"We're getting there. He'll never be a Vienna Boys Choir boy but the maturity is starting to kick in. We'll get Year 10 out of the way and I'll be the proudest mother at the graduation. He is talking about going to Year 12 now too.

"He's comfortable with who he is and he's confident about his abilities now. He's really at the next stage where he can move forward, having gathered his emotions that will help him to move more positively. But we've had nearly five years of difficult, challenging times. It's just been the worst. He's had a shocking experience.

"Recently a boy took his grandfather's car, crashed it into a tree and died. They said he had been bullied relentlessly. His parents were going to put him in a new school but the thought of starting a new school was too much for him. It breaks your heart.

"For the ones that survive, there are definitely profound and lasting issues they have to deal with. And some, I guess, overcome them, and I'm sure my boy will, but it's been a long, hard road for him."

– Linda Barclay





4

Chapter

Then and now





Chapter 4: Then and now

The results presented thus far have sought to provide an understanding of bullying at school age viewed retrospectively. The study has highlighted the dire impact of pack bullying and emotional bullying on the social skills of respondents. It has been made apparent that self-esteem and assertiveness have significant associations with these aspects of the bullying experience. In addition, though not as profound, bullying has affected the respondents' perceptions of their capacity for empathy, co-operation and anger management.

This chapter will uncover the self-reported impact of these experiences in adult life. The main focus will be on the positive and negative effects of bullying followed by an examination of the action taken and advice sought.

As mentioned earlier, 85 per cent of respondents reported some effect on adult life, mostly with negative consequences.

Negative effects of bullying

The results from qualitative data indicate a combination of negative effects experienced by respondents in adult life. However, an interesting revelation was the extent to which the impact of bullying on social skills during the respondents' schooldays carried over into adult life.

Low self-esteem and withdrawal in adulthood were listed as the primary effects of school bullying along with difficulties in building relationships of trust. Poor anger management (aggressiveness) was another effect carried into adult life. However, it was interesting to find that some respondents viewed feelings of shame and guilt associated with empathy as negative effects.

Respondents who believed that they had low self-esteem generally felt isolated and withdrawn from society.

One such respondent stated:

I'm at uni now and still find it difficult to talk with people and to make friends; I sense that people don't want to talk to me. I feel uncomfortable participating in tutorials because I fear what other students will think of me. I hate getting attention put on me. I've gone through all of uni so far just

keeping to myself. I wish I had some friends. I'm so afraid that no-one is going to want to employ me.

Another reported:

At times I have overwhelming feelings of inadequacy and anxiety in public. There are times when I want to spend weeks without leaving the house, doing so only if I absolutely have to. At these times it is more difficult to find a job and certainly experience anxiety about meeting new people ...

These results seem to demonstrate a close interrelation between self-esteem and assertiveness. The loss of self-confidence due to bullying was related to respondents wanting to avoid communication with other people so as to avert any opportunity for further bullying.

Linked to this were problems associated with building relationships of trust in adult life. This was analysed from a number of different standpoints. Some respondents highlighted a difficulty in building trust not only in the wider social sphere but also in their more intimate personal relationships:

... I had a tendency to assume the worst in people who might approach me. I assumed people didn't want to be friends with me and if someone showed an interest (especially a girl), I would assume it was part of a trick ...

Some respondents expressed difficulty in trusting anyone they met in a social setting. As a result, various responses indicated a withdrawal from society with respondents hiding their true identity to ensure they could not be harmed:

I told myself I would never be taken advantage of again and as a consequence never really developed truly trusting relationships with others, always feeling that eventually anyone close to me would

betray me. I used over-confidence as a way to protect myself, and shut out anyone that I thought showed any sort of threat to me.

An alternative issue relating to trust is that the experiences of bullying at school caused people to trust too easily. This may have been largely due to their feelings of loneliness and the want of belonging which they might have not been able to overcome in school. This is highlighted in a comment by a female respondent:

After leaving school, if an individual promised he wouldn't hurt me or my feelings, I often gave in to my feelings and they usually ended up betraying my trust. Because of this I was almost raped on a few separate occasions because I trusted people who I thought were friends.

These results highlight a strongly debilitating effect of school bullying in that the insecurities created in school were found to continue into adulthood, leading to many respondents becoming withdrawn and isolating themselves from society. Other respondents were pushed to the opposite extreme: their decision-making ability was influenced by the want of attention or slightest interest shown towards them.

These results highlight not only a lack of self-esteem in respondents but also a low level of assertiveness. An important measure of assertiveness discovered within this report was whether victims kept to themselves when they were in school. A glimpse into the lives of people who were bullied revealed that many still continue to shy away from society as a method of protecting themselves from potential bullies.

Frustrations from bullying at school had caused damaging effects to the respondent's perceptions of social interactions and led to a limited capacity for anger management. The responses in this area demonstrated varying levels of anger and aggression, mainly in victims.

There appeared to be some resentment and blame placed on the school. A number of respondents believed that if not for the school experience, their lives would be more enriched and successful:

I didn't finish high school because of bullying, in fact I didn't even finish Year 10 ... I hardly turned up to school because I was so scared. I was considered a trouble-maker. I had eating disorders, severe depression, I've been on and off anti-depressants, in and out of counselling and mental health centres. I fear having children because I

don't want them to be ignored in school when they have problems. I honestly feel high school almost ruined my life.

This sentiment was also mentioned in focus group discussions with Wesley Mission staff who said that most of the children in their care were victims of bullying. They said that many of these children had often been suspended from school for fighting back against emotional bullying. Emotional bullying often went unnoticed by teachers, allowing the bully to escape detection and subsequent punishment.

Respondents confessed to difficulty in dealing with confrontation. Some victims seem to be frustrated and angry with themselves for avoiding opportunities to express their opinions out of fear of confrontation. This argument is presented in the comments made by a male respondent:

I never stood up to anyone, ever. I married someone who dominates me and I became a doormat for the world. I have a good life, but I certainly don't voice my opinion or demand anything. I am the consummate coping individual. I avoid conflict at all costs, and this achieves nothing but frustration and anger for me.

Given the above, a possible interrelation between aggression (limited anger management) and low assertiveness could be argued here. This is of particular concern as it appears that the anger that respondents would normally feel about a situation is compressed in order to minimise conflict in the short term. However, the long-term consequences could be very damaging, not only to the respondent but to others in the community.

The most serious effects on anger management skills in victims reached and even surpassed the level of aggression described above. With such respondents the ability to ignore confrontations had been diminished, resulting in often aggressive outbursts:

I find it very difficult to be in situation where there is confrontation of any kind and so I rarely voice when I am upset or angry until I feel so angry or upset that I lose control and have screaming arguments.

Research conducted by Camodeca and Goossens (2005) may contribute to an explanation of this behaviour. They argue that the continual bullying of victims ultimately causes them to perceive almost all social situations as hostile (Camodeca and Goossens, 2005: 194). Based on this initial perception, the responses available to the victims usually involve anti-social options from which a best method of response

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is chosen. Therefore, a continuous experience of bullying tends to hamper the way in which victims perceive their social world (Camodeca and Goossens, 2005: 194).

However, it seems that victims experiencing the most difficulty with managing their anger and aggressiveness involved those respondents purely seeking reprisals for their treatment in school. One respondent comments on the extent to which such people would go to extinguish their anger.

Hatred for humanity ... desire to go to their houses and chop off their legs in the night. Find all the bullies (now adults) and make their lives hell – destroy their relationships, slash their car tyres, possibly burn their houses down and injure their pets.

One particular respondent's perception of social interaction is likened to a battlefield in which he is a mercenary with nothing to lose:

If a person becomes my enemy I will go to great efforts to cause them harm – even at the cost of my own position or well-being. I over-react to small slights, frequently applying overkill in response to them. I have a rather scorched earth policy on my enemies. I worry that I could harm or kill someone in response to perceived or actual threat. I have violent fantasies about torturing and killing my enemies.

This is an upsetting finding as the respondent appears to project severe aggression issues which might require ongoing treatment to assist in developing social skills for even the basic social interactions.

The most significant effects of bullying in adult life were related to mental health. A large proportion of respondents said they suffered from depression and anxiety in varying severity. Many of them spoke of a need for professional assistance over extended periods of time:

I am still in counselling from when I was 14 and I am 26 now. I have mental health problems and severe depression. I have 1 friend and have lost all other friends.

Despite such assistance, some respondents did not see an improvement in themselves or a way through their anxieties.

My self-esteem never really recovered. Have suffered from depression most of my life, taking anti-depressants for more than 10 years now.

This serves to highlight the lasting effects of bullying experienced as a child. It also puts into perspective the major tasks faced by practitioners in order to achieve even very slow journeys to recovery.

The research indicated an interrelation between a deficiency in three particular social skills, self-esteem, assertiveness and anger management, causing negative effects in adult life. There is, however, an underlying issue connecting the negative effects in adult life with these life skills: the issue of fear.

Fear is mentioned throughout much of the data and with reference to all the social skills. For instance, the low level of self-esteem and assertiveness exhibited by respondents in adult life are mentioned in conjunction with fear of further bullying.

I allow people to push me around as an adult and am very fearful of everyone and everything, giving me no confidence.

In relation to anger management, it seems to be the fear of confrontation that actually contributes to an inevitable aggressive response. With regard to aggression for the purposes of revenge, it can be argued that their pre-emptive nature could be a product of fears regarding potential bullying.

In some cases, respondents with anger management problems were more fearful than others of the impact that schooling would have on their children:

I feel a lot of hatred for the bully still to this day. I worry a lot about my kids starting school and having to deal with bullies. I don't know how I would react if I found out one of my children were bullied.

This fear is related to a lack of confidence in the school system, largely based on the respondents' experience of bullying:

I fear school policies are not tough enough on bullies and parents are not allowed to sort out problems independently.

Lessons from bullying

The discussion of the positive effects in adult life was associated with the development of three specific social skills in respondents. These were:

- becoming more assertive
- becoming more self confident/higher level of self-esteem
- being more understanding and empathetic.

These skills in particular stood out due to the interrelation between them in the data. That is, the results suggested that an improvement in one of these skills was usually associated with a positive outcome in the others.

The results have so far highlighted a grim perspective with regard to the development of assertiveness in victims. However, there were a number of respondents who reported success in building this skill in adult life:

As an adult I have learned to try to stand up for myself now if something bothers me or if someone does something that would once have intimidated me.

The comments made by some respondents regarding their level of assertiveness allowed for an inference to be made in relation to their level of self-esteem. It seemed that respondents who believed they were more assertive in adult life also mentioned an improved level of self-esteem. This is highlighted in the comments made by a particular respondent:

Learn to stand up for yourself and about self-worth. Helps to increase self-esteem once you have got rid of the bullying.

This comment is interesting as the discussion of the negative effects of bullying suggest there is an immense difficulty in actually “getting rid of the bullying”. This therefore introduces the process of understanding exhibited by a large majority of victims within the sample.

The analysis of this data involved an examination of understanding from two standpoints. The first involved respondents getting rid of the bullying by shifting focus from themselves to the individuals by whom they were bullied. One respondent in particular felt very strongly about this:

I was able to see how much I succeeded in life, compared with those who earlier during high school days would have picked on you and other students. In the end, those who picked on you and other students and hence didn't care about others, they are the losers. (Because they are now facing the consequences of their personal neglect during high school i.e. not doing their best in education and studying well like all the other well-behaved students).

Meanwhile another respondent had learned:

... that bullies really have no power but the power we give them. It's our perception of bullies

that makes them bullies. Otherwise they're just uncompassionate, self centred and probably scared of anything they don't know or can't control.

These results highlight a positive development of social skills in respondents as they no longer blame themselves for the bullying. However, it seems that, with this viewpoint, respondents have yet to deal with issues of passive aggression. This is justified by the tendency of these victims to engage in name-calling similar to what they had themselves experienced.

The second viewpoint involved victims empathising with the bully's situation. This was done by considering the possible extenuating circumstances that led them to bully:

It made me realise that people sometimes only make you feel bad when they are trying to make themselves feel better. It's not always about what you as an individual have done.

This is addressed by another respondent in a similar manner:

I am more aware of what other people can do to me and I've learned that the bullies are actually people who are just in need of a caring, loving friend. But they act as bullies to cover up what they are really feeling inside.

The above indicates that for some respondents, overcoming the problems associated with low assertiveness and self-esteem contributed to a development of empathy for the bully. This is an interesting result as empathy would generally be considered an issue analysed from the perspective of bullies rather than victims. It must be mentioned that where bullies did show empathy, it was in the form of genuine remorse for their actions complemented by an intention to refrain from this behaviour in adult life.

I am ashamed of being mean to certain students, and even tried to atone to the ones I met subsequently. I feel like I grew personally, and from having been on both sides of the coin feel like I can empathise better with victims. I'm proud that I am able to understand that what I did was wrong and that I feel bad about it.

The positive building of these essential social skills in adult life was found to also produce other beneficial outcomes for the respondent. For instance, the development of positive assertiveness and self-confidence appeared to encourage respondents to proactively help others in the community with similar experiences:

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I am now very keen to look out for other people who are being bullied. I now know what to look out for in people who are being bullied or doing the bullying because I have been at the receiving end of both. I know what the victim is looking for emotionally in a friend/support person.

Meanwhile, respondents with children describe how the building of these social skills in their adult lives have encouraged them to positively prepare their children for the school experience

... instilling the importance of two things in my children – resilience when faced with friendship difficulties, and NEVER to join in when a group of peers excludes a child for whatever reason, simply because of peer pressure – make your own choices that you can live with.

Some parents even reported their efforts to develop an understanding in their children of the bully's circumstances.

... teaching them to be strong in themselves and value themselves. To see bullies as being lonely and hurt themselves and to forgive them for what they do.

These approaches to family provide an interesting comparison to the comments of respondents who experienced negative effects in adulthood. This can be explained when considering the absence of fear with reference to the positive effects in adult life. The development of positive life skills for these individuals appeared to assist not only in overcoming personal fears from school but also to prepare their children for the possibility of school bullying.

Advice sought

As previously stated, most respondents sought a combination of advice or action with reference to the bullying experienced in school. We now examine the possible influence of these responses on the social skills of respondents in adult life.

The results from the qualitative analysis indicated that the majority of respondents sought advice from a professional, with the second choice being family and friends. Overall, the advice was reported to produce a beneficial effect on the development of the respondents' social skills as shown in this comment by a respondent who sought advice from a psychologist:

I saw a psychologist in my early 30s (should have done this earlier!) and she really helped me put things into perspective and helped me realise it

not always about me! And that often it is about the other person being unhappy with themselves – this realisation enabled me to realise I can still retain my own power. I think this type of education should be taught in schools.

Meanwhile another stated:

I have seen a counsellor to deal with these issues, in particular, self-esteem.

The advice received from family and friends followed similar lines. It seemed, however, that visiting a professional had greater benefit for the development of the respondents' social skills.

However, there were also instances where the advice received caused further frustration for the respondent, largely due to a perception that the situation was hopeless and had no effective solutions:

I asked my doctor for help dealing with my anxiety and issues. I asked friends and families for tips on how to deal with the bullies. They gave me advice that was typically counter-productive like “just walk away” or “try to make friends with them”. Both strategies only escalate the bullying, if you walk away they chase you and get more aggressive, if you try to make friends you just give them more ammunition and new ways to torture you.

It is interesting to note the difference in the opinion of the advice sought by respondents. Their comments appear to mirror the positive and negative effects mentioned above. It is possible that the respondents who saw benefits in the advice received tended to use their new-found knowledge to describe the positive impact of bullying in their adult life whereas, respondents who seemed sceptical of the advice they received may have been more inclined to report the negative effects.

Action taken

Respondents who sought professional advice were prescribed treatment for mental health issues:

I got therapy to discuss the issues I face and am also on medication to control the negative feeling.

However, a definite indicator of improved assertiveness and self-confidence in adult life was that a large proportion of respondents enrolled in educational courses related to bullying. For some it created an avenue to assist people in bullying situations. Whereas for others it was a method of self-development in order to understand the reasons for bullying in schools:

I have studied to be a social worker so that I can help people ...

and:

I did psychology and learned why and how the human mind and relationships work.

There were also some comments made by bullies in reference to action they had taken in adulthood. While these comments were infrequent they did highlight an improvement in the level of self-confidence and empathy in these bullies.

I have realised over time that my actions were actually bullying and not just being assertive and tried to curb these behaviours. I try hard to ask for people's opinions on things and not be cruel. I've learnt through more experiences with a functional family how to compliment people and be nicer and have more confidence in myself.

Reasons for not seeking advice or help

The results indicated that 41 per cent of the sample did not seek advice or take action. This is quite disturbing when taking into account the large proportion of respondents who commented on the negative effects associated with being bullied in school.

However, upon a closer examination of the qualitative results it was discovered that the majority of these reasons related to the coping mechanisms of victims. Many felt that they could deal with the issues themselves and that they were, in fact, succeeding in doing so.

I found that I managed to deal quite well with these issues by myself. I learnt a lot from my life's experiences ...

However, while it is possible that these respondents were successfully able to develop their own social skills, other respondents appeared to find it much more difficult. A number of victims commented on the shame and fear associated with being a victim of school bullying:

I was embarrassed and ashamed and I don't believe anyone out there could help me and really get what I am going through.

It could be suggested here that a lack of assertiveness could be linked to the victim's reluctance in seeking advice. As such, it is possible that these victims further isolate themselves from a society they believe will never understand the deleterious impact of school bullying.

It seems that a low level of social skills did not form the only barrier to assistance. Rather, a number of respondents were unaware of the support available or where to find it. Related to this issue though was also the problem that many of these respondents believed they could not afford the service.

Didn't know where to go, money is a big issue, didn't know of such help and others always made me feel worse ...

Comments such as this indicate that some respondents did not make an effort to find the appropriate assistance out of fear that they would not be able to afford it.

While there were large proportion of negative effects, it is interesting to note the change in these effects once respondents overcame the fear associated with their experiences of school bullying. Whether it is through professional support or that provided by family and friends, the development of social skills in adult life served to eliminate this fear and assist respondents in leading more productive lives. This is justified when considering the negative experiences reported. Respondents who claimed to be fearful of their social environment tended to also report a low level of assertiveness. This is further supported by indications that many respondents feared being labelled a victim of school bullying. Because of this, they ultimately denied themselves of an opportunity to develop these much-needed social skills.

In her book *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander* Barbara Coloroso gives accounts of two eight-year-old schoolgirls.

One, Meghan, had been reported to the principal for having pulled down her knickers in the schoolyard in front of some boys while a group of girls looked on. Her father was asked to take her home and teach her not to corrupt other children. Crying uncontrollably, Meghan refused to speak until finally a family friend broke through: the group of girls, the coolest set in class that she had yearned to join, had told her that she would be accepted if she took off her knickers in front of the boys.

The other eight-year-old was Marie Bentham, who in 1999 took her own life, unable to take one more day of the bullies in her class.

Bullying is coming to be perceived as malignant and destructive. It is behaviour that warps the offender as well as the victim so that both are social misfits who have difficulties with relationships. Wesley Mission staff who work with children see incipient tragedies like those of Marie and Meghan every day; their energies are devoted to building social skills such as self-esteem, assertiveness, empathy and anger-management so that children have a healthy awareness of their own worth and can make good relationships with others.

The harmful effects of bullying are detected right across Wesley Mission's major child-focused programs in foster-care, early intervention, anti-truancy, youth mentoring and counselling. The problem is faced and treated in a dozen inventive ways.

Literacy programs, for example, recognise that children who are stranded in class because they cannot speak, read or write as well as others can become social misfits who turn to bullying to cover up their deficiencies or become classroom rejects, picked on or excluded at will by the group. Here is one parent's view of a literacy program run by Wesley Mission's Riverstone Family Centre for pre-school kids:

I am writing to inform you about the impact the "Reading Bug" program has had on my son Matthew. At the beginning of the year Matt was showing behavioural problems due to frustration. The frustration and aggression was because he was having difficulties with his speech.*

Matt began speech therapy in June 2009 and this combined with the Reading Bug program

has seen Matt go from a very angry little boy to a very happy, confident little boy. He dances and sings nursery rhymes without prompting and is very confident to perform actions to the nursery rhymes. But best of all Matt speaks clearly and can now communicate with teachers and fellow friends.

Communication is a key social skill that can avert the bullying experience, and Wesley Mission staff encounter children who are so disadvantaged by their family background that they would have little chance in school. Stacey Crowley, who runs a weekly Breakfast Club for primary schoolchildren in Sydney's west, works with three brothers and a sister. When they first attended the club, which offers free breakfasts, they were as unformed as Kipling's Mowgli, shovelling cornflakes into their mouths with their hands, sitting in a tight, wary unit, communicating only in grunts. They would not make eye contact, would not speak to Stacey. Over 12 months the care workers gradually broke through, chatting to them, teaching them, mixing them up with other kids. "Now it's 'Hi Stacey! Hi Stacey! Hi Stacey!'" when the kids come in through the gate," they say with a grin. "They sit next to their new friends. Last week Shani* even said, 'Thank you for wiping the table'." Those are children for whom a year ago school would have been unbearable, the playground, torture.

At the Creative Learning Circle for Kids in Riverstone, children meet and socialise in a safe space, learning relationship arts they might not receive at home while absorbing some education. The program is particularly helpful for children from the area's large Aboriginal community which is both marginalised and riven by internal differences, fault-lines that show even in these children's dealings with each other. A drumming class was recently upset by four girls who bullied the rest of the group. At a round-table meeting the four were told that they were spoiling fun for the others and offered the chance to leave the class if they did not like it. Defiantly, the four girls voted to leave. Two weeks later they re-appeared, missing the social contact. This is a win but the centre's staff, led by manager Tricia Young, are still working to build up the girls' self-esteem so that they stop using thuggery to gain social power.

Louna Heloui, a former schoolteacher, is in contact with a young man who was a client at Wesley Mission-run JPET, an educational guidance program for youth who dropped out of school. This man is so severely disturbed by the bullying he experienced

in school that he is frequently suicidal and needs psychiatric care.

Wesley Mission foster-care workers have to deal with the sadness of children whose troubled background makes them victims of bullying. Karen Tetlow, who is team leader of foster-care on the Central Coast, says it is common that when these children finally lash out after prolonged mental torture, they are the ones suspended from school for their one violent outburst while the perpetrators of emotional bullying get off scot-free because the harm they cause is insidious, unseen by the schoolteachers.

Christie O’Leary, who works with troubled school-aged youth at Wesley Mission’s Newcastle office, is anxious to encourage schools to accept and fully enact anti-bullying programs — not an easy task with schools reluctant to admit to problems that might scare off parents, according to Louna who, over 20 years of being a casual teacher, grew frustrated with the reluctance of the educational system to acknowledge the problem honestly and put safeguards in place that are uniform and genuine.

At the back of these caseworkers’ minds is the tragedy of the consequences of letting school bullying go unchecked, with the story of Geelong student Chanelle Rae who was driven to take her life in July 2009 because her morale had been destroyed by cyber-bullies; the tragedy of 14-year-old Alex Wildman in Lismore who killed himself in 2008 after suffering a series of violent confrontations with other schoolboys; of the death in unexplained circumstances of 13-year-old schoolboy James Roney, who had quit school in Mount Gambier due to prolonged bullying and, on the day he was due to start at a new school, took his grandparents’ car out early in the morning and suffered a fatal crash.

Brighter Futures is a large-scale and well-resourced Department of Community Services-led early intervention project. Wesley Mission is the lead Brighter Futures agency across Blacktown-Baulkham Hills, and the Cumberland and Nepean areas. Staff work with little children whose troubled backgrounds have hindered their development which has often led to bullying. This report carries the story of one such child, Jake (see page 24). Many children like Jake learned how to be bullies because of violence and bullying behaviour in their homes. All have diminished self-worth due to their home life. Early skills-building programs are vital:

a study published in August by a team of British, French and Canadian scientists showed that 15 per cent of preschool children had abnormally high levels of depression and anxiety.

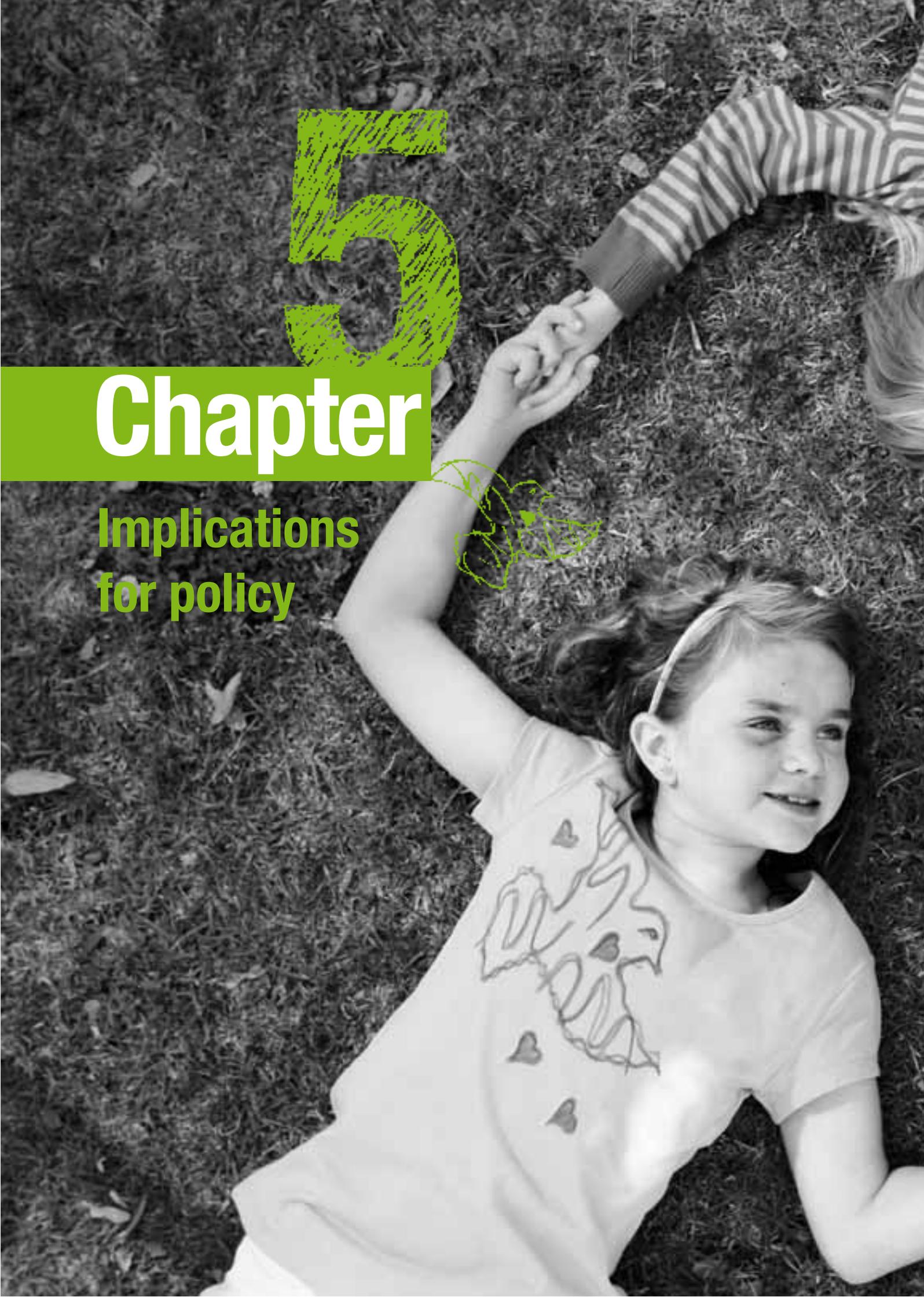
A Wesley Mission-developed group program for children whose social skills have been damaged by domestic violence, *Stretching Your Wings*, shows great promise along with other programs such as *Me and My Friend* and *Seasons for Growth*. Bullying is a learned behaviour, and given time and resources, it can be unlearned. Understanding and support is coming, but the need is far greater than current resources can support.

Leading Australians are speaking out about the bullying they experienced at school, giving the lie to the view that bullying is a “strengthening” experience. Australian novelist and poet John Kinsella, who holds chairs at eminent universities in three countries, has written of being “a bullied child who genuinely feared turning up at the school gates”. There are the stories of individual pain and loneliness from victims of bullying in school. There are catastrophes from the same unhappiness that we must avert: Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the boys who killed 12 students and a teacher at Columbine High School in 1999, saw themselves as outcasts, wrote *Denver Post* columnist Chuck Green: they had been repeatedly bullied and ostracised by their schoolmates at Columbine. Bullying, wrote Green, has emerged as a common thread in most school shootings.

– Dino Kelleghan

*Names changed.





5

Chapter

Implications
for policy



Chapter 5: Implications for policy

This Wesley Mission report builds upon our influential 2007 project on child abuse and neglect: *Beyond adversity: Giving kids a chance to shine*. This 2009 Wesley Report *Give kids a chance: No-one deserves to be left out*, examines peer abuse, or bullying, and its effects on children and adults. Through our extensive work in social services and this research project, Wesley Mission has witnessed the damage that bullying imposes on young people, adults and their communities. Wesley Mission understands that peer abuse is a complex personal, familial, educational and social problem. As a result, bullying is not just a consideration for schools or parents: ending peer abuse is everyone's responsibility.

This 2009 Wesley Report echoes the 2007 *Beyond adversity* report on child abuse. Both projects found that serious adversity that (a) occurs early in life, (b) continues over time and (c) is accompanied by additional stress factors, causes the greatest degree of distress and tends to result in negative outcomes in adulthood. Wesley Mission's work in these reports, taken together, generate strong voices in the call for eliminating child abuse and peer abuse.

- Association of Children's Welfare Agencies
- NSW Department of Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families
- University of Sydney
- University of Western Sydney
- Wesley Mission

Implications for policy

This 2009 Wesley Report on bullying sets out policy recommendations to address the needs of all involved in the cycle of harm: bullies, victims, bystanders and communities. Our goal is to prevent bullying and help young people become more resilient and optimistic about their futures.

Wesley Mission's policy recommendations stem from a research and consultation process that included a literature and policy review, a media review, focus groups with Wesley Mission case-workers and a policy workshop held in August 2009 at Wesley Mission. This workshop united representatives from a range of government, academic, non-government and social services organisations, including:

- NSW Commission for Children and Young People
- NSW Department of Human Services (Children's Services)
- NSW Department of Education and Training

Overview

This Wesley Report, *Give kids a chance: No-one deserves to be left out*, identifies three areas for policy action; we seek positive change for children/families, schools and communities. We recognise that, in peer abuse, the roles people play become intertwined; victims may become bullies and vice versa. With our whole-of-community approach to peer abuse, we address the problems facing bullies, victims and bystanders, as well as society in general. Because bullying often involves a group, our policy recommendations also take into account both individual and social dynamics. Wesley Mission understands that bullying is a common, corrosive social problem that deserves extended, evaluated and focused attention.

By offering an interconnected set of recommendations, Wesley Mission encourages the entire community, and especially those dealing directly with children and young people, to conquer peer abuse. Our emphasis is on the development of resilience, and in particular the social skills that help children, young people and

adults to weather the difficult experiences they may encounter. Wesley Mission's policy recommendations include actions for prevention (before bullying occurs), intervention (upon report of bullying) and healing (following the cessation of bullying).

1. Children and families

The key findings of the 2007 *Beyond adversity* report on child abuse were that early, enduring and complex experiences of adversity are linked to poor outcomes in adulthood. Similarly, the findings of this 2009 report on peer abuse demonstrate that bullying that occurs early in life, continues for a considerable period and is perpetrated by a group (rather than an individual) exerts the greatest amount of distress. In addition, the negative effects of bullying (e.g. low self-esteem) may last into adulthood, regardless of whether the individual involved was a victim or a bully.

Wesley Mission believes that enhancing childhood resilience should be a key component of anti-bullying programs. Our research shows that the presence of positive social skills and qualities (e.g. self-worth, assertiveness, empathy, anger management) can empower children/adolescents to find alternatives to bullying behaviour and to respond more effectively to bullying if it occurs. In addition, social and parenting skills training for parents/carers increases the likelihood that children will witness positive models of behaviour in their formative years. The following recommendations for children and families cover both preventive and restorative measures to address peer abuse.

Early intervention

Consistent, effective early intervention programs are likely to give children the best possible opportunities to avoid and/or recover from experiences of bullying (Tremblay, 2005). To reach a wide range of children, especially those at greatest risk of being involved in bullying, Wesley Mission advocates a multi-faceted approach to assessment and intervention.

1.1 Wesley Mission's policy workshop, in addition to our literature and policy review, highlighted the importance of accurately and quickly identifying bullying behaviour. We believe that bullying should be considered by health practitioners and social services providers when they assess a child (Lyznicki, 2004). By focussing further on children at risk, and children who have already been affected by bullying, the cycle of harm may be

prevented or altered to achieve more positive outcomes for these children.

Wesley Mission calls for improvement in identifying bullying in our community. We recommend the addition of specific questions regarding bullying involving:

- therapeutic assessments conducted by health practitioners and social services providers during initial or subsequent contact with children
- educational assessments by teachers/counsellors/principals in relation to a child's experience and development in preschool/school
- discussions between staff/teachers and parents/carers regarding a child's experience in preschool/kindergarten/daycare.

1.2 Current research indicates that peer abuse begins sooner than it did in previous decades, even as early as four years of age (Humphrey and Crisp, 2008, Wesley Mission, 2009). At present, the problem of bullying does not seem to be directly or adequately addressed in most childcare settings. Wesley Mission suggests that additional resources be devoted to helping young children resolve conflicts, build healthy self-esteem and establish friendships without bullying.

These efforts may take the form of an accreditation program (e.g. SunSmart) for preschools/kindergartens/daycares. The programs may require additions to existing behavioural and social development activities for preschool children and/or modifications to primary school anti-bullying programs to make them suitable to younger children. The goal is to build respectful learning/playing environments for preschool-aged children.

Wesley Mission calls for the development and implementation of anti-bullying and resilience programs for preschools/kindergartens/daycares. These efforts would comprise:

- training for staff/teachers to recognise bullying behaviour and build positive relationships between children
- programs for parents to increase awareness of bullying and offer positive alternatives
- educational activities for children to increase their understanding of acceptable behaviour and enhance trust and respect.

Transitions

Research shows that children and adolescents tend to find transitions challenging as new experiences test their notions of identity. In particular, children who are new in a community or school are more vulnerable to becoming involved in peer abuse. In addition, Wesley Mission's research shows that while some bullies feel remorseful for their actions, they may also bully again. Thus, timely and effective intervention is crucial in helping young people move through difficult periods in their lives without resorting to emotional or physical violence.

Currently, a range of government and non-government educational and social programs focus on transitions for children and adolescents. Many of these do contain components on bullying (e.g. Personal Development Health and Physical Education curriculum, Wesley Mission Breakfast Clubs), but there is room to extend these efforts. Since not all existing social support programs contain specific anti-bullying information or social skills training, Wesley Mission sees opportunities for revising and developing interventions that target specific needs.

1.3 Wesley Mission recognises that peer abuse is a social problem; it often occurs in groups, or in front of groups, and is used as a way of defining and enforcing social boundaries (Cassidy, 2009). In keeping with current research on peer abuse, Wesley Mission acknowledges the normal developmental processes that fuel bullying, yet we seek positive ways to manage those tensions (Pepler et al., 2008). Children and young people need guidance in navigating new relationships and their emerging sense of independence. By mid-primary school, children should be developing the key social skills that minimise bullying behaviour and provide insulation to its effects.

Bullying is also a long-term problem, developing as early as preschool and continuing throughout childhood and adolescence, sometimes into adulthood. Extensive research both in Australia and internationally shows that bullying behaviour peaks between the ages of nine and 14. Thus, anti-bullying and social support resources – both preventative and restorative in nature – should be targeted at key periods and particular circumstances in which bullying is most extensive and destructive.

Wesley Mission advocates for anti-bullying and resilience programs (either in addition to, or within, existing initiatives) that:

- address the social dimensions of bullying and provide alternatives for all roles in the process: bullies, victims and bully-victims.
- occur over time, during key transitions in a child's life (e.g. preschool to primary school, primary to high school, post-secondary opportunities).

1.4 A small but significant percentage of children and adolescents in our community have problems that are too severe to allow them to participate in a standard school setting; some of these young people have been expelled from school or are within the juvenile justice system. Others have withdrawn from school due to extensive injury and/or psychological damage from bullying. Wesley Mission believes our society must provide opportunities for children and adolescents on the margins to grow and heal, so that they may become positive, productive members of society. To a significant degree, anti-bullying information can be added to existing programs for disadvantaged and troubled young people (eg Youth Pathways, Operation Hope Camps). There may also be a need for new initiatives to support children who are yet to return to school after severe bullying.

Wesley Missions advocates for the development and implementation of anti-bullying and social skills programs to meet the needs of young people outside the school environment. These services should:

- help build social-skills/resilience and increase understanding of the effects of bullying in young people within the juvenile justice system and in residential or day programs;
- restore dignity and confidence to victims of severe bullying through 'safe houses' or other models of care (e.g. Red Balloon Learner Centres, UK);
- pair young people with an appropriate adult mentor for ongoing support.

Family dynamics

Research suggests that the home environment plays a role in whether or not children become engaged in bullying at school. Children whose families are disharmonious or whose parents are authoritarian and/or emotionally distant, seem to be more likely to engage in peer abuse (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2004). Because Wesley Mission seeks a whole-of-community solution to the problem of bullying, we advocate for programs that build parenting skills and improve family dynamics, so that parents learn to model positive behaviours in the home environment.

1.5 Wesley Mission works to foster a greater sense of equality, responsibility and respect within families. In homes where domestic violence has occurred, or is at risk of occurring, we recommend that children participate in anti-bullying and resilience programs in their communities and/or schools [see previous recommendations]. The parenting and family programs we recommend and provide may take the form of additional anti-bullying information and training inserted into existing programs (e.g. Triple P Parenting, 1-2-3 Magic).

Wesley Mission calls for the provision of extended, tailored parenting and family therapy programs that include training on:

- social skills and conflict resolution, especially qualities like self-esteem, empathy and anger management
- assessing children's behaviour, so that parents learn to recognise when children are involved in bullying, either as bullies or victims
- information on how to address peer abuse with educational organisations and in the home.

2. Schools

Ecosystemic approach

Wesley Mission believes the whole school community should be involved in efforts to eliminate bullying and strengthen bonds between students. Recent research suggests that interventions work best when they incorporate group dynamics and school culture because these influences differ markedly from location to location (Healey, 2007; Parada, 2008). Programs that take an ecosystemic approach seek to align changes

with the needs of particular schools or communities, while still sending a consistent core message to all schools.

2.1 Wesley Mission hopes to see greater attention to entire school communities in anti-bullying policies and practices. This work may require the further implementation of existing programs or the revision/extension of programs that are not comprehensive enough. Programs need to educate all students, including non-bullies and bystanders, because even passive behaviour encourages peer abuse and magnifies its effects.

Wesley Mission calls for increased support for ecosystemic, tailored anti-bullying and resilience programs in government and independent schools, at both the primary and high school levels. These programs should include:

- building individual social skills, especially self-esteem/self-worth, empathy, assertiveness and anger management
- developing group interaction skills, especially around relationships, classroom behaviour and conflict resolution
- shifting the culture of each school to one that values safety and respect, heightens responsibility and discourages aggression.

2.2 Young people, in particular adolescents, place value on relationships and on being part of a group. Teenagers also seek a sense of meaning and purpose. Because bullying is a complex social problem which often occurs in and around schools, anti-bullying programs managed by young people can have a unique and positive impact (Healey, 2003).

Wesley Mission supports anti-bullying peer advocacy programs in which changes to attitudes and behaviour are led by young people and directed at their communities. This work may include the wider implementation of existing programs or new addition to current interventions. The key components are:

- conflict resolution sessions, where older children talk to the individuals/groups involved to try to resolve problems
- mentoring programs, where an older student is paired with younger child who is at risk of, or has been a victim of, bullying.

Clarity and consistency of response

Research reveals that many people (e.g. children, adolescents, parents) are reluctant to report bullying (Frisen et al., 2007, Wesley Mission, 2009). The process of reporting and responding to bullying is not clear, consistent or sufficient in many schools (Bauman, Rigby & Hoppa, 2008). Due to inconsistencies in teacher/staff training and experience levels, some educators lack the skills and resources to respond adequately (Tremblay, 2005). Wesley Mission sees opportunities to further develop and implement standardised principles for teachers/staff to follow in response to bullying (Parada, in press; Rigby, in press). Children should only have to report bullying once.

2.3 Wesley Mission encourages schools to adopt consistent steps in the process of identifying and responding to bullying, with specific descriptions of behaviours that require intervention (Parada, 2008). This work may include the further development and application of a standardised bullying type/seriousness scale. The goal is to enable educators to effectively recognise and address bullying in schools.

Wesley Mission calls for the establishment of a clear “line of sight” from the first report of bullying in schools to the resolution of the problem. This work may include:

- a more specific, more consistent process of identifying and responding to peer abuse in schools;
- additional training for teachers/staff to strengthen their skills in responding to bullying;
- an accreditation system (e.g. SunSmart and Asthma Friendly Schools) through which schools meet criteria to be rated as “resilient and respectful” and/or “bully-free” schools.

Partnerships: schools and community organisations

Wesley Mission recognises that the resources of both schools and community organisations are stretched, and it is difficult to secure additional funding for non-academic programs. Yet by working in partnership, schools and community organisations may be able to use existing resources to combat the challenging problem of peer abuse.

2.4 Wesley Mission envisions opportunities to work directly with schools to deliver evidence-based, ongoing social programs that benefit young

people before, during or after school. This work may take the form of an accreditation process whereby Wesley Mission is identified as a provider of services that fit within the NSW Department of Education and Training’s Safe Schools project or other similar initiatives. These programs may also be supported by partnerships with non-government organisations who advocate for children, including endeavours that emerge from the 2009 NSW Government inquiry ‘*Bullying of Children and Young People*’.

The overall goal of these interventions, whether they are provided by Wesley Mission or other social services organisations, is to build life skills that enable young people to safely, happily form and sustain social and familial connections.

Wesley Mission calls for partnership support and accreditation of their best-practice programs (eg Breakfast Clubs, To The Core) that help build social skills (including conflict resolution) in children and young people.

3. Communities

Wesley Mission advocates for a new level of understanding of bullying; one that recognises the seriousness of the problem, the longevity of its effects and the need for the whole community to participate in the solution. We want the community to understand that peer abuse is everyone’s problem.

Altering attitudes

Wesley Mission recognises that childhood bullying is fuelled by a range of complicated and interconnected factors. One way to address this problem is to raise the level of understanding of bullying in the general community.

3.1 Wesley Mission believes a community awareness campaign could help teach people of all ages, but in particular adults, to recognise, discourage and report bullying, as well as to support those involved previously to recover in a peaceful, positive environment. Particular groups to target in the campaign may include: community leaders, families, sports teams, educators, workers in a wide range of occupations. This work may take the form of a partnership between Wesley Mission and a government department and/or company to support the development and dissemination of this information.

Wesley Mission calls for a community awareness campaign about bullying. The issues addressed should include:

- the definition of bullying
- the seriousness of its impact;
- alternative perspectives and behaviours for individuals and groups.

3.2 Wesley Mission wants to foster institutions that are free of bullying and calls for improvement in organisations where this is a problem. We advocate research into workplace bullying and the subsequent announcement of “awards” and “gongs” for prevention of peer abuse in the workplace (e.g. “Great Place to Work” Institute awards, *Fortune’s* “Best Companies to Work For” awards).

Wesley Mission calls for a researched, publicised system of plaudits and critiques for levels of bullying in the workplace. These efforts would be accompanied by explanations of adult peer abuse, its effects and alternatives.

Restorative programs

3.3 Mission’s research reveals that the effects of peer abuse are enduring and serious. Adults who were involved in childhood bullying, particularly if they considered themselves victims rather than bullies, reported significantly lower levels of self-esteem and more difficulty in relationships. Those adults who admitted they were childhood bullies also struggled with self-esteem and guilt in adulthood. Many of these adults would not have had an opportunity to benefit from childhood social skills and resilience programs at the relevant time.

Wesley Mission calls for social services programs for adults who have been engaged in bullying and who are currently suffering from problems related to these experiences. This work should include:

- teaching health practitioners and social service providers to ask about peer abuse in assessing adults with depression, anger management issues and other interrelated problems
- offering support services (e.g. counseling or group therapy, developing social networks) to aid the healing process
- helping these adults recognise and cope with bullying if it affects their children.

Research

3.4 Although there has been considerable research on peer abuse over the past two decades, in particular, there is still debate about how to define and measure bullying and how to evaluate and improve interventions for it. Currently, the field of peer abuse research deserves greater attention and research support, so that improvements may be made in how we understand and address bullying in children and young people.

Wesley Mission calls for greater public and private sector support for research into bullying. This work may involve a partnership between Wesley Mission and an educational institution and/or research centre to:

- provide data for research (through our programs)
- support and/or collaborate on data analysis
- assist in publicising results and advocating for any necessary reforms to existing programs.

Additional recommendations

3.5 Wesley Mission supports professional development of, and proper conditions for, people who work with children affected by abuse of any kind. These professional roles are stressful and often involve challenging working conditions and modest levels of remuneration. As a result, there are high levels of staff turnover in some child-and-family areas of social services. Our community needs to support those who work for the most vulnerable members of our society, especially children.

3.6 Current government education-related funding for children with disabilities does not cover children with experiences of abuse. Wesley Mission calls for a reconsideration of these funding criteria so that children who have been involved in child abuse, neglect or serious bullying may receive additional assistance in a school setting.

Because research shows that different types of bullying (emotional, physical, cyber, etc.) are highly correlated, Wesley Mission does not differentiate its recommendations for particular types of bullying. Our recommendations are comprehensive in nature and appropriate to all types of bullying.

Appendix 1: About the research

The purpose of this section is to provide an elaborated explanation of the methodology of the research.

The geographical focus for the study was based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics statistical division of Sydney. The suburbs in the sample were recoded into five main areas. These were:

- Mid and North West
- Inner Metro
- North
- South
- South West and Outer West

Choosing the appropriate life/social skills

It has been suggested that no definitive set of essential social skills actually exist. Rather, the skills considered important vary in terms of the topic (UNICEF).

Therefore the process of determining which life skills were to be incorporated within the current study was based on a review of existing literature of school bullying. From this array of literature, five specific skills appeared paramount to the experience of bullying in schools.

As mentioned earlier, these social skills were:

- self-esteem
- co-operation
- aggressiveness/anger management
- assertiveness
- empathy.

Academic literary sources identified two validated scales to tests self esteem and co-operation. These were the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the co-operativeness scale developed by Rigby, Cox and Black (1997: 357) for use with secondary students.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Scale was developed in 1965 by Morris Rosenberg in his publication titled Society and the Adolescent Self Image (<http://www.bsos.umd.edu/socy/research/rosenberg.htm>). It consists of 10 questions that are scored on a four-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”.

The Wesley Mission report adopted the 0-3 scoring method from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. As indicated by the scales developer, all negative questions were reverse scored so that a response of strongly agree to “not having much to be proud of” attracted a zero score.

The co-operativeness scale

This scale was made up 18 co-operation questions which were scored in a similar fashion to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. That is, scoring was reverse scored where the co-operativeness statement was negative.

Although it is not mentioned in the study by Rigby, Cox and Black (1997: 368), the scoring of co-operation in the Wesley Mission report was calculated from the degree to which the statements were agreed to by participants in the study. The 0 to 3 scoring scale was adopted for this report, implying a score out of 72 for co-operation.

Measuring the other life skills

The questions used to measure assertiveness, anger management/aggressiveness and empathy were based on examples provided in the existing literature. For example, Camodeca and Goossens (2005: 190) gauged the likelihood of children producing aggressive responses to a number of hypothetical scenarios. As such, the questionnaire for the current report involved four hypothetical questions. Two of these related to the victim whilst the remaining addressed the aggression of the bully. Bully victims were directed to one question for each of these groups.

The sample

As mentioned in the introduction, the sample for the Wesley Mission report consisted of 1200 respondents selected at random. The sample was weighted against age and gender of the population of Sydney before being outsourced to Australian Fieldwork Solutions (AFS) for data collection.

The division of figures was calculated using gender and population statistics from the 2006 Census. The quota for the sample is provided below:

Gender	18-29	30-44
Male	256 (21%)	337 (28%)
Female	256 (21%)	351 (29%)

% may not equal 100 due to rounding

Given that the method of data collection was an online survey, AFS was briefed with reference to the appropriate location of “skips” dependent on the responses of the bully, victim and bully-victim. The survey was put in field after construction.

The bully v. victim experience

A different series of questions were asked to respondents once they had stated their role in the bullying experience when in school. These questions were largely drawn from the Peer Relations Questionnaire constructed by Rigby and Slee (1994). The items from two of the subsets i.e. the victims and bullies scale were incorporated into the Wesley Mission questionnaire. The four-point scale was also employed within the study, but with changed labels. “Once in a while” was changed to “sometimes”, “pretty often” was changed to “often” and “very often” changed to “most of the time”.

The purpose of using these scales was to gauge the severity of the victims experience and identify the specific types of negative actions they experienced. Similarly, the bullies’ perspective involved the frequency of the specific negative actions in which they were engaged.

Data analysis and coding

Prior to the commencement of data analysis, the research team conducted a rigorous process of cleaning the data file provided by Australian Fieldwork Solutions (AFS). This involved a cross-comparison of the codes within the SPSS file and coding frame provided to AFS, to ensure they matched.

The cleaning process also required accounting for blank responses as it was possible that they were not, in fact, missing but “not applicable” according to the various skip commands.

The raw scale results for both the self-esteem and co-operativeness scales required conversion into scores out of 30 and 72. This involved computing the scores across each question to produce a total for each respondent. Once completed, the variables were collapsed to allow for use in cross-tabulations.

The inclusion of more qualitative open-ended questions provided a previously untapped wealth of knowledge in the Wesley Mission report. Questions that returned a large number of responses were checked for common themes. The intention here was to convert their comments into a numeric form on SPSS. This was somewhat difficult as a large number of responses could not be tied down to a single theme. As such, response were left in text form and analysed manually.

Appendix 2: Life skills and the bullying experience survey

This is a survey about linking the bullying experience in schools to specific life skills we learn as we grow into adulthood. It is being conducted for Wesley Mission Sydney; a community organisation which runs a range of programs to help children and youth. You will find more information about this organisation at the end of this survey. You won't be asked to make any donations as this survey is for research. The answers you provide will be completely anonymous, and will be combined with more than 1000 other answers in the analysis.

Section A: Qualifying questions

1. Do you live in Sydney?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) No _____
Terminate here
2. What is the postcode of your address?
Record _____ (if not within range)
Terminate here
3. Would you mind telling me how old you are?
Record _____

Instruction: If refused, record quota range below:

- 1) 18-29
- 2) 30-44

**Instruction: If respondent older than this –
Terminate here**

The bullying experience — what does it mean?

A situation in school is defined as bullying when a student is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students (Olweus, 1994:1173).

Bullying includes situations when someone is hit, kicked, threatened, tormented, locked inside a room, sent insulting notes, deliberately ignored and purposely excluded from group activities. It is also bullying when a student is teased repeatedly in a nasty way. But it is not bullying when two students of about the same strength have the occasional fight or quarrel.

4. Thinking back to your time at school, would you consider yourself to have been?
 - 1) A bully
 - 2) A victim
 - 3) Sometimes a victim and other times a bully

- 4) A bystander _____
Terminate here
- 5) Other _____
Terminate here

Note: If Response 1 at Q.4 Skip to Section C

**If Response 2 at Q.4 Cont. to Section B and
Skip Section C**

If Response 3 at Q.4 Cont. to Section B & C

Section B:

5. How old were you when you were first bullied?
Record _____ years
6. And at which level of schooling do you feel you were most bullied?
 - 1) Primary school
 - 2) High school
 - 3) Other _____ (please specify)
7. Looking back at your time in school how often were you bullied by another student or group of students?
 - 1) Most days
 - 2) Two to three times a week
 - 3) About once a week
 - 4) About once every few weeks
 - 5) Every now and then
8. Thinking back to these experiences of bullying, please tell us how long they lasted?
 - 1) A few days
 - 2) A week
 - 3) A few weeks
 - 4) A month
 - 5) A few months
 - 6) More than a few months but less than one year
 - 7) More than a year
9. By whom were you mainly bullied by in school?
 - 1) An individual student
 - 2) A group of students
 - 3) Roughly even for both
 - 4) A teacher

10. On a scale from 1 to 4 where 1 means “never” and 4 means “most of the time”, how frequently did the following things happen to you when you were bullied at school?

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
a) Teased in an unpleasant way in the playground	1	2	3	4
b) Teased in an unpleasant way in the classroom	1	2	3	4
c) A teacher ignored the bullying incident in the classroom	1	2	3	4
d) Left out of things on purpose	1	2	3	4
e) Avoided or ignored by other students on purpose	1	2	3	4
f) Threatened with harm	1	2	3	4
g) Hit or kicked	1	2	3	4
h) Possessions were moved or hidden	1	2	3	4

11. Did you ever stay away from school because of bullying?

- 1) No, I never thought of doing so
- 2) No, but I have wanted to
- 3) Yes, I have stayed away from school once or twice
- 4) Yes, I have stayed away from school more than twice

12. During your time at school, did you ever tell anyone about being bullied?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No _____ Skip to Q.16

13. Which of the following people did you tell about being bullied?

- 1) Your mother
- 2) Your father
- 3) A teacher
- 4) A counsellor
- 5) A friend or friends
- 6) Other _____ (please specify)

14. Was any action taken after you told this person?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No _____ Skip Q.15

15. What action was taken?

16. Generally speaking, why do you think some school children bully others?

17. Why do you think you were bullied at school?

Appendix 2: Life skills and the bullying experience survey

18. According to you, what do you think makes bullying stop?

20. When you were in school, did you mainly bully on your own or as part of group of students?

- 1) Mainly on my own
- 2) Mainly as part of a group
- 3) Evenly for both
- 4) Other _____ (please specify)

21. Generally speaking, why do you think some school children bully others?

Section C:

19. If you can recall, how often did you bully other students in school?

- 1) It happened once or twice
- 2) Sometimes
- 3) About once a week
- 4) Several times a week

22. On a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 means “Never” and 4 means “Most of the time”, please show how often the following statement were for you:

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
a) I gave soft kids a hard time	1	2	3	4
b) I was part of a group that went around teasing others	1	2	3	4
c) I liked to make others scared of me	1	2	3	4
d) I liked to show others that I was the boss	1	2	3	4
e) I enjoyed upsetting wimps	1	2	3	4
f) I liked to get into fights with someone I could easily beat	1	2	3	4

Section D:

23. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning your general feelings about yourself when you were in school.

	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time
a) On the whole I was satisfied with myself	1	2	3
b) At times, I thought I was no good at all	1	2	3
c) I felt that I had a number of good qualities	1	2	3
d) I was able to do things as well as most other people	1	2	3
e) I felt I did not have much to be proud of	1	2	3
f) I certainly felt useless at times	1	2	3
g) I felt that I was a person of worth	1	2	3
h) I wished that I could have had more respect for myself	1	2	3
i) Overall, I felt like I was a failure	1	2	3
j) I took a positive attitude towards myself	1	2	3

24. Please indicate how often you had to deal with the following situations when you were at school.

	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time
a) Having no friends	1	2	3
b) Feeling lonely at school	1	2	3
c) Being rejected by other students	1	2	3
d) Parents checking up on me	1	2	3
d) Being ignored by parents	1	2	3
e) Being picked on by teachers	1	2	3
f) Doing worse in schoolwork than I had expected	1	2	3
g) Having arguments or disagreements in the home involving me	1	2	3
h) Feeling uncomfortable or awkward when talking with other students	1	2	3
i) Having difficulty with excelling in school	1	2	3

Section E:

25. Returning to your time in school, please indicate to what extent you would agree or disagree with the following:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) I gave soft kids a hard time	1	2	3	4
b) I was part of a group that went around teasing others	1	2	3	4
c) I liked to make others scared of me	1	2	3	4
d) I liked to show others that I was the boss	1	2	3	4
e) I enjoyed upsetting wimps	1	2	3	4
f) I liked to get into fights with someone I could easily beat	1	2	3	4
g) It was fun to take part in running a club	1	2	3	4
h) Social clubs hardly ever worked well	1	2	3	4
i) It was often difficult working with other people	1	2	3	4
j) It was more productive to work on one's own	1	2	3	4
k) Teamwork was the best way to get results	1	2	3	4
l) Boys and girls could usually work together quite well	1	2	3	4
m) Involvement in joint projects was very satisfying	1	2	3	4
n) It was difficult to arrive at an agreed decision in groups	1	2	3	4
o) Committees were a waste of time	1	2	3	4
p) I liked to get to know people better	1	2	3	4
q) Friends ought to be concerned about each other's wishes	1	2	3	4
r) People of a different sex could hardly ever agree	1	2	3	4

Appendix 2: Life skills and the bullying experience survey

Note: If Response 1 at Q.4 Skip Section F
If Response 2 or 3 at Q.4 Continue to Section F

Section F:

26. The following statements are about the ways in which you perceived yourself during school. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) My demeanour appeared timid	1	2	3	4
b) I gave into the bully too easily when I was picked on	1	2	3	4
c) I became tearful when I was picked on	1	2	3	4
d) I fought back when I was picked on	1	2	3	4
e) I stood up for myself when I was teased by other kids	1	2	3	4
f) I was not bothered when other kids tried to pick on me	1	2	3	4
g) I backed off when I was teased by other kids	1	2	3	4
h) I looked like an unhappy person	1	2	3	4
i) I spoke very quietly	1	2	3	4
j) I kept to myself and did not really interact with other peers	1	2	3	4
k) I was overly apologetic when faced with confrontations	1	2	3	4
l) I generally felt more comfortable in the company of teachers or other adults than with kids of my own age	1	2	3	4

27. Please indicate how easy or difficult the following actions were for you during school?

	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult
a) Very easy	1	2	3	4
b) Making friends	1	2	3	4
c) Introducing myself	1	2	3	4
d) Complimenting myself	1	2	3	4
e) Questioning unfair rules or decisions	1	2	3	4
f) Joining informal and formal student groups on my own	1	2	3	4
g) Initiating conversation with other students	1	2	3	4
h) Controlling my temper when teased by other students	1	2	3	4
i) Joining social clubs outside of school on my own initiative	1	2	3	4
j) Being the leader of group activities	1	2	3	4
k) Showing interest in what was being said by teachers	1	2	3	4

Section G: Aggressiveness and anger management

Note: If Response 1 at Q.4 Continue to Scenario 1b & 2b

If Response 2 at Q.4 Continue to Scenario 1a & 2a

If Response 3 at Q.4 Continue to Scenario 1a & 2b

Scenario 1a:

Imagine that you were back in school and waiting in the canteen line to place your lunch order when suddenly another student pushes in front of you claiming that this spot was being minded by a friend. You are quite certain that this is a lie.

28. Please answer the following, on a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 means “not bothered” and 4 means “Very angry”

	Not bothered	Bothered	Angry	Very angry
a) How would you have felt about the situation?	1	2	3	4
b) How would you have felt about the individual?	1	2	3	4

29. How important or unimportant would it have been for you to do the following:

	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Very unimportant
a) Forget the incident as soon as possible	1	2	3	4
b) Feel less angry about the situation	1	2	3	4
c) Retaliate for what the person did	1	2	3	4

Scenario 2a:

Imagine that you came to school one day and found out that you were the only student in your class who was not invited to attend a popular student’s birthday party.

30. Please answer the following, on a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 means “not bothered” and 4 means “Very angry”.

	Not bothered	Bothered	Angry	Very angry
a) How would you have felt about the situation?	1	2	3	4
b) How would you have felt about the individual?	1	2	3	4

31. How important or unimportant would it have been for you to do the following:

	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Very unimportant
a) Forget the situation as soon as possible	1	2	3	4
b) Feel less angry about the situation	1	2	3	4
c) Retaliate for what the person did	1	2	3	4

Appendix 2: Life skills and the bullying experience survey

Scenario 1b:

Imagine that you were back in school and the bell rings for assembly. As usual you casually make your way to your class line. As you approach the line you notice the same student who seems to always be at the start of the line. You see him trying to catch the teacher's eye and gain approval. You proceed to your usual place in the assembly line, which happens to be at the end.

32. Please answer the following, on a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 means "Not bothered" and 4 means "Very angry".

	Not bothered	Bothered	Angry	Very angry
a) How would you have felt about the situation?	1	2	3	4
b) How would you have felt about the individual?	1	2	3	4

33. How easy or difficult would it have been for you to do the following:

	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult
a) Continue as any other normal day	1	2	3	4
b) To later take it out physically, on the student	1	2	3	4
c) Control your anger about the situation	1	2	3	4
d) To later take it out emotionally, on the student	1	2	3	4

Scenario 2b:

Imagine that you were back in school and you had just received a test paper back from the teacher only to find that you had once again scored low marks. However, a particular student at the front of the class continually receives praise for once again performing well.

34. Please answer the following, on a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 means "Not bothered" and 4 means "Very angry".

	Not bothered	Bothered	Angry	Very angry
a) How would you have felt about the situation?	1	2	3	4
b) How would you have felt about the individual?	1	2	3	4

35. How easy or difficult would it have been for you to do the following:

	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult
a) Continue trying your best	1	2	3	4
b) To later take it out physically, on the student	1	2	3	4
c) Control your anger about the situation	1	2	3	4
d) Ask a classmate for help with the work	1	2	3	4
e) To later take it out emotionally, on the student	1	2	3	4

**Note: If Response 1 or 3 at Q.4 Continue to Section H
If Response 2 at Q.4 Skip Section H**

Section H: Empathy

36. Recalling a bullying incident that you were involved in during school, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) I felt ashamed of myself	1	2	3	4
b) I wished that I could have just hidden away from everyone	1	2	3	4
c) I blamed myself for what had happened	1	2	3	4
d) I felt like making the situation better	1	2	3	4
e) I blamed others for what had happened	1	2	3	4
f) I felt angry about what had happened	1	2	3	4
g) I felt like I could do it again if I wanted to without feeling remorse	1	2	3	4
h) I felt that people should toughen up and learn to take a blow	1	2	3	4
i) I felt a thrill in seeing how far someone could get pushed	1	2	3	4

37. Were there any other feelings you recall experiencing about this incident?

- 1) Yes _____ Go to Q.38
- 2) No _____ Skip Q.38

38. Can you please describe how you felt?

40. Could you please describe the positive effects these experiences have had on you?

41. Could you please describe the negative effects these experiences have had on you?

Section H: Then and now

39. Do you think your experiences of bullying at school have had a positive or negative effect on you in adult life?

- 1) Positive _____ Go to Q.40; Skip Q.41
- 2) Negative _____ Go to Q.41; Skip Q.40
- 3) Both _____ Go to Q.40
- 4) Not sure _____ Skip to Section I

**Note: If Response 1 at Q.39 Skip Q.42
If Response 2 at Q.39 Continue to Q.42
If Response 3 at Q.39 Continue to Q.42**

Appendix 2: Life skills and the bullying experience survey

42. Have you taken any action or sought advice to deal with these issues?

- 1) Yes – I took action
- 2) Yes – I sought advice
- 3) No

Note: If Response 1 at Q.42 Skip Q.44 & Q.45
If Response 2 at Q.42 Skip Q.43
If Response 3 at Q.42 Skip Q.43 & Q.44

43. What action did you take?

44. What advice did you seek?

45. What was the reason(s) that you did not seek advice or help?

Section I: Other demographics

The following questions are designed for us to learn a bit about you.

46. What is your gender?

- 1) Male
- 2) Female

47. And you marital status?

- 1) Never married
- 2) Married
- 3) De facto or living together
- 4) Separated but not divorced
- 5) Divorced
- 6) Widowed
- 7) Declined to answer

48. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- 1) Primary school
- 2) Some secondary school
- 3) Completed secondary school (HSC, Leaving Certificate, etc)
- 4) Trade or technical qualification (e.g. TAFE)
- 5) Undergraduate university diploma/degree or equivalent
- 6) Postgraduate university diploma/degree or equivalent
- 7) Decline to answer

This brings us to the end of the questionnaire. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for answering all those questions.

Wesley Mission is one of the largest community service organisations in NSW. Wesley Mission provides a broad range services to assist various groups within the community. These include children and family services, youth outreach services, foster-care, suicide prevention, mental illness services, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, Lifeline counselling and homeless supported accommodation services.

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How you can help

Bullying can break young lives whether they are the bullies, victims or bystanders. Wesley Mission provides the counselling, care and support required to change the future for children and families like those in the stories of this report.

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