

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN BULLYING AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY

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Abstract

In the past ten years considerable attention has been devoted in the literature to violence in schools, especially, bullying behaviour. Research has established that this form of violent behaviour is an endemic problem as school students seek to develop a system of attitudes and values based on mixed social messages from today's society. The inconsistent models and images they receive from their peers, teachers, parents and the media help to perpetuate and to a certain extent, condone, this state of almost institutionalised violence. While research has established that bullying behaviour is widespread (Byrne, 1994; Maslin, 1994; Olweus, 1978; Rigby & Slee, 1989) of particular interest to this proposed study is the issue of gender differences in the nature, extent and attitudes towards bullying behaviour. While it is true that boys bully more often than girls and are more often the victims of bullying behaviour girls are picked on or teased more frequently by boys than other girls (Tulloch, 1995). The issue of gender and violence focuses on the social construction of masculinity and femininity and how it underlies the nature and extent of bullying behaviour in schools. Research into gendered violence in schools (Askew, 1989; Maslin, 1994; O'Doherty, 1994; Ollis & Tomaszewski, 1993; Roland, 1989; Tulloch, 1995) highlights the imbalance in the power relationship between males and females and needs further investigation as it is reasonable to suggest that in many cases cross sex bullying constitutes sexual harassment. Studies have established that intervention programs designed to address violence in schools are effective in reducing the level of bullying behaviour in schools. The O'Doherty (1994) Report in NSW goes further by suggesting schools adopt strategies to address gender equity issues in relation to violence in schools, in particular, boys' education. On this basis cross gender bullying deserves a closer look with regards sex role perceptions and attitudes of students and the extent of cross sex victimisation experienced.

DEFINITIONS OF AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON BULLYING.

Bullying is a phenomenon that has been described in literary works for a very long time and most adults would have experienced it from their own school days. While there has been concern in the media and in schools for some time the authorities did not involve themselves (Maslin, 1994) until fairly recently in the form of research attention. A number of researchers have reported on the phenomenon of bullying behaviour in society in general and schools in particular. It is with reference to this behaviour in schools that the present review is interested.

Scandinavian researchers are considered to have pioneered studies into bullying behaviour (Besag, 1989; Olweus, 1978, 1993). One definition of bullying/victimisation is described as follows: "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” (Olweus, 1993; p. 9). In Britain “ an attack carried out solely by one individual against another” (Besag, 1989; p. 3) can constitute bullying and most definitions contain three factors:

- it occurs over a prolonged period,
- it involves an imbalance of power and
- it can either be psychological, verbal or physical in nature.

A personal definition of bullying offered by Besag (1989) contains a fourth factor, that is, that it may be socially acceptable behaviour (eg. academic, sporting, social success) that makes others feel inferior or stressed - a point that will be explored later in the section of the literature that deals with the explanations for bullying and victim behaviour.

Bullying must be defined in terms of both the long term and systematic imposition of physical (kicking, pushing, beating) or mental (teasing or exclusion) violence against an individual or individuals who in an actual situation are unable to defend themselves. For an attack, direct (verbal, physical) or indirect (Psychological), to be considered bullying most authors suggest there should be an imbalance of strength and/or power and is repeated psychological, verbal or physical aggression directed at others by an individual or group and agrees that is both “systematic and ongoing”(Byrne, 1994; p. 71).

A child needs to have reached “...an appropriate level of cognitive development, involving and understanding of the self and of the feelings of others..”(Chazan, 1989; p. 33) to be capable of carrying out an intentional hurtful act (bullying), however, by nursery school age children have witnessed both in their own families and on T.V. many acts of aggression and already know many ways of purposely hurting others.

The recent upsurge of interest by researchers in bullying behaviour highlights the abuses of power in man - woman relationships (sexual harassment) and what happens at school sustaining the wider arena of relationships between people (Askew, 1989; Maslin, 1994; O’Doherty, 1994; Ollis & Tomaszewski, 1993; Tulloch, 1995). Studies clearly agree that any definition of bullying needs to contain both factors relating to the types of bullying employed - psychological, verbal or physical; a statement indicating the power imbalance between the bully and the victim; acknowledgement that bullying can occur between individuals and/or groups and an indication that the behaviour manifests itself over a prolonged period of time.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF BULLYING

Research has established that this form of violent behaviour is an endemic problem. Even in relatively good schools children are picked on, punched, spat on, hit, tripped within full view of the teacher both inside and outside the classroom “It is hard to imagine anywhere in society where acts of such cruelty go unpunished”(Maslin, 1994; p. 31). A large scale survey of school violence undertaken recently in Australia reported that one in seven children were bullied at least once a week and in some schools “..the figure was as high as one in four”(Maslin, 1994; p. 32). Kim Adey’s report from the University of South Australia of more than 3,000 rural teachers indicated that verbal and physical abuse between students was common in over half the schools surveyed and highlights the Crawford Committee’s findings that some teachers spend up to 40% of their time controlling student violence both in and out of the classroom (Maslin, 1994).

A nationwide survey of Norwegian primary and junior high schools (Olweus, 1993) revealed some 15% of students were involved in some kind of bullying/victim problems, in other words, one

student in seven (the same figure quoted by Maslin, 1994, in the large-scale Australian study). Of the above figure approximately 9% were victims and 7% bullies with about 1.6% of students reported as both victim and bully. On a grade by grade basis bullying decreases with higher grades, therefore, it is the younger and weaker students who are most exposed. In the higher grades the bullying tends to be less physical, however, a considerable part of the bullying that takes place in the lower grades is carried out by older students. While good data is not available to assess whether bully/victim problems have increased in the 1980s and early 1990s Olweus (1993) suggests that not only is it more prevalent now than 10 - 20 years ago but has taken more serious forms.

The percentages of children being bullied in three Adelaide primary schools and one high school revealed the greatest reported incidence for verbal abuse and the least for physical. Pooled results indicated some 17% of boys and 11% of girls are regularly bullied with teacher reports in the vicinity of 8%. Age trends on their Victimization index indicated a reduction in bullying with age for both boys and girls due in part to the fact they believe that older children “..are more able to do the bullying”(Rigby & Slee, 1989; p. 26).

Of particular interest to this author is that teachers see bullying as being a long-term problem extending in some cases over years with victims accounting for 5-10% of the population and bullies 5% (Smith & Sharp, 1994). It can be seen that the reported incidence levels of bullying/victimisation vary both from country to country, school to school and sex to sex however Olweus (1993) found no evidence to support city versus rural differences or indeed the size of the school or class. The issue of socioeconomic differences will be discussed later in the context of the explanations for the development of bullying behaviour. Incidence levels vary from approximately one in six to one in ten depending on age or sex establishing bullying/victimisation as a major issue in schools today.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLIES AND VICTIMS

The characteristics of bullies and victims have been variously described by researchers and several sub groupings of both victims and bullies have emerged. Besag (1989) describes victims as passive (unwilling/unable to fight back, no peer support, fearful, physically weaker, withdrawn, poor coordination and low self esteem); proactive (tease, taunt or unintentionally provoke antagonism and/or retaliation); colluding (take on role of victim to gain acceptance, class clown, join in disruptive behaviour, mask academic ability); false (complain unnecessarily about others, attention seeking, cry 'wolf'), bully/victim(bullied/harsh discipline by parents at home, physically strong, aggressive to younger or more vulnerable, less popular with peers). In line with Besag's (1989) sub groupings Olweus (1978, 1993) describes a category of victim also as being provocative and who has a combination of anxious and aggressive tendencies. These victims have trouble with concentration, cause irritation and/or tension and are often hyperactive.

The typical victim according to Olweus, (1978, 1993) was characterised as being more anxious and insecure compared to the general population often being more cautious, sensitive and quiet. When attacked they often respond by crying and/or withdrawal in the lower grades and have low self esteem. Victims are often lonely and are not provocative in their behaviour and in fact usually have a negative attitude towards violence. They are usually physically weaker. Olweus (1978, 1993) describes this as the passive victim who "...signals to others that they are insecure and worthless individuals who will not retaliate if they are attacked or insulted" (p. 32). Whereas Olweus (1978, 1993) describes his victims as having an anxious reaction pattern coupled with physical weakness he summarises his typical bully as having "...an aggressive reaction pattern (in the case of boys) with physical strength." (p. 35) and sees bullying as a manifestation of a more conduct disordered behaviour pattern.

Bullies are seen as being physically stronger and having both more energy and confidence than their peers and appear to seek out conflict and aggression for their own enjoyment (Besag, 1989). Besag (1989) also describes the anxious bully as lacking confidence, being less popular, having problems at home, possibly experiencing educational failure, maybe neurotic or a 'hanger on'.

Research in Dublin schools (Byrne, 1994) related to bullying concluded that the personalities of bullies and victims is very different with bullies being more likely to start fights or talk back to the teacher whereas the victims were usually unpopular and isolated from their peer group. Like Besag (1989) and Olweus (1978, 1993) Byrne (1994) identified some students, who depending on the circumstances, displayed characteristics of both bullies and victims. These are described as the 'provocative' victims who brought trouble on themselves usually through an array of attention seeking behaviours (eg. off-putting eating habits).

In a study of victim aggression Perry et al (1988) found that victimisation and aggression are "orthogonal" (p. 812) dimensions, that is, some extreme victims were among the most aggressive and could be considered among Olweus's (1978, 1993) provocative group. Perry et al (1988) found about equal numbers of provocative victims to passive victims whereas Olweus (1978, 1993) maintained the provocative victim was less than one in five.

What are the characteristics of bullies and victims in terms of their physical appearance and psychological traits? Roland (1989) concludes that except for physical strength physical traits are unimportant for bullies or victims except that there is some evidence to suggest that in the case of female bullies they are slightly weaker than their female peers. From a psychological point of view Roland (1989) found that victims had lower academic achievement than non-victims and were less intelligent as were boy bullies, however, girl bullies had better school performance and were

slightly more intelligent than other females not involved in bullying behaviour. Not unexpectedly victims in both sexes suffered from low self-esteem.

A fairly clear pattern has emerged from the literature on the physical and psychological make-up of the bully and the victim which not unexpectedly describes the bully as aggressive and physically stronger and the victim as anxious and physically weaker.

EXPLANATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EITHER BULLYING AND/OR VICTIM BEHAVIOUR

In a study of communication in abusive relationships (Bugental, 1993) power struggles are influenced by perceptions of power attributed to self and others, in particular, power relationships in families at risk for violence. This information is important for seeing how asymmetrical power relationships in families may help us understand other social relationships (eg. bully - victims) that are characterised by an imbalance of power. Parents who maintain threat-oriented relationships with their children, when confronted with initial resistance by their children, resort to more assertive and coercive tactics to maintain their power relationship thus maintaining their beliefs and the child's in a dysfunctional or poorly functioning interpersonal system. It can be seen how if one applies this knowledge to bully/victim behaviour it provides a strong argument not only for the learning of the behaviour in the first place but the maintenance and/or escalation of it as well. The kind of 'learned helplessness' described by Seligman (1977) in his experiments with rats is similar to the responses evident in the passive victim. Seligman (1977) found that when rats were shocked whether they attempted to respond to the aversive stimulus or not they eventually stopped responding and took the shock passively.

A study of child behaviour problems in maritally violent families, given that children from violent marriages are more likely to suffer from conduct and/or anxiety problems, looked in particular at the specific factors present in violent marriages, namely, interspousal aggression, parent-child aggression and child behaviour problems Jouriles et al (1987). It was found that the relationship between parent-child aggression and reported conduct disorder, attention/concentration problems hyperactivity and withdrawn or anxious behaviour in the child were significant. "...families characterised by interspousal aggression, the witnessing of marital violence may not be as important in influencing child behaviour as the occurrence of parent-child aggression" (Jouriles et al, 1987; p. 171), a point that Bugental's (1993) observations would support.

A number of studies conducted by Olweus (1978, 1988, 1993) examine the question of the causes and/or possible explanations for bullying or victim behaviour. Olweus (1978) looked at what factors contributed to the development of these behaviours and found like Bugental (1993) permissiveness for aggressive behaviour and the mother and father's use of physical punishment and strong threats were all important in developing the aggressive reaction pattern described in bullies.

Further support to the above argument is provided by Maslin (1994) who believes that children arrive at school with "ghosts from the nursery" (p. 31), parental and television instilled beliefs that burden the child from the moment they enter school. "Ill-treated themselves when young, unloved and unable to establish emotional bonds with the adults nearest them" (p. 31) they are often helpless at school due to this brutality at home. He goes on to say they then repeat the tragedy of their own childhood when they become parents. Some of the weaker children become the victims and some of the stronger ones the bullies venting the anger and hate that has built up at home in the playground. School does not make bullies or victims but in some cases may provide the atmosphere conducive to the kind of bullying behaviour that is a function of social and family background outlined by the previous authors. He also believes that certain personal, physical,

psychological and behavioural characteristics (described earlier in this literature review) are important for both the appearance of and maintenance of this behaviour.

An interesting variable investigated by Olweus (1978) was that mothers' negativism and permissiveness were major contributing factors to the boy becoming more aggressive and hostile to his environment at a later stage and one could hypothesise towards women as well. The role of the father was shown to have less effect and to be weaker than those of the mother but this may just be a reflection of traditional child rearing practices and if fathers were more involved with direct child-rearing this would have an increased effect. Olweus (1978) found that boy's level of aggression was unrelated to socioeconomic variables but psychosocial factors related to the family unit.

In a study of circulating testosterone levels and aggression in adolescent males Olweus et al (1988) found that elevated levels had causal effects on provoked and unprovoked aggressive behaviour and led to an increased readiness to respond to threats. High levels of testosterone also made the boys more irritable and impatient. Of particular relevance to this current review is Olweus' (1993) conclusion that factors related to societal models in the media and other hereditary factors may contribute to the development of aggressive temperaments in children.

The O'Doherty Report (1994) into boys' education in NSW listed a number of social and other factors that parents, educators, academics and students (boys and girls) felt responsible for concerns about the current generation of boys. The report concludes that the problems being experienced by boys have not been caused by changes for women but what society regards as "acceptable masculinity" (p. 19) and sees the above social problems as a result of society's harmful attitudes and values, especially about masculinity. It is not surprising, therefore, that school boys modes of behaviour reflect the masculine values dominant in society with schools being very much a part of the system constructing these gendered beings. As boys react to the fear of being cast out by their peer group they learn how to be male by the "gendered discourses associated with such things as discipline, sport, play, knowledge, assessment and teacher/pupil and pupil/pupil relations" (O'Doherty, 1994).

The range of explanations for bullying victim behaviour range from psycho-social to biological-chemical factors and everything in between and while socioeconomic status has not been considered a significant variable it is possible to see how pressure placed on families and children by such factors as poverty and lack of suitable housing would have to be factored into the equation somewhere.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS BULLIES AND VICTIMS

While education bureaucracies tend to play down school violence the attention it attracts from the media fosters the notion that it is a rapidly escalating epidemic. The inconsistent models and images they receive from their peers, teachers, parents and the media help to perpetuate and to a certain extent, condone, this state of almost institutionalised violence. School students then seek to develop a system of attitudes and values based on mixed social messages from today's society. The whole problem of bullying has been underestimated by adults because it often takes place without any adult witnesses and reports are always second hand and unreliable because there still exists a social stigma in relation to telling on your mates or whistle blowing either to teachers or parents. Another possible explanation is due to professionals being insensitive and/or ill-informed on the subject especially as it is only the victim who suffers "The teacher and the rest of the group may remain unaffected" (Besag, 1989; p. 5). There are many cultures in which children are traditionally expected to look after themselves and those who are unable are considered unprepared for life and in some cases are bullied as a character-building exercise for more physically able

children at the expense of their self-esteem and self-confidence. Reluctance on the part of school authorities to admit to the problem is possibly due to a belief that it will make it worse for the victim by driving the problem underground or simply because they don't know what to do.

Australian Institute of Criminology research sees the problem of school violence, including bullying and harassment, as "...representative of a wider culture of violence that exists in the outside world" (Maslin, 1994; p. 32) and suggests that while Australians continue to condone this behaviour little can be done to achieve a non-violent society. The NSW Government reintroduced the option of using the cane for schools in 1987 confirming their support of this violent form of punishment, however, most school authorities play down school violence. Children are becoming callous about what they see and they are learning to just be passive and stand by because they cannot control their environment. While there is no doubt that people are concerned about the level of violence in schools and society in general one in four children comes from a home in which domestic violence is how personal problems are solved (Maslin, 1994). Presented with such role models on TV and in the home they are then asked to act differently at school. Earlier research by Thomas et al (1977), that discussed whether exposure to televised violence can reduce a child's sensitivity to real-life violence, concluded that such exposure had in fact decreased their sensitivity to real-life aggression. Teachers feel powerless spending 40% of their time either in or out of the classroom controlling student misbehaviour and parents are seemingly uninterested.

While Olweus, (1993) only briefly touches on the topic of attitudes to bullying/victim behaviour of major significance to the current author is his contention that "...the attitudes of the teachers toward bully/victim problems and their behaviour in bullying situations are of major significance for the extent of bully/victim problems in the school and in the class"(p. 26). Schools, as an institution, through their stereotypical male rules and regulations typically militate against unconditional positive regard for others by teaching that it is desirable to be dominant, independent, competitive, ambitious, aggressive, never to cry, and never to show emotional weakness. Attitudes towards the victims of bullies under such circumstances would be unsympathetic and increase with greater exposure to the school environment.

In assessing schoolchildren's attitudes to bullying Rigby and Slee (1989) found a large number of teachers and children who believed that something should be done to stop bullying with girls being significantly more supportive than boys. With increasing age children became less sympathetic and by senior class there was no difference in the empathic responses of females to males confirming that the school environment hardens victim attitudes in children. Askew (1989) argued that boys are encouraged to be tough and may be even rewarded with parental approval "...for being rough"(p. 63). The message that boys are consistently getting from home, the media, society, school, their peers is that violence is OK if not taken too far (eg. on the sporting field) and may in fact improve your social status but weakness or being afraid to fight must be avoided at all costs.

GENDER ISSUES IN BULLYING

The above research confirms the vicious cycle maintaining bullying/victim behaviour that is considered endemic in our society and how without fundamental changes to society's attitude towards gender and violence issues, particularly teachers and parents, bullying/victim behaviour will continue to be passed down from generation to generation. While research has established that bullying behaviour is widespread of particular interest to this review is the issue of gender differences in the nature, extent and attitudes towards bullying behaviour. The nature and extent of bullying behaviour in schools focuses on the social construction of masculinity and femininity and how it underlies the issue of gender and violence. Research (Ollis & Tomaszewski, 1993) from a feminist perspective highlights the imbalance in the power relationship between males and females and so the issue of gender and violence needs further investigation. It is reasonable to suggest that in many cases cross sex bullying constitutes sexual harassment. O'Doherty (1994) defines sex-based harassment as "the imposition of behaviour based on sex stereotyping"(p. 23). Examples of this in a school context include breast pinching, bra pinching, boys dacking girls or flicking up their skirts and in extreme cases, removing sanitary napkins from school bags and later taunting girls with them (Maslin, 1994). On this basis cross gender bullying deserves a closer look with regards sex role perceptions and attitudes of students to the extent of cross sex victimisation experienced. A number of investigations have been interested in the issue of gender specificity in bullying behaviour(Askew, 1989; Maslin, 1994; O'Doherty, 1994; Ollis & Tomaszewski, 1993; Tulloch, 1995).

Those males who do not come up to the stereotype of physical and mental toughness, considered desirable qualities for Australian males, (Antill, et al, 1981), fear being labelled as having their masculinity or sexuality questioned. A driving force for many boys is proving their masculinity by being as tough or tougher than their peers. Being a member of this masculine power bloc often has sexual implications characterised by sex-based harassment (O'Doherty, 1994).

Girls are more often the victims of classroom and schoolyard harassment. A 1991 survey of 800 girls and 400 teachers and administrators (Listen to Girls) outlined by Maslin (1994) highlighted sexual harassment as the "...most constant and systematic form of abuse at all levels of schooling"(p. 31). The gender equity unit of the Queensland Education Department argue that sexual harassment is a part of everyday school life for girls due to the apparent overwhelming need for boys to assert their masculine identity, however, girls aren't only victims with a steep rise in violence among girls being reported by education authorities and teachers (Maslin, 1994).

The O'Doherty (1994) Inquiry into Boys Education in N.S.W. discussed the issue of gender construction in our society with respect to the different expectations of female roles. Gender, they maintain, is constructed by social practice and so "...males and females become 'masculine' and 'feminine' through social construction..."(p. 21) through a process of accentuating certain behaviours and qualities and suppressing or repressing others (Antill et al, 1981). The O'Doherty Report(1994) goes on to say that this underpins our understanding of the problems associated with boys during their education because of the pressures to conform to what peers and society regards as 'masculine' and feelings of inadequacy in trying to conform to these expectations. Maslin (1994) described the manifestations of this 'masculine' behaviour in the schoolyard with regard to the sexual harassment of girls and the bullying of other boys. Boys who don't conform to this male stereotype very often find themselves the victims of name-calling or even physical violence. O'Doherty (1994) regards this questioning of another boy's masculinity as a form of sexual harassment in itself.

The D.E.E.T. Gender and Violence Project (Ollis and Tomaszewski, 1993) support the above view pointing out that "Gender based violence is a part of the social fabric of Australian society"(p. 3).

They go on to say that many women and some men who experience powerlessness that is seemingly unrelated to violence do so due to a structure that legitimises male violence.

One of the major difficulties schools face is defining violent behaviour, because the threat of violence causes just as much suffering and fear as the actual physical act and it is this assertion and maintenance of power by “men and boys over women and girls and other boys” (Ollis et al, 1993; p. 4) that needs to be understood. If not, violence will continue to be a part of the culture of the school manifested in its social organisation, practices and policies. Ollis and Tomaszewski (1993) conclude by saying that the perpetrators of violence in schools are overwhelmingly male and while some men and boys may also be the victims it is female teachers and girls who predominantly experience this continuum of violence (Maslin, 1994).

Typical male behaviour is seen as being more highly valued than typical female behaviour and so the images that young boys especially aspire to, whether or not they are natural, are toughness and aggression and must above all avoid being thought of as unable to fight. The incidence of boy bullies is about three times that for girls with twice as many boy victims as girl victims, however, Roland (1989) questions the accuracy of these statistics on the basis of the willingness of boys and girls to accurately report truthfully their involvement in bullying behaviour. Other findings reported by Roland (1989) are that boys predominantly use physical abuse whereas girls prefer psychological means (eg. excluding).

In a study that examined the gender differences in the attitudes of students to social relationships within the school and their self-reports as bullies or victims Tulloch (1995) found that despite looking at all forms of bullying boys were still predominant and victims from both sexes claimed that it was boys who physically bullied, picked on or teased the most. Girls admitted to higher levels of bullying than boy victims reported and also to being bullied at a higher level than boy bullies but Tulloch (1995) suggests this may be due to under-reporting because of social expectations with regard to cross-gender interactions, a view supported by both Roland (1989) and Ollis and Tomaszewski (1993), suggesting that girls are more willing to report cross gender harassment than boys who perhaps see this as natural.

It can be seen from the above literature relating to the gender specificity of bullying/victim behaviour that these elements cannot be ignored in any discussion of causal relationships or sociological explanations, however, it is true that boys bully more often than girls and are more often the victims of bullying behaviour. Girls are picked on or teased more frequently by boys than other girls (Tulloch, 1995).

Maslin (1994) describes the manifestations of this ‘masculine’ behaviour in the schoolyard with regard to the sexual harassment of girls and the bullying of other boys. O’Doherty (1994) regards this questioning of another boy’s masculinity as a form of sexual harassment in itself. Negative femininity in boys was a significant predictor of victimisation and Tulloch (1995) concludes that socially marginal boys are just as much victims of the social construction of the male sexual stereotypes as are females.

The present author undertook a study to investigate cross gender differences in the incidence of physical, verbal and psychological harassment that occurs in some NSW high schools and in students’ attitudes to such behaviour. The relationship between student behaviours and attitudes and their self perceptions in terms of traditional sex typed characteristics was also examined. Findings provided baseline data on the level of bullying and the attitudes of high school students. By identifying different forms of bullying and relating them to dimensions of masculinity and femininity, the study provided a greater insight in to the values underlying cross sex bullying and

thus provided valuable information to schools to enable the development of appropriate intervention programs and policies in this area.

To address the problem adequately it was important to have a measure of its nature and extent. The study aimed to examine the issue of cross gender school bullying and to show how males and females perceive this type of bullying by identifying the level of bullying and victimisation by both boys and girls, identifying the incidence of particular types of bullying behaviour, the sex of the bully and victim and relate the student's tendency to bully and experience of victimisation to their attitudes to peer relations and their self perceptions in relation to social constructions of masculinity and femininity.

It was predicted that the relationship between incidence data, attitudes and sex-role perceptions in this study would support the view of recent research into bullying confirming the positive relationship between traditional sex-typed characteristics in male bullies and the sex-based harassment reported by their female victims. It was hypothesised that there would be a positive correlation between acceptance of bullying on the Social Relations Scale (Rigby & Slee, 1989) and bullying behaviour in boys. It was further hypothesised that negative masculine characteristics is also a predictor for bullying in boys. It was also postulated that the extent of bullying behaviour in males would be greater than for females for both male and female victims and that the nature of male victimisation reported by females would be under-reported by their male bullies.

SUBJECTS

Subjects were drawn from Year 8 in the 11 State high schools and of a total of 1,004 students 47% were girls and 53% were boys. Parents were informed of the study by letter and were able to indicate in writing to the school if they did not want their child to participate. Participation by students was on a voluntary basis. All data in this study was collected by means of an anonymous questionnaire which contained several subsections. All items were of a self report type. No student was asked to identify another student as a bully or victim.

METHOD

Incidence measures. A series of questions established the frequency with which a student has participated in or been victim of particular forms of bullying: physical, verbal and psychological by members of their own and the opposite sex. Students were asked whether during the past two weeks at school, (i) they had been bullied by another student and (ii) they had bullied another student. Students were asked to select from the responses "never", "sometimes", "often" or "very often". Following each of the above questions they were asked to indicate if this happened "alone" or "in a group" and whether the pupil who did this was "a boy", "a girl", "several girls" or "several boys". Overall reliabilities for the bully items and the victim items were .82 and .85 respectively.

Social Relations Questionnaire (Rigby & Slee, 1989). A 17-item questionnaire was used to measure attitudes to bullying: specifically attitudes to weak children and support for an interdependent school community. Students were asked to indicate how they felt about aspects of school life using a five response scale of "strongly disagree", "disagree", "don't know", "agree" or "strongly agree". This enabled comparison with their findings. Half the items were keyed positively and half negatively. The items in the Social Relations Questionnaire that measured attitude to bullying had a reliability of .82.

Ways I Describe Myself Questionnaire (Antill et al, 1981) A 50-item questionnaire was used to measure student's self ratings on clusters of traits rated as typical of Australian males or females. It was necessary to modify the terminology used in the Sex Role Scale (Antill et al, 1981) to ensure the items were appropriate for Year 8 level students. Students were asked to indicate which

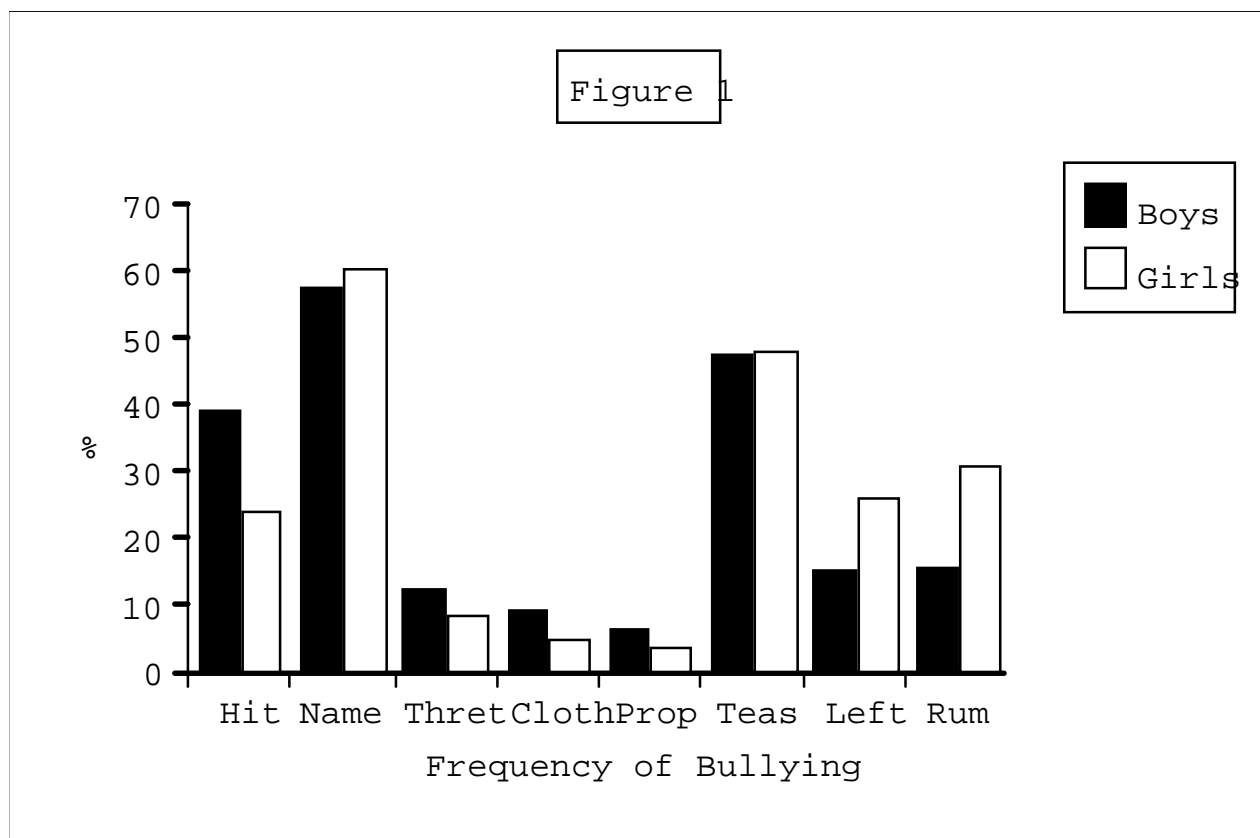
statements described them from a list of statements that may or may not be true about them. A five response scale of “strongly agree”, “disagree”, “don’t know”, “agree”, and “strongly disagree” was used to measure student’s self ratings on four scales of positive masculinity, negative masculinity, positive femininity and negative femininity. The reliabilities for the modified scale were respectively, .67, .81, .77 and .71 (The reliabilities for the Antill (1981) scale were .61, .79, .77 and .68 respectively).

Students completed the set of questionnaires during a 40 minute period in classroom groups. They were not required to place their names on the questionnaires and were assured of total anonymity. Bullying was defined at the start of the questionnaire in the preamble: “If someone comes up to you in the playground or any where and slaps you on the back in what you consider a friendly way - this is not bullying. But if someone slaps you on the back in a hurtful way then this could be bullying, especially if you feel you cannot stop them. There are less obvious ways of bullying too, such as making it obvious you are not going to sit with someone or that someone is not going to sit with you; hiding bags; name calling; gossiping; stealing; laughing at others and making fun of others. You can probably think of more.” As the questions may focus on problems some students may have with their peer relations, they were advised of how they can discuss issues of bullying with appropriate staff if they choose to do so.

RESULTS

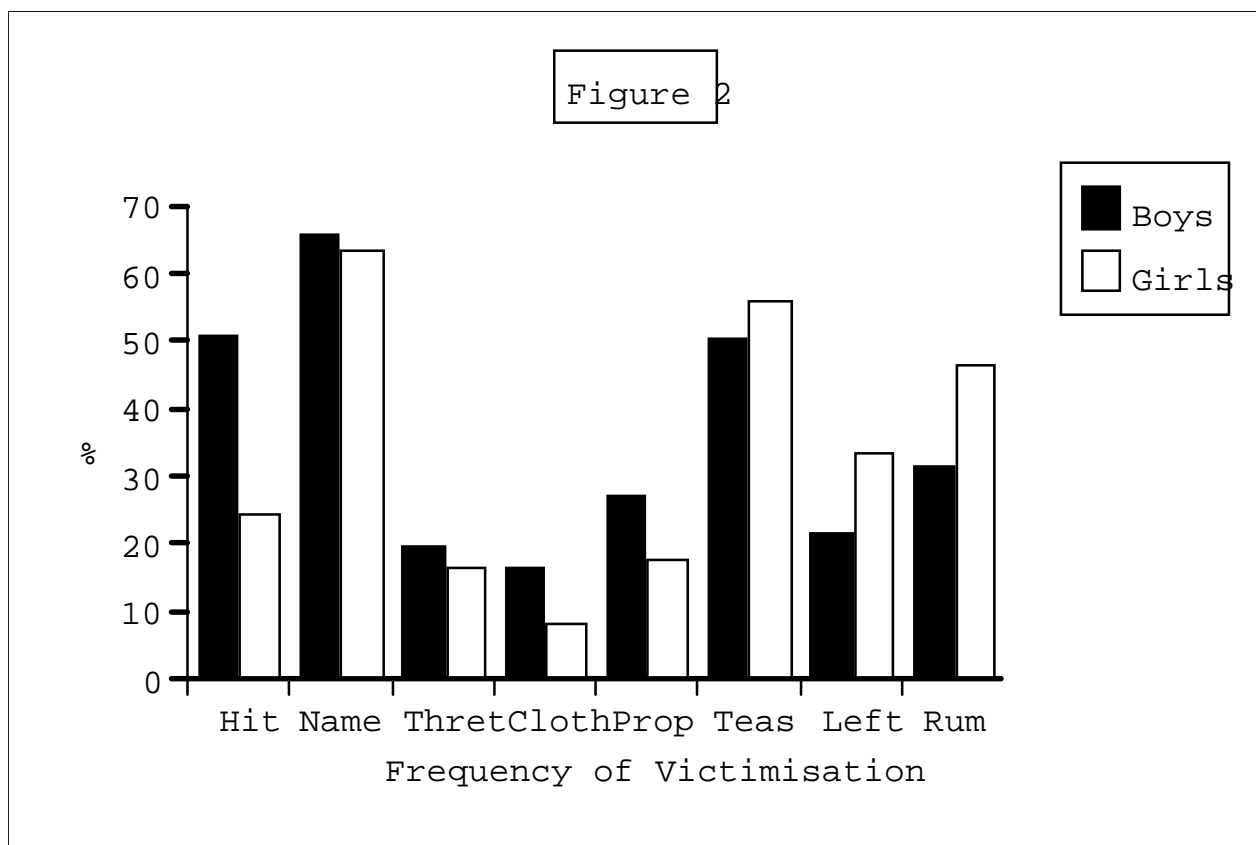
In the study conducted by the present author the extent of bullying behaviour in males was greater than for females (Figures 1. & 2.). Whereas boys may see admitting to picking on other boys as socially acceptable, under-reporting harassment of girls may be due to a perception that it is natural or fun rather than being seen by them as gendered violence (Figures 3. & 4.). The relationship between incidence data, attitudes and sex-role perceptions in this study supported the view of recent research into bullying confirming the positive relationship between traditional sex-typed characteristics in male bullies and the acceptance of bullying. Negative masculine characteristics were a predictor for attitude to and bullying in boys. Gender differences in bullying have been attributed to the social constructions of masculinity and femininity and the greater tolerance of violence in boys and thus provide valuable information to schools to enable the development of appropriate intervention programs and policies in this area.

The bullying problem in NSW high schools reveals incidence data consistent with that found overseas and in the SA urban studies (Figure 1.). Despite the emphasis on non-physical as well as physical forms of bullying there was a preponderance of male bullies. There were no significant differences in levels of victimisation between males and females (Figure 2.). Twice as many boys as girls classed themselves as both bullies and victims. Over two-thirds of the girls and more than three-quarters of the boys reported not having been bullied in the past 2 weeks.



Boys reported bullying other boys for all types of bullying at nearly twice the rate reported for bullying girls. Victim reports indicate that male bullying of boys for most bullying types is at the level reported by their male bullies (Figure 3.), however, as hypothesised, girls reported victimisation by boys for nearly all categories of behaviour at almost twice the rate reported by their male bullies (Figure 4.). Bullies and victims from both sexes report name calling and teasing as the most common type of bullying followed by hitting in males and rumour spreading and being excluded in females. Both sexes reported being called names or teased as the most common form of bullying. When it came to hitting boys reported almost six times the incidence of this behaviour than did girl victims.

Bullies indicated in bully reports that for hitting, threats and interfering with clothing or property they bullied boys on all eight measures at a higher rate than they did females. On name calling, teasing, exclusion and rumours bully reports indicate a higher rate for female victims than for males. For hitting, name calling, threats and interfering with clothing and property boy victims were subjected to higher levels by bullies than girl victims, however, for being excluded, being the object of rumours



or teased girls were victimised at a greater rate than boy victims. There are a number of possible explanations for this discrepancy. Not all bullying occurs in the same grade and so bullies and victims would not necessarily be referring to the same incident. Given the anonymous nature of the survey it could be that a small number of male bullies are harassing a large number of female victims or conversely, a single or small number of female victims are being bullied by the same male students (Tulloch, 1995).

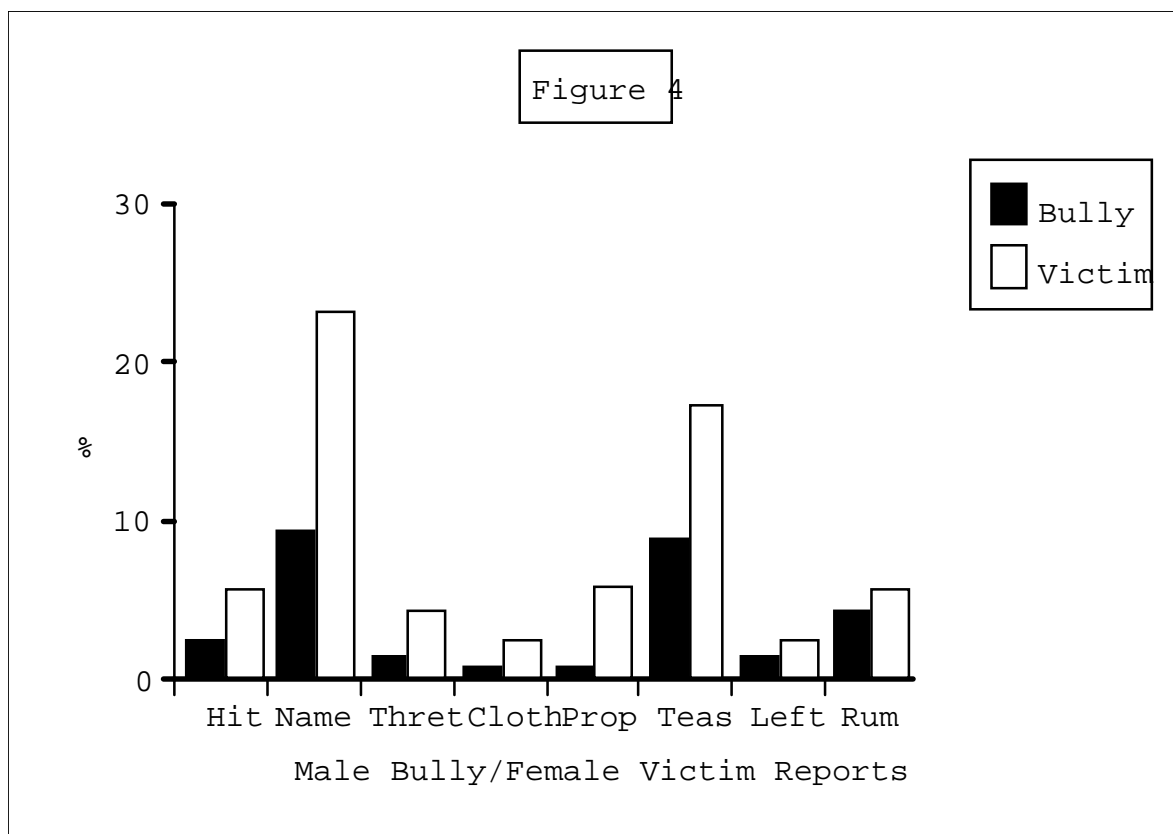
While these factors do not lend themselves to predicting causal relationships with this type of data certain relationships, however, do suggest themselves. Boys admit to higher levels of bullying other boys in all bullying activity but, despite underreporting bullying females, admit to using types of bullying consistent with traditional sex-based harassment (eg. name calling, teasing etc.).

Values and perceptions about cross-gender bullying needs to be examined in relation to the issue of under-reporting and socially desirable responding. Males are failing to recognise that much of the pattern of interaction between boys and girls is not natural but rather gendered violence (Ollis & Tomaszewski, 1993). Despite the high level of girls reporting being picked on by boys this kind of harassment may be seen by boys as “acceptable fun”(Tulloch, 1995; p. 289) because many of these interactions are perceived differently by boys.



Roland (1989) believes that gender differences in the reporting of bullying behaviour is due sometimes to the reluctance of females to admit to socially undesirable behaviour (eg. hitting), whereas, when it comes to ignoring or excluding or picking on other girls self-reported just as much as boys did. It may also be the case that boys are underreporting the bullying of girls given the high overall level of reported male bullying by girls. This is particularly true of the underreporting of physical aggression towards girls by boys despite the fact that girls experience higher levels of this type of bullying from the opposite sex than they do from their own sex.

It may be that males view physical aggression towards other males as being somehow more socially acceptable than violence against females (Tulloch, 1995). On the other hand, underreporting by boys of being bullied by females may be due to their unwillingness to admit to this because of the perceived status differences. While not being able to resolve issues about how cross-gender bullying is perceived or reported the present data strongly suggests that current understandings of masculinity and femininity may affect the reporting of cross-gender bullying.



Despite the results confirming that bullying is a serious problem the majority of pupils do not view bullying as acceptable. The 'attitudes to bullying' factor extracted from the Social Relations Questionnaire (Rigby & Slee, 1989) revealed that more than three quarters of female students disagreed with the rejection of weak children and an acceptance that they deserve to be targets of bullying and the idea that it was natural for boys to fight to prove that they weren't wimps. On the other hand, less than a third of male students rejected bullying behaviour. As predicted, there was a significant correlation between attitude to bullying in boys and girls and bullying frequency with male bullies having the highest scores on acceptance of aggression and rejection of weak children. Female victims rejected bullying while at the same time supporting interdependence. There was a significant negative correlation between attitude to bullying and frequency of victimisation in female victims. (Tables 1 to 4)

The relationships between perceptions of masculinity and femininity surveyed in the Ways I Describe Myself questionnaire and attitudes to bullying in the Social Relations questionnaire revealed positive correlations in males and especially females between negative masculinity and attitude to bullying. The postulated significant relationship existed between negative masculinity and bullying frequency in males. This confirmed previously reported relationships to this effect that those males who do not come up to the stereotype of physical and mental toughness, considered desirable qualities for Australian males, (Antill, et al, 1981), fear being labelled as having their masculinity or sexuality questioned (O'Doherty, 1994). A driving force for many boys is proving their masculinity by being as tough or tougher than their peers. Being a member of this masculine power bloc often has sexual implications characterised by sex-based harassment (O'Doherty, 1994). It is this assertion and maintenance of power by "men and boys over women and girls and other boys" (Ollis et al, 1993; p. 4) that needs to be understood. The gender equity unit of the Queensland Education Department argue that sexual harassment is a part of everyday school life for girls due to the apparent overwhelming need for boys to assert their masculine identity.

Table 1 - BULLYING FREQUENCY IN MALES

Variable:	Beta:	T:	Sig T:
FPOS	-.13	-1.99	.05
FNEG	.05	1.11	.27
MNEG	.15	2.90	.00
MPOS	.08	1.38	.17
ATB	.22	3.77	.00

TABLE 2 - FREQUENCY OF VICTIMISATION IN MALES

Variable:	Beta:	T:	Sig T:
FPOS	.05	.84	.40
FNEG	.21	4.24	.00
MNEG	.05	.87	.39
MPOS	.04	.67	.50
ATB	.04	.76	.45

TABLE 3 - BULLYING FREQUENCY IN FEMALES

Variable:	Beta:	T:	Sig T:
FPOS	-.05	-.79	.43
FNEG	-.01	-.15	.88
MNEG	.40	7.06	.00
MPOS	-.02	-.42	.67
ATB	.05	1.04	.30

TABLE 4 - FREQUENCY OF VICTIMISATION IN FEMALES

Variable:	Beta:	T:	Sig T:
FPOS	-.04	-.54	.59
FNEG	.17	3.10	.00
MNEG	.14	2.24	.03
MPOS	.02	.29	.78
ATB	-.14	-2.25	.03

In the author's study negative masculine characteristics was a strong predictor for bullying frequency in females and while in males this appears to relate to societal expectations this is less clear in females. One possible explanation may be that it has more to do with personality than socialisation. While attitude to bullying and frequency of victimisation for both sexes was negatively correlated this relationship was only significant in girls.

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES AND WHOLE SCHOOL POLICIES

The O'Doherty Report (1994) believes that our understanding of the problems associated with boys during their education must be understood in terms of the pressures to conform to what peers and society regards as 'masculine' and feelings of inadequacy in trying to conform to these expectations. Boys who don't conform to this male stereotype very often find themselves the

victims of name calling or even physical violence. Maslin (1994) described the manifestations of this 'masculine' behaviour in the schoolyard with regard to the sexual harassment of girls and the bullying of other boys. O'Doherty (1994) regards this questioning of another boy's masculinity as a form of sexual harassment in itself. In the present survey negative femininity in boys was a significant predictor of victimisation and Tulloch (1995) concludes that socially marginal boys are just as much victims of the social construction of the male sexual stereotypes as are females.

Studies have established that intervention programs designed to address violence in schools are effective in reducing the level of bullying behaviour in schools.

Statistics indicate that between 1 in 3 and 1 in 10 students will be effected by bullying. Because most bullying is hidden kids are ashamed to admit it and so don't tell. All acts of bullying within the school should be reported using established student welfare channels. Research suggests that victims of bullying will suffer at the very least from low self-esteem and an appreciation of the effects of bullying will result in a more supportive school climate. Students who are able to improve self-esteem have a greater capacity to establish trust and build and maintain positive relationships.

Prevention methods are best formulated in consultation with the whole school community and the responsibility for decreasing incidences of bullying is a collective one with the process of responding to bullying being reflective of school student welfare practices in general. The Bidgee Resource Centre (Wagga Wagga, 1994) list a number of ways in which a school can respond to bullying:

- plan playgrounds that minimise boredom
- ensure teachers arrive at lessons on time
- interesting lessons with lots of student participation
- reduce movement between classes along narrow corridors.
- adequate and diligent supervision, especially of potential problem areas.
- allocation of specific playground areas
- model assertive, not aggressive or passive, behaviour in teaching styles.
- be aware of students having poor interaction skills with their peers
- emphasise cooperation rather than competition
- respond to notifications of bullying
- react to observations of bullying
- sufficient classroom resources to go around
- model positive behaviour to unpopular students
- give validity to reports of bullying by writing down incidents
- have parenting courses available
- a survey to determine the incidence of bullying in your school.
- increasing student awareness through curriculum (eg. bystander power, assertiveness training)

The O'Doherty Report in NSW goes further by suggesting schools adopt strategies to address the gendered nature of violence in schools, in particular, boys' education. The literature regarding the perceived and real consequences of bullying with respect to its management in our schools and

community has implications for policy in this area and the results of this review are seen as providing hard data for both preventative and remedial programmes in this context.

Work needs to be done also to improve the status of certain kinds of victims through the personal development curriculums in schools by taking into account self esteem and happiness at school. In addition, the build-up of negative attitudes must be looked at and attempts made by the community to redress these by running parenting skills workshops. Randall (1994) believes this early work with parents can then be built on by teachers to improve peer relations in children. Mellor (1994) has focused on encouraging schools to develop anti-bullying policies involving all members of the school community. Apart from reducing the actual occurrence of bullying behaviour these initiatives have also resulted in a number of other issues being dealt with including discipline, relationships and child abuse. The most important benefit is a more open school community prepared to talk about and resolve concerns. Unless violence in children is modified by the age of 10 or 11 the research indicates they could be set for a life of violent crime but schools and communities are at a loss to know what to do about it. Teachers are unable to do much about the viewing habits of their students in relation to violence on TV and in the cinema (Thomas et al, 1977) and have to develop their own strategies to deal with violent behaviour in the class and in the playground. Critics of conventional schooling say that the authoritarian approach taken by many teachers, age-graded practices, formal massed teaching activities have little regard for students to self-realise or critically reflect all contribute to alienating students (Maslin, 1994).

The O'Doherty (1994) report into boys' education recommended a teachers code of ethics would help clarify the socialisation and educational aspects of a child's development that are a community or family responsibility. Another outcome of this report has been the trialing of ant-violence programs in some schools which will eventually be commercially available. Many articles suggest that school violence is an issue that the whole community must face because teachers are not there to control others they are there to teach students who are responsible for their own behaviour. O'Doherty(1994) recommends a gender equity program for boys to run parallel but not separate to the girls pr ogram already in schools. The program should include:

- * understanding of gender stereotyping;
- * ensure boys stay to year 12;
- * involve parents, especially fathers, in children's education;
- * appropriate child and adult role models for boys and girls;
- * encourage boys to join student councils;
- * encourage participation of boys in cultural activities;
- * appointment of boys supervisor in schools;
- * encourage boys to work with a variety of males and females in the humanities;
- * review discipline policies to incorporate gender issues;
- * all teachers to undergo teacher education courses which address gender issues and gender equity strategies should incorporate social construction of gender, adult roles, vocational aspirations, gender relations, gendered resistance to school, gender content of the curriculum and sex-based harassment and school life.

Given that the basis of the problem of bullying is to be found in the developmental periods prior to a child coming to school so problems need to be tackled as they arise in the school setting. Olweus (1978) proposes two general goals - limit or prevent the occurrence of physical as well as mental bullying within the school setting and create better peer relations in the school.

For the above to work Olweus (1978) research suggests that it must be a concerted effort on the part of the school administration, staff and community to repudiate bullying. To do this there needs to be greater contact between school and home, adults must be more actively involved with children's lives, teachers taking a central role in integrating the change process and the use of outside consultants to assist in this process.

A novel approach for dealing with the problem of bullies and victims is by teaching victimised children to respond to both verbal and physical bullying in unexpected ways (eg. humour or assertion) that make it non-reinforcing for aggressors and reduce their being targeted for abuse. On the other hand Rigby and Slee (1989) believe that by teachers and children working together a school social climate can be achieved where bullying of a child is not acceptable. They maintain that the condemnation of individual bullies by people in authority is one of the most important factors in combating this type of violence but the deeper question still remains as to how the social consciousness of the school community can be mobilised sufficiently to reduce and in the long term overcome the incidence of bullying and victimisation.

CONCLUSION

The above studies reinforce the findings of previous studies as to how critical the support and involvement of all concerned is to a satisfactory resolution of bullying and violence in schools. While the issue is seen as someone else's problem and not a community problem bullying will continue to be dealt with ineffectively by schools, families and the community. To be effective programs need to be remedial as well as preventative in their approach.

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