

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

REPORT by - LIBBY PETERSEN - 2000 CHURCHILL FELLOW

PROJECT : To study high school peer counselling programs as effective interventions for supporting troubled and victimised youth

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Study Topic: To study high school peer counselling programs as an effective intervention for supporting troubled and victimised youth. The main focus areas for this study were school anti bullying programs and research, and peer support programs.

Site Visit Highlights : CANADA - Dr Shelley Hymel, B.C. University; Safe Schools Centre, B.C., Dr Debra Cullinane ; Journey Middle School, Ettie Catto; Dr Debra Pepler, Toronto and Dr Wendy Craig, Kingston, Ontario. **U.S.A.** - Committee for Children, Seattle, Dr Karin Frey. **U.K.** - Pennywell School, Sunderland; Val Besag, Newcastle; Roehampton Institute, London, Dr Helen Cowie; Dr Sonia Sharp, Birmingham; Acland Burghley School, London; Mental Health Foundation, London, Jo Scherer-Thompson; Childline, London, Maggie Turner; **SWEDEN** - Upsalla, Dr Anatol Pikas

Anti bullying programs need to be initiated in the early primary school years in Australia. In my work in primary schools I intend introducing specific anti bullying training modules for staff. Additionally I will be speaking at conferences to this end.

Responses to bullying should be improved to include problem solving approaches such as the Method of Shared Concern. Production of a training video is recommended in this respect as well. Private industry and/or community organisation sponsorship to enable production of this training video will be sought

The importance of meaningful inclusion of students in the provision of solutions for peer abuse will be reinforced in conference presentations.

A national database of resources on school bullying is a worthwhile endeavour. I have begun discussions with Dr Ken Rigby who is a major Australian and international researcher in the area of school bullying, to collaborate on this endeavour.

All schools can make a difference is a message which needs to be consistently conveyed. This will be a central tenet of my conference presentation

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is one of the most pervasive and unrecognised problems in schools today. International and Australian research in the last decade has confirmed that it occurs in significant incidence levels, produces harmful short and long term effects for all students and, schools do have the capacity to minimise and deal effectively with it. In light of all this an investigation into anti bullying programs in countries which have pioneered work in this area was undertaken. Although the study topic is entitled "*to study high school peer counselling programs as effective interventions for supporting troubled and victimised youth*" the frame of reference for the study tour was in fact much broader. As such anti bullying and peer support were the two central focus areas of study for this fellowship.

Peer counselling is encompassed within the area of peer support. Students supporting and helping their fellow students in systematic ways is a concept which has been underutilised in Australian schools to date. Peer support to help students who are being bullied or who are experiencing personal difficulties in any respect has been used widely in North American schools for the last twenty years and is being increasingly and extensively used in English schools in the last decade.

The study tour aimed to cover both research in and practical applications of both these focus areas. This aim was achieved overall without too much difficulty due in the main to the fact that researchers in anti bullying and peer support are very practically focused and likewise practitioners recognise the importance of applying practices which have been demonstrated to be effective.

Countries visited for the study included Canada, USA, United Kingdom, and Sweden. Norway was on the itinerary to be visited. However just prior to undertaking this sector at the end of the tour, the contact person experienced some personal problems which prohibited her from facilitating my visit. No alternate contacts were able to be found unfortunately at such a late stage.

The support and encouragement which I have received from numerous people over the last five years must be acknowledged here. In particular I wish to mention Dr Ken Rigby from the University of South Australia whose conference address in 1994, first stirred me into action in one of my district schools and whose continued professional support and recommendations have culminated in the unique opportunities provided by this study tour. I wish to convey my deepest gratitude to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for providing me with such an extraordinary and privileged opportunity to investigate this topic so widely and deeply.

PROGRAM

CANADA

Vancouver, British Columbia

University of British Columbia - Dr Shelley Hymel

Safe School Centre, British Columbia Province - Dr Debra Cullinane

Kwayhquitlam Middle School - Allyson McLennan

Seaview Elementary School - Cindi Seddon

Burnaby South Secondary School - John Anderson

West Bay Elementary School - Diane Nelson

Burnaby District Office of Education and Training - Terry Waterhouse

B. C. Student Voice - Sharon Cutcliffe

Richmond Elementary School - Ron Parkes

Victoria

University of Victoria - Dr Sybilla Artz

Cedar Hill Junior Secondary School - Linda Moyer

Peer Resources Network - Greg Saunders

Journey Middle School - Ettie Catto

USA

Seattle

Committee for Children - Dr Karin Frey

CANADA

Toronto, Ontario

York University - Dr Debra Pepler

Safe School Centre, Toronto School Board - Bill Byrd

York Region of Education - Cayre Community Anti Bullying Steering Committee

Kingston, Ontario

Queen's University - Dr Wendy Craig

Limestone District Office of Education - Dr Wendy Craig

Better Beginnings Project - Queen's University

UNITED KINGDOM

London

Roehampton Institute, University of Surrey - Dr Helen Cowie

Greenshaw High School - Stefania Ferrazzuola

Mental Health Foundation - Jo Scherer-Thompson

Kingsbury High School - Ita McNamara

Goldsmith's College, London University - Dr Peter Smith

Newcastle

Sunderland - Pennywell School

Gateshead LEA - Valerie Besag

Blaydon Primary School - Val Besag

Kingsmeadow High School - Val Besag

Nottingham

Elliott Durham High School - Derek Wilson

Bolsover

Bolsover High School - Margaret Hill

Sheffield

Sheffield LEA Conference - Dr Sonia Sharp, Jennifer Smith

London

Acland Burghley School - Vavi Halel and Eliza Smith

Wanstead High School - Sally Ann Wilsher

Childline - Maggie Turner

Kidscape - Michelle Elliott

SWEDEN

Stockholm

XXVIIth International Congress of Psychology

Upsalla

Upsalla University - Dr Anatol Pikas

CANADA Vancouver

University of British Columbia - Dr Shelley Hymel. Dr Hymel is the director of The UBC Psychoeducational Research & Training Centre in the Faculty of Education. She has advised the British Columbian Government in recent years on issues related to its anti violence/ anti bullying initiatives in education and law enforcement. This position has allowed her to present to the government worldwide research and practice in the field and undertake relevant research to further explore issues. At present Dr Hymel and her doctoral students are focusing on exploring students' attitudes to bully/victim/onlookers/school community problems in order to develop interventions appropriate to students' needs. An excellent questionnaire is at present being trialled in a group of B.C. schools as part of this.

B.C. Safe Schools Centre - Dr Debra Cullinane. Dr Cullinane is the director of The B.C. Safe Schools Centre. The Safe Schools Centre is a joint collaboration of the B.C. Attorney General's Department, the B.C. Ministry of Education and Training and the Burnaby School District. It provides resources, consultancy, staff training and advocacy for anti bullying/ anti violence programs and issues. The centre was established as part of the provincial government's wholistic approach to tackling youth violence.

Bullying is specifically targeted in the school setting in recognition of the widespread and serious nature of the problem and in recognition of school bullying as a potential precursor to youth and adult violence.

A primary school program called *Focus on Bullying* was developed by the Vancouver School Board and is now available for use in all B.C. schools. A secondary version of this program is about to be released. These materials have been developed in light of international research findings and local needs. Curriculum materials are of a high standard and all aspects within it reflect a whole school approach to the problem.

The British Columbian Ministry of Education and Training has been wracked by negative publicity in recent years. This followed the murder of a Victoria school student, Rena Virk, by her classmates and the suicide of a Vancouver school student who left a note detailing chronic bullying as the reason for the suicide.

The Safe Schools Centre is central to the government's focus. Dr Cullinane is an ex district superintendent, school principal and school counsellor. She firmly believes that children must be educated in social responsibility from an early age and engaged in the process of peer education about bullying. Onlookers must be educated in the role they play in perpetuating bullying and their capacity to intervene. All the latter should be placed in the context of a whole school approach to learning and behavioural expectations for students.

Her work with school districts uses *The Effective Behaviours Support* (EBS) program which was developed at the University of Oregon, as an overriding program within which the anti bullying modules are meaningfully placed. Dr Cullinane emphasised the essential link between school learning and achievement and safe and caring schools.

She also reinforced that a barrier to student leadership/ participation in anti bullying can be the adult perception that such participation is not connected to the curriculum and that there is not enough time. Teachers need professional development in how and why to involve students meaningfully.

Kwayhquitlam Middle School, Coquitlam - Allyson McLennan, Vice Principal. Allyson is one of three professionals who began their work in anti bullying in 1995 at Kwayhquitlam School in response to parents' demands for the safety of their children at school. This program is called *Bully Beware* and is now marketed commercially in the form of a video, booklet and parent book. *Bully B'ware* also offers professional development for schools and organisations and is recognised nationally and internationally as a leader in the field.

Allyson spoke of the history of anti bullying initiatives at the school and how students are taught strategies to deal with bullying in a systematic way both prior to (in transition from primary to middle school) and during their years at Kwayh. They are taught the W.I.T.S. method in detail by both their teachers and

peers. The acronym stands for Walk away, Ignore, Talk(assertive" I " statements) and Seek help. How these four strategies should be used is covered in great detail. The issue of confidentiality is reinforced consistently in action and words to students so that the safety of students who report bullying can be guaranteed at all times.

Seaview Elementary School, Port Moody - Cindi Seddon, Principal. Cindi is also one of three co authors of the *Bully B'ware* Program. The programs within her school and the philosophy inherent in the school's administration reflect this. The school is in an economically impoverished area which suffers from high rates of unemployment and the ensuing social problems.

Social inclusion and anti bullying is a top priority at Seaview and much curriculum and pastoral care time is spent on the issue.

The *Circles of Support* Program is an impressive aspect of the program. I was impressed with a Year 5 class' engagement with the program. They spoke excitedly how much they enjoyed being involved in supporting their fellow students. *Circles of Support* uses a group of about ten students in each class to provide social support and guidance to a student in their class who is experiencing any kind of social/behavioural difficulty.

Burnaby South Secondary School, Burnaby - John Anderson, Principal. This is a large comprehensive high school (2,650 students) which is also the B.C. Provincial School for the Deaf (Jericho School). It is the largest school in the province. Student leadership underpins both the student welfare and curriculum aspects of the school. E.B.S. is the core behavioural system for the school and has been developed consistently for the last few years. E.B.S. relies heavily on data collection , reporting back to staff, a whole school vision and commitment to the program, and a complex and relevant reward system.

West Bay Elementary School, West Vancouver - Diane Nelson, Principal. The school relies heavily on the *Focus on Bullying* and *Second Step* (Committee for Children, Seattle) social skills program. Combined with this is an across the school emphasis on positives, whereby children are taught positive social skills and problem solving and opportunities are provided for them to practice and be rewarded for their efforts. The highest priority is given to their attempts to report bullying. Diane emphasised the importance of involving parents in the school's programs and the enormous efforts she had made to achieve this.

Burnaby District Office of Education - Terry Waterhouse, Manager, Youth Services. Terry is a co author of the B.C. *Focus on Bullying* program. Terry stressed the profound effects that bullying can have on the whole school community including the bully. He said that the only effective response can be a whole school and community response. Social skills programs such as *Second Step* are important but should not be used in isolation. Anti bullying work which tends to "criminalise" children by labelling them as bullies and speaking of zero tolerance and getting tough, is not an appropriate or justifiable way of approaching the problem. More proactive approaches are needed. A curriculum alone approach is at risk of students' hearing that they are the problem and as such they are unlikely to listen. Involving students in meaningful ways plays a key role in reducing violence. Students will need to be convinced that they can contribute to their voice being heard. Future directions in anti bullying should recognise that there is no one cure all and we cannot "fix" the kids in isolation.

B.C. Student Voice, Vancouver - Sharon Cutcliffe, B.C. Principal and Vice Principal's Association. Student Voice is an student organisation supervised by Sharon which represents B.C. students in matters affecting their education. They are enlisted in their latter years of high school for one year after being nominated by their school and meet regularly to plan activities and representation for various aspects of their education. They have had bullying as their central focus for the last two years in recognition of the deleterious effect of bullying on student learning and well being. They meet regularly and feedback to their schools and districts. Members sit on curriculum committees although this is only a very recent development. They produce regular journals for students showcasing student leadership participation in schools across the province.

Richardson Elementary School, Vancouver - Ron Parkes, Principal. The school relies heavily on the principles of the *Assets Approach* program(Search Institute, Minneapolis). Assets are grouped into eight categories some examples of which are, support, commitment to learning, positive values, and social

competencies. The school tries to nurture development in all these areas in both a formal and informal way. A nearby Boys and Girls Club (and all these clubs in the province) is likewise oriented and both operate cooperatively to achieve similar aims.

University of Victoria, Victoria, Vancouver Island - Dr Sybille Artz, Associate Professor and Director of the Department of Child and Youth Studies. Dr Artz has been particularly interested in female violence and played a central role in advising the provincial government on its violence prevention campaigns in recent years and in issues related to the Rena Virk case. She believes that bullyproofing school programs can only be at best a harm reduction tool but not a violence prevention tool. She bases this understanding on the results of a large scale Victoria University research project undertaken across a group of Vancouver Island schools. She insists that there is in fact no difference between bullying and violence and we must look closer at the causes and meanings of violence for youth if we are to develop effective strategies to decrease youth violence.

She says that anti violence programs for girls and boys must be different in recognition of the differing needs of both and their differing use of violence. Students should play a central and not tokenistic role in educating adults in ways to reduce school bullying.

The main enhancer to student participation in this process is providing avenues for listening to them and showing respect. The latter concept is the most salient in this, Dr Artz emphasised. The role that violence plays in identity formation for some youth is an important area for future research.

Cedar Hill Junior Secondary School, Victoria, Vancouver Island - Linda Moyer, School Counsellor. Linda has run a peer helper program at the school for the last ten years. 25 students are nominated by teachers on a yearly basis and given a week's intensive training in the last week of the school year by Linda. They are supervised weekly by her. They are attached to Year 7 tutor groups and are heavily involved in the transition to high school program in the year preceding this. Some of these peer helpers work informally with their peers but this depends very much on their personal preferences. The training program is school specific and based on the Peer Resources Network material.

Journey Middle School, Sooke, Vancouver Island - Ettie Catto, School Counsellor.

Ettie began a peer helper program ten years ago at Journey. This program ran along similar lines to the Cedar Hill model. In 1993 she established the *BullySmart* Team in response to student and parent demand for anti bullying programs. The term *BullySmart* as opposed to *BullyProof*, was chosen to reflect the understanding that bullying cannot be fully stopped and schools therefore bullyproofed, but rather that students can be taught to outsmart the bully and deal effectively with bullying as it occurs.

The *BullySmart* team involves 24 Year 7 & 8 students each year who are selected on the basis of peer and teacher nomination and who are given specific anti bullying and leadership training. They are selected on their capacity to relate well to their peers and teachers, be academically able in view of the large amount of time they must invest in the program and therefore out of the classroom and be able to show enthusiasm for and commitment to the program. They take a very public role in the school in that they deliver the bulk of the lessons on bullying to Year 6 and Year 7 students. This is very much in cooperation with the class teachers. All 24 of them deliver the student leaders introductory lessons and then they divide into groups of 2-3 to deliver specific parts such as role plays and skill practice across all the classes.

Intensive training by the school counsellor involves weekly whole day sessions for one term with assistance from specific teachers such as the drama teacher. The role plays and skill sessions are produced and written by them and are therefore very relevant and topical for the recipients of the program.

BullySmart is among five finalists for a national recognition in violence prevention and considered as best practice in British Columbia. As well as anti bullying these student leaders along with a smaller group of others deliver prosocial programs such as anti smoking/drugs and school behaviour codes in a similar manner.

They are well received by their peers according to the leaders and some randomly chosen students at the school. Credibility is recognised by both staff and students as an essential ingredient for success. Thus a

boy who had a previous profile as a bully was very effective as a leader in the *BullySmart* program after he had spoken publicly to staff and students of his involvement in bullying.

University of Victoria, Victoria, Vancouver Island - One week training course in Peer Helping run by Greg Saunders, Peer Resources Network, Victoria.

The majority of the course used an experiential learning mode for delivery of the training course materials. Such a learning model should be used with students in training them as peer helpers/supporters. This entailed participants learning through the processes of doing, reflecting and applying.

Some essential considerations in setting up a peer helping school program were discussed in detail. These were a) establishing needs b) establishing goals c) determining the support base at the school d) advertising and promoting membership of peer helping e) selection methods and the relationship of this to the goals of the program f) training modes g) evaluation methods.

U.S.A. Seattle

Committee for Children, Seattle, Washington State U.S.A. - Dr Karin Frey, Director, Committee for Children and University of Washington, Seattle. The Committee for Children is a non governmental charitable organisation which promotes children's safety and well being. In the early 1990's it produced *The Second Step Program* for elementary school children. This program is now the most widely used social skills program across North America.

For the last three years the committee has been developing a comprehensive anti bullying program for elementary schoolchildren, entitled *Steps to Respect*. This, like *Second Step*, is based on sound empirical research, intensive piloting and school community feedback, and high quality resourcing from many fields. It is anticipated to be on sale in early 2001.

Steps to Respect is a bullying prevention program for grades 2 - 6 designed to decrease bullying at school and help students build more supportive relationships with one another. The program's dual focus on bullying and friendship is based on research showing that friendship protects children from the harmful effects of bullying. It also emphasises the responsibility that all members of the school community have to decrease bullying. In this respect it promotes a whole school approach which research has continually affirmed as the strategy appropriate to tackle bullying.

The videos which accompany the curriculum materials are particularly notable for their capacity to elicit support from onlookers and to explore the complex and varied emotions involved in bullying incidents.

I viewed a Grade 6 lesson at Lady of the Lake School, Seattle which used *Steps to Respect* and has participated in the piloting of the program.

CANADA Toronto

York University, Toronto - Dr Debra Pepler, Professor of Psychology and Director of the La Marsh Centre for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution Dr Pepler is one of Canada's leading researchers in the area of school bullying and has conducted research in the area for the last ten years. Along with Dr Wendy Craig, many of her findings have come from observing video taped interactions of students in the playground and in the classroom.

Dr Pepler was central in the 1990 Toronto School Board's research into school bullying. This research established bullying as a pervasive and persistent problem for students which caused serious and far reaching effects on children's learning and general well being.

She stressed that bullying as a form of violence must be considered in the social context. Research in recent years reflects this understanding she feels. Her data shows that peers were involved in some way other than as bully or victim, in 85% of all bullying episodes. The average episode of bullying lasted for 38 seconds and if an onlooker intervened it stopped in ten seconds. Students must be shown therefore how to intervene appropriately eg not bully the bully.

Her research also suggests that teachers' attitudes and awareness of bullying needs to be changed as well. In one study (Peppler & Craig, 1997) adults were found to have intervened in only 4% of episodes recorded on the videotapes, while peers intervened in 11% of the episodes.

Dr Peppler feels that teachers are resistant to student participation in tackling bullying and the proliferation of peer mediation programs hinders rather than aids the process. This is because these programs are tokenistic in training delivery and do not address the power imbalance issue inherent in bullying situations. Evaluations consistently show them to be ineffective in reducing violence and increasing student participation. She insists that students need to be given the opportunity to express their views in a safe and respectful way such as in small mentor groups.

Dr Peppler insists that in the future we need to see a societal shift in our perspective on bullying in much the same way that society now views drink driving and the wearing of seatbelts. The combination of power and aggression, viz bullying, is as much a social problem as either of the latter and requires a similar social understanding as is evidenced in the community anti bullying campaign in the York Region.

York Region, Northern Toronto CAYRE “ Put the Brakes on Bullying” Steering Committee Meeting.

Attended this meeting with Dr Peppler who is a member of the steering committee. This is a community wide anti bullying program which is in its initial first year stage. There were ten community representatives at this meeting. The York Region of Education has 200 schools and this program is targetting children from Kindergarten to Year 8.

The York Region has produced substantial anti bullying material for use in its schools in the last few years and this is seen as a natural progression to gain more involvement of schools and the community.

The steering committee consists of representatives from schools, daycare, local council, police, health, federal government (National Crime Prevention), Catholic schools and The La Marsh Centre (Dr Peppler). It is currently working on an awareness raising phase and planning for next year's focus.

A highlight of the year will be a community forum and conference in the region as well as a community week focusing on bullying in school. Previous research undertaken by the committee suggests that parents want teachers trained, students educated about bullying, parents educated about consistency of approaches and support for victims.

Safe Schools Centre, Toronto School Board, Toronto - Bill Byrd, Coordinator. This centre is a resource centre for curriculum materials and programs and professional development in the Toronto School Board area. Although an education initiative it appears to be heavily influenced by a law and order perspective. According to Dr Peppler this probably reflects some of the philosophy of the current Ontario provincial government.

CANADA Kingston

Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario - Dr Wendy Craig, Associate Professor, Faculty of Psychology. Dr Craig reflects that a greater understanding of the social dynamics of children has led to more fruitful research and practice in the area of anti bullying in recent years. The shift away from exclusively looking at the bully victim dyad has resulted in deeper understandings of the apparently minor things which capitalize on the juxtaposition of someone's displeasure and their own actual involvement.

The videotaping of children's interactions at school undertaken in collaboration with Dr Debra Peppler, show clear and unequivocal evidence for the importance of the peer group interactions in the initiation and perpetuation of bullying. Dr Craig insists that schools must have both consequences and support in place to tackle bullying.

The consequences should be of an educative nature so as to allow for opportunities to learn new and appropriate behaviours rather than generic and meaningless consequences being applied. Victim support should also be available.

Student participation in anti bullying is essential. The barriers to this are seen as 1) peer pressure - need to make it a desirable status program 2) staff training and maintenance of the program 3) possible clash of

family and school values or problem solving versus fighting back 4) competing interests of academic and pastoral care concerns. A school climate which emphasises empathy and responsibility is an enhancer to student participation.

Dr Craig would like to see a national coordination of anti bullying programs and more evaluation of programs for their effectiveness. These should be centralised in schools but involve the whole community. For example older citizens in nursing homes could sit in deckchairs on the nearby school playground., graduate students could visit and community police could interact regularly with the students.

Dr Craig also wants to see an expanded definition of bullying to recognise the relationship between early school bullying and date rape, from a developmental psychology perspective. Her research in this area has found a definitive link between the two.

UNITED KINGDOM

London

Roehampton Institute, University of Surrey, London - Dr Helen Cowie, Professor of Psychology.

Dr Cowie has been a leader in the field of anti bullying and peer support against bullying for the last ten years. She began her work in the field after researching cooperation in the classroom. This led her to examine the motivations of those who undermined cooperation and how interventions which supported students challenged this undermining of cooperation.

The most significant developments in anti bullying research in recent years has, according to Dr Cowie, been the development of systemic interventions which do not only consider the characteristics of bullies and victims, but also take into account the full social context within which bullying occurs. The pioneering research work of Dr Christina Salmivalli in Finland is considered by her to have shed much light in this respect.

Students can play key roles in empowering bystanders to take positive action against bullying, to develop school policies to tackle bullying and to evaluate and monitor procedures and policies. Participation in these roles is not only valuable for the school's culture and administration it is also personally invaluable for the participating students both in a present and future sense.

The barriers to student participation include those teachers who consciously or unconsciously sabotage the efforts of students, curriculum demands which are inflexible and narrow, time constraints for staff and the needs of some students and staff who by their very nature need to ignore the capacity of students to support others.

A school which has an active anti bullying policy which is inclusive of students' support, has senior management support, fosters teamwork in students and provides resources for the supervision of peer support programs, enhances student participation in anti bullying programs.

Dr Cowie feels that in the future further insights will be gained by interdisciplinary work in aggression studies and networking in school communities to increase young people's participation.

Her work in recent years has examined peer support programs in U.K. schools in various forms with particular reference to anti bullying. The main findings of this work can be summarised as :- peer support programs of themselves do not reduce bullying. This finding is only in respect of reported bullying rates and the reality of incidence levels may in fact be quite different. However they clearly do have the capacity to enhance the school climate as a safe, caring and supportive environment where the negative effects of being bullied are reduced. This of itself is ample justification of peer support systems in schools, Dr Cowie asserts.

Many victims who are recipients of peer support programs report that they have been given strength to overcome the bullying problem. Peer support programs to counter bullying are enormously advantageous to the peer supporters themselves. The communication and enhanced social skills learnt are recognised by students as personally and professionally rewarding for the present and in the future.

Dr Cowie is involved in a European Project entitled *Training and Mobility of Researchers (TMR)*. The project has nine teams across five countries, Italy, Spain, Portugal, U.K. and Finland and is looking specifically into the nature and causes of bullying in schools. The U.K. team is researching the attribution of emotions and coping styles of victims, bullies, onlookers and defenders by peer nominated victims, bullies, onlookers and defenders.

Greenshaw High School, London - Stefania Ferrazzuolo, TMR researcher and Roehampton Institute Phd student. Stefania presented her preliminary findings to the senior management staff at Greenshaw H.S. A sample of Year 9 students participated in the study.

The Mental Health Foundation, London - Jo Scherer-Thompson, Peer Support Project Director. The Peer Support Project involves funding and consultation support for five schools, one voluntary organisation and one College of Further Education to set up peer support projects to promote the mental health of

children and young people. One of the school projects has set up a support scheme to specifically address the issue of bullying and the other projects offer support across a range of issues.

The project's aims are to raise awareness about mental health issues affecting young people; to set up systems whereby students can offer support to their peers, and to produce materials on peer support and mental health for inclusion on the peer support website.

Jo Scherer-Thompson is also in the process of establishing a peer support forum across the U.K. for the pooling of resources, contacts and programs. To this end she is organising a national conference in November 2000.

Kingsbury High School, London - Ita McNamara, Year 9 Head and P.D. Coordinator.

Kingsbury H.S. is one of the Mental Health Foundation's Peer Support Project funded schools and its program is specifically aimed at addressing bullying issues. It is called the CONNECT Program and it began about three years ago with a group of 20 Year 12 students speaking to younger students about bullying. A successful application to be involved in the Peer Support Project led to staff and student (10) training by trainers from *Relate*, a national counselling organisation similar to *Relationships Australia*. A method for ongoing supervision of these students was set up as well as a drop in centre. The latter was launched publicly in January 1999 and was well used for the first few weeks. The student peer supporters became quickly disillusioned after referrals became few after this time.

It was decided to diversify the service and as such another group was trained six months later and five of these students then visited other schools, as organised by *Relate*. Another group of 13 became involved in teaching assertiveness skills to Year 7&8 students who were being victimised. Once again *Relate* trained the student leaders.

In another program some Year 12 students worked with primary school Year 6 students to assist in their transition and orientation to high school. Those students involved in the initial training in listening skills and the drop in centre have since become involved in a playground program whereby they go out onto the playground in groups of 3 to support younger students informally. The drop in centre still operates but its use is now more varied.

Additional to all this is a Buddy Support Scheme in which some of the CONNECT students visit home tutor groups on a regular basis to support younger students.

The overall project operates on the basis of ongoing supervision of students by staff and the training of staff volunteers on a regular basis by outside trainers and more recently by a newly employed school counsellor.

Goldsmiths College, University of London, London - Dr Peter Smith, Professor of School and Family Studies, Department of Psychology.

In 1989 Dr Smith adapted Dan Olweus' (the Norwegian pioneering researcher in school bullying) survey for Britain and this became an integral part of Sheffield University's 1991-1994 study into school bullying in the Sheffield LEA. This highly regarded study produced important findings which have been applied around the world including Australia. Most importantly this study showed that school action to counter bullying could be effective and that the most significant changes occurred in schools which took a whole school approach to the problem.

A subsequent national survey undertaken by Dr Smith suggests that bullying rates may have decreased. U.K. schools all have mandatory anti bullying policies and many have specific anti bullying programs to support the policy. This is very much an outcome of the Sheffield study and its findings, Dr Smith reports.

The T.M.R. program should shed much more light on school bullying when it completes its four year cycle.

Dr Smith sees that the most significant developments in recent research into bullying is the growth of peer support to tackle bullying of which Dr Cowie is a world leader, research into the causes and consequences of being a victim, findings from coping skills literature and studies which suggest that a developmental model of bully-victim relationships can be postulated.

Dr Smith feels that qualitative methods of looking at bullying should be employed more often in the area therefore.

In the future anti bullying initiatives will continue because of the legal requirements for safety of children, increasing public awareness of the issue and increasing legal cases. Dr Smith insists we must explore what works and why.

Goldsmiths College, London - Lorenzo Talamelli, PHD student. Lorenzo is part of a team which is investigating victims' methods of dealing with bullying. This study is a follow on from a 1998 Roehampton Institute study in which 54 UK schools participated in administering surveys on bullying and peer support systems in their schools. Student sample numbers were 1,825.

The Lorenzo Project involved recontacting these schools and subsequently 35 agreed to be further involved in this project. In the initial study 413 students identified themselves as being victims of bullying and the Lorenzo Project has focused on this group. 324 victims have been involved in being given semi structured interviews two years later for this project. A non victim control group has also been likewise interviewed. Peer Supporters in groups of 4-5, as well as teachers who ran peer support programs were also interviewed.

The data is at present being analysed and will yield very valuable data on the coping styles of students who are bullied, which methods are effective/non effective and the role of peer support in this process.

Goldsmiths College, London - Claire Monks, PHD student. Claire has been investigating 4-6 year old nursery and school students, using self and peer(cartoons), and teacher nominations to identify bullies, victims and defenders. The children were assessed over four months and in this time the main findings were that the bullying and defender groups were quite stable whereas the victim group was very changeable. The implication from this is that patterns of behaviour for coping with bullying may be related to developmental experiences and interpretations of bullying and that therefore children can and should be taught to constructively deal with peer abusive behaviours from an early age.

Newcastle

Pennywell School, Sunderland(Newcastle) - Meetings with individual students, groups of students involved in peer support activities, headteacher, deputy principal, head of house, head teacher/ support, class teachers, parents and community groups and local primary school teachers.

Pennywell is a school of 1,100 students, established in 1963 in a then new council housing estate for families with complex problems. It has been plagued by violence and criminality in all that time and in recent years many resources have been injected into the area to change practices and support the community. It is still regarded as the most socio economically disadvantaged area in Britain. In some streets on the estate many houses are boarded up after being firebombed by residents and vandalised continuously leading to a stark and desolate street terrain in some areas of the estate. Sunderland is an ex coalmining and shipbuilding town and suffers from high rates of unemployment. Pennywell School is in the heart of this environment and has been challenged to provide innovative and inspiring programs for its students. Peer support and whole school programs are at the heart of these programs.

Peer support began at Pennywell seven years ago with an anti bullying program. A small group of staff chose a group of Year 9 &10 students and trained them in anti bullying issues, listening skills and self esteem raising activities. This involved a series of lessons being held offsite using outside agency trainers. Staff were then invited to a weekend workshop at an attractive hotel resort to work on anti bullying material. 50 out of 80 attended and the previously trained students were involved in delivering some of the

workshops. These students were given another training day in the following month. Six months later another group of Y9/10 and some Y8 students were given intensive training at a week long residential workshop run by both school staff and outside agencies. Although much of the focus for this course was anti bullying a large proportion focused on self esteem raising and team building. Peer support was now the overriding principle as well. Students were chosen for the course by staff and peer nominations. The following year a mixed group of Year 8&9 students were trained and at this point a drop in room called B2 was set up for students to seek help from their peers.

Supervision structures were set up for peer supporters, in the form of two meetings per term for refresher training and individual informal support from staff. At this time two separate weekly lunchtime meetings were established. The first was open to all interested students to attend.

I attended one of these which involved about 40 students. It was a fun activity based session which was led by students with four staff members taking a minor role. The activities involved team building, anti bullying, peer supporting and self esteem raising. The second weekly meeting is specifically for peer supporters and is topic focused. As a staff member who supervises this group explained this is where special peer support projects are planned and developed. At the time of my visit a group were being trained to assist a local community group through public speaking and youth advocacy to lobby government and raise public awareness over a health issue.

Three years ago training of students for peer support was extended to Year 7 students and this group of Years 7/8/9 students was selected on the basis of self nomination followed by peer and staff nomination. Training now operates twice a year with 32 Year 7 students from two of the four houses at Pennywell being involved per half year. This leads to 64 new students being trained in peer support per year and one third of the school population being involved formally in peer support. All the year 7 peer supporters are involved in peer support activities with their tutor groups after they have completed their initial training. The drop in centre model of peer support was abandoned after about one year when peer supporters (peer listeners/helpers) found that usage became minimal. Publicising the service certainly helped but this was needed constantly and it was considered that too much time was needed for such publicity when compared to other needs of students at Pennywell. Informal peer support is very much encouraged at Pennywell with any effort to assist a peer being recognised, valued and rewarded both publicly and privately. Hence all students at Pennywell are referred to as peer supporters if their behaviour warrants the description.

I spoke at length to two Year 10/11 students who had been involved since Year 7. Phillip a Year 11 student spoke of the self confidence he had gained and the sense of belonging to a community. He explained that the task last year of convincing a panel of adults in London to award their peer support program funds in a bid was initially daunting. However the combined sense of belonging and worth enabled him to overcome the fears of inferiority he felt in coming from a community plagued by low self esteem and serious troubles.

Phillip related the example of Emily Blyth a student who had been at risk of dropping out of school in her early years at Pennywell. Emily had an extremely poor attendance record and low academic grades in Year 7. She joined peer support and immediately began to shine. Phillip explained that Emily felt that her talents needed to be hidden for her to survive in the difficult community she lived in. Peer support provided the nurturing and support she needed. Last year Emily scored eight straight A's with stars in four of these subjects. She has been a shining light in all the school's peer support initiatives, including the 1999 international conference on peer support run by Pennywell at the Sunderland Stadium of Light and attended by 300 delegates, including a live video link up with students and myself from Jamison High School.

Pennywell applies peer support in varied, dynamic and creative ways. Its community education programs such as the Bridge Project for parents is targetting the parents of peer supporters initially, and giving students credit in their courses for childminding and interior decorating the children's playroom (the old B2 room which was not used enough as a drop in room to justify its continued use as such). Similarly this particular program uses adult peers to support the parents.

Pennywell is recognised nationally for its Literacy Across the Curriculum program and its mentoring program both of which are dynamic and creative programs which are continually being revised and developed.

Marketing of and for the school is a huge component of Pennywell's program. The school does receive a lot of governmental assistance as a socially disadvantaged school. However a large proportion of its funds

come from bids that groups of staff and students make to secure funds. Pennywell charges no fees for excursions and has already taken a large group of students to Canada to collaborate with a group of peer supporters at a Canadian school for a week. Plans are at present underway to visit Jamison High School in a similar way. Students have been involved in writing and presenting bids for funds for their peer support programs. They have been highly successful. All Pennywell programs are explained for parents, students and the community in the form of glossy pamphlets which are produced by local printing firms.

Leadership at Pennywell is outstanding. A strong and charismatic principal expects a lot from his staff and rewards them with active encouragement and empowerment with the provision of opportunities. All suggestions from staff are considered provided they are willing to be actively involved. Executive staff provide opportunities for staff to bid for funds for their programs and be involved in school financing. There is tangible evidence of strong collegiate support in that although some staff may be leading a certain program many others offer their support in other ways. Programs are in a state of evolution as they are evaluated and changed depending on their successes and failures.

The deputy principal, Sandra Smith who began and oversees peer support at Pennywell, reported that Pennywell was down to an enrolment of 700 students seven years ago and was at risk of closure. It now has a waiting list and is continuously commended for its work. In fact during my visit to the school an Ofsted inspector who was at the school to observe a class from a neighbouring special education school that was being assisted by a group of Pennywell students in woodwork (another example of peer support at Pennywell), commented that he had been told that Pennywell was considered "a jewel in the thorn." Sandra considers that peer support provides for the increased sharing of knowledge and understandings between staff and students to further promote a caring, safe and supportive school. She gave the example of staff awareness raising by students at professional development sessions by their role playing some difficult situations encountered by students at school. Sandra said that there is ample evidence that peer support has led to higher academic achievement, the example of Emily being just one notable example. Academic results have been steadily rising over the last three years although due to the relatively low academic standard when compared to national standards, this may be overlooked by some. Attendance figures are certainly on the increase being down to 82% seven years ago and now up to 87.6% in 2000.

Gateshead LEA, Newcastle - Valerie Besag, Educational Psychologist. Valerie is a pioneer researcher, practitioner and writer in the area of anti bullying. She published a highly regarded book in 1989 entitled *Bullies and Victims in Schools* and is also the author of a school development resource entitled *We Don't Have any Bullies Here*. Recently she wrote a CD program for Rotary International on school bullying with separate versions for primary and high schools. This is widely used in UK schools along with her previous works.

Val has visited Australia and other countries to promote anti bullying in schools. Val reflects that the last fifteen years has seen the development of a wide range of programs for schools to use to tackle bullying. She views peer support as integral to the success of these programs. The barriers to peer support are seen by Val as a lack of teacher awareness training, and lack of community and government support. Dedicated and charismatic teachers can overcome these barriers however as Val has seen many times in schools.

Schools need to develop their own dynamic approaches to anti bullying using a core set of standards and requirements for a whole school approach to the issue. Strategies for victims to use should be more fully investigated in the future and female bullying which by its very nature is more covert and involves specific gender issues, needs more research.

Peer mediation is a useful means of dealing with female bullying particularly in friendship groups where one member is specifically targeted. However it must be understood that such behaviour is a recurrent theme of group maintenance and support for victims should be seen as the optimal involvement one is capable of succeeding with.

Blaydon Primary School, Newcastle - Val Besag, Educational Psychologist. A peer mediation program has operated at Blaydon for the last three years involving Year 5 & 6 students. It has its own room whereby students can make an appointment to talk to a mediator at lunchtime using a system of tags

attached to a board. Year 6 students assist in training Year 5 students and two members of staff supervise. The program is very developmentally appropriate and user friendly.

Kingsmeadow High School, Newcastle - Val Besag. This school utilises drama effectively to raise awareness of the plight of victims who are bullied at school. Year 9 drama students develop and present their own performances on this topic every year to Year 7 students and parents. They recently performed for a large group of district teachers and their performances were highly regarded. Audiences are invited at the end of the performances to ask questions of the performers whilst they are still in role and this has led to some powerful moments of understanding for the audience.

Nottingham

Elliott Durham School, Nottingham - Michelle Darrington, coordinator, Peer Counselling, Robin Tinker, ex coordinator and teacher and Derek Wilson, educational psychologist and ex coordinator, Elliott Durham.

Elliott Durham School is an inner city school of 450 students in an area of high social deprivation. 65% of its students are in receipt of free school lunches, 80% are from step and single parent families and 75% are from multi racial backgrounds. There is high unemployment in the area and attendance and GCSE scores are below the national average. In this setting a peer counselling program was established in 1995 to help students deal with bullying.

The ABC Peer Counselling Program was inspired by the BBC documentary featuring Acland Burghley School, London. Ten students from Years 7-11 each year are trained as counsellors by the school's educational psychologist. They are given training in listening and communication, confidentiality and problem solving for one hour in school time and four hours out of school. Selection involves nominations from existing peer counsellors, then volunteering following the placing of ads in the school bulletin and announcements for three weeks at assemblies. Written applications are then received and these are short listed for final interviews with two peer counsellors and Derek Wilson.

The counsellors have their own room for supervision and meeting with students who are seeking their help. A communication box operates in the front office to receive referrals. Students also seek counsellors out in the playground. Michelle reported that some counsellors are more popular than others with their peers.

She attributes the success of the program to three key elements, namely selection, training and weekly supervision. In the last few years the peer counsellors have run courses for Elliott Durham teachers, district schools and trainee teachers. They have received much publicity for their work and are regarded as best practice nationally. Ofsted inspections also rate the program very highly as "making a major contribution to the quality of life in school."

Bolsover

Bolsover School, Bolsover, Chesterfield - Margaret Hill, Deputy Principal and Coordinator, Bullying Helpline.

The Bolsover School Bullying Helpline was set up in 1993 to provide an accessible and confidential support service for Bolsover students. It is a four hour per week telephone service which is manned by 30 students on a roster from Years 7-13 who receive training in listening and telephone counselling skills. They are closely supervised by Margaret every Wednesday evening as they man a dedicated phonenumber. In recent years the service has been less frequently used. Their training is quite intensive and is at an off school site once a year. They receive 20 hours of training and last year this was in combination with other schools in the area who have begun similar listening services. The types of problems they can tackle are limited and they are well trained to refer on to adult counselling services in the area. For the last three years an additional ten students have been trained to become peer listeners for Year 7&8 students in their home tutor groups.

The Derbyshire LEA has been very proactive in the last ten years in developing high quality anti bullying programs for its schools. It has recently produced performance appraisal measures to assist schools in monitoring, evaluating and maintaining existing anti bullying programs.

Sheffield

Sheffield LEA, Sheffield - Dr Sonia Sharp, Senior Educational Psychologist and Assistant Director SEN Department, Birmingham LEA.

Sonia Sharp has been a leading figure internationally in the area of anti bullying and was a researcher in the University of Sheffield landmark study in 1991-1994. Dr Sharp was the keynote speaker at an Anti Bullying Conference for teachers from the Sheffield LEA. I attended this conference and her presentation is summarised herewith.

23 schools were involved in the Sheffield study and some key points emerged from this study. Every school can make a difference for its students; it must be a whole school affair; maintenance issues for the program must be addressed; evaluation of programs must be ongoing.

The key features of bullying include 1) it is persistent and systematic 2) it is an abuse of power 3) it induces fear of what might be done 4) it can take many forms 5) it takes more than one person, ie it is a group process. The work of Christina Salmivalli in Finland is very significant here in that she found that 80% of students were involved in some way in any one bullying incident.

Incidence levels across most western nations are roughly similar although the data from studies to date suggest that Italy has the highest rates and Scandinavian countries have the lowest. 10% of high school students and 27% of primary school students are bullied at least once per term, and 4-6% overall are bullied every day.

The dilemmas for schools are that bullying is widespread; it can be hard to detect. Michael Boulton's work showed that in nine out of ten cases when an adult saw a bullying incident they either misinterpreted it or did not see it at all. It is easy therefore to overlook or misinterpret it; it can be dangerous to ignore. Some recent suicide incidents in Britain attest to that; it is resistant to change at the individual level. It needs a group collective response.

The impact of bullying of students can be clearly seen in attendance problems and lowered self esteem (Olweus, 1980). Rigby and Slee (1993) showed that somatic complaints and general depression and suicidal ideation increased in victimised students. In a 1995 study Sharp found that one third of students who reported having been bullied had impaired concentration levels. Her study also found that rumour mongering was the most distressful form of bullying for students. This type of bullying was hardest to stop because of its covert nature. Sharp postulates that it is the most distressful because it betrays intimacy in friendships and reduces the sense of belonging so crucial for adjustment. Maslow's hierarchy of needs and model of learning is seen as a relevant model to consider in this context.

Bullying is a chronic stressor and as such creates a general level of stress that impairs one's ability to cope with other stressors. Chronic stressors lead to low self esteem, impaired learning ability and impaired problem solving skills. Sharp's study found that children who are bullied do develop a wide range of strategies to deal with it. Those who are less stressed by bullying are no different to their counterparts who are heavily stressed, in terms of bullying incidence rates. The difference between the two groups are that those students who are less stressed by bullying have significantly higher self esteem, have an assertive approach to handling bullying and have good problem solving skills. She proposes therefore that we should view bullying as an organisational stressor. These are stressors which are part of the very fabric of an organisation, are resistant to individual solutions and require change at the group/organisational level.

School based action against bullying is achieved through a combination of:-

* establishing guidelines for behavioural responses to bullying for staff, students and parents. In view of the fact that there will rarely be concrete and reliable evidence, schools must plan for this in these guidelines. Responses should be outlined for low level interventions such as questioning in corridors "Is everything all right?" through to proposed disciplinary action at the other extreme. Direct action must always occur when bullying is observed.

* reinforcing some essential principles underlying responses:-
- never ignore bullying

- be assertive not aggressive. A staff code of conduct is as important as a student code to model prosocial behaviour. Staff development sessions should be used to teach how to respond to bullying, including the importance of not making jokes about bullying incidents.
- do not get tied up in the truth debate
- always give time for students to be heard
- adopt a problem solving approach such as that proposed by Anatol Pikas
- involve parents as early as possible and follow up over time as well

* implement curriculum based approaches

- to raise awareness about bullying issues
- to increase opportunities for peer support for bullied students
- to teach relationship and emotion management skills

* develop opportunities for peer support for inclusion during breaktime.

75% of primary school and 45% of high school students report being bullied during recess/lunchtime.

* highlight the role of the whole school policy at every opportunity

* develop prevention strategies. These can be achieved by increasing social responsibility for action by teaching through role plays; teaching the importance of telling/reporting, acting assertively, and being aware of personal safety.

Kidscape Presentation at Sheffield Conference - Jennifer Smith, Training Coordinator, Kidscape

Jennifer asserted that we must challenge the many myths perpetuated by students such as:

“ It was only a joke” “ It was an accident” “ I didn’t know” “ I only borrowed it”. To this end one school banned the students using the words “only” and “just” in their explanations for anti social behaviours.

A Kidscape survey in 1984-1986 found that 68% of students had been bullied at least once in the school year, 4% of girls and 8% of boys severely.

The cycle of self esteem linked to how I feel about myself -to- how I behave - to- how others perceive me was explained with reference to the effects of bullying on this process. 46% of victims in this study had at some stage contemplated suicide. Jennifer suggested that bullying thrives because telling is actually discouraged by teachers and further reinforced by peers norms.

Schools can inadvertently promote bullying by their school layout, supervision, structure of the school day, staff attitudes, disciplinary procedures, behavioural expectations, and adults’ actions.

In a Young Offenders survey conducted in 1994, school bullies described their feelings whilst bullying. They spoke of feeling a nobody at home but being able to be ‘top dog’ at school and feeling great. Victims of school bullying spoke of feeling bad about themselves, of being oversensitive and of finding the continual bullying in a strange way reassuring in that it confirmed their inferior social standing.

London

Acland Burghley School, London - Vavi Halel and Eliza Smith, Coordinators ABC Peer Support Scheme.

Acland Burghley School is internationally recognised for its pioneering work in anti bullying programs particularly with regard to its peer counselling program to support victimised students. The sensitive filming of the early work of the pilot ABC project by Windfall Films, its screening in April 1994 on BBC2 and the sale of the film overseas has lead to enormous national and international interest in the scheme.

The scheme has evolved and grown dramatically over the past few years as evaluations have pointed the way to some new directions and increasing the scope of the program. Vavi Halel estimates that 7-10% of the school population is involved in some way in peer support.

The ABC scheme began by training a group of students in peer counselling skills and the setting up of a drop in room in which to talk to victimised students and offer support. This is still a core activity of the ABC service but other activities are now undertaken by peer supporters as well. These additional responsibilities were incorporated when the counselling service was being underutilised. It became apparent that the peer

supporters/counsellors needed more “street” credibility and publicity for students to view it as acceptable to access the peer supporters’ help.

As such the peer supporters now actively seek contact by :-

- 1) a primary school program, whereby peer supporters lead sessions with Year 5&6 students at nearby feeder schools. The one hour sessions involve icebreaker activities, role plays and discussions about bullying issues. Training for this is provided in two hour training sessions provided by a drama workshop private therapist at the school.
- 2) induction to high school program whereby 30 students are involved in groups of 2-3 per class. The peer supporters give the lesson which is similar to the primary school sessions but involves more “getting to know you “activities. Training for this is once again provided by the drama therapist.
- 3) tutor group program, whereby peer supporters visit tutor/roll call groups twice a term at least to talk to the students.
- 4) speaking at assemblies, whereby peer supporters speak at Year and whole school assemblies.
- 5) attractive and creative posters around the school promote the service
- 6) photos of the peer supporters are placed in the front foyer
- 7) articles are placed in the school bulletins on a regular basis
- 8) internet site discusses the service

The counselling service operates every lunchtime with students rostered on to man the room.

Training of peer supporters in counselling skills involves two hours of training after school for eight consecutive weeks. Outside trainers who have developed a counselling program which is solution focused are employed by the school for this task.

Selection of students for the ABC peer support scheme involves students across all years being invited to volunteer and fill in a form. The more experienced counsellors and teachers shortlist the volunteers for interview and students are then chosen after the interview. They are asked about their commitment since involvement requires the commitment of two hours and one lunchtime per week. 80% of training must be completed for students to be accepted into the peer counselling service. Not all students do achieve this but they are encouraged to remain in the program to be involved in another capacity, such as the ones outlined above. All students meet on a weekly lunchtime basis to coordinate activities and team build.

Staff support for the program over the years has been excellent but in recent years the coordinators have been heavily taxed by the demands of the program on top of their normal teaching load. Some of the duties have been paid by school funds but a large part has come from successful bids for assistance from private companies. This latter part has provided a school assistant for administrative purposes two hours per day, stationery supplies, a computer, and a phone line. Two male teachers and a dinner lady have recently volunteered time to assist the coordinators who receive a small decrease in their teaching load to coordinate the service.

Wanstead High School, London - Sally Ann Wilsher, Coordinator, Peer Support Scheme

This peer support scheme is now four years old and aims to assist students across a range of issues and not bullying specifically. The scheme is part of the Mental Health Foundation’s pilot peer support program.

Year 12 students aim to support students in two main ways. Firstly, the support is provided with a drop in centre for students to access peer supporters. Secondly, peer supporters visit tutor groups across Year 7,8&9 about once a week. A third layer of support is being planned for the new school year in which peer supporters will offer academic help as well in the classroom. They will target certain students who have been identified by the learning support teacher.

Training for peer supporters involves two days intensive training by an outside counsellor from the local Child and Family Unit followed by four one hour twilight sessions run by school staff and parents who have counsellor training. These latter sessions cover a range of social and health problems. Refresher sessions at the beginning of the school term are also given.

Selection of peer supporters involves the offering of training to anyone interested, holding three information sessions on the service and staff input on the volunteers. Some students drop out during the training and some are not deemed suitable by staff after the training.

Kidscape, London - Michelle Elliott, Director

Kidscape is a registered charity which has played a central role for the last fifteen years in promoting the needs of victimised children, producing resource material for schools, parents and community groups, liaising with and advising government, providing professional development to schools on bullying and child safety and abuse issues and providing a telephone support service to parents and students.

Kidscape has also recently begun offering assertiveness training for students in small groups.

Kidscape offers an excellent curriculum based anti bullying program for primary and secondary schools.

Childline, London - Maggie Turner, Manager, CHIPS (Childline In Partnership with Schools) program.

Childline is a registered charity which provides as its central function a 24 hour telephone counselling service for children. It operates from London and various other regional areas throughout the UK. It is a child centred organisation which responds to requests and the needs of children as expressed by them.

Two years ago the *C.H.I.P.S.* program was established to support children in schools. It provides this in various ways:-

CHIPS has set up a website for children in schools to access for help.

It provides network conferences for groups of schools on topics such as fundraising, bereavement or any topic requested by schools. Outside trainers are utilised for this.

It also trains school staff in individual schools on specific topics such as bullying and peer support using a train the trainer model to provide in school training for students.

Curriculum materials are developed in response to children's and teachers' requests on topics such as staying safe, loneliness, making friends, bullying and school problems. These are developed to be compatible with the PSHE and Citizenship secondary curriculum which will be mandatory for schools as a non core curriculum in 2002.

Maggie Turner is also involved with the coordination of the Peer Support Program of the Mental Health Foundation.

SWEDEN

Stockholm

XXVIIth International Congress of Psychology, Stockholm, Sweden.

This five day conference provided sessions from a multitude of psychological disciplines. Sessions attended included Social identification and children's intergroup attitudes; The affect infusion model and thinking; Social psychology and intergroup conflict; Gender differences in long term shyness; Childhood experience and adult coping; Body change strategies amongst adolescent boys and girls; Dyslexia; and others.

Sessions specific to the study topic were limited due to the non attendance by two presenters who were previously programmed. One session led by one of Dr Christina Salmivalli's doctoral students, Ari Kaukiaian, was entitled *Intervening in school bullying via teacher education*. Ari described a Finnish study in which 1222 students in 48 classes in schools in Helsinki and Turku were involved. Their teachers were given professional development over four separate one day sessions within a year on the topic of school bullying. The emphasis in these sessions was on the various roles students play in bullying and the nature of the group mechanisms involved in bullying incidents. The schools were encouraged to set up interventions across the school ranging from the school level (anti bullying whole school policy) to class level (awareness raising about individual roles in bullying, trying to change group norms, role plays, discussions,drama) to individual level (intervening using the Pikas method, Farsta method, Maines and Robinson method, and working with victims). Schools varied in implementation of these suggestions. Students were surveyed on rates of victimisation for themselves and their peers.

After six months an evaluation took place in these schools in which students were given follow up surveys to report on bullying incidence levels for themselves and their peers. The results showed small decreases in levels of self reported victimisation whilst peer estimated levels did not decrease. Ari Kukuiaian postulated that this may have been because victim reputation is more difficult to change.

Does community education decrease bullying at school? was the title of another session attended. It focused on a three year study of two Finnish schools which to differing degrees implemented whole school anti bullying programs. In line with international findings the school which implemented the widest programs across all levels of the school community achieved the most significant decreases in bullying rates.

Two poster sessions dealt with school bullying. One involved Japanese students and another examined the effect of staff attitudes and behaviours on one victimised child and his mother.

Upsalla

Professor Anatol Pikas, Professor of Psychology, Upsalla University, Sweden.

Anatol Pikas is the author of the Pikas Method of Shared Concern, a technique for interviewing bullies and victims in a non judgemental, non punitive, problem solving manner which has been shown to be effective in two out of three cases. It is developmentally suitable for students from age 8 and upwards. The method and its philosophy is being increasingly used in Australia, UK and Scandinavia and to some extent in North American schools. Pikas first published his method in English in 1989 but Swedish schools had been applying it throughout the decade.

Anatol Pikas is at present applying the method in the area of conflict resolution and in particular in the field of peer mediation.

Anatol discussed the underlying philosophy and practical issues surrounding the method in great detail. He particularly emphasised the importance of the interviewer maintaining an objective supportive stance with both the bullies and the victims. Demonising children who bully is regarded by Anatol as a common and serious misunderstanding of the dynamics and nature of bullying. He emphasised that doing so will only jeopardise the safety of victimised children and increase the abusive behaviour of children who bully.

In using the Shared Concern Method such children can be persuaded to change their behaviour to actively support victims or at a minimum to end their abusive behaviour towards victims. Anatol Pikas asserts that

it is the bully's fear of being bullied him/herself which causes the collusion with the group in the bullying behaviour.

The removal of power dynamics in the relationship between the therapist interviewer and the bullying child is the medium by which the child can be offered the opportunity to share concern for the victim and offer constructive help for him/her. The lack of coercion is crucial here. The interviewer needs to employ a cognitive non emotional style of interview with the student which avoids explicit appeal to the student's guilt feelings and fears.

All bullying is enmeshed in group dynamics and therefore one's approach in dealing with it must recognise this.

It is important that if outright group violence is observed at any time the Shared Concern Method is inappropriate for use at that moment. Immediate action must be taken as to fail to do so would not only jeopardise the safety of the victim, it would also be obvious to students that the teacher is failing in his/her duty of care. The Method of Shared Concern is only for reported bullying or perhaps in the case of the latter at some point later.

Class discussions on bullying should focus on actual bullying in the classroom but should only be handled by exceptional teachers in exceptional classes. If such discussions are possible they should be established on a regular basis and include positive topics and feelings.

Strict adherence to the procedures proposed by Pikas is essential for the success of the method.

CONCLUSIONS

- Anti bullying programs can and should be introduced in the early primary school years. Canadian curriculum materials such as the B.C. *Focus on Bullying* program have been used with such aged children within the context of a whole school anti bullying program. They demonstrate that schools can and should address social skills and responsibility as an equally valid aspect of children's education as academic skills.
- The finding from Claire Monks (unpublished PHD, Goldsmiths College, London) that victim behaviours amongst four to five year old students are unstable over time suggests that teaching assertive coping styles in the early years of school may well be the optimal time before victim behaviours become entrenched as a way of responding to bullying. Sonia Sharp's research that students who have assertive approaches, high self esteem and problem solving skills, although experiencing bullying no less are however significantly less stressed by bullying. Children can and should be taught 'bully smart' skills.
- Curriculum materials in these early years are best explored in the context of developing friendship skills. *The Steps to Respect* program (Committee for Children, Seattle) is based on the notion that friendship can provide protection from peer abuse and much needed support after it has occurred. Opportunities for modelling prosocial types of behaviour are also a direct outcome of belonging to a supportive friendship group. Failure to adequately establish friendships at an early age is a risk factor for both bullied and bullying children.
- Seeking help for bullying should be reinforced within the classroom curriculum context and within staff training programs. Without the latter, school staff's responses may inadvertently discourage reporting of bullying. The emphasis on encouraging children to tell adults directly challenges the view that children need to learn to stand up for themselves and that bullying will stop if children ignore it. Staff should also be shown how to sensitively handle complaints of bullying ensuring that the informer's safety and self respect is not further jeopardised. The Bully Beware program (Vancouver) is an excellent resource in this respect.
- School responses to incidents of bullying should be initially problem solving oriented rather than purely punitive. This does not mean a soft option approach but rather an approach which is respectful of students' group membership and safety needs. A punitive consequence for bullying is likely to be more effective in reducing further incidents if there is an educative element in the consequence.
- Viewing school bullying from a social ecology perspective leads to important implications for anti bullying practices in schools. System responses to bullying incidents and preventative programs to decrease incidents both need to acknowledge the complex social context in which bullying occurs. It is naive to assume that by simply changing a victimised child's responses to bullying the bullying will stop. Likewise challenging a bullying child in isolation from his/her peer group is unlikely to change behaviour.
- Systemic solutions to school bullying must be inclusive of the program recipients, that is the students themselves. In all schools where effective anti bullying programs operated there was a clear recognition that peer support (and support from students) was vital to the success of the program. Thus 'street credibility' of peer leaders/supporters was seen as crucial to the success of the program. This can be achieved firstly by careful attention to selection procedures. Program aims should be established initially before selection takes place. Generally speaking peer supporters should be chosen first for their capacity to be accepted amongst their peers. Thus a system of adult selection alone is unlikely to be productive in this respect. A pool of volunteer students appears to be the most widely used and successful means of gaining credible peer supporters. Using peer nominations is an additional means of increasing credibility.
- Additionally the provision of varied avenues of peer support is viewed as likewise essential. A counselling approach to peer support in isolation in a school is unlikely to maintain momentum and efficacy to support peers without considerable and intensive marketing in the school community and ongoing exemplary supervision and training for peer counsellors. In those schools where this has been

possible such as in Elliott Durham School in the U.K, considerable success has been achieved in supporting victimised students. In many schools however this is simply not possible. Expanded notions of peer support should be explored therefore. It is clear that peer support roles must be expanded in schools along the lines suggested by the students themselves and not solely in response to adults' views on this. Support for fellow students is a concept which needs continual publicity and encouragement from students themselves.

- Peer support of itself is unlikely to reduce bullying or violence incidence rates. There has been insufficient statistical evidence as yet to indicate the converse. However research in the U.K. has affirmed the capacity of peer support to assist victims to deal with bullying and equally importantly the capacity of peer support to create a caring and supportive school environment for students. The latter suggests a whole school culture of support which of itself may have the capacity to reduce violence over the long term.
- Involvement in training in peer support provides the recipients with increased self efficacy and self esteem. All of the latter are protective development processes which develop resilience in the individual. The provision of such opportunity could be extended to more students.
- All of the above conclusions will be reinforced in my presentations to staff, parent, and community groups at the local, district, state and national level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Anti bullying programs need to be initiated in the early primary school years in Australia. Incidence levels peak around the middle years of schooling, in Years 5, 6 & 7. However the behaviours which precede this appear much earlier. Aggressive behaviours amongst peers which are encouraged by others actively and by non action of itself, allows for an environment where peer abuse can flourish. Focusing on peer protective and peer supportive behaviours in the early years needs therefore to receive a higher priority in schools. In my work in primary schools I intend introducing specific anti bullying training modules for staff. Additionally I will be speaking at conferences to this end.
- Responses to bullying should be improved to include problem solving approaches such as those proposed by the Swedish psychologist, Anatol Pikas. Training in this method could be provided by myself after having closely consulted with Professor Pikas and having had considerable practical experience with the method. Production of a training video is recommended in this respect as well. Private industry and/or community organisation sponsorship to enable production of this training video will be sought by myself.
- Peer support programs should be developed more widely in both secondary and primary schools in Australia. The importance of meaningful inclusion of students in the provision of solutions for peer abuse will be reinforced in my conference presentations at all levels. Clarification of the optimal conditions for implementation of peer support programs will also be addressed in these presentations.
- All teachers should be encouraged to examine their interactional behaviours with students. Remembering that it is the abuse of the power differential which is the central component of bullying, it is vital that school staff do not model the bullying behaviours we wish to discourage amongst peers. University teacher training programs and staff development programs within schools need to explicitly address this issue.
- A national database of resources on school bullying is a worthwhile endeavour. I have begun discussions with Dr Ken Rigby who is a major Australian and international researcher in the area of school bullying, to collaborate on this endeavour.

I will be actively promoting the capacity of schools to deal effectively with bullying. **All schools can make a difference** is a message which needs to be consistently conveyed. This will be a central tenet of my conference presentations.