



Journal of

Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research

Bullying and peer violence in secure settings

Guest Editors: Dr Ivana Sekol, Professor David P. Farrington
and Jane L. Ireland



Journal of

Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research

Volume 8 Number 2 2016

Contents

Number 2

Bullying and peer violence in secure settings

Guest Editors: Dr Ivana Sekol, Professor David P. Farrington and Jane L. Ireland

- 73 Guest editorial
- 76 Peer abuse and its contexts in industrial schools in Ireland
Jeremiah J. Lynch and Stephen James Minton
- 86 Bullying among adolescents in residential programs and in public school: the role of individual and contextual predictors
Michelle F. Wright
- 99 Personal characteristics of bullying victims in residential care for youth
Ivana Sekol and David P. Farrington
- 114 Characteristics of bullies and victims among incarcerated male young offenders
Anne Connell, David P. Farrington and Jane L. Ireland
- 124 Attitudes towards prisoner-to-prisoner bullying and the association with prison environments: examining the components
Jane L. Ireland, Carol A. Ireland and Christina L. Power
- 137 Bullying behind bars: a preliminary study of human resources professionals and workplace bullying in corrections
Matthew E. Ritzman

Ivana Sekol, David P. Farrington and Jane L. Ireland

Ivana Sekol is based at Faculty of Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Osijek, Croatia.

David P. Farrington is based at Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK.

Jane L. Ireland is based at University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK and Ashworth Research Centre, Mersey Care NHS Trust, Liverpool, UK.

Bullying in secure settings

While there is a substantial amount of research investigating bullying in schools, research on bullying and peer violence in secure settings (e.g. prisons, secure care homes, or forensic psychiatric facilities) is rather limited. Living in secure settings of any kind, however, implies operating in a more or less inescapable social system. The unique nature of the "institutional" social context, together with individual characteristics of its residents, makes bullying and/or peer violence in institutions arguably more complex than school bullying and worth separate investigation and preventative strategies.

This special issue of *JACPR* aims to advance our understanding of bullying and peer violence amongst those detained in secure settings and suggest specific policy implications to address this type of bullying. The papers are presented in two clusters, each comprised of three papers. The first group of papers focuses on bullying and peer violence amongst young people in residential care, while the second centres on bullying occurring in juvenile and adult prisons.

We open the edition with a paper by Stephen Minton and Jeremiah Lynch. This paper is an excellent introduction, not only to the first group of papers, but also to the entire special issue. Focusing particularly on six Irish industrial schools run by the Christian Brothers, the paper provides an important historical overview of the contexts of physical and sexual peer violence that occurred in Irish industrial schools for boys from 1868 to 1969. Although it uses no primary data, the paper draws on the accounts of industrial schools' former residents as well as on the results of previous research and reports compiled by legislative enquiries into Irish industrial schools. Together with describing the industrial schools' psychosocial and physical context, the paper uses these accounts to explain how institutional factors rendered detainees powerless and voiceless, contributing in turn not only to the abuse of residents by adults, but also to peer abuse. While dedicated to those who used to be detained in Irish industrial schools, this paper contributes beyond its historical significance. Its thought-provoking arguments will make readers think about what institutional practices preceded contemporary residential care in many countries, not only in Ireland, and question to what degree our current residential care practices have advanced.

In the second paper from the residential care series, Michelle Wright compares 50 boys from residential programmes for boys with behavioural problems with 50 control boys from regular public schools in the USA on measures of self-reported bullying, peer attachment, parenting styles, and school belongingness. As expected, boys from residential programmes reported higher rates of bullying and victimisation than boys from public schools. Permissive parenting styles, low peer attachments and poor school belongingness predicted bullying and victimisation in both samples, but these associations were stronger for boys in residential programmes. It is concluded that the characteristics of residential placements might increase adolescents' risk of bullying and victimisation and that Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological model might be useful for understanding bullying in residential care.

The third paper, by Ivana Sekol and David P. Farrington, is the final residential care paper of the special issue that examines characteristics of bullying victims. The paper presents results from a national survey of 601 young people aged 11 to 21 from 22 Croatian care facilities, including facilities that formally accommodate youths without explicit behavioural problems (i.e. Children's Homes) and facilities that care for young people with behavioural and emotional problems (ranging from community residential homes to correctional institutions). The residents completed an anonymous self-reported bullying questionnaire, the Big Five Personality Inventory, the Basic

Empathy Scale, and the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. The results demonstrate that male and female victims lacked self-esteem, had neurotic personality traits and were likely to believe that bullying was just part of life in residential care. Female victims also presented with low agreeableness and conscientiousness, while male victims tended to be young and had a history of victimisation during their previous placement, in school and at the beginning of their current placement. Overall, the paper demonstrates that strategies targeting only the residential environment and personal characteristics of bullies are unlikely to be sufficient without also taking into account the characteristics of victims. This paper, therefore, offers some insights on how to protect victims in residential care.

The fourth paper, by Anne Connell, David P. Farrington and Jane L. Ireland, is the first paper of the special issue that focuses on bullying occurring in a prison setting, namely in correctional facilities for young offenders in Ontario, Canada. The paper is based on interviews on bullying with 185 male young offenders aged 16-19 in nine Ontario facilities, capturing also the potential contribution of personal characteristics. The results demonstrate that bullies were the most "criminal" of the offender population. Compared with non-bullies, bullies had spent a longer time in their present facility, had been bullies in a previous facility, had more previous custodial sentences, had been suspended or expelled at school, and expressed aggressive attitudes. Victims, however, were socially isolated in custody, had failed a grade in school, had been committed to a psychiatric hospital, had been victims in a previous facility, had fewer previous custodial sentences, and were less likely to express aggressive attitudes. Based on these results, the authors demonstrate that it might be possible to develop risk/needs assessment instruments at prison entry that predict who will become a bully or a victim. Suggestions on what those instruments might look like are probably the greatest strength of this paper, as it is a valuable guide for future researchers, policy makers, and practitioners.

The fifth article, by Jane L. Ireland, Carol A. Ireland and Christina Power, presents results from a self-report survey of 423 adult male prisoners and 195 correctional officers from three Canadian prisons. The study explores attitudes about bullying in prisons and examines the ways in which those attitudes are associated with the elements of the social and physical prison environment that might promote bullying amongst prisoners. The results demonstrate that prisoners and officers held similar attitudes about bullying, but that prisoners were more likely than officers to feel that victims of bullying should be supported. Associations between environmental characteristics likely to promote bullying and attitudes supportive of bullying were found only amongst prisoners. The strongest predictors of such attitudes were poor relationships between prisoners as well as between prisoners and officers. By stressing the importance of the social aspects of the prison environment and including prison officers into the sample, the study represents an exciting shift from prior prison bullying research that was primarily based on examining individual characteristics of prison bullies and victims and captured only the attitudes of prisoners. While acknowledging that it might not be an easy task, the authors suggest that policy makers should spend more effort on changing elements of unhealthy social prison environments than on individual approaches to dealing with bullying and victimisation.

The final article, by Matthew Ritzman, investigated the prevalence of workplace bullying that was reported to human resources staff in correctional settings. The sample comprised 75 members of an international association of training professionals who worked in human resources in the field of corrections. The prevalence of bullying reported to human resources staff in corrections was compared to the prevalence of bullying reported by 5,288 employees in 70 non-correctional organizations across Great Britain in a previous study. The results demonstrated that more workplace bullying was reported to correctional human resources staff than was self-reported by employees in the comparison study. According to the author, the reporting of workplace bullying in their study may be a product of human resources staff already being aware of the identity of victims, and that in reality victims commonly under-report their victimisation, regardless of their workplace setting; thus it appears that human resources may have additional information to support the identification of workplace bullying. While this might be the case, it is also likely that, compared to other work settings, more workplace bullying could occur in correctional settings, influencing in turn its reporting to human resources staff. This would be in line with the earlier paper of this special issue by Jane L. Ireland *et al.* and would provide further evidence that certain social elements of the prison environment might promote bullying, both amongst prisoners, and

amongst staff. Future self-reported workplace bullying research is needed to ascertain whether this is indeed the case. This final paper of the special issue is limited by the small sample size, which, along with the fact that staff-reports were compared with self-reports, made direct comparisons with the previous study rather difficult. However, the paper offers interesting preliminary results that might serve as a good starting point for studying workplace bullying in secure settings.

All empirical papers presented in this special issue are cross-sectional and consequently correlational in nature. This is largely unavoidable when examining bullying in closed settings where access to information can be limited and the need to maintain the anonymity of participants is paramount. Nevertheless, each paper aims to answer different research questions and applies different methodologies to demonstrate the development of this field and where the need for additional research is required. All papers show that bullying in secure settings is a serious problem in different countries, occurring amongst both residents and staff. Compared to school and workplace bullying, bullying in secure settings seems to be more prevalent and serious, probably because of the distinct individual characteristics of secure setting residents, and also because of unique features of the social and physical secure setting environment, as noted by a number of the papers in this special edition. Therefore, it seems that the methodology for studying bullying in secure settings should be specially tailored to capture the complexity of these settings in relation to bullying.

This special issue demonstrates that valid and reliable bullying measures for secure settings already exist, and calls for the developments of new measures and approaches that could expand on existing knowledge and capture the elements of the secure setting environment. The scale measuring attitudinal components of the prison environment proposed by Ireland *et al.*, which could be tested in other prisons and secure settings, could be a good starting point for this. The empirical papers presented in this issue demonstrate that the field has moved from being merely descriptive in nature and is considering more the underlying factors that influence bullying, and the need to develop more refined methods of measuring the various elements of institutional bullying that are important in driving the field forward. It would be important in future to mount longitudinal studies of institutional bullying.

Overall, this special issue identifies a number of questions that are yet to be answered. However, it also presents a valuable knowledge base for practitioners and researchers who are interested in answering those questions, offering also a range of policy implications that existing practitioners and policy makers could find useful.