UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL BULLYING

Its Nature & Prevention Strategies

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FOUR

Basic knowledge about school bullying and cyberbullying

A lot of basic knowledge about school bullying has been acquired over the last twenty-five years, and cyberbullying over the last ten. This chapter discusses the prevalence of bullying, age and gender differences, various types of bullying, where it happens, how long it lasts, and attitudes towards bullying. As cyberbullying (or online bullying) has distinctive features, it is considered to be somewhat independent of what is often called traditional (or offline) bullying. Changes over time are also considered – both changes in individuals (individual stability in roles, school transitions, developmental trajectories) and secular trends (historical changes). Finally, there is a section on cultural differences.

Prevalence of bullying/victimisation

Meta-analyses and comparative studies

Chapter 3 described a range of methods for assessing bullying, and also a range of issues relevant to the figures actually obtained. The actual prevalence figures reported in a survey or research study can vary hugely, independent of the actual phenomenon. Even when solely considering questionnaires, prevalence figures will be influenced by what definition is used or behaviours given, what time span is being asked about, what frequency is regarded as bullying, and the time of giving a questionnaire in the school or calendar year. All these issues often make it difficult to make comparisons across different studies. They also mean that absolute prevalence figures are rather meaningless when taken in isolation.

In an attempt to generalise over many studies, Cook, Williams, Guerra and Kim (2010) examined quantitative studies of school bullying published from 1999 to 2006. A search revealed 82 studies that met the criteria for a meta-analysis. Sample sizes varied from 44 to 26,420! Of the 82 studies, 45 were in Europe, 21 in the United States and 16 in other locations. The majority, 61 studies, used

self-report data, 13 peer report, and 8 teacher or parent report. About half (38) used a definition-based survey, and the other 44 a behaviour-based survey. Worryingly, the time referent period was not reported in 27 studies, but was the past year in 18, the past six months in 15, the past 30 days in 15, and the past week in 7.

Cook et al. provided both weighted (by sample size) and unweighted average prevalence rates. Broadly speaking, these were around 20% for bullies, 23% for victims and 8% for bully/victims. There was a high variability in figures across studies, but overall these are quite high figures. This may reflect a lack of consistency between studies as to how often bullying had to happen in order to be included. The time referent period was analysed as a variable, but the frequency within a time period was not; the authors seem to have taken an average of this, if more than one frequency criterion was reported in a study (2010: 350). This means that bullying that only happened 'once or twice' in a time referent period was probably included in a number of studies.

Cook and colleagues did, however, examine the influence of some factors on the prevalence figures obtained. First, *informant source*: peer nomination methods produced lower bully and victim rates than either self- or teacher/parent reports (but no difference for bully/victim rates). Second, *time referent period*: figures for all three roles naturally increased from 'past week' to 'past 30 days' and again to 'past six months', although 'past year' was no higher than 'past 30 days'. Third, *bullying measurement approach*: a definition-based approach gave higher prevalence rates for bullies, but a behaviour-based approach gave higher rates for victims and bully/victims. Fourth, *location of study*: bully rates were lower in the United States while victim and bully/victim rates were higher in other locations.

Two other large-scale sources of prevalence data come from the World Health Organisation (WHO) surveys on Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) and the EU KidsOnline project. These have a substantial focus on differences between countries, which will be discussed later; here we shall look at the overall prevalence figures.

The HBSC surveys

The HBSC surveys collect data from 11, 13 and 15 years olds from nationally representative samples every four years, starting in 1993/1994: there is a minimum of 1,500 respondents per year group in each participating country. These are classroom-based, anonymous, self-report questionnaire surveys. The reports on bullying are based on a single victim item and a single bully item, adapted from the Olweus questionnaire (see Chapter 3), which asks about experiences over the past couple of months, with the five standard response options. Victim or bully rates are calculated from 'at least two or three times in the past couple of months' or more (thus ignoring 'it only happened once or twice'). A standard definition of bullying is given (mentioning repetition and imbalance of power).

Craig et al. (2009) provide findings from the 2005/2006 survey. This data set is from 40 countries, mostly European, but also including the United States, Canada,

the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The rates for bullying others average out at 10.7%, and for being bullied (victims) at 12.6%, with 3.6% scoring as bully/victims. Currie et al. (2012) provide data from the 2009/2010 HBSC survey. This data set is from 38 countries, again mostly European, but also including the United States, Canada, the Russian Federation, Armenia and Ukraine. The rates for bullying others average out at 10.3%, and for being bullied (victims) at 11.3% (there was no separate category for bully/victims).

It can be seen that there is a slight decrease in figures between the two surveys, a trend discussed further in the latter section of this chapter. It is also noticeable that these figures are less than half the level from the Cook, Williams, Guerra and Kim (2010) review. Age and gender trends are also reported. For bullying others, there was some increase between ages 11 and 15 in many countries, and boys were more involved in almost all countries. For being bullied, there was some decline between ages 11 and 15 in most countries, and boys were more involved, but only significantly so in a minority of countries (Currie et al., 2012).

The EU Kids Online survey

Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson (2011) reported findings on traditional bullying and cyberbullying from 25 European countries, from the EU Kids Online survey carried out in spring/summer 2010. The samples were based on random stratified sampling of some 1,000 children, 9–16 years old, in each country. Self-report survey questionnaires were given face-to-face in children's homes. The survey was on internet use, risks and safety. A section on bullying did not use the term 'bullying', but started with a statement:

> Sometimes children or teenagers say or do hurtful or nasty things to someone and this can often be quite a few times on different days over a period of time. For example, this can include: teasing someone in a way this person does not like; hitting, kicking or pushing someone around; leaving someone out of things.

The interviewer explained that these activities could be face-to-face, or via mobile phone calls or texts, or on the internet. A range of activities was therefore covered, as well as the repetition criterion, although the imbalance of power criterion was not explicitly mentioned. The child or young person was then asked whether someone had acted in this hurtful or nasty way to them in the past 12 months via these three types of activities. Following on from this they were asked if they themselves had acted in a hurtful or nasty way to others in the last year. Responses were scored as more than once a week, once or twice a month, less often than that, or never.

Across the entire sample of European countries, perpetrator or bullying rates averaged 12%. Only 2% said this had happened more than once a week, and another 3% once or twice a month, with 7% responding that it was less often. There was very little gender difference (with boys slightly higher at 3% in the more than once a week category), and bully rates increased somewhat with age.

Again across the whole sample, victim rates averaged 19%. Only 5% said this had happened more than once a week, and another 4% once or twice a month, with 10% responding that it was less often. Victim rates were slightly higher in girls, and increased slightly with age.

If one disregards experiences that were less frequent than once or twice a month, then bully prevalence is 5% and victim prevalence is 9%. These are lower than the HBSC findings with a corresponding frequency cut-off (and of course much lower than the figures from the Cook, Williams, Guerra and Kim meta-analysis). The HBSC figures are about 10% and 11% respectively, so the main discrepancy is the lower prevalence of bullying others in the EU Kids Online findings. This is unexplained, although one possible explanation could be a greater unwillingness to admit to bullying others in a face-to-face interview compared to an anonymous class-based questionnaire.

Examples of some studies in individual countries

As was obvious from the Cook et al. (2010) review mentioned above, there are many prevalence studies on bullying, and many more have been published since their cut-off inclusion date of 2006. Here, just a few surveys published after 2006 are reviewed: these are studies with reasonably large samples, and from a range of countries, to give an idea of the methodologies used and prevalence rates obtained. Some surveys, including oft-cited ones such as Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton and Scheidt (2001) in the United States, used national data from the HBSC surveys; however, the studies reviewed next used different data sets.

United States

Carlyle and Steinman (2007) reported on data collected through a Primary Prevention Awareness Attitude and Use Survey, developed in Ohio, which assesses adolescent risk behaviours. The data reported were collected in 2003, from 188 schools in Colombus, Ohio. The survey was given to sixth to twelfth graders (about 11–17 years old), with a total of over 78,000 respondents. The sample was mainly White (63%) or African-American (21%).

The questionnaire was given out by trained teachers/school staff and was anonymous. Relevant to bullying were 13 items, asking about the frequency of direct and indirect bullying behaviours during the past year. This was therefore a behaviour-based questionnaire, with seven items on perpetration (for example, 'How often have you told lies or spread false rumours about someone?') and six on being victimised (for example, 'How often has someone physically attacked you?'). Responses were on a four-point scale (never, once, two–three times, four or more times), with only the last point (four or more times) being counted.

The results showed that the overall prevalence for bully was 18.8%, and for victim 20.1%. These figures included 7.4% who were bully/victims. The grade trends showed that bully rates increased up to eighth grade and then declined, being

highest in grades 7 through 10: victim rates were highest in grades 6 through 8 and then declined. Males were involved more than females as both bullies and victims. African-American (and a smaller number of Native American) children showed higher prevalence rates for being bullies, and Native American for being victims.

These figures are not national, reflecting one urban area in one US state, but the sample is very large so the age, gender and ethnicity differences are representative of that area. The prevalence figures are quite high: although the authors chose a moderately high frequency criterion (four times or more in the past year), it is not clear that imbalance of power was assessed in this study. For example, an item like 'How often has someone physically attacked you?' measures an aggressive act, but might pick up fights between equals as well as bullying (see Chapter 2). None of the items assessed cyberbullying: awareness of cyberbullying mainly dates from a year or so after this survey was carried out, although some might have already been occurring.

England

Benton (2011) reports findings from a survey carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). These findings were based on 'almost 100 secondary schools' (2011: 6; further details are not given) from 35,311 young people in years 7–13 (so around 11–17 years old). They were asked about seven types of bullying they had experienced 'by people from their school' over the previous 12 months. This looks like a definition-based questionnaire, but details of whether a definition was provided and what response options were used are not given. Nevertheless, it appears that analyses are based on any experience of being bullied, so this is a very lenient frequency criterion. Overall, 44% of the young people said they had been bullied in at least one of the seven ways asked about.

This report contained a large sample of children, but unfortunately many procedural details are missing, including also the year that the data were obtained. The high prevalence figure certainly reflects the likelihood that even single instances of attacks were being picked up in the responses. In fact the author comments that the prevalence rate of 44% 'differs from some other published figures regarding the percentage of pupils who are bullied; for example results from the Tellus4 survey' (Benton, 2011: 7).

The Tellus4 survey (Tellus 4 National Report, 2010) was commissioned by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families. It was carried out in late 2009 with pupils in years 6, 8 and 10 (so around 10–14 years old), from 3,699 schools, and with a total of 253,755 children across England. It included a section on bullying, which started with a definition:

> We'd like to ask you about bulling. Bullying can mean lots of different things to different people. Bullying is when people hurt or pick on you on purpose, for example by teasing you, hitting or kicking you or saying that they will do this. It can involve people taking or breaking your things, making you do something you don't want to do, leaving you out or spreading hurtful and untrue rumours. Bullying can be face to face, by mobile phone or on the internet.

Table 4.1 Percentages of 10–14 year old pupils in England who reported being bullied in the Tellus4 survey of late 2009 (calculated from Figures 3.2 and 3.3 in the original report)

	When it happened			Frequency of bullying	
	In school	*Out of school*		*In school*	*Out of school*
Never	52	79	Never	52	79
More than one year ago	23	7	A few times this year	24	12
In the last year	12	6	Every month	4	2
In the last six months	4	3	Every week	3	1
In the last four weeks	9	5	Most days	11	3
			Every day	5	2

The young person was then asked if they had ever been bullied at school, and if so, whether it was more than one year ago/in the last year/in the last six months/in the last four weeks, and whether this had happened a few times this year/every month/every week/most days/every day. They were similarly asked about being bullied when not in school (including on the journey to school).

Altogether, 48% of young people said they had experienced bullying at some point in school, and 21% said they had experienced it out of school. The proportions responding to various options about when it happened, and how often, are shown in Table 4.1. Looking at the 'in school' figures, which are generally much higher than the 'out of school' figures, and if we take 'every week' as the frequency criterion, then the prevalence rate for victims in school is 19% – a fairly high figure. However, only 13% of pupils said they had been bullied in the previous six months (a common reference period), so some of the 19% must be referring to earlier times. It is also worth noting that the definition used, given above, although it covers a good range of behaviours, does not mention the imbalance of power criterion: thus depending on pupils' understanding of 'bullying', some behaviours not involving imbalance of power may also have been picked up.

The survey found no differences in victim experiences between boys and girls. Victim prevalence was higher in younger children, in children with disabilities, and in White rather than Asian or Black British pupils.

Wales

Bowen and Holcom (2010) carried out a survey on bullying for the Welsh Assembly Government, between April and June 2009, using the OBVQ. Findings were reported for year 6 (n = 1,500), year 7 (n = 2,275) and year 10 (n = 2,154) (so about 11, 12 and 15 years old), from 167 schools. Questions were asked about bullying over the previous two months. Some findings are shown in Table 4.2. The question about bullying others was split into a question on 'bullying others on my own' and a question on 'bullying others as part of a group'.

Table 4.2 Percentages of pupils bullying others and being bullied in Wales (data from Bowen and Holtom, 2010)

	Rarely or never	Once or twice a month	Two or three times a month	About once a week	Several times a week
			Bullying others on my own		
Y6	90	6	2	1	1
Y7	93	4	1	2	<1
Y10	94	3	<1	<1	2
			Bullying others as part of a group		
Y6	82	12	3	1	2
Y7	89	7	2	1	1
Y10	89	7	1	<1	1
			Being bullied		
Y6	69	12	7	6	6
Y7	71	11	7	6	5
Y10	87	7	2	2	2

If we take the 'two or three times a month' criterion as the cut-off, as is usual with the Olweus questionnaire, we get prevalence rates for bullying others of about 4% 'on my own' and also 4% in a group (it is not reported how these overlap), and about 14% as a victim. It is noticeable that the bully rates do not show much change with age, but victim prevalence shows a substantial decrease by year 10. Gender differences were reported as most noticeable in types of bullying rather than in the overall prevalence of being a bully or victim.

Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

RSM McClure Watters (2011) gave the OBVQ to a representative sample of 904 primary and 1,297 post-primary pupils in Northern Ireland in March 2011, asking about experiences in the previous two months. The percentages who reported bullying others, and being bullied, at various frequencies, are shown in Table 4.3. Taking the 'Two or three times a month' frequency as a cut-off, at primary school 3.9% had bullied others and 17.2% had been bullied, and at post-primary 3.4% had bullied others and 11.1% had been bullied.

O'Moore and Minton (2009) gave a questionnaire (with similar wording for the main questions on bullying) to 2,974 post-primary students (aged 12–16 years) from eight schools in the Republic of Ireland. The corresponding figures in Table 4.3 indicate 5.2% of students bullying others and 8.5% being bullied – rather higher figures for bullies and lower figures for victims than in the Northern Ireland sample of equivalent age.

Table 4.3 Percentages of pupils bullying others and being bullied in Northern Ireland (data adapted from RSM McClure Watters, 2011) and from the Republic of Ireland (data from O'Moore and Minton, 2009)

	Only once or twice	Two or three times a month	About once a week	Several times a week
NORTHERN IRELAND				
Bullied others primary	17.6	2.2	1.1	0.6
Bullied others post-primary	17.8	1.6	1.1	0.7
Been bullied primary	22.1	7.7	4.6	4.9
Been bullied post-primary	18.4	4.3	3.3	3.5
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND				
Bullied others post-primary	19.7	2.6	1.6	1.0
Been bullied post-primary	21.7	3.5	2.5	2.5

Hong Kong

Wong, Lok, Lo and Ma (2008) surveyed 47 primary schools in Hong Kong. Although the publication date is 2008, the data were actually gathered in 2001. Altogether 7,025 children in grades 5 and 6 (range 10–14 years) returned questionnaires: 71% were born in Hong Kong while 29% had emigrated from mainland China. Focus groups were first held to construct an indigenous questionnaire. This included questions about bullying others and being bullied in relation to four types of bullying (physical, verbal, social exclusion, extortion) over the past six months. Some results are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Percentages of pupils in Hong Kong aged 10–14 years bullying others and being bullied, for four types of bullying (data from Wong et al., 2008)

	Physical	Verbal	Exclusion	Extortion
Bullying others				
Never	75.8	47.9	75.6	90.5
1–5 times	19.4	39.3	19.2	6.7
6–10 times	1.7	5.5	2.3	1.0
11 or above	3.1	7.3	2.9	1.8
Being bullied				
Never	68.3	38.0	71.9	86.8
1–5 times	23.8	41.1	21.2	9.4
6–10 times	3.1	9.1	3.1	1.4
11 or above	4.8	11.7	3.8	2.4

Since the measurement period is six months, a frequency of 1–5 times is less than once a month. By the usual repetition criterion we might take the 6–10 plus 11 or above responses as representing bullying. The authors do not give composite figures over the four types of bullying, but clearly at least 13% of children report bullying others, and 21% report being bullied. Comparison of these figures with others is complicated by issues that often occur in cross-national comparisons (discussed later). We do not know what language the questionnaires were given in, or if in Chinese (Mandarin? Cantonese?) what word(s) were used for *bullying*. Nor do we know whether any definition of *bullying* was given.

Summary of prevalence rates

It is difficult to make any generalisation about prevalence rates, beyond saying that a substantial minority of children and young people are involved in bullying others or being bullied. But how large are those minorities?

Some studies seem to suggest figures of around 20–25% in each role (for example, Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Cook, Williams, Guerra & Kim, 2010). This seems very alarming – are nearly half of children really involved in bullying (as bullies or as victims)? However, these figures are probably picking up some acts which are not bullying, by the definitional criteria of repetition and imbalance of power. It is apparent (for example in Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4) that many pupils experience occasional aggressive acts. Every now and then a pupil might receive an insult or a shove, or feel left out. But this is not bullying unless it happens repeatedly (two or three times a month is a common cut-off), and unless there is some indication of an imbalance of power (either through the wording of items, or by giving a defined term of *bullying* or a term of similar meaning). Other studies (for example, HBSC, which included a standard definition) give figures of around 10–12% in each role. Yet others (for example, the EU Kids Online) give figures of around 5–9%. These are still substantial minorities, but seem more realistic.

Despite the difficulties associated with prevalence figures, such information is important for three main purposes. First, reports of prevalence can be crucial in awareness raising and associated publicity when concern about the topic of school bullying is lacking. Second, within a study meaningful comparisons can be made by age, gender, ethnicity and other risk characteristics (see Chapter 5). Third, prevalence figures are necessary for monitoring and evaluating the effects of school-based interventions (see Chapter 6).

Age differences in traditional bullying

The studies above have generally reported age changes. There is a shift with age away from physical bullying and toward indirect and relational bullying (Rivers & Smith, 1994), in line with general findings on aggression (Björkqvist et al., 1992). There are also changes in the prevalence of bullying roles. In a meta-analysis of 153 studies, Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim and Sadek (2010) found a correlation of

age with bully role of 0.09, but with bully/victim role of –0.01; and with victim role of –0.01; however, these are linear trends, and some trends are more complex.

Usually, self-report surveys suggest no decline or some increase with age in bullying others, during the mid-adolescent years (for example, from 11–15 in the HBSC study). Pepler et al. (2006), in a cross-sectional study in Canada of pupils from the sixth to eighth grade (elementary school) to the ninth to twelfth grade (high school), found that bullying others first increased, then declined, with a peak in the ninth grade (the beginning of high school). Bullying others was related to sexual harassment, which also peaked in the ninth grade, although this was followed by a slower age decline.

As far as being a victim is concerned, many reports find a decrease with age (the only exception above being the EU Kids Online survey). Smith, Madsen and Moody (1999) showed that most large self-report surveys showed a fairly steady downward trend in self-reports of being a victim through ages 8–16. They examined four hypotheses to explain this age-related decline: (1) younger children have more children older than them in school, who are in a position to bully them; (2) younger children have not yet been socialised into understanding that you should not bully others; (3) younger children have not yet acquired the social and assertiveness skills to deal effectively with bullying incidents and discourage further bullying; (4) younger children have a different definition of what bullying is, which changes as they get older. The authors suggested there was support for both (1) and (3), (2) appeared to have little impact before age 15, while (4) might explain high rates of report in children under 9 years old. However, peer nomination data do not give such clear age decreases in victim rates (Salmivalli, 2002).

Even if older pupils are less likely to experience being bullied, an exception to this may occur during the transition between primary and secondary school: here Pellegrini and Long (2002) highlighted an increase in being bullied experienced by pupils of both sexes, possibly due to disruptions in friendships and peer group affiliations brought about through a change in school environment.

Gender differences in traditional bullying

It is very commonly reported that boys are more likely to be involved in bullying others than are girls (for example, HBSC survey; Pepler et al., 2006). Gender differences are more variable in terms of being a victim: the usual finding is that boys again are more involved (for example, HBSC survey), but some studies find little difference, and the EU Kids Online survey found victim rates slightly higher in girls. In their meta-analysis of 153 studies, Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim and Sadek (2010) found a correlation of gender (boys) with bully role of 0.18, with bully/victim role of .10, and with victim role of 0.06.

Gender differences vary according to type of bullying, however. Most studies find boys are more likely to be involved in physical forms of victimisation, while bullying among girls is more likely to be either relational or verbal (Besag, 2006; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). For example, the study by Wong et al. (2008) in Hong Kong found boys more involved in both bullying others and being bullied by physical means, but no gender differences for verbal bullying or social exclusion.

Generally, this is explained in terms of how each gender can most effectively bully others of the same gender. Boys tend to be physically stronger than girls, and physical strength and prowess are more valued in boys' groups, therefore demonstrating greater physical strength is an effective strategy for the bully. In contrast, girls tend to be better in verbal skills, and value reputation in relationships: passing negative rumours about someone is a more effective strategy for the female bully (Besag, 2006).

Witnesses, bystanders and defenders

Many pupils witness bullying. For example, surveying 12–16 year old English students, Rivers et al. (2009) found that 63% reported having witnessed peers being bullied over the previous nine weeks. But what do witnesses of bullying do? In their Finnish sample, Salmivalli, Lagerspetz et al. (1996) found that, according to peer nominations, around 26% of pupils assisted or reinforced the bully, around 24% did nothing or were outsiders, and around 17% were defenders, helping the victim in some way.

O'Connell, Pepler and Craig (2001) and Hawkins, Pepler and Craig (2001) used their observational methodology (see Chapter 3) to videofilm peers' actions in playground bullying episodes seen among 6–12 year old Canadian children. They found peers to be present in most episodes (88% in Hawkins et al., 2001). O'Connell et al. (2001) found that for about 54% of the time, witnesses acted as passive bystanders (which they took as passively reinforcing the bullying); about 21% of the time, witnesses became reinforcers by actively encouraging the bullying; and about 25% of the time discouraged it. Hawkins et al. (2001) analysed a further 65 episodes where witnesses acted as defenders in this way (19% of all episodes, in this sample). For girls, this intervention was most often by verbal assertion, while boys used physical assertion as much as verbal assertion. These actions were most often directed at the bully. Boys were more likely to intervene when boys were involved, and girls when girls were involved, but there was no gender difference in the likelihood of intervening. Of these interventions, 57% were judged to be effective in stopping the bullying (26% were ineffective, and for 17% this could not be determined).

Most studies of defending, however, have used self-reports or peer nominations. These tend to show more reports of, or nominations for, defending in younger than older pupils, and for girls more than boys. These are similar to the age and gender differences found for attitudes to bullying (see later in this chapter) and for interest in peer support systems (see Chapter 6). For example, Rigby and Johnson (2006) showed a video depicting bullying in the presence of bystanders to late primary and early secondary school students in Australia: 43% indicated that they were likely to help the victim. Girls reported more defending behaviour than boys. Other significant predictors of defender behaviour included being in a younger age group (namely primary school), having rarely or never bullied others, having (reportedly) previously intervened, a positive attitude to victims, and believing that parents and friends (but not teachers) expected them to act to support victims.

Types of bullying

Usually some four or five main types of bullying behaviour have been distinguished (see Chapter 3), namely physical, verbal, social exclusion and rumour spreading, and more recently, cyberbullying. However, studies have varied; for example, Bouman et al. (2012) used a separate damaging property category, and Wong et al. (2008) did not include indirect relational in their Hong Kong study, but did include extortion, defined as 'asking for money or other's property' (see Table 4.4). Findings from some more detailed studies are considered below.

Del Barrio et al. (2008) reported data on 14 types of bullying from a survey of Spanish students. They gave questionnaires to a nationally representative sample of 3,000 pupils from 300 secondary schools in 2006 (a similar survey had been given in 1999 – see the later section on time trends). Regional languages were used (for example, Basque, Catalan, Galician) where appropriate. Victim rates were calculated for bullying being experienced 'often' or 'always': it is not clear whether a definition of bullying was given, or what the time referent period was, so the rather high victim figures obtained may reflect general experiences of being aggressed against.

From a victim perspective, types of bullying experienced were spreading negative rumours (31.6%), being insulted (27.1%), being called offensive names (26.7%), having belongings hidden (16.0%), being ignored (10.5%), not being allowed to participate (8.6%), being threatened/scared (6.4%), having belongings stolen (6.3%), being cyberbullied through a mobile phone or the internet (5.0%), being hit (3.9%), having belongings damaged (3.5%), being sexually harassed (0.9%), being blackmailed (0.6%), and being threatened with weapons (0.5%).

The study in England by Benton (2011) asked respondents about seven types of bullying: verbal, physical, being left out, property damaged/stolen, racism, sexual and cyber. The most common was verbal (both genders), and the next being left out (especially for girls); these were followed by physical (especially for boys) and property, cyber was less frequent, and sexual the least. There was a general decrease in victimisation with age for verbal, physical, being left out and property, but there was no clear decrease or increase with age in cyber and sexual. For a reason not explained in the report, such data on racist bullying were not explored.

The study by Bowen and Holcom (2010) in Wales also reported on seven types of bullying behaviours. Taking 'two or three times a month' as the cut-off, the relative rates in year 6 and year 10 are shown in Table 4.5. This also shows verbal bullying and rumour spreading to be most often reported, with a similar ranking for the two age groups.

A comprehensive national sample of data from Finland was analysed by Salmivalli and Pöyhönen (2012). Internet-based questionnaires were filled in at school by 17,627 students, aged 8–15 years, from 156 schools representing all five provinces of mainland Finland. Data were collected in May 2007 (grades 3, 4 and 5) and May 2008 (grades 7 and 8). The questionnaire gave the standard Olweus definition including repetition and power imbalance. For each of nine types of

Table 4.5 Percentages of pupils in Wales who reported different types of bullying experienced, from year 6 and year 10 (data from Bowen and Holcom, 2010)

Type of bullying	Year 6	Year 10
Called names or teased in a hurtful way	20	12
Lies or rumours spread about me	16	7
Left out of things on purpose, excluded or totally ignored	15	6
Mean names, comments or gestures that had a sexual meaning	10	5
Being hit, kicked or pushed	7	4
Threatened or forced to do things I didn't want to do	6	3
Money or other things taken away from me or damaged	4	2

bullying, students were asked how frequently they had been bullied during the previous few months: a cut-off criterion of at least two to three times a month was used. The rates reported were verbal (9.2%), sexual (7.1%), social exclusion (5.6%), spreading lies and nasty rumours (4.9%), physical (3.8%), racist (3.0%), cyber (2.0%), threatened/forced (1.6%), and taken or damaged property (1.3%). Notable here is the relatively high reporting of sexual bullying (mainly in the older students), which possibly represents a heightened awareness of the inappropriateness of such behaviour in Finland.

Perhaps surprising in these data sets from Spain, England, Wales and Finland is the comparatively low rate of physical bullying reported. The survey by Wong et al. (2008) in Hong Kong (see Table 4.4) showed verbal bullying to be most frequent (a very common finding), but with physical coming second, and then social exclusion and extortion.

In fact, physical forms of aggression (and bullying-like behaviours) are more frequent in nursery and primary age children, but decline by middle childhood. An example of data from a younger age group is provided by Monks, Smith and Sweltenham(2005). They used peer nominations, with four cartoon sketches of types of aggression or bullying, as more appropriate for a younger age group (see Chapter 3). Their sample was 104 children aged 4–6 years from reception classes and first grade classes in four primary schools in London. Some data on nominations for being a victim of four types of aggression/bullying, by gender, are shown in Table 4.6. At this age, physical is the most common, followed by verbal. Younger children are less likely to be identified as involved in social exclusion or rumour spreading. Some types of indirect and relational bullying probably require cognitive and verbal skills which are more available in older children.

Tremblay (2003) argues that younger children have not yet been socialised into learning that physical aggression is not normally acceptable. The majority of preschoolers are physically aggressive at times, but most learn how to control their aggression as they get older; thus he finds a peak in physical aggression at around 3 or 4 years old, which then decreases. Of course, in some older children those who bully others may not be too worried about what is socially acceptable, but even so, physical bullying may be more obvious and easy to detect by teachers in the school, so that other methods may come to be preferred.

Table 4.6 Mean number of peer nominations for each type of victimisation received by boys and girls aged 4–6 years (data from Monks et al., 2005)

	Physical	Verbal	Social exclusion	Rumour spreading
Male	1.58	1.09	0.78	0.71
Female	1.90	1.66	1.32	0.95

Overlap of types of bullying

Pupils may experience several types of bullying, and a systematic study of this aspect was carried out by Wang, Iannotti, Luk and Nansel (2010). They used data from the HBSC survey in the USA in 2005–2006, with students in sixth to tenth grade. Latent class analysis suggested that three models provided a good fit to explain the co-variation across the five different types of victimisation assessed. These were *all-types victims*, who scored highly on physical, verbal, social exclusion and rumour spreading, and moderately high on cyber as well; *verbal/relational victims*, who scored highly on verbal, social exclusion and rumour spreading; and *non-victims*, who were low on all types. Gender and ethnicity differences were not very marked for these three groups, but (consistent with general age trends) younger students were more likely to be verbal/relational victims, and older students to be non-victims.

Cyberbullying and its features

Cyberbullying refers to bullying carried out via electronic media – namely mobile phones and the internet. The rapid diffusion of mobile phones, and use of the internet, this century, were shown by Rideout, Foehr and Roberts (2010; see www.kff.org) in representative US samples of 8–18 year olds surveyed in 1999, 2004 and 2009. In 1999 there was no question on mobile phones at all, and in 2004 only one asking mobile *or* landline phones, but in 2009 time spent in a typical day with mobile phones was 1.33 hours texting and 0.33 hours talking. The average number of hours spent on a computer was 0.27 in 1999, 1.02 in 2004 and 1.29 in 2009.

Types and forms of cyberbullying

There are various methods of cyberbullying. Rivers and Noret (2010) started a survey in 2002, and at that time only assessed text message and e-mail bullying. Li (2007) distinguished between e-mail, chatroom and mobile phone bullying. Smith et al. (2008) used seven main media described by secondary school pupils: bullying by mobile phone calls, text messages, picture/video clip bullying, e-mails, chatroom, instant messaging and websites. Hinduja and Patchin (2010)

used a nine-item cyber victimisation scale, covering similar media. Cyberbullying in internet game contexts is another form: one study found this to be especially common in South Korea (Tippett & Kwak, 2012).

Looking at the types of action, Willard (2006) described seven categories: flaming, online harassment, cyberstalking, denigration (put-downs), masquerade, outing and exclusion. These are to some extent independent of the media used. Rivers and Noret (2010) described the content of abusive text messages and e-mails. Their 10 main categories were: threat of physical violence, abusive or hate-related, name calling (including homophobia), death threats, ending of platonic relationship(s), sexual acts, demands/instructions, threats to damage existing relationships, threats to home/family, and menacing chain messages.

Pyzalski (2012) listed 20 categories of 'electronic aggression' in a study in Poland. He also looked at the recipients of cyber-aggression, in a sample of 2,143 pupils around 15 years old. Although many of these were other young people known to the perpetrator offline (often in school), many were also known only from the internet, or were just attacked randomly. Other prominent categories were former girlfriends/boyfriends, groups (for example, fans of a certain pop group or football team), celebrities, vulnerable people, and school staff or other known adults. Over the last year nearly two-thirds of the students had undertaken at least one cyber aggressive act against one of these recipients, although as Pyzalski is careful to point out, many of these would have been single acts with no obvious imbalance of power, so would not constitute cyberbullying.

As technology develops, new forms of cyberbullying emerge. The advent of smart phones that can access the internet made the earlier distinction between mobile phone and internet bullying less obvious. These bullying contexts are not restricted to young people, any more than is traditional bullying, and some forms have been mainly described in adults: for example, cyberbullying or 'griefing' in virtual worlds (Coyne, Chesney, Logan & Madden, 2009).

Distinctive features of cyberbullying

Although there are many similarities between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, the latter tends to have some particular characteristics. A number of commentators have discussed these (Dooley et al., 2009; Smith, 2012; Tokunaga, 2010; Vandebosch & van Cleemput, 2008). They include the following:

- It depends on some degree of technological expertise: although it is easy enough to send e-mails and text messages, more sophisticated attacks such as masquerading (pretending to be someone else posting denigrating material on a website) require more skill.
- It is primarily indirect rather than face-to-face. Thus there is a certain 'invisibility' to those doing the bullying. A perpetrator may try to withhold identification in text or internet postings to maintain anonymity. Smith et al. (2008) reported that about one in five victims did not know who it was that had

cyberbullied them, and Vandebosch and van Cleemput (2008) found that half of victims did not know who the cyberbully was.

- Relatedly, the perpetrator does not usually see the victim's reaction, at least in the short term. On the one hand, this can enhance moral disengagement from the victim's plight and thus might make cyberbullying easier; without such direct feedback there may be fewer opportunities for empathy or remorse (see Chapter 5). On the other hand, many perpetrators enjoy the feedback of seeing the suffering of the victim, and would not get this satisfaction so readily by cyberbullying.
- The variety of bystander roles in cyberbullying is more complex than in most traditional bullying. There can be three main bystander roles rather than one: the bystander is with the perpetrator when an act is sent or posted; the bystander is with the victim when it is received; or the bystander is with neither, but receives the message or visits the relevant internet site.
- Relatedly, one motive for bullying is thought to be the status gained by showing (abusive) power over others in front of witnesses. The perpetrator will often lack this in cyberbullying, unless steps are taken to tell others what has happened or to publicly share the material.
- The breadth of the potential audience is increased. Over time, cyberbullying can reach particularly large audiences in a peer group compared with the small groups that are the usual audience in traditional bullying. For example, when nasty comments are posted on a website, the audience that may see these comments is potentially very large.
- It is difficult to escape from cyberbullying as there is 'no place to hide'. Unlike traditional forms of bullying, where once the victim gets home they are away from the bullying until the next day, cyberbullying is more difficult to escape from: the victim may continue to receive text messages or e-mails, or view nasty postings on a website, wherever they are.

These are important distinctions that may impact particularly on both the motives for (cyber)bullying and the impact such acts have on the (cyber)victim (see Chapter 5). However, they should not be overstated: some forms of traditional bullying (such as rumour spreading) are not face-to-face, for example. A case can also be made that these distinctive features are differences in degree rather than differences in kind (Pyzalski, 2011).

Prevalence of cyberbullying

Given the diversity in definition and measurement, it is not surprising that the reported prevalence of cyberbullying varies just as widely as for traditional bullying. In addition, the date of a study is especially important (even though this is often not given!).

The EU Kids Online survey (Livingstone et al., 2011), carried out in 2010, found that across European countries, bullying others was reported by 3% on the

internet (this was mostly on a social networking site or by instant messaging), and by 2% using a mobile phone. This compared with 10% who reported face-to-face or offline bullying. For experiences of being a victim, this was reported by 6% on the internet (again mostly on a social networking site or by instant messaging), and by 3% using a mobile phone. This compared with 13% who reported being bullied face-to-face or offline.

Genta et al. (2012) reported findings from a cross-national study of 12–15 year olds in Italy, Spain and England, carried out in 2008. They compared mobile and internet cyberbullying over the previous two months, using an Olweus-type definition. Percentages for severe (two or three times a month or more) mobile bullying ranged across the three countries from 0.9–2.7%, and internet bullying from 1.0–1.6%: for mobile victim from 0.5–2.2%, and internet victim from 1.3–2.6%. Olweus (2012a) reported similarly low figures from large surveys carried out in the USA and Norway from 2007–2010. In the USA, rates of being cyberbullied were around 4.1%–5.0%, and of cyberbullying others 2.5%–3.2%. In Norway, rates for being cyberbullied were around 3.2%–4.2%.

Some other researchers find these low figures difficult to believe, and report much higher figures. For example, in a commentary on Olweus (2012a), Hinduja and Patchin (2012a) stated that 'Olweus' findings that 4.1–5.0% of youth have been cyberbullied and 2.5–3.2% of youth have cyberbullied others are simply out of line with the weight of the available evidence' (2012a: 541). They cite their own work as an example, with about 20% of 11–18 year olds having been victims of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012b). In a review of 35 published articles, they found on average 24% of pupils had been cyberbullied and 17% had cyberbullied others. As another example of high percentages, we can take a study in Turkey by Arslan, Savaser, Hallett and Balci (2012). They sampled 372 children aged 8–11 years, from three primary schools (the date of the study is not given). Using a definition-based questionnaire, they reported that 17.5% of the children had cyberbullied others, and 27.4% had been cyberbullied.

In a response to Hinduja and Patchin's (2012a) criticism, Olweus (2012b) pointed out the importance of the time reference period and frequency criterion. The figures cited by Hinduja and Patchin cover whether someone has ever been involved in cyberbullying (similarly, Arslan et al., 2012, asked 'Have you ever been cyberbullied by other people?'). On the other hand, the studies producing smaller figures generally ask about the last month or term (or year, in EU Kids Online).

Similarly, the frequency criterion is crucial. As another example, O'Moore and Minton (2009) reported separate data on cyberbullying frequencies, shown in Table 4.7 (this is a subset of the data on general bullying shown in Table 4.3). The date of the survey was not given but appears to be around 2008; the questions referred to experiences in the previous few months. Taking the standard 'two or three times a month' criterion, frequencies of cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied are 1.6% and 2.8% respectively. However, the authors prefer to highlight the figures of 8.7% and 14.2% obtained by including those for whom it only happened once or twice, and this obviously gives substantially higher figures.

Table 4.7 Percentages of 12–16 year old pupils in the Republic of Ireland, cyberbullying others and being cyberbullied (data from O'Moore and Minton, 2009)

	Only once or twice	Two or three times a month	About once a week	Several times a a week
Cyberbullied others	7.1	0.6	0.5	0.5
Been cyberbullied	11.4	1.1	0.8	0.9

Both the frequency criterion and the time reference period are crucial to the kinds of prevalence rates obtained; but other factors are also likely to contribute to the very wide range of prevalence figures reported. One is the definition of cyberbullying or cyber-aggression used – does it include repetition, and/or imbalance of power? Rates of cyber-aggression can be expected to exceed cyberbullying, more strictly defined. The nature of the sample is obviously important, and this may vary by country or culture, age and gender, as well as other demographic characteristics. Also, what behaviours are sampled? Earlier surveys, such as Rivers and Noret's (2010), only assessed text message and e-mail bullying; later surveys have used a much broader range. The date of a survey is very important in such a fast developing and changing area. Bullying through websites, and specifically through social networking sites, has recently become a common form as social networking escalates in popularity in the adolescent years (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Tippett & Smith, submitted).

Age differences in cyberbullying

We know little about when children start cyberbullying, and most studies have focused on the middle or secondary/high school age ranges. There have been some variations in reports, but the review by Tokunaga (2010) argued that there is a curvilinear relationship, with the greatest prevalence in the seventh and eighth grades (around 13–15 years old). This appears to be consistent with much of the literature, and suggests a slightly later age peak than is found for traditional bullying. Ševčíková and Šmahel (2009) reported on being an aggressor or target amongst persons from a wide age range (12–88 years old) in the Czech Republic. They found the 12–15 year age group most involved as aggressors, and the 16–19 and 20–26 year old age groups most often involved as targets, although both roles were present throughout older age groups including 50 plus.

Gender differences in cyberbullying

The area of gender differences in cyberbullying has been accurately described as 'fraught with inconsistent findings' (Tokunaga, 2010: 280). Examples can be

found of boys being more involved than girls (for example, Calvete et al., 2010), few or no significant differences (for example, Smith et al., 2008), and girls being more involved than boys (for example, Rivers & Noret, 2010). Overall, there may be relatively greater involvement of girls in cyberbullying, just as there is in relational bullying, when compared to traditional physical (mainly boys) or verbal bullying, which is consistent with seeing cyberbullying as more similar to relational bullying.

Both age and gender differences may vary by the different media for cyberbullying, cultural background and historical time; for example, in recent years girls in some countries, including the UK, are particularly involved in social networking sites such as Facebook, and thus more at risk of cyberbullying involvement in that medium (National Family Week Survey, 2010).

Bias, prejudice or identity-based bullying

Identity-based characteristics such as race, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity can be used as a pretext for bullying behaviours, and also be manifested in the kinds of behaviour (such as insulting words) based on these characteristics. Often based on stereotyped views of particular social groups, these are also referred to as bias bullying or prejudice-related bullying. They are not only targeted at an individual, but also reflect negative attitudes towards a wider sub-community or group whom that individual identifies with (or is believed to identify with).

Racist bullying

Bullying which is related to a child's race or ethnicity is commonly referred to as racist bullying. Although racist attitudes can be widespread and can affect children's behaviour, it is not necessarily the case that children from ethnic minority groups are more likely to experience bullying than ethnic majority children. In England, early studies by Moran et al. (1993) and Boulton and Smith (1992) studied Asian and White school pupils in England: both Asian and White pupils had comparable numbers of friends, enjoyed school to an equal degree, and reported the same level of being bullied or bullying others. The only significant difference reported in these studies was that Asian children who had experienced bullying were more likely to have been victimised through racist name calling, which was experienced as hurtful and damaging. Eslea and Mukhtar (2000) surveyed Hindu, Indian Muslim and Pakistani children: about half reported some experience of victimisation, with little variation in involvement by ethnic background. While all three Asian groups were equally likely to be bullied by white children, victims indicated that in most cases the bullies were other Asian children from a differing ethnic group, with the bullying often related to the child's religious or cultural differences.

More recently, Smith, Thompson and Bhatti (2013) investigated the effects of ethnicity on both bullying and cyberbullying in a sample of 11–16 year old pupils in 14 English secondary schools. The data were gathered in 2008. Comparing White, Asian, Mixed and Black ethnic groups, no consistent ethnic differences were found for either traditional (direct, indirect) or cyber (mobile, internet) bully or victim rates.

Tippett, Wolke and Platt (2013) examined ethnicity and bullying involvement in a sample of 10–15 year olds, drawn from the UK Household Longitudinal Study. The survey was conducted between 2009 and 2011, and included questions on physical and relational bullying and victim experiences. White children were not any more involved than other ethnic groups, even when controlling for age, gender, parental qualifications and economic situation. African children were the least likely to be victims, and Caribbean and Pakistani children were most often involved in bullying others – these differences being significant for girls, but not for boys. This study did not cover cyberbullying.

Sawyer et al. (2008) examined racial and ethnic differences in children's reports of being bullied in a US sample. Minority group pupils were less likely than white children to report being the victim of frequent bullying when using a single-item definition based measure; however, using a multi-item behaviour-based measure, minority youth were more likely to report at least one form of being bullied. This suggests there may be cultural differences in the way experiences of bullying are perceived or defined.

Monks, Ortega-Ruiz and Rodríguez-Hildago (2008) examined racist bullying in multi-cultural schools in Spain and the UK. No difference in personal victimisation was found between majority or minority pupils; however, those from minority groups were more likely to experience cultural name calling and social exclusion.

In summary, racist kinds of bullying clearly occur. However, it is not clear whether there are major differences in experiences of bullying among racial groups, although there may be methodological issues around how racist bullying is defined and interpreted by children. Faith-based bullying is a related although under-explored issue: Eslea and Mukhtar (2000) reported some bullying among Hindu, Indian Muslim and Pakistani children that was related to the places in which they worshipped.

Bullying based around gender and gender identity

Some bullying is specifically targeted at an individual's gender and based on sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes. This is commonly referred to as sexist bullying (based on sexist attitudes) or sexual bullying (based on bullying behaviour that has a specific sexual dimension).

Some qualitative studies in England and Wales have reflected on sexual bullying in primary and secondary schools. Sexual harassment of girls by boys mainly took the form of sexually abusive and aggressive language which predominantly centres on a girl's sexual status, for example using terms such as 'bitch', 'slag' etc. (Duncan, 1999; Renold, 2002, 2006).

Research by Besag (2006) and others (see also a review by Jennifer, 2013) shows that girls also engage in sexual bullying of other girls, for example spreading nasty gossip about a girl's sexual reputation, or ridiculing their breast development. A study of Welsh adolescents (Ringrose, 2008a,b) found instances where sexually aggressive terms were used by girls in relation to other girls, in order to regulate their own and others' behaviours in the context of heterosexual competition. Williams (2013) found that girls' use of social networking sites now provides a frequent forum for (mainly) girl-to-girl bullying of this kind. Although less commonly reported than verbal or indirect forms of bullying, physical forms of sexual harassment are also experienced by some girls (Duncan, 2002).

Girls thus may suffer sexual harassment from both other girls and boys, often about appearance and reputation. Boys too can experience these kinds of harasssment, but some of this is more likely to reflect comments on sexual orientation. Wolfe, Crooks, Chiodo and Jaffe (2009) suggested that, particularly in early adolescence, gender-role expectations play a central role in young people's peer acceptance. These gender-roles can be enforced through abusive tactics such as gender-based harassment and homophobic bullying, which emerge in the context of other socialisation agents, such as the media.

Bullying based on sexual orientation: homophobic bullying

Homophobic bullying is bullying directed at lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) people, or those perceived to be LGB, because of their (real or perceived) sexual orientation. Some studies include transgendered individuals, with prevalence reported for LGBT individuals combined.

A particular issue to consider in measuring homophobic bullying is that some young LGB people may not feel ready to disclose their sexual orientation (Carragher & Rivers, 2002). Several retrospective studies have been conducted with LGB identified adults, asking them about bullying experiences when they were younger. In these reports verbal bullying is usually found to be the most common type of bullying behaviour associated with homophobic bullying (Carragher & Rivers, 2002; ChildLine, 2006; Ellis & High, 2004). This is consistent with general bullying trends. Another similar finding is the gender differences in the types of bullying behaviour experienced by young lesbian girls and gay young men (King et al., 2003). Physical bullying is more commonly experienced by males, whilst indirect or relational bullying appears to be more commonly reported by females.

Surveys of young people who identify themselves as LGB show high rates of victim experiences. One conducted in the UK by Stonewall (Hunt & Jensen, 2007), with 1,145 secondary students who identified themselves as LGB, found that 65% had experienced direct bullying; this figure was even higher in faith schools, at 75%. Even if LGB youths did not directly experience bullying, they reported being in an environment where homophobic language was commonplace. By asking 377 adolescents to list abusive terms they commonly heard at school, Thurlow (2001) found 10% of all abusive language used by 14–15 year olds in Welsh and English schools to be of homophobic origin. Homophobic items were much less common

than sexist terms, but were used significantly more than racist pejoratives as a means of insulting fellow pupils. Thurlow (2001) also found that homophobic terms were rated by young people to be less taboo and offensive than racially abusive terms.

Toomey and Russell (2013) identified 18 studies where school-based victimisation was directly compared for sexual minority (LGBT) and heterosexual pupils, and carried out a meta-analysis. The risk of victimisation was significantly higher for LGBT pupils, with an effect size of d = 0.33 (small/moderate). Age was not a moderator in this, but gender was: the effect size was higher for boys than girls. Depressingly, effect sizes were larger for more recent studies (in the 2000s) than older studies (in the 1990s).

The gender difference was confirmed in a longitudinal study in England reported by Robinson, Espelage and Rivers (2013). Their findings were based on a sample of 4,135 young people 13–14 years old in 2004, followed up until 2010 (by which time they had left school). Of the sample 4.5% identified themselves as LGB, and they experienced significantly more victimisation than their heterosexual peers. Over the study's six years there was a fairly steady decrease in victimisation with age in the total sample (in line with the general age trends mentioned earlier). However, the relative risk for LGB young people increased, but for males only. Their odds ratio for increased risk of victimisation increased from 1.78 at the start of the study to 3.95 at the end. For females the odds ratio started at 1.95, but by the end had decreased to 1.18 (not significant). Thus while victimisation experiences were higher for LGB young people, generally they declined with age, whereas the relative risk compared to heterosexual peers got worse for males but better for females.

Robinson et al. (2013) also assessed emotional distress, such as feeling unhappy or depressed. This was higher in LGB young people. Using structural equation modelling, it appeared that about 50% of this greater emotional distress experienced, compared to heterosexual peers, could be attributed to prior victimisation experiences.

In summary, LGB young people are generally at substantially higher risk of being a victim of bullying; this is especially so for males.

Bullying based on disability

Disablist bullying can affect any child who is classed as having a disability: this can be physical or sensory, or refer to learning difficulties. Many studies show high rates of bullying in children with disabilities, but these are most informative when there is a well-matched comparison group. In an early study, Whitney, Smith and Thompson (1994) compared the experiences of 93 special needs children, drawn from eight schools in Sheffield, England, with those of 93 mainstream children, matched for age and year group, school, gender and ethnicity. They found that the special needs children were two to three times more likely to experience being bullied compared to the mainstream children; they were also nearly twice as likely to be involved in bullying others. For example, one girl with a physical disability told the interviewer:

> Because of my disability I can't balance and with a heavy tray with my dinner on it I can't balance … In class they say 'Look Elisabeth's here' and they call me names all the time or they stand up and do impressions of me walking up and down the classroom. (Whitney et al., 1994: 223–224)

This study also compared bullying prevalence among types of special needs. Interestingly, blind or visually impaired children were not at greater risk, but those with moderate learning difficulties and physical disabilities were, and those with a hearing impairment were at the highest risk (although the sample sizes were small in some of these sub-categories).

In Northern Ireland, the survey by RSM McClure Watters (2011) reported on the relationship between involvement in bully/victim problems and disability. Using a lenient criterion (see Table 4.3), the prevalence of being bullied for children with a disability, compared to those without, was higher both in primary school (44.3% vs. 38.6%) and in post-primary school (44.9% vs. 28.2%). The prevalence of bullying others was also higher in primary school (27.8% vs. 20.8%) and post-primary school (29.1% vs. 20.5%) for those with a disability.

A study in Canada by Hamiwka and colleagues (2009) compared the prevalence of bullying in three groups: children with epilepsy, children with chronic kidney disease (CKD) and healthy controls. The children were aged around 12 years and the two medical groups were recruited via clinics and hospitals. Self-report data was gathered via the OBVQ. Victim rates on the 'two or three times per month' criterion were 42% for children with epilepsy compared to 18% for CKD and 21% for healthy controls, while the bully rates were 15%, 10% and 5%, and the bully/victim rates 9%, 5% and 0%, respectively. Children with epilepsy were clearly more at risk of involvement as bullies or victims, compared not only to healthy controls but also to children with CKD – another chronic disease but without the obvious physical symptoms of epilepsy.

A study in the USA by Christensen et al. (2012) compared the experiences of 13 year olds classed as having typical cognitive development (TD) or intellectual disability (ID). They were drawn from a variety of schools, as part of a larger longitudinal study. According to self-report, 62% of ID adolescents reported having been bullied (presumably, ever) compared to 41% of TD adolescents.

In Sweden, Holmberg and Hjern (2008) used the HBSC questionnaire with fourth graders in a municipality in Stockholm. They compared children diagnosed with varying degrees of ADHD with controls. The rates for being bullied were around eight times higher in children with ADHD, and rates for bullying others were around three times higher.

In England, Knox and Conti-Ramsden (2003) examined the risk of bullying among 11 year old pupils with specific language impairments. They found that 36% considered themselves at risk of bullying, compared to 12% of pupils with no language difficulties.

Children with various disabilities are clearly at greater risk of bullying involvement, so why should this be so? There may be three main reasons for this, varying, of course, with the individual and the type of disability. First, for children with disabilities who are in mainstream schools, there are often problems in

social acceptance, specifically having few friends and lower quality friendships, negative peer perceptions and social rejection (Mishna, 2003). Nabuzoka and Smith (1993), using peer nominations, found children with learning disabilities were significantly more likely to be nominated as a victim than children without learning disabilities; they also had fewer friends and were more sociometrically rejected in the peer group.

Second, some children with disabilities may lack some social skills that would help in avoiding or coping with bullying. Christensen et al. (2012) found that the greater risk of victimisation for ID adolescents correlated to greater social problems and social withdrawal. The psychosocial characteristics of children with autism and Asperger's syndrome – such as a lack of social skills, and difficulties expressing non-verbal forms of communication – can increase their vulnerability to bullying by peers. Van Roekel, Scholte and Didden (2010) studied Dutch children with autistic spectrum disorder, attending a special school, and found high rates of involvement in bullying; they also found that those involved in bullying were more likely to misinterpret short video clips of peer interaction: those who were victims tended to classify non-bullying situations as bullying, whereas those who were bullies tended to classify bullying situations as non-bullying.

Third, some characteristics of a disability, such as clumsiness or a stammer or poor hearing, may make someone an easy target for those who enjoy bullying others. Children or young people who stutter or stammer can easily be made fun of, as was shown in a study by Hugh-Jones and Smith (1999). They carried out a retrospective study with adult respondents from the British Stammering Association. A majority (83%) had experienced bullying at school, especially those with a more severe stammer.

Children with sensory disabilities may be at greater risk of being bullied, but Whitney et al. (1994) found that this was not the case for visually impaired children. Perhaps visual impairment is something easy to empathise with, as we all know what it is like to be blindfolded or to stumble in the dark, so they might present less of a target for bullies, or bullies might not gain social rewards from bullying visually impaired children if they do not get bystander support. Unfortunately, this understanding does not seem to extend to hearing impaired children, who were at the highest risk in the Whitney et al. (1994) study.

In a qualitative study, Dixon, Smith and Jenks (2004; see also Dixon, 2011) found that deaf children were likely to be considered 'second class citizens' by non-deaf children, and 'put down'. As one mainstream pupil observed:

> … some of them, like, just put the deaf children down. When the deaf children want to explain something, talk about something, some of the people probably, like, talk over them – enough to say they're nothing. (Dixon et al., 2004: 52–53)

Here some of the explanation for the greater victimisation of deaf children lies with the peer group. However, deaf children may also be more at risk even when they are educated separately from normally hearing children. Bauman (2012) investigated traditional and cyberbullying in 12–19 year old deaf and hearing pupils. She compared two schools in the USA, one a School for the Deaf, using

American Sign Language for instruction, and the other a school sharing the same campus, but for hearing children. She selected 30 children from each, matched for grade, gender and ethnicity. The rates for traditional bullying (both victim and bully) were considerably higher in the deaf children, as was the rate for being a victim of cyberbullying (the rates for being a cyberbully were too small to analyse).

The location and duration of bullying

Location of bullying

The playground is a common location for bullying in school, especially in primary schools. For example, the survey in Wales by Bowen and Holcom (2010) found that in year 4 pupils (around 9 years old), 55% of bullying was reported in the school yard, 24% in the classroom, 14% in the corridors, 13% in the toilets and 12% in the canteen. Areas that are generally less well supervised are where bullying (especially overt bullying) is most likely to happen.

Cyberbullying presents a somewhat different picture, as it is often initiated or received outside school. Smith, Mahdavi et al. (2008) asked secondary school pupils in England if they had ever experienced traditional or cyber bullying inside school, outside school, or both. The figures for traditional bullying were 37.0% for only inside, 4.7% for only outside and 12.4% for both, but for cyberbullying 3.4% for only inside, 11.1% for only outside and 2.6% for both. Many schools place restrictions on mobile phone and internet use within the school premises. But even though cyberbullying may escape school boundaries, it will often be pupils at that school who are involved in the bullying. Smith et al. found that when victims knew who the cyberbully was, for 58% of them the perpetrators were from the same school.

Duration of bullying

Some bullying can last just a few days, while some can go on for years. Questionnaires such as the OBVQ often contain a question about how long a victim has experienced bullying. Sharp, Thompson and Arora (2000) reported some analysis of this, based on data gathered from secondary schools in England. They found that 30.5% of pupils reported being a victim in the previous school term (this was presumably on a lenient criterion including 'just once or twice'): this comprised 15.0% (so nearly half the victims) who said it had lasted less than a week, 7.1% who said it had happened just this half term, 2.2% this term, 1.9% all year and 4.3% more than one year. Longer duration bullying tended to also occur more frequently, and was experienced as more stressful. The short-term bullying was more often social exclusion, while the longer-term bullying was more often being called names, threatened, and having nasty rumours spread.

Smith, Mahdavi et al. (2008) found that for those who were victims of cyberbullying, most said it had lasted one or two weeks (56.5% of victims), followed by about a month (18.8%), about six months (5.8%), about a year (8.7%) and several years (10.1%).

A consistent pattern here is that about half of all bullying reported appears to be quite short term – perhaps constituting some social exclusion or relatively mild bullying that works itself out after a week or so. However, a substantial amount of bullying goes on for some months. Finally, a small but significant percentage of pupils experience bullying for a year or several years, perhaps for much of their schooling.

Using a Retrospective Bullying Questionnaire (see Chapter 3), Schäfer et al. (2004) asked adults from three countries (Germany, Spain and the UK) for their recollections of being bullied in primary and secondary school. While 72% had no recollections of being bullied at school, 11% remembered being bullied but only in primary school, 9% only in secondary school, and 8% had memories of being bullied in both primary and secondary school. This study did not measure duration in detail, but – consistent with the findings above – about half of those who recollected being victims said that it had lasted for just a few days, while about half said that it had lasted for weeks or months, or even longer.

Attitudes towards bullying

Some questionnaires ask about attitudes towards bullying, in contrast to experiences, and some findings are unexpected. Although most pupils say they do not like bullying, a significant minority do say they could join in bullying. Perhaps surprisingly, these 'pro-bullying' or 'anti-victim' attitudes increase with age up to 14–15 years old (after which they start to decline). This was first shown by Rigby and Slee (1991) in a study of Australian school children, and confirmed in a report by Rigby (1997) based on a survey of primary and secondary school pupils from South Australia. They used an Attitude to Victim Scale, made up of 20 items such as 'I like it when somebody stands up for kids who are bullied', or (negatively scored) 'Nobody likes a wimp'. Thus, high scores mean sympathetic attitudes to victims. They found that attitudes were slightly more sympathetic for girls than boys, but for both boys and girls these sympathetic scores declined steadily from 9–10 years old through to 13–14 (girls) or 15–16 (boys) before rising again slightly at 17–18 years. These findings have been broadly confirmed in Italy and England by Menesini et al. (1997).

Some findings from Olweus and Endresen (1998), on Norwegian students 13–16 years old, suggest that attitudes may vary by gender dyad – specifically, for boys to boys. They did not measure attitudes to bullying as such, but gave empathy scales with items such as 'seeing a [boy][girl] who is sad makes me want to comfort [him][her]'. Girls were more empathic than boys, and their empathy

scores increased with age. Boys' scores did not increase with age, specifically when asked about empathic feelings for other boys in distress, but did increase when asked about girls in distress.

In summary, although sympathetic attitudes to victims predominate, they decrease from middle childhood to early or mid-adolescence. Unsympathetic attitudes may be especially marked among boys.

Stability of bully and victim roles

Do children tend to stay in the same roles over time – or, how easy is it to 'exit' a role? There are various ways of looking at the stability of roles such as bully or victim. Given two or more time points in a longitudinal study, one can calculate correlations (for example, in percentage of peer nominations), look at the proportions for those who change role (for example, 'escaped' versus 'continuing' victims), or look at the relative risk of staying in a role (for example, risk of being a victim at time 2, compared to being or not being a victim at time 1). Whichever measure is used, there is consistently found to be some stability in bully and victim roles, but with some variability by age, gender and type of bullying, as well as measurement technique.

Stability tends to be relatively low among young children of nursery or kindergarten age, but increases through the elementary school years. This is especially true of victim status. For example, Kochenderfer-Ladd (2003) gathered self-report data on victimisation from US children in kindergarten, first grade, second grade and third grade. Some stability correlations obtained are shown in Table 4.8. All correlations are statistically significant (the sample size was around 380 children), but from kindergarten to first grade it is only a modest value of 0.26 (in other words, about 7% of the variance is explained in terms of continuity). The stability increases such that between grade 2 and grade 3 it is 0.41 (that is, about 17% of the variance).

Table 4.8 Stability for peer victimisation, and aggression, between kindergarten and first three grades of elementary school in a US sample (data from Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2003)

Correlations from:	to Grade 1	to Grade 2	to Grade 3
Peer victimisation			
Kindergarten	.26	.27	.16
Grade 1		.35	.27
Grade 2			.41
Aggression			
Kindergarten	.59	.52	.58
Grade 1		.56	.56
Grade 2			.67

Other studies at kindergarten age, whether based on peer reports, self-reports or observational data, find low stability of victim role over time: different children are victimised over the period of the study. For example, Monks et al. (2003) found that in children moving from reception class to first grade in two English schools, the correlation between peer nominations received was only 0.19: only about 13% of victims in reception class remained victims in first grade.

Stability for aggressors is relatively high in the early years, however (bearing in mind that the 'bullying' label may be less applicable, precisely because victim stability is low). As seen in the US data in Table 4.8, the inter-grade correlations are around 0.5–0.6: a qualification here, however, is that a different assessment method was used for these aggression ratings which came from teachers. Monks et al. (2003) used the same peer nomination procedure for all roles, and found a high correlation of 0.78 for aggressor between reception and first grade (as well as a relatively high correlation for defender at 0.38). Thus some 60% of children nominated as aggressors in reception class were again so nominated in first grade.

The low stability of the victim role (but not the aggressor role) during these early years suggests that although some children may experience some repeated attacks from aggressive peers, for many of them this is not likely to last for long. Monks et al. (2003), following Perry, Perry and Boldizar (1990), suggested that aggressive children may direct attacks towards a large number of children initially before they get to know which children would prove the most rewarding targets for them (namely those who do not cope well; see Chapter 6). Furthermore, the social structure of young children's peer relationships is less stable in general than those found among older peer groups. Schäfer, Korn, Brodbeck, Wolke and Schulz (2005) suggested that young children are less likely to occupy a particular 'role' within their peer group as yet, making it easier for those who are victimised to avoid being labelled as such and thus also avoid further victimisation.

Stability of the victim role increases by middle childhood and adolescence. A study of 8–9 year olds in English middle schools by Boulton and Smith (1994) found appreciable stability in both victim and bully roles, but some variation by gender. They gathered peer nominations at four time points – October, March and June in one school year, and October soon after the start of the next school year. For victim status, the correlations across time points varied from 0.57–0.80 for boys, but from 0.15–0.78 for girls – for five of the six correlations calculated, the value was lower for girls than boys (and equal in one case). For bully status, the correlations across time points varied from 0.63–0.89 for boys, and from 0.46–0.91 for girls – again, the value was lower for girls in five of the six correlations, although the difference was much less than for victim status. Overall, stability was high, especially for bully status, and lowest for girl victims.

Wolke, Woods and Samara (2009) followed up English primary school children from ages 6–9, up to ages 10–11. They found that victims of direct bullying at the first time point, compared to non-victims, were twice as likely to be victims at the second time point, but that this was more the case for girls. This is unlike the finding of Boulton and Smith, above, who did not distinguish types of bullying. Wolke et al. found stability was not significant for victims of relational bullying,

which would more commonly involve girls. Sapouna et al. (2012) followed up samples of 8–9 year old English and German children over a short nine-week period. Over this shorter time period stability was naturally higher, with victims at the first time point, compared to non-victims, being six times more likely to become victims over the follow-up period.

In secondary schools, although the overall incidence of being a victim falls, stability of roles can be high. Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor and Chauhan (2004) followed up 413 pupils from 35 secondary schools in England, from when they were 11–14 years old to when they were 13–16 years old. Of 204 pupils victimised at the first time point, 58 were still (continuing) victims and 146 were not (escaped victims). The continuing victims reported fewer friends at school (but no fewer outside school), and liked other pupils and breaktimes less than did escaped victims or non-bullied pupils. Of 209 comparison pupils (matched for school, year group, gender and ethnicity), 175 had never been bullied over the intervening two years, seven had experienced some bullying but not continuing, and 27 could now be classed as new victims.

Rueger, Malecki and Demaray (2011) followed up seventh and eighth graders (aged 12–13 years) in a US middle school over a 10-month period. The correlations for victim scores (on a self-report measure) were .50 for boys and .53 for girls. Altogether, about half of the victims were stable over the period, and about half changed status.

In summary, stability of the victim role is low in primary school but increases with age; stability of bully (or at least 'aggressor') is higher from early on. While there is a tendency for many children to stay in the same role over a number of years, there are also appreciable changes over time, possibly influenced by gender and type of bullying, as well as age.

School transitions and longer-term studies

The above studies on stability were carried out within classes and schools. But what happens when a pupil changes class or moves up to a higher level of schooling?

Salmivalli, Lappalainen and Lagerspetz (1998) followed up children from sixth to eighth grade (around 12–13 to 14–15 years old) in 17 school classes in Finland. Children changed schools at seventh grade; the researchers identified 29 children who were in a new class with no or at most one prior classmate from sixth grade (class changers), and 35 children who were still with a great majority of the same classmates as in sixth grade (class stay-ons). The stability of participant roles in bullying tended to be higher in the class stay-ons, but this was not the case for victims: children who were victimised and moved peer groups (that is, classes) were often repeat targets for victimisation in their new peer group.

Pellegrini and Bartini (2000b) followed pupils from fifth grade in US elementary school, to fall (entry) and spring in sixth grade in middle school. Overall rates for bullying others increased at entry to sixth grade in the new school, then decreased by spring – a finding that the authors attribute to children sorting

out dominance positions in a new peer group setting, and some children using bullying tactics for these ends. However, both individual bully and victim scores showed some stability over the time period.

In another US study, Paul and Cillessen (2003) followed up children moving from fourth grade in elementary schools to seventh grade in middle schools. They measured victimisation each year (but not bullying). Victimisation was stable from year to year (correlations of .68, .70) and also stable across the transition (correlation of .62). Over the total three years, the correlation was .44, meaning that about one-third of victims in fourth grade were still victims in seventh grade.

In a study in Germany, Schäfer et al. (2005) examined the stability of victim and bully roles from second and third grade in primary school up to seventh and eighth grade in secondary school. Over this relatively long six-year period they found no significant stability of being a victim or bully-victim, although there was some stability for being a bully. However, the stability of being a victim was influenced by a measure of peer hierarchical structuring (in their case, measured by the standard deviation of social impact scores: a high hierarchical structuring meant that there was a high degree of variability in who was liked and disliked in a class). The researchers hypothesised that if a strong peer hierarchy was already established in primary school, then there were more likely to be clearly labelled victims who would be low in the hierarchy, and this would carry through to secondary school. Conversely, if there was not yet a strong peer hierarchy, this would be a situation more similar to that in infant schools, with some stability in aggression/bullying but not in who is a victim. Their analyses tended to confirm this idea, as victim stability was significant for pupils coming from primary school classes with a strong peer hierarchy, but not significant for those coming from a weak peer hierarchy.

An even longer eight-year longitudinal study was reported by Sourander, Helstelä, Helenius and Piha (2000) in Finland, with data from 580 children at around age 8 and age 16. Rates for bully and victim were much less at 16 years, so there were many 'drop-outs', but those who were involved were also quite likely to have been involved at 8 years, especially for victim role and for boys. Altogether about half of boy bullies and almost all boy victims at age 16 had been in the same role at age 8, and similarly for about a quarter of girl bullies and a half of girl victims.

In summary, although findings are varied, there can be considerable stability of roles even over a transition to a new class or school.

Developmental trajectories

Longitudinal studies also provide an opportunity to classify pupils according to their developmental trajectories and relate this to other factors. Goldbaum, Craig, Pepler and Connolly (2003) used a modified OBVQ to assess pupils in fifth to seventh grade from seven Canadian schools, at three time points over the span of a year. They distinguished four trajectories as regards victim scores: non-victims, late-onset victims, desisters and stable victims. These are perhaps rather obvious

trajectories to obtain, but meaningful relationships were gained with, for example, internalising problems (highest in stable victims: high levels of anxiety preceded increases in victimisation) and friendship variables (lowest trust and affection in stable victims), with desisters showing improving scores.

So what about trajectories for bullying others? In a study in Scotland, using data from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, Barker, Arsenault, Brendgen, Fontaine and Maughan (2008) obtained self-reports on bully and victim roles from adolescents for each year between ages 12 and 16. Overall, both bully and victim rates declined with age in this sample. However, for bully scores, while 84% of students followed a low and decreasing trajectory, 16% (more boys) followed a high and increasing trajectory. For victim scores, 85% followed a low trajectory, 10% followed a high but decreasing trajectory, and 5% followed a high but increasing trajectory. These researchers also examined delinquency and self-harm. Pupils who were in the high/increasing bully trajectory and also high/increasing victim trajectory (so bully/victims) were most at risk, although for boys this was primarily for delinquency, and girls primarily for self-harm.

Trends over time – is bullying increasing or decreasing?

The media often portray bullying as a problem that is on the increase. Whether this is so was investigated by Rigby and Smith (2011), drawing upon empirical studies undertaken in a wide range of countries in which findings had been published describing its prevalence at different points in time between 1990 and 2009.

Relatively few studies have involved collecting data in one place from equivalent samples across time. One referred to earlier is the regular HBSC survey, where there was a slight decrease in bully and victim rates between 2005/2006 and 2009/2010. Molcho et al. (2009) analysed data preceding this, collected from students aged 11–15 years at four-year intervals between 1993/1994 and 2005/2006. They presented trends over time for 27 countries, for occasional and frequent victim and bully rates, by gender. For all these indices, decreases were observed in the majority of the 27 countries for which there were data over all the time points. The most striking findings were for frequent bullying of others, where the country average fell from 19.3% in 1993/1994, to 16.1% in 1997/1998, 11.1% in 2001/2002 and 10.6% in 2005/2006. On a larger set of countries, this figure fell further from 10.7% in 2005/2006 to 10.1% in 2009/2010. This is a very substantial reduction, even though it has been levelling off more recently.

This evidence of a decline in bullying involvement is supported by other studies that have been independent of the HBSC surveys. Rigby and Smith (2011) reviewed supportive findings from England (including the Tellus surveys), Wales, Finland and Australia.

In Spain, Del Barrio et al. (2008) compared the prevalence of bullying between 1999 and 2007. There were significant reductions in the percentage of students

who had been involved (as bullies, or victims) in several types of bullying, notably 'being called names, 'being insulted', 'being ignored', 'having belongings hidden', 'being threatened' and 'being sexually harassed'. Similar reductions were indicated from responses about bullying others. The authors concluded that 'the most important finding of the resulting longitudinal study is the evidence of a decrease in prevalence of several forms of bullying in secondary schools all over Spain along the last seven years' (2008: 611).

In the USA, changes in abusive behaviour involving children have been reported by Finkelhor et al. (2009). They examined data from two similar national surveys conducted five years apart, in 2003 and 2008. Both surveys provided information through randomised telephone interviews relating to abusive behaviour experienced by children between the ages of 2 and 17 years. Caregivers answered questions about children under the age of 11 years, while older children were interviewed directly. For the 2003 survey, data were obtained for 2,030 children; for the 2008 survey from 4,046 children. Overall, there was a reduction in abusive behaviour experienced by children between 2003 and 2008. This included a large drop in having been physically attacked by a peer or sibling, from 21.7% to 14.8%. The authors comment that 'The decline apparent in this analysis parallels evidence from other sources, including police data, child welfare data, and the National Crime Victimization Survey, suggesting reductions in various types of childhood victimization in recent years' (2009: 238).

A more complex pattern has come from comparisons in Norway, reported by Roland, Bru, Midthassel and Vaaland (2010) and Roland (2011). Surveys of a nationally representative sample of schools, with around 1,200–5,000 pupils in grades 5, 6, 7 and 9, were conducted in spring 2001, spring 2004 and spring 2008. In 2001 the proportion of victims was 6.3%, while in 2004 this had decreased to 4.9%; however, in 2008 this had risen again to 6.2%. Similarly, for bullying others in 2001 the proportion was 2.3%, and in 2004 this had fallen to 1.9%, but in 2008 it had risen again to 3.7%. Roland (2011) attributes the decrease between 2001 and 2004 to the success of the first Norwegian Manifesto (Manifesto-I) against School Bullying (2002–2004), and the subsequent increase to the failure to follow this up so effectively with a second Manifesto (Manifesto-II) launched in 2006 (discussed further in Chapter 6). Olweus (2012a) also reports separate data from 41 Norwegian schools, from 2006 to 2010. There are slight peaks in both victim and bully rates in 2008, with a slight decrease in 2009 and 2010.

While not universal then, there is good evidence that in most countries and for many indices bullying involvement has fallen in the last decade or so. Given that we know that anti-bullying interventions generally have some success (see Chapter 6), it is likely that increased awareness and the implementation of anti-bullying interventions have helped produce this decline. However, as of yet the evidence mainly concerns traditional bullying. There is scant evidence for a decline in cyberbullying.

There is no doubt that cyberbullying increased as the relevant technology has become more and more accessible in the early years of this century, but has this rise continued? In England, Rivers and Noret (2010) surveyed some 2,500 students

aged 11–13 years old from 13 schools for each year between 2002 until 2006. Students were asked *'Have you ever received any nasty or threatening text messages or emails?'*. The percentages who had experienced this at all over each of the five years were 13.0, 12.5, 16.4, 16.3 and 15.5; taking a stricter criterion of 'sometimes this term' or more, the percentages were 2.6, 2.2, 3.2, 2.9 and 2.4. On either criterion there is some suggestion of an increase, but levelling off or slightly decreasing later. The slight decreases in 2005 and 2006 are suspect in that the survey only covered text message and email bullying, and by these dates cyberbullying was already diversifying into other forms.

Wolak, Mitchell and Finkelhor (2006) reported data from the First and Second Youth Internet Safety Surveys (conducted in 1999–2000 and 2005 respectively), and Jones, Mitchell and Finkelhor (2012) have updated these with data from the Third Youth Internet Safety Survey conducted in 2010. Each used telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,500 US internet users, aged 10–17 years old, covering internet use, safety and unpleasant experiences. A measure of unwanted sexual solicitations showed a steady decline over the three time points. However, the data closest to cyberbullying are those on internet harassment, defined as 'feeling worried or threatened because someone was bothering or harassing you online', or 'someone ever using the internet to threaten or embarrass you by posting or sending messages about you for other people to see'. The three surveys showed an increase in internet harassment from 6% to 9% and then 11%, with this being more marked for girls. This increase might in part be related to increased internet use: the same surveys showed that a composite measure of amount of internet use increased from .24 to .41 and then .49 over the three time points.

Ybarra, Mitchell and Korchmaros (2011) reported data from the Growing Up with Media survey in the USA. This collected data in three waves (2006, 2007 and 2008) from the same households (*N*s were 1588, 1206 and 1159 respectively). In each household, a young person aged 10–15 years filled in an online survey. They found that 'most rates of youth violent experiences online were stable over the 36-month observation period' (2011: 1379), although there was some increase in the perpetration of harassment online. Using an Olweus-type definition of bullying, Ybarra et al. specifically measured 'bullying victimization' (being a victim of bullying) on the internet and via text messaging, at 2007 and 2008 only; the changes in both measures were small and not significant.

Olweus (2012a) reported data from a very large US sample (about 440,000 pupils) from 2007 to 2010. No systematic time trends were found, although if anything the trend is slightly upwards. He also analysed data from 41 Norwegian schools, and again found little in the way of a systematic trend, although if anything the direction is slightly downwards.

In England, Tippett and Smith (submitted) surveyed the same four secondary schools in 2008 and 2011. Taking a lenient 'once or twice' criterion, there were decreases for being a direct victim (17.3–16.9%), indirect victim (21.4–16.1%), direct bully (10.1–6.8%) and indirect bully (10.8–7.5%); these were all statistically significant, and some reductions were present using the 'often' criterion as well.

Thus traditional bullying involvement decreased on all four indicators. However, there was little change for mobile victims (4.5–4.5%), internet victims (7.5–7.7%), mobile bullies (2.4–2.6%) or internet bullies (3.6–2.7%). These changes were non-significant, although there was a trend for the cyberbullying involvement to become less frequent by the 'often' criterion. Although there was little change in the overall incidence of cyberbullying, by 2011 much more of it was on social networking sites (for 69% of victims, compared to 42% in 2008).

In summary, there is good evidence from many studies that, in many countries, rates of involvement in traditional bullying have shown some decline over the last ten or twenty years. There is much less evidence about cyberbullying involvement, but it clearly increased in the early years of this century, and has since proliferated into different forms. Nevertheless, as the proportion of students in most communities having access to mobile phones and the internet approaches saturation, the indications are that rates of cyberbullying are not rising substantially over the last few years, but neither are they declining so clearly as is the case for traditional bullying.

Cultural differences

Comparative surveys suggest considerable variations in the incidence of bullying problems across countries. The HBSC surveys show great variations in bully and victim rates in European and North American countries. Country differences often outweigh age and gender differences. Craig et al. (2009) reported victim rates varying between 8.6% and 45.2% among boys, and 4.8% and 35.8% among girls; high rates of bullying were reported in the Baltic countries (Lithuania and Latvia scoring the highest), and low rates in northern European countries (with Sweden scoring the lowest). Livingstone et al. (2011) also reported large variations from the EU Kids Online survey across 25 European countries. Experiences of being bullied (at all, online or offline) varied from 9% to 43%, with Estonia the highest and Portugal the lowest.

Unfortunately, for the many countries overlapping in these two large cross-national datasets, there is rather little correspondence! For example, Lithuania comes out as average in the EU Kids Online survey, although highest in the HBSC. Sweden comes out as fourth highest in the EU Kids Online, although lowest in the HBSC. These discrepancies are worrying. Besides some methodological differences between the two surveys (described in more detail in Chapter 3), these might reflect issues about how representative the samples are for each country.

Besides variations in prevalence across countries, there are also variations in some structural aspects of bullying. These are not so strong amongst the western countries themselves, but do appear significant when looking at the Pacific Rim countries of Japan and South Korea, especially.

In Japan, Kanetsuna and colleagues (Kanetsuna & Smith, 2002; Kanetsuna, Smith & Morita, 2006) examined the kinds of situation in which high school pupils say that *ijime* (in Japan) or *bullying* (in England) occurs, using corresponding

questionnaires and interviews in the two countries. Consistently, they found that in Japan pupils reported *ijime* as most likely to come from pupils that they knew well, of a similar age, and often within the classroom; in England, pupils reported bullying as often coming from pupils they did not know well, often older, and often in the playground. The greater incidence of bullying in the classroom, in Japan, is partly based on a greater emphasis on social exclusion, and is reflected in a greater ratio of bullies to victims compared to studies in England or western countries (Morita et al., 1999).

A somewhat similar pattern comes from studies of *wang-ta* in South Korea, by Koo, Kwak and Smith (2008). *Wang-ta* also seems to occur between pupils who know each other (for example, former friends), and the ratio of bullies to victims is even higher than in Japan. A milder form is *eun-ta*, in which some short-term social exclusion of a victim by a small group of former friends occurs – not so different from what is found in western countries (for example, Besag, 2006). But *wang-ta* is more severe, and within a classroom context this can mean the whole class shunning one pupil. An even more severe form of social exclusion is *jun-ta*: this refers to the whole school labelling the victim and shunning that person. Not surprisingly, many such victims of *jun-ta* show psychiatric symptoms and may have to receive special schooling (Koo, 2004). This emphasis on social exclusion is found throughout childhood and into the workplace context (Lee, Smith & Monks, 2011), but is not static; these terms were unfamiliar a generation ago, & new terms are being introduced – some pupils have created a new word, *jjin-ta* (not in any current dictionary) to replace *wang-ta* to indicate a bullied/socially isolated person (Lee, Smith & Monks, 2012).

Linguistic issues

The apparent differences in prevalence and structural characteristic across countries might reflect real behavioural differences – the obvious interpretation – but equally, they may reflect differences in interpreting the term 'bullied' or related concepts primarily used in that country. For example, in Italy the term *prepotenze* has been widely used as the appropriate term for *bullying* in Italian questionnaire studies. However, *prepotenze* has a broader meaning profile than *bullying*, as shown by the cartoon test (see Chapter 2 and Table 2.4), as it includes physical aggression as well as physical bullying. Italian researchers have found that the use of different terms to translate *bullying* significantly affects the incidence rates obtained (Fonzi et al., 1999).

What is considered unjustified?

As noted in Chapter 2, bullying is generally considered unjust aggression, but what is actually considered unjust varies by culture. For example, the expanded cartoon set (see Chapter 2) has one cartoon where the rest of the team won't let a pupil take part in a competition, even though s/he is one of the best players,

because s/he is from a lower year group; 81% of 14 year old English pupils say this is *bullying*, but only 29% of 14 year old Japanese pupils say this is *ijime*. What this example shows is that some (ab)use of power by older pupils might happen in Japan, as in England, but not be reported as *ijime*: the same behaviour may be thought of as abusive or unjust in one culture, and reported as such, but not in another culture.

Explanations for cultural differences in bullying

Whether cultural differences are behavioural, linguistic or rooted in normative beliefs, they need explaining. One obvious approach is how cultures vary in their characteristics in ways that can affect interpersonal relationships. Hofstede (2001) proposed five dimensions, of which two – power distance and individualism/collectivism – may be the most relevant in considering differences in bullying. Power distance may be relevant in understanding the acceptance or not of hierarchically imposed behaviours: Japan and South Korea may be considered more hierarchical, with a greater respect for older persons, including older pupils, such that (ab)use of power by older persons will be more likely to be seen as legitimate and not unjust. The individualism/collectivism dimension contrasts individualistic cultures, in which the social ties between individuals are loose and cultural values emphasise self-reliance, autonomy and personal achievement, and collectivistic cultures, in which people are in strong and cohesive in-groups and group goals take priority over individual goals when there is conflict between them. Thus, in harming someone else, individual attacks may be seen as most effective in individualistic societies (western Europe, North America, Australia), but social exclusion is more likely to be adopted in collectivist societies (Japan, South Korea).

Other factors to consider here are how different societies view violence generally (in the mass media, the home, other contexts), and specifically in schools – are anti-bullying policies required, for example? The organisation of schools can be important – for example, how playground breaks are supervised and the extent of homeroom class teaching. And for cyberbullying, clearly the availability and penetration of mobile phones (and especially smart phones) and the internet will be a key factor.

Summary

Many factors affect prevalence rates, which vary widely across different studies. Particularly important are the definition, time reference period and frequency criterion. High prevalence figures generally mean a relaxation in one of these factors.

Age trends are different for bullies (not declining in the school years) and victims (general downward trend with age), but with a general shift from more physical to more relational and indirect types. There are well-established gender differences in

the frequency and types of bullying, although for defenders a gender disparity in verbal reports has not been confirmed by observation. Gender differences are more uncertain and possibly changing rapidly in the case of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying has a number of distinctive features contrasting it to some extent with traditional bullying, nevertheless there is considerable overlap with traditional forms of bullying. It now forms a significant minority of victimisation experiences. Prejudice-based bullying exists in a variety of forms. Young people of a minority sexual orientation, as well as those with many kinds of disability, are clearly more at risk of victimisation.

Bullying tends to take place in poorly supervised locations. Much bullying is short term, but for a minority it can last for months or years. There is some stability in roles in bullying, and this is greater in older children, most clearly for victims. Pupil attitudes to bullying, while mainly against it, tend to get less provictim with age, at least up to mid-adolescence.

A number of studies suggest that – over recent decades – bully and victim rates have not increased, and in many countries have decreased; any such decrease is not yet obvious for cyberbullying, however.

Cultures vary widely in bully and victim rates, but consistent findings are not yet available. In Japan and South Korea, bullying appears to be more based on group processes and social exclusion. However, these may be actual differences in behaviour – perhaps due to dimensions such as individualism-collectivism, or power distance, or more prosaically, to differences in schooling arrangements. There are also differences in conceptions of unjust (ab)use of power, and differences in the words available to describe these. In addition, all of these factors can and do change through historical time.