

**Researching prospects for restorative justice practice in schools: The Life at
School Survey 1996-1999**

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Restorative justice practices are being regarded increasingly as attractive options for dealing with wrongdoing in school communities. Traditional punishments of a social kind, such as suspension or expulsion, are being sidelined as tools of last resort as researchers and practitioners document the negative consequences of allowing children “to be at a loose end” in the community (Cunningham & Henggeler, 2001; Hirschi, 1969; Jenkins, 1997), geographically and socially separated from family and friends who are enmeshed in education and employment networks for most of their day. Suspension and expulsion leave children who are already vulnerable even more exposed than they were previously to being trapped within subcultures that operate at the fringe of, if not outside the law.

Alternative strategies for dealing with children who find themselves in strife in the school community take a variety of forms (Rigby, 2001). Some interventions focus on changing the behaviour of such children through counselling and rehabilitation programs, others focus on teaching more effective parenting, and still others focus on the school, with the intention of shaping school norms about appropriate behaviour, and teaching children to identify wrongdoing, mediate conflict, and find peaceful solutions. The whole school approach of building a culture that rejects actions that involve the domination and exploitation of others is now widely endorsed as a means of reducing school bullying and violence, and creating a safe learning environment for children (Smith, Morita, Junger-Tas, Olweus, Catalano, & Slee, 1999).

Restorative justice nestles comfortably as an idea within these broad social trends of best practice in school management. Restorative practices focus on maintaining and strengthening social bonds to prevent children, either bullies or victims, from feeling isolated from or rejected by the school community. At the same time as the child is encircled in this community of care, the issue of accountability and responsibility for wrongdoing is placed centre stage for discussion and resolution. Offenders and victims meet, with care and support available to both sides. Restorative justice practices share

the common feature of recognizing and discussing the harm done and helping the wrongdoer work towards acknowledgment and commitment to make amends. The approach accepts human weakness in the sense that every person is capable of hurting others, but at the same time affirms human dignity, through recognizing each person as a valued member of the community who can make amends and be reintegrated with forgiveness.

How restorative justice practices are best integrated into an educational environment is a complex question. For the most part it is likely to be a reflexive process of action learning and research. Adapting restorative practices to the context is critically important if they are to be effective as a means of social regulation. At the heart of successful restorative practices is commitment and emotional engagement. Neither is possible unless community members feel that the restorative justice process provides safe space to explore the issues that are troubling the group. Having advocated a process of adaptation and diversification in bringing restorative justice to the school context, there are nevertheless some basic processes that are fundamental to its effectiveness.

One social-psychological process that offenders must work their way through in restorative justice settings is the management of shame related emotions (these include guilt and remorse) (Braithwaite, 1989; Ahmed, Harris, Braithwaite, & Braithwaite, 2001). The disapproval of another for failing to meet a standard or for breaking a code of conduct commonly gives rise to shame-related emotions and can be broadly referred to as the process of shaming another for wrongdoing. Yet shaming covers a broad spectrum of disapproving behaviours ranging from those that are highly respectful of the offender (reintegrative) to those that are disrespectful (stigmatising) (Braithwaite, 1989). Adaptive shame management is the expected outcome from a process that is reintegrative, and not stigmatising. Under conditions of reintegration where an individual feels supported and valued, the wrongdoing can be acknowledged, the harmful consequences accepted, plans can be made to make amends, and forgiveness and

repaired social bonds can pave the way for a fresh start. Under conditions of stigmatisation, shame is likely to be all encompassing and overwhelming for the individual, leading to responses such as withdrawal, avoidance, or an attack on self or on others (Nathanson, 1992). Once the wrongdoer cuts him or herself off from the community psychologically and socially, the shame and the harm done can be disowned, or at the very least justified, providing the individual with temporary respite from the painful shame emotion. At this point, social regulation has broken down.

While traditionally reintegrative shaming theory embedded effective shaming within a reintegrative framework, understanding how offenders manage and work through their feelings of shame has been a more recent development (Ahmed, Harris, Braithwaite, & Braithwaite, 2001). For instance, despite all the support in the world, do some offenders fall apart psychologically when confronted with their wrongdoing, drowning in a shame experience from which they can see no escape? Alternatively, is the self-protective mechanism so strong in others that they are unable to relate to the harm that they have caused, deflecting the shame experience adroitly away at every turn? And if there can be a win-win solution in the shaming-shame management process, what are the psychological mechanisms that ensure this outcome?

Nathan Harris (2001) and Eliza Ahmed (2001) have focused on such questions from the wrongdoer's perspective. Harris argues that feeling shame means that one's ethical identity has been thrown into question by others whom one respects, as well as by oneself. Self-reflection may be a state that one arrives at through the disapproval of respected others, but at the end of the day, the self-doubt about one's own ethical identity is real: it is not an emotional response that is simply about feeling uncomfortable with the disapproval of others. Given the salience and depth of this emotional response, how does the individual cope? Is the social space provided by Braithwaite's (1989) reintegration philosophy enough? Ahmed argues that it can be enough if the individual can be encouraged to adopt adaptive shame management skills.

Adaptive shame management requires two kinds of responses from the wrongdoer. The first is shame acknowledgment. Shame acknowledgment means that the individual can admit and come to terms with any wrongdoing, can take responsibility for the harm done, and is willing to embark on a course of action to make amends. The second desirable set of responses is that the wrongdoer resists the all too human tendency of blaming others, of making excuses for the action, of being angry, and using one's energy to find ways of "placing" the shame elsewhere. In other words, offenders must have, or be helped to have, the resilience and wisdom to stay away from shame displacement. Ahmed concludes that while shaming is a societal mechanism for regulating social life, adaptive shame management is an individual mechanism for self-regulation. Restorative justice practices therefore are likely to be most effective when they harmonize regulatory mechanisms found in the society with those found in individuals.

If adaptive shame management is crucial to behaviour change and to community re-integration, the question must be asked, is non-adaptive shame management at the heart of repeat offending? Many have argued that unresolved shame is a prime trigger for violence (Lewis, 1971; Scheff, 1994, 1996). The research of Scheff (Scheff, 1987; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991) and Retzinger (Retzinger, 1987, 1991) describes the relationship in dynamic terms as a shame-rage spiral where one fuels the other at increasing levels of intensity. If poor shame management skills are implicated as a source of the problem, and if adaptive shame management skills are necessary for effective resolution of the problem in restorative justice, then the context in which restorative justice is practiced must be one that is capable of eliciting adaptive shame management in place of poor shame management.

Researching the basics for a restorative justice intervention program

The above issues formed the basis for our deliberations on how best to build a

restorative justice program in schools. Our preferred intervention was to tackle the notion of shame management, both from the perspective of the individual and the school. Could adaptive shame management skills assist children in saying no to bullying, and could a school culture be built where children felt safe acknowledging wrongdoing and resisting the temptation to displace their shame onto others through displays of bravado and machismo? Before walking this path of active intervention, further research was required to test out some of the more fundamental assumptions.

In 1996, Eliza Ahmed had involved 32 schools in Canberra in a “Life at School Survey”. Children from ages 9 to 13 years ($n = 1401$) completed a questionnaire in class about themselves and their school experiences under the supervision of the researchers. The children were given a companion survey to take home for their parents to complete. Parents returned a completed, sealed questionnaire to a collection box at the school at their convenience ($n = 978$). Parent and child surveys had matching identification numbers, so that they could be paired later for purposes of data analysis. At the end of the parental survey, families willing to take part in a follow-up survey were asked to provide their name and address. This group formed the sample for a 1999 “Life at School Survey”. The combined 1996 and 1999 data sets comprising 333 parents and 341 children were used to seek answers to three questions:

- a) How relevant and malleable are shame management skills in the context of reducing school violence across different age groups?
- (b) If relevant, is it possible for schools to strengthen shame management skills as part of the school’s behaviour management program, or are such practices learnt primarily from parents, perhaps even before children go to school?
- (c) If shame management skills are relevant and can be developed in the school context, how accepting are parents of a restorative justice approach that relies on shame management for dealing with school bullying and conflict among students?

All of these questions needed to be answered before we could recommend intervention programs for schools based on restorative justice principles.

Shame management: still relevant and malleable after three years?

In 1996, Ahmed (2001) demonstrated that two aspects of shame management, shame acknowledgment and shame displacement, were important predictors of bullying behaviour. Shame acknowledgment and displacement are measured through presenting children with a set of different scenarios in which one child is described bullying another and is caught in the act by the teacher. In each case, the child is asked to imagine himself/herself as the wrongdoer and to answer a series of yes (2)/no (1) questions. For shame acknowledgment the questions are: (a) Would you feel ashamed of yourself? (b) Would you wish you could just hide?, (c) Would you feel like blaming yourself for what happened?, (d) Do you think others would reject you?, and (e) Would you feel like making the situation better?. For shame displacement the questions are: (a) Would you feel like blaming others for what happened?, (b) Would you be unable to decide if you were to blame?, (c) Would you feel angry in this situation?, (d) Would you feel like getting back at that student?, and (e) Would you feel like doing something else, for example, throwing or kicking something?. Ahmed's analyses showed that children who bullied other children were more likely to adopt a shame management pattern of low acknowledgment and high displacement, and that this pattern explained variation in bullying behaviour even after controlling for a number of other variables that had previously been linked with bullying. Among the list were measures of family disharmony, stigmatising and harsh child rearing practices, indicators of school performance and school satisfaction, perceptions of a bullying culture in the school, and personality variables such as impulsivity, empathy, self-esteem and internal locus of control (see Ahmed, 2001 for details).

Knowing that children involved in bullying others were less likely to acknowledge shame over such actions and were more likely to displace shame was consistent with our basic assumption that if we could change children's shame management strategies in

relation to bullying we might be able to halt the repeated pattern of bullying that was so destructive for both victims and offenders. Ahmed's (2001) data suggested that children who bullied others did not have the self-regulatory mechanism needed to think that this was not something they would want to do again. At the same time, these data were cross-sectional and were collected among primary school children: As such, they could not shed light on the possibility that shame management was a deeply entrenched behavioural pattern that could not be readily changed. Moreover, it was not clear that shame management would continue to be important later on. In 1996, all participants were pre-adolescent. With the transition to secondary school, it was possible that shame management would lose its potency as a predictor of bullying. By adolescence, bullying may have become a regular part of life.

In order to establish whether or not shame management was both relevant and malleable, the 1999 "Life at School Survey" data set were analysed. 314 parent-child dyads had completed the survey in both 1996 and 1999.

First of all, a core set of measures taken in 1996 and 1999 were correlated across time. Children's survey responses were used to form the following measures: (a) self-reported bullying behaviour, (b) the number of friends at school, (c) hassles and worries at home, (d) hassles and worries at school, (e) hassles and worries with others socially, (f) empathy, (g) impulsivity, (h) perceptions of a bullying culture in the school, (i) shame acknowledgment and (j) shame displacement. All measures, with the exception of shame acknowledgment, and shame displacement, were based on previously used survey instruments (see Ahmed, 2001 for description of measures).

Also included were parent's likely responses to seeing their own child bully another. Our interest in parental attributions about bullying grew out of our second question: How important are parents as socializing agents who influence whether or not children develop adaptive shame management skills? In order to measure parental attributions

about a child's behaviour, parents were given the same bullying scenarios presented to the children and were asked how they would respond if they saw their child behaving in this way. Parents judged their child on (k) future likelihood of his/her behaving in this way, (l) intentionality of the act, (m) responsibility for the act, and (n) controllability of the act. These measures were developed specifically for this purpose and are described in full in Ahmed, 2001.

The correlations across the three-year time span were positive and significant in all but one case (range was .17 to .39). The strongest correlation emerged for the measures of impulsivity ($r = .39$) and family hassles ($r = .39$). Children who were impulsive and reported family hassles in 1996 were more likely to be relatively high scorers on these dimensions in 1999. Also of note was the finding that children who were engaged in bullying others in 1996 were significantly more likely to be bullying others in 1999 ($r = .26$). Similarly, measures of shame acknowledgment in 1996 and 1999 were interrelated ($r = .31$) as were those of shame displacement ($r = .23$)¹.

While these results suggest a degree of stability on a range of psychological, social and behavioural attributes over time, they do not answer the question of their relative importance in predicting the future bullying activities of the child. More specifically, do the shame management skills acquired in primary school limit a child's capacity to turn away from bullying behaviours at secondary school, or do other factors come into play as children mature?

This question was addressed using ordinary least squares regression analysis. The outcome variable was involvement in bullying others in 1999. The first set of predictors entered into the equation were the control variables of age, sex and bullying behaviour in 1996 (the same bullying measure as had been used in 1999 so that we could interpret the findings in terms of the prediction of change in bullying behaviour). After this the

¹ All of the mentioned correlations were significant at the .001. The correlations were partial

1996 measures were entered for the number of friends the child had at school, the child's reports of hassles and worries at home, at school and socially, the personality variables of empathy and impulsivity, perceptions of a bullying culture in the school, the shame management skills, and parental interpretations of bullying behaviour should it occur in their child.

The results appear under Model 1 in Table 1. Bullying behaviour was likely to increase over time for children who, in 1996, scored high on impulsivity, experienced hassles in relation to their academic performance, reported having lots of friends, and perceived their school as harbouring a bullying culture. It is of note that neither shame acknowledgment nor shame displacement in 1996 played a direct role in shaping future bullying behaviour. In other words, whether or not a child had adaptive shame management skills in 1996 was not a predictor of whether or not they would be drawn to bullying others later on.

The next stage of the analysis substituted the measures taken in 1999 for the 1996 measures with three exceptions – age, sex and bullying in 1996 (see Model 2). This time, bullying in 1996 emerged as a predictor (in the absence of other 1996 measures), together with the 1999 measures of impulsivity, the degree to which the child perceived the school as harbouring a bullying culture, shame acknowledgment and shame displacement. These findings suggest that school culture and shame management within that culture at the time the bullying is occurring are important factors in unravelling bullying behaviour. At the same time, past involvement in bullying behaviour is not irrelevant – past offending increases the likelihood of future offending.

Finally, the 1996 and 1999 measures were entered together (see Model 3). Children whose bullying behaviour increased over time had significantly higher levels of impulsivity in 1996 and 1999. Their views of their circumstances in 1999 were protective of their bullying status. They perceived a flourishing and accepted bullying

culture in the school and they showed a greater resistance to shame acknowledgment over hypothetical bullying incidents, along with a readiness to displace shame.

Table 1: Beta coefficients with adjusted R-squared for three regression models predicting bullying behaviour in 1999

Predictors ²	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Control variables</i>			
age	.08	-.01	.01
sex	.09	.03	.02
bullying in 1996	.11	.14**	.09
<i>1996 measures</i>			
number of friends	.13*		.05
family hassles	-.03		-.02
school hassles	.14*		.06
social hassles	-.02		-.02
impulsivity	.18**		.14*
empathy	.01		.02
perceptions of a bullying school culture	.12*		.07
shame acknowledgment	-.09		.01
shame displacement	.07		-.02
future likelihood from parent	.01		.00
intentionality attribution from parent	.07		.03
responsibility attribution from parent	-.02		-.04
controllability attribution from parent	-.07		-.04
<i>1999 measures</i>			
number of friends		.05	.05
family hassles		-.01	-.02

² Variables are scored such that an increase in score reflects an increase in the attribute being measured.

school hassles	.10	.08	
social hassles	-.05	-.03	
impulsivity	.18***	.13*	
empathy	-.05	-.06	
perceptions of a bullying school culture	.12*	.12*	
shame acknowledgment	-.30***	-.28***	
shame displacement	.16***	.17**	
future likelihood from parent	.08	.09	
intentionality attribution from parent	-.02	-.01	
responsibility attribution from parent	.01	.03	
controllability attribution from parent	.00	.00	
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R-squared	.21***	.36***	.39***
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Adjusted R-squared	.17***	.32***	.32***
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* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

These findings show shame management skills as being relevant during the period when bullying is taking place. The shame management skills shown in relation to bullying episodes three years earlier do not appear to have a direct bearing on later bullying behaviour. By the same token, the importance of shame management is not bound by the innocence of childhood. Ahmed's findings with 9 to 12 year olds were replicated in Model 2 with the same children, now in their teenage years (12 years to 16 years). Children not involved in bullying were more likely to manage shame adaptively in their teenage years.

Shame acknowledgment and displacement appear to be reactions to bullying that are contained by space and time. This is encouraging from the perspective of a school intervention. If children's bullying actions were traced primarily to shame management skills learnt years before in primary school or in the family, prospects of a successful

social intervention at the time bullying was occurring would be reduced. At the same time, these findings should not be interpreted as showing that shame management is a will-o'-the-wisp phenomenon. Ahmed (2001) describes adaptive shame management skills as akin to having a conscience. If this is so, learning to manage shame well in early childhood should give the child a head start in applying shame management skills in a range of different contexts later on.

In summary, shame management does not appear to be an aspect of temperament like impulsivity, that leaves some children dispositionally vulnerable to getting into trouble from childhood through adolescence. If shame management is conceived as a situational response, there may be some possibility of altering it through re-examining the bullying context with offender and victim. Also of importance in these analyses is the consistent finding that children who bully others perceive their school environment as being tolerant of bullying. In other words, such children fail to perceive school disapproval for the harmful actions in which they engage. Interventions for bullying need to be sensitive to the disposition of the child, particularly impulsivity, mindful of the poor shame management skills that accompany bullying, and critically aware of the school culture in which the bullying incident has taken place. The next question to ask is what are the antecedents of shame management skills? How much are they shaped by past events and how much by the present, how much by the home and how much by the school? If we want to elicit acknowledgment and discourage displacement, what are the points of leverage, and where are we likely to be blocked in a restorative justice intervention?

Shame management: learning to be adaptive

Ahmed's (2001) research showed that if a school was to control bullying, it needed to encourage acknowledgment of its harm and discourage displacement of blame onto the victim or the situation that gave rise to the incident. Ahmed pointed to two personality

variables that were relevant to the realization of this goal. Empathy among students for children who were bullied was a factor conducive to what we call the adaptive shame management pattern of high acknowledgment and low displacement. The personal characteristic that was least likely to be associated with adaptive shame management was impulsivity. Impulsive children were more likely to display low acknowledgment and high displacement. These findings suggest that a restorative justice intervention might be successful in dealing with school bullying if it creates a safe space for children to learn to see things from the perspective of others, and for impulsive children to develop adaptive shame management skills.

In order to find out if a restorative justice intervention was likely to improve shame management skills, a further set of regression analyses were tested in which the 1996 and 1999 measures were used to predict first 1999 levels of shame acknowledgment, and then 1999 levels of shame displacement.

Table 2: Beta coefficients with adjusted R-squared for regression models predicting shame acknowledgment and shame displacement in 1999

Predictors ³	1999 outcome variable	
	Shame acknowledgment	Shame displacement
<i>Control variables</i>		
age	-.11*	-.04
sex	-.11*	.01
acknowledgment 1996	.24***	-.04
displacement 1996	-.09	.21***
<i>1996 measures</i>		
number of friends	-.04	.11

³ Variables are scored such that an increase in score reflects an increase in the attribute being measured.

family hassles	-.05	-.13
school hassles	.02	.08
social hassles	.02	.04
impulsivity	.01	-.01
empathy	-.08	-.03
perceptions of a bullying school culture	-.13*	-.02
future likelihood from parent	-.04	.05
intentionality attribution from parent	.15*	-.16*
responsibility attribution from parent	.03	.11
controllability attribution from parent	-.09	.06
<i>1999 measures</i>		
number of friends	-.04	.04
family hassles	-.01	.24***
school hassles	-.13*	-.04
social hassles	.14*	.02
impulsivity	-.04	.08
empathy	.37***	-.09
perceptions of a bullying school culture	-.10	.14*
future likelihood from parent	-.02	-.08
intentionality attribution from parent	-.04	.07
responsibility attribution from parent	-.05	.00
controllability attribution from parent	-.05	-.02
R-squared	.41***	.19***
Adjusted R-squared	.36***	.11***

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Children's capacity to acknowledge shame in 1999 was predicted by both earlier

experiences and attributes (as measured in 1996) and by more contextually relevant measures taken in 1999. First, it is of note that acknowledgment was less likely to occur among boys and older children. Acknowledgment of shame was aided by being able to acknowledge shame earlier in primary school.

Other factors measured in 1996 that were important predictors of shame acknowledgment in 1999 were tolerance of a bullying school culture and parental rejection of the idea that their child would intentionally bully another in a scenario context. This latter finding contradicted our hypothesis in an important way. Our initial thinking was that accusing one's own child of intentionally hurting another would be stigmatizing to that child, and therefore damaging to self-esteem and confidence. On reflection, however, we realized that our measure asked parents to interpret an imaginary situation where they actually saw their child bully another child. Therefore, what we were measuring was a parent's willingness to accept evidence that appears before their eyes and to face up to a situation where their child intentionally engages in a harmful act. Interestingly, parents who were prepared to confront rather than avoid the problem in 1996 were more likely to have children who were able to acknowledge shame three years on. We now interpret this finding as showing that adaptive shame management involves parents in not only setting limits on what behaviour is appropriate or not in the abstract, but also being prepared to call children to account for inappropriate behaviour when it occurs. Parents who allow their children to wriggle out of difficult situations with excuses and "on technicalities" are likely to have children who fail to develop adaptive shame management skills. In these findings we are possibly catching a glimpse of the parental and school actions that contribute to the development of conscience in children in the domain of bullying behaviour.

The contemporaneous measures that affected shame acknowledgment were having empathy for other children and having hassles at school. Shame acknowledgment was higher among children who expressed empathy for others and who were having

difficulties at school socially. Acknowledgment was lower in cases where the difficulties were associated with school work.

In sum, past socialization and contemporary social context appear to join forces in shaping a capacity to acknowledge wrongdoing in relation to bullying. The most important of the contemporary context variables was empathy. If children in a school share strong positive social bonds with each other, shame acknowledgment is more likely to occur. This finding fits into our general thesis that safe space is important for shame acknowledgment and provides essential background for effective reintegrative shaming interventions in schools.

While the prediction of shame acknowledgment was quite strong from these data, prediction of shame displacement was poor. A tendency to displace shame in 1996 predicted later displacement, and again, parents who were unwilling to accept that their child intentionally hurt another in a scenario context were more likely to have children who later displaced shame in the bullying context. Contemporary measures that affected displacement were related to home and school. Displacement was more common when children reported hassles at home and when they perceived bullying as being tolerated at school.

The findings from this research suggest the following:

- (1) Bullying behaviour does not disappear as children get older.
- (2) Bullying behaviour is accompanied by poor skills in being able to acknowledge wrongdoing and a tendency to displace blame and anger onto others. Such tendencies are interpreted as part of the self-regulatory system that we commonly refer to as conscience.
- (3) Schools that are seen to tolerate bullying provide a fertile ground for the expansion of bullying activity and weaken the shame management skills that might lead children to

desist from bullying.

(4) Parents have a role to play in developing shame management skills in their children. Parents who were unable to accept intentional wrongdoing in their child in an imaginary situation had children who, three years later, had poor shame management skills.

Together, these findings support current best practice of adopting a “whole of school” approach to bullying. Teachers, students and parents work together to create a culture in which bullying is not condoned and one in which children can expect to feel safe from predatory behaviour of any kind. The findings also warn, however, that children who step outside the rules and bully others in this culture are not going to be helped by exclusion or marginalization. The temperament of impulsivity, for instance, will always leave some children vulnerable to a hasty thoughtless act. Furthermore, hassles created at school, by friends or in the family, will always be occurring and will leave some children emotionally fragile and insecure, despite the prevailing supportive culture. Such children at times may engage in anti-social activities of various kinds. Rejecting such children through suspension and expulsion from a cohesive and generally supportive school community is likely to do more harm than rejecting them from a fragmented group full of competing, mutually hostile sub-cultures. If the “whole of school” approach is adopted, dealing with acts of wrongdoing through restorative justice practices appears to be the optimal solution. Not only is it in the best interests of the child but also, through being consistent with the school philosophy, the restorative justice approach adds to the integrity of the school culture.

Would parents be accepting of a restorative justice intervention?

As one of the two major learning environments for children, schools should not be places disrupted by unnecessary change and strife. If restorative justice practices are to be introduced into schools, authorities need to know what parents think, what concerns they are likely to have and how they will view such procedures.

Previous work based on the 1996 data set of 978 parents provided some important insights into how parents wanted the problem of school bullying controlled by authorities (Braithwaite, 2000). These findings were confirmed by Morrison (2001) in her research with teachers and parents on trialling intervention programs in particular schools. Parents consistently favoured non-punitive strategies, usually to the surprise of teachers. Overwhelmingly, parents believed that the first approach should be dialogic, with resort to more punitive measures occurring only when the dialogic had failed.

Nonetheless, constituencies of support could be found for both dialogic and more traditional punitive strategies. The analysis of the 1996 data (Braithwaite, 2000) revealed that preferences for dialogue or punishment for dealing with school bullying was largely a question of ideology. Furthermore, ideology outweighed in importance the experience of having a child who was a victim or offender. Those who supported more punitive traditional strategies prioritized security concerns, they saw the world in competitive terms, looked at individuals as isolated entities, and supported action to expel the bad apples. They were of the view that children who were bullies could not be changed. The ideological base was inherently conservative viewing the triumph of good over evil in terms of authorities using a command and control system to deter would-be offenders.

In contrast, a dialogic approach was based upon an ideology that sought security through harmonizing the social bonds among members of the society. The approach to regulation was not individualistic but relational, favouring social solutions that would rehabilitate wrongdoers. Children who bullied were seen as basically good kids who had got into trouble. A problem solving approach offering mutual respect, discussion and support was seen as essential for the effective management of bullying. Fundamental to this position was trust in the democracy.

The combined 1996 and 1999 data set offered an opportunity to further examine the

question of how parents would respond to restorative justice processes being introduced into the school. It also allowed us the opportunity to ask if three basic principles of restorative justice, that is, acknowledgment of wrongdoing, readiness to repair the harm done, and reintegration as opposed to segregation of the offender, were ideals that were compatible with the dialogic approach that had already been shown to have a strong following among parents in the schools.

The regression analyses used to answer these questions relied on two outcome variables that captured the kinds of strategies considered by schools to be desirable and practicable at the time the research was conducted. The first comprised actions that illustrated a dialogic relational approach to dealing with bullying, and included strategies such as role-playing and story-telling to explain why bullying was bad, meetings with parents and students to develop anti-bullying guidelines for the school, peer mediation, and the signing of contractual obligations to desist from bullying. The second involved the school in prioritizing punitive individualized actions such as the taking away of privileges if class rules were broken, sending offending individuals to the principal's office, suspension from school for a week or two, and expulsion.

Using ordinary least squares regression analysis, we predicted preference for dialogic relational actions and preference for punitive individualized actions from three restorative justice attitude scales developed by Brenda Morrison and Monika Reinhart. The acknowledgment scale required parents to state how important the following principles were in dealing effectively with school bullying: (a) ensuring the bully has the opportunity to express/acknowledge the harm done to others, (b) ensuring the bully has the opportunity to express/acknowledge the harm done to themselves, (c) ensuring the victim has the opportunity to express/acknowledge the harm done to others, and (d) ensuring the victim has the opportunity to express/acknowledge the harm done to themselves. The reintegration scale comprised the following principles: (a) ensuring that the bully has the opportunity to feel like a valued member of the school community, (b)

community, (c) developing supportive ties within the school community for the bully, (d) developing supportive ties within the school community for the victim, (e) ensuring that the bully has the opportunity to be forgiven by those affected, and (f) ensuring that the victim has the opportunity to be forgiven by those affected. Reparation involved acceptance of the following principles: (a) ensuring the bully carries out some form of reparation, and (b) the form of reparation should focus on the victim and his/her family. Finally, a segregation measure was included as this would make the introduction of a restorative justice program virtually impossible in a school context. The scale comprised two items with which parents were asked to agree or disagree: (a) Bullies must be separated from those they are hurting, and (b) Victims must be separated from those who bully them.

In addition to these predictors, a number of variables were included representing ideological position and personal experience. Ideology was represented by four measures taken from 1996 and used in the earlier analysis of what parents want schools to do about bullying (see Braithwaite, 2000 for a full description of measures). Included were the basic value orientations of security (involving the competitive pursuit of finite resources) and harmony (involving the pursuit of peaceful and cooperative relations with others through sharing resources), and attitudes to child rearing that represented a command and control style (using authority and expecting obedience to achieve results) and a self-regulatory style (encouraging open and honest discussion in a mutually respectful manner). The reasoning behind taking these measures from the 1996 sample was that if people's preferences had an ideological base, that base would contain long-held values and beliefs about how children should be treated and how society should be structured.

The experiential variables included in the regression analyses represented whether or not the parent was aware that his or her child had been accused of bullying or was a victim

and the community to contribute constructively to the problem of solving school bullying, and the degree to which parents believed that children who bullied could change their ways. All of these measures were taken in 1996 and 1999 (see Braithwaite, 2000 for a description of the measures). The results reported below are based on the 1999 experiential measures.

Table 3: Beta coefficients with adjusted R-squared for regression models predicting parental support for dialogic relational approaches and punitive individualized approaches to school bullying in 1999

Predictors	1999 outcome variable	
	Dialogic relational	Punitive individualized
<i>1996 ideology measures</i>		
security value orientation	.09	.21***
harmony value orientation	.26***	-.11
command and control parenting	-.04	.15*
self-regulatory parenting	-.04	-.03
<i>1999 experiential measures</i>		
child a victim	-.08	.00
child accused of bullying	.03	.03
likelihood of changing bully	.05	-.06
trust in authorities	.26***	.04
trust in community	.03	-.14*
<i>1999 restorative justice principles</i>		
acknowledgment	.15**	.00
reparation	.02	.20***
reintegration	.14*	-.03
segregation	.08	.13*

R-squared	.34***	.26***
Adjusted R-squared	.31***	.23***

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Parents who regarded the relational dialogic approach as essential for dealing effectively with bullying were more likely to subscribe to a value system that emphasized societal harmony and cooperation. Such parents also expressed trust in those in authority to constructively contribute to solving the bullying problem. They believed that the process of resolution should involve acknowledgment of the harm done from the perspective of both victim and bully and should enable both victim and bully to be reintegrated into the school community with respect, support and forgiveness.

In contrast, parents who believed that punitive individualized strategies would be essential to controlling bullying problems held a value system that emphasized competition for resources, playing within the rules, and having the status and power to ensure security for oneself and one's group. The philosophy of command and control was evident in preferred child rearing strategies that were protective and restrictive and that emphasized achievement, self-discipline, and obedience. Such parents expressed low trust in the community, and believed that principles of segregation and reparation should underlie strategies for dealing with school bullying.

Importantly, the approach that parents wanted schools to take in dealing with bullying was not tied to their beliefs about how their child was being affected by bullying at school. Preferences were shaped by a broader worldview.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, we have used data from the “Life at School Survey” to identify the contextual factors that are fundamental to restorative justice practices working effectively in schools. Our findings support the view that a “whole of school” approach to establishing a community of care in which bullying is regarded as out of bounds is the foundation for any restorative justice intervention. Disapproval for bullying must first come from the school community, and be shared by children, teachers, and parents. The shared and open opposition to bullying within the school community is fundamental to establishing school norms that recognize bullying behaviours as harmful (and not playful) activities. Such norms underlie the establishment of a safe school and the cultivation of adaptive shame management skills in children so that they can self-regulate their own and others’ tendencies to bully.

The second objective was to describe an approach that allows interaction between theory building, theory testing, and practice, and embraces the interdependency of these endeavours. The first wave of data collection in the “Life at School Survey” and Nathan Harris’ work on the Reintegrative Shaming Experiments (RISE) informed the revision of reintegrative shaming theory (Ahmed, Harris, Braithwaite, & Braithwaite, 2001). The follow-up study enabled us to replicate and extend some of our earlier conclusions in a way that would enable the setting up of a contextually sensitive restorative justice intervention program. The research also alerted us to sources of concern and opposition from parents, providing us with an approach to introducing restorative justice in an inclusive and non-threatening way. The most strongly supported strategy involving an escalating set of sanctions, with traditional punishment on the menu only when relational strategies had failed, recognized the presence of different voices that often compete for ascendancy in the school community.

In walking the bridge between theoretical understanding and practice, we were able to satisfy ourselves that contextually, shame management was important, even if we had not reached the stage of unteasing its complex interrelationships with other variables. We

had taken the research to a point where it was clear that the capacity to manage shame adaptively needs nurturing in institutional settings. In this sense we emerged with the conviction that a restorative justice intervention program to address school bullying was a healthy alternative to a more legalistic approach to the problem.

Of fundamental importance in our coming to this view was the active role of parents and the school in promoting shame management. The research findings confirmed the story that socialization theorists have traditionally told. Society functions smoothly, in large part, because of agreed standards of behaviour that we learn over a life time, that we internalize, and that eventually become part of our belief system of “shoulds” and “should nots”, that is, of conscience. What happens to children when they are young affects how they respond in later years. And here the leadership of parents was shown to be critically important. Parents can hold children to account for their actions, particularly in relation to coming to terms with intentionality. The finding that a precursor to poor shame management was a parent not accepting intentionality on the part of the child alerts us to the special role parents play in confronting children with their own misdeeds.

Although this result is not at all surprising theoretically, its implications for the practice of institutional design are of considerable interest. An increasing number of cases of bullying are being arbitrated within the formal legal system in Britain, the United States, and more recently Australia. As admirable as this development may be in making a statement that bullying is unacceptable in our society, its repercussions for other parts of the social regulatory system need to be monitored diligently and systematically. Schools may respond to the fear of legal action with a greater sense of responsibility and follow the widely recommended “whole of school” approach. This would be a desirable outcome, but requires adaptive shame management at the organizational level. Some workplaces are not so blessed. It is conceivable that some schools will not acknowledge failing the students themselves, but rather push responsibility down the

chain to the parents of those who bully others. If parents see that the legal consequences of bullying can be costly, socially and materially, for the child and the family, they may also come to the view that self-protection through deflection is their best option.

This challenges parental responsibilities in an unexpected way. Parents of children who are prone to bullying others might be wise to limit damage to their family through denying that the child had any intention of hurting another. If denial is seen as the prudent response across institutional settings (that is, the family, the school and the court) children will miss out on the opportunity of being confronted with wrongdoing by their most significant others and learning to deal adaptively with the subsequent feelings of shame in a safe environment. Over-reliance on courts to settle bullying incidents may extinguish some important parent-child dynamics that lie at the heart of curtailing bullying early on.

Ideal practice in institutional design would harness the benefits of using the formal legal system to assert normative standards that oppose bullying while supporting institutions of accountability within families and schools. Through heeding the lessons of research and becoming sensitive to the ways in which children learn the art of managing their shame adaptively, we can protect those family and school institutions that are so important to the transmission of adaptive shame management skills. Unless we do, we may destroy an essential element of social regulation, and in its place leave a far more threatening “catch-me-if-you-can” social order. In this respect, restorative justice practice is a constructive offering, strengthening family responsibility for adaptive shame management and legitimating the role of the school in enabling, rather than stifling, the character development of the child.

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