

Special Section Editorial: Workshop on Aggression 2023

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The 'Workshop on Aggression' is a small and intimate annual conference, which focuses on advances in aggression research. Traditionally, the conference has been hosted in German-speaking countries, before expanding into an international audience. In 2023, and for the first time ever, the Workshop on Aggression was hosted in England. Spanning across two days, the event was hosted at Senate House, situated in Bloomsbury, London. The event was organised by Hannah Brett, and supported by her doctoral supervisors, Prof Alice Jones Bartoli and Prof Peter K. Smith.


The conference provided an opportunity for attendees to celebrate the 80th birthday of Professor Peter K. Smith, offering him congratulations on his contributions to the field of bullying research.


The event saw two keynote speakers: Professor Lucy Bowes from Magdalen College, University of Oxford, and Professor Peter K. Smith from Goldsmiths, University of London. Professor Bowes

opened the event with a keynote presentation on the role of the family in childhood bullying involvement, focusing on different family aspects, such as siblings, parenting behaviours, and genetics. Meanwhile, Professor Smith shared a keynote presentation on cultural variations in school bullying, with discussion of the challenges of drawing conclusions of bullying rates cross-culturally, and the impact on the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions. It was evident from both keynote speakers that cross-cultural work is an imperative part of progressing the literature on aggression and bullying.

Two interactive panels were also organised during the Workshop on Aggression, which were aimed predominantly at Early Career Researchers (ECRs). Professor Alice Jones Bartoli led a panel on academic publishing, which offered guidance on submitting papers, managing the peer review process, and becoming a reviewer and an Editor. Meanwhile, Dr Saskia Fischer led a panel with Dr Antonia Paljakka and Dr Karlien Demol for the 'European Young Researchers Network on Teachers' Role in School Bullying'. This was an opportunity to share the work of this researchers within the networking group, and following to the Workshop on Aggression has been renamed the 'European Early Researchers Network on School Bullying'. The group offers an opportunity for ECRs to work collaboratively on new research, with possibilities for cross-cultural studies:

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there are currently around 55 members in the network across 16 countries, including some outside of Europe.

Across the two days, a total of 24 oral presentations and 7 poster presentations were held: research conducted by a total of 74 scholars was shared, spanning across 17 countries and 4 continents. One of the long-standing strengths of this workshop is its support for early career researchers, and as such participants are welcome to share work in progress as well as completed studies. This special section includes two such completed studies presented at the workshop, and we look forward to future special sections seeing the conclusion of work mentioned in the workshop round-up below. Many thanks to all presenters for sharing their work and inviting feedback.

Session one had a focus on the role of teachers in children's bullying involvement: Peter Macaulay presented an ongoing systematic review of parent-teacher collaborations in preventing bullying; Saskia Fischer discussed an ongoing systematic review of teachers' responses to bullying incidents; Karlien Demol presented an ongoing qualitative study of teachers' bystander behaviours from the perspective of students; Viola Lechner made some recommendations based on a qualitative study exploring the attitudes of school staff towards barriers and resources for (cyber-)bullying prevention and intervention, which included a desire for clear action plans, training, and greater collaboration and direct involvement from parents, students, and social workers (Lechner et al., 2023); Dziuginta Baraldnes presented an investigation of teachers' use of anti-bullying activities, with consideration of how different characteristics influence these, such as age, gender and length of experience. A key theme that existed within all of these presentations was the need for active efforts from teachers, but equally collaborative efforts from parents and students alike.

Session two centred around peer bullying and aggression: Thomas Gumpel shared two research presentations: one explored sexual aggression, looking into whether perpetrators and victims can be grouped into latent classes and whether traits are similar between these, and the other offered a parsimonious conceptualisation of the participant role approach in peer bullying. Laura Jacobs shared an ongoing qualitative study of peer victimisation and pathways to sexual offending; Marina Camodeca presented a longitudinal study of the association between social

anxiety, developmental period and immigrant status in predicting bullying victimisation, with the results demonstrating a cumulative risk of these factors; Tiina Turunen presented a study of how bullying perpetration in Grade 3 is associated with psychosocial adjustment four and five years later. The complexity of peer victimisation was an ongoing theme throughout these presentations, with all researchers offering suggestions on how to best conceptualise and explain this phenomenon.

On the important and rapidly developing theme of cyberbullying: Naska Goagoses shared a cross-continental qualitative study, which examined the views of children across Finland, Malaysia, and Namibia towards cyberbullying, and their development of anti-cyberbullying materials; Oonagh Steer presented a study on the severity perception of humouristic, aggressive behaviours, and found that audience, degree of humour, and gender all impacted severity perception; Lucy Betts presented an exploration into whether optimistic beliefs surrounding cyberbullying are influenced by previous experiences of cyberbullying or technology use (Betts et al., 2024); Sarah Buglass presented a study exploring cyberbullying within adult student and non-student samples, and found that fear of missing out (FoMO) was a motivator for spending more time online; Hana Machackova presented an early-stages longitudinal study into perpetration and victimisation in both online and offline spheres, with consideration of at-risk adolescents. From these presentations, it is clear that the existing research into cyberbullying is progressing substantially, and our understanding of who is at risk and what factors impact online aggression are improving considerably.

The fourth session took a focus on political violence and hate speech: Oskari Lahtinen explored what factors were correlated with finding political violence justified, and found that political left and political right individuals have different profiles in finding violence justified; Ludwig Bilz shared an ongoing study of the influence of situational factors on adolescents' use of counter speech towards hate speech in schools; Marie Bedrosova presented an ongoing longitudinal study of the causal pathways between discrimination and cyberhate exposure for young people; Anja Schultze-Krumbholz explored the influence of bystander reactions and severity of online hate speech on adolescent's responses, and found that whilst these factors did not impact responses, those who do not endorse online hate speech are more likely to report it;

Anke Görzig shared an ongoing study of teachers' responses to identity-based social exclusion, with exploration of individual- and system-level influences. The research presented in this session offered an insight into a very relevant and current issue, and each researcher provided thoughtful considerations into what can cause this issue to occur, and how research is necessary for improving prevention efforts.

The wider themes of aggression were explored in the fifth session, including sibling bullying, image-based sexual abuse, and aggression. Hannah Brett shared a qualitative study of the experiences of foster children in relation to peer and sibling bullying, with initial themes surrounding vulnerabilities, interpersonal relationships, and efforts to address bullying alone; Georgina Mclocklin shared a qualitative study which sought to understand why victims of image-based sexual abuse may be reluctant to seek help, which has since been published (Mclocklin et al., 2024); Eva van Kelecom shared the initial stages of a study utilising adolescent samples in investigating sibling violence, whilst reflecting on the previous research that has been limited by retrospective studies; Marie Kollek presented a study of males' honour norms and aggressive behaviour in school-age children, finding that endorsement of honour norms predicted aggressive behaviour at the individual-level, but not the contextual-level.

Finally, a session specifically for poster presentations was held. Topics covered workforce development for teachers to manage school bullying (Antonia Paljakka) a retrospective view of the deleterious impact of childhood bullying on later romantic relationships (Shanie Cogan); a whole-school approach to bullying in Lithuania and Norway (André Baraldsnes); a view of online harassment from young adults, stating stalking as a common concern (Rachel Austin); an alternative and human-centric view of definition criteria for bullying (Roderick Sherlock); an exploration of teachers' views on 'banter' – citing emoji use and intent as important considerations (Lucy Betts); and an introduction to a psychoeducation programme to develop socioemotional skills as a bullying prevention method (Paula García Carrera).

This special section presents two research papers. Betts and Macaulay (2024) investigated optimistic beliefs and cyberbullying experiences relative to others. For this, 444 participants were recruited

($M_{age} = 20.38$) from two UK-based universities. Participants self-reported their problematic internet use, FoMO, previous experiences of cyberbullying, and the likelihood with which they and eight comparator groups would experience cyberbullying. The results suggest that problematic internet use and being a victim negatively mediated the relationship between FoMO and optimistic beliefs, whilst witnessing these behaviours in their own lives within the last 9 months positively mediated this. Moreover, being a victim predicted reduced comparative optimism, and witnessing cyberbullying predicted increased comparative optimism.

Brett, Cooper, Smith, and Jones Bartoli (2024) investigated the experiences of children living in social care in relation to their interpersonal relationships and bullying involvement. Utilising secondary data from the 2014 and 2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) surveys, they compared children living in social care (residential and foster care; $n = 484$) with an age- and gender-matched control group living with biological family members ($n = 484$). They found that children living in social care were more likely to be involved in bullying, regardless of their age and gender; this contradicts the age and gender differences seen in non-care samples, and highlights the vulnerability of these children. The results also revealed that children in social care report significantly poorer interpersonal relationships, and these relationships – in particular, those with classmates – mediate the relationship between living in social care and bullying involvement.

The 27th Workshop on Aggression provided an opportunity for academics to come together and share their work in the field of aggression, network, and form new collaborative projects. We were also pleased to be able to honour Prof Peter Smith's contributions on the event of an important and landmark birthday. Exciting developments in the field were presented – with emerging concepts like FoMO and banter being given some focus, alongside a marked increase in the number of qualitative studies taking place – and opportunities to receive feedback on early-stages work were provided. The Workshop on Aggression allows us to see just how quickly the field is moving forward, and continues to be a productive experience. The 28th Workshop on Aggression is being hosted by academics from Nottingham Trent University in November 2024.

References

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Bio Sketches

Dr. Hannah Brett is a lecturer in Psychology at Kingston University. Her research has focused on how family factors may contribute to the risk of bullying involvement during adolescence, and the mediating role of family and school relationships. In particular, she is interested in between-sibling bullying, and the experiences of children living in social care.

Professor Alice Jones Bartoli is Professor of Psychology in Education at Goldsmiths, University of London and a Deputy Director at the National Children's Bureau, UK. She works primarily to understand factors contributing to social and academic exclusion, including schools' understanding of neurodiversity and children's experience of stress and school relationships.