Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams

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Michael Williams
HOD Student Support and Counseling
Edgewater College, Pakuranga.
Edgewater College
Pakuranga, Auckland. NZ

Roll: 887
Boys 52%, Girls: 48%
NZ Pakeha: 16%
Samoan: 16%
Maori: 17%
Tongan: 10%
Cook Island: 5%
Indian : 7%
Chinese: 6%
Decile 4
“Happier and safer schools are better schools; happier and safer students are better students”

Julia Gillard, PM Australia.
Covert bullying

A recent Australian study found that covert bullying has the potential to result in more severe psychological, social and mental health problems than overt bullying and is more difficult to detect and eliminate. Teachers see very little of bullying and are often shocked and surprised that it is happening in their class.
Secrecy Cycle of Bullying

- School culture where covert bullying is normalised
- Student believes that school/classroom culture condones bullying
- Victim of bullying less likely to report, suffers in silence
- Ineffective teacher/parent response (minimising seriousness, fobbing off, advice giving, exposing the victim/bully, punishment, etc)
- Inaction enfeebles young person
Traditional view of bullying

• Most common view is that people bully because “that’s what bullies do”
• Problem is located “within” pathological individuals who intend to do harm or abuse their power over others (Rygby, 2003) or those who lack moral conscience
• These people bully because of “who they are” and are often seen as a product of a dysfunctional family or culture
• They earn the label or reputation of “bully” by their actions and by the expectations of others
• They are identified by being “abnormal” and their actions are “unacceptable”
• Identification of “bullies’ requires teachers to make distinctions between individuals character based on a reading of their intentions and their relationship to the normal/moral order and requires prior condition of recognizability (Davies, 2011)
Traditional responses to bullying

- Most common approach is punitive and usually involve the identification of a bully and a victim, isolating the perpetrator and applying punishment.
- Anti-bullying programmes focus on “fixing” the bully and “treating” the victim by (re)normalising or (re)moralising the one who has a deficit. eg assertiveness programmes for victims and anger management for bullies.
- Implication (hidden curriculum) is that the right to bully is reserved for those in authority.
- Because of that: relationships are not transformed or restored and children never learn about their role in creating social justice.
- Resentment of authority a more likely outcome, revenge more likely.
- Punishment of bullies has limited effect.
- Little evidence from meta-studies to show that these type of programs make a lasting impact (Galloway and Rowland, 2004).
A Different Approach

• We need to ask how the school environment itself is producing actions considered to be a punishable offense

• Focus on the relational, situational and cultural dimensions of bullying (Davies, 2011)

• Function of bullying is the function of police

• Norms are maintained by students and produce a “student social order” (Davies et. al., 2009)

• Observers of bullying themselves know what they must do to preserve the social order and to produce themselves as normal and good students

• Schools must address the relational context of bullying

• Difference not seen as an error to be tolerated and/or obliterated, but as an expression of diversity
What is the Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams approach?

“A strategic intervention where the target of the bullying, the counsellor and teachers co-author an alternative story of peace and harmony by recruiting a group of influential students who simultaneously support the target of bullying and influence the class relationships”
What are they not?

Not counselling or group counselling
Not mediation
Not group work
Not conflict coaching
Not community circle
Not about blame or deficit
Not about finding the causes
Not about the counsellor as expert
A “Narrative” Approach

• Actions of students are seen as ‘played-out’ story lines with a plot trajectory. Students are participants in a storyline but can be invited to step out of the story line into an alternative one.

• The deliberate creation of a relational context of change and the production of a personalized plan of action

• The recruitment of an expanded team of significant members in the wider school community to support the production of an alternative set of classroom behaviours

• Production of a counter story of support and cooperation
This is achieved by:

• Privileging *stories* over facts

• The use of *externalizing conversations* to help students *extract* themselves from the *storyline* of bullying or inaction that has captured them (the problem is the problem, the person is not the problem)

• The clear *separation* of *stories* of humiliation and torment from stories and plans of *cooperation, respect* and *understanding*
Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams Address The Limitations of Punishment

And they:

- **Enhance** the *relationships* in the classroom and school community
- **Honour** the young peoples’ ability to solve their own *problems* in their own way
- **Accept, include** and **encourage** diversity
- Dramatically shifts the *balance* of power
Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams:

Offer team members a:

• A new pro-social ‘identity’ and support to develop that identity
• Anonymity to gain confidence with that identity
• A new understanding of the impact of bullying and how they can dislodge its power
• A framework and structure in which to act
Undercover Anti-Bullying teams offer:

• "Immunity from prosecution" i.e. a chance for both the bullies and the observers to start a new relationship and without "outing" or fear of punishment by the authorities

• An opportunity for team members to repair harm done either deliberately (perpetrators) or by inaction (observers) without losing face

• Support and monitoring to develop a new narrative
Practices

- Formal Restorative Conferences / Hui Whakatika
- Individualised followup and support
- Classroom Conference Circles
- Brief Restorative Interventions
  - Mediated Meetings
  - Counter-bullying work
  - Restorative tools for pastoral staff
- AOD Brief Interventions
- Restorative conversations.

Outcomes

(Described in the research)

- Fewer suspensions and exclusions
- Reduction of racial disparity from punitive tools
  - Wrongdoers, victims, staff and parents are satisfied with outcomes from formal restorative conferences
- Non-escalation of problems
- Fewer stand-downs and suspensions
- Fewer bullying problems
- Re-engagement of ‘at risk’ students
- Students empowered in problem solving
- Improving achievement rates
- Prevention of problematic behaviour school-wide
- Better attendance and punctuality
  - More time on task
- Relationships between students enhance learning
  - Improvements in students’ social and emotional competence – including management of shame
  - Lower dropout rates
The composition of the Undercover Team

- **Six** students chosen by the **victim** of bullying including **two “worst”** bullies
- **Four** students with **prestige** and **influence** in the class and **two worst “bullies”**
- Can be a **combination** of ethnicities and equal gender mix
- “Victim” helps select the team together with counsellor, critical part of the entire process
- Counselor/facilitator to show **concern** and **hope** (focus to be on **eliminating** bullying, not attributing blame)
- Formed for the sole **purpose** of **eliminating** bullying then **disbanded** when task is **completed**
- (Teachers then **consulted** about the **composition** of the team)
The Steps - A Calendar

Day 1: Interview the victim by him/herself. Complete the form together if appropriate for UT approach (15-30 min)

Day 2: Assemble and recruit the Undercover team – Read out the story of bullying, let them begin their plan (30-40 min). Teachers of core class informed of existence and purpose of team

Day 5: Check in with the victim to establish progress (15 min) Check with the teachers (email, 20 mins)

Day 7: Meet the Undercover team to check their progress and give encouragement (15 min)

Day 9: Check in with victim to monitor progress (10 min)

Day 14: Meet the Undercover team again to plan for the long-term. Final definitional ceremony and team evaluation surveys (20 min)
Day 1: Interview the Victim

- **Listen** with compassion and concern
- Establish what has happened (the story)
- Outline the Undercover Anti-Bullying Team approach as an option for the victim - explain that punishment is **not** involved
- Work with the victim to fill out the UABT **sheet**, including the **selection** of the **support** group
- Include the **teachers** in the plan (and **parents** if young person gives **permission**)
Consulting the “Victim”

• Victim of bullying usually will have **little confidence** that others will want to help and whether or not it will work
• Can use **archives** to reassure student
• Student informed that **teachers** of core classes consulted about the composition of team and included in the monitoring process
• Student told that UABT members will receive a **voucher** and Principals' **certificate** when the bullying has gone
• Victim of bullying asked to keep the Undercover Anti-bullying Team Approach a **secret** to class members in order to maximise its success
**Example Form**

**UNDERCOVER TEAM MEETING FORM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEAM NUMBER:</th>
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</table>

**Name of student to be supported:**

**Date of incident / concern:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutor Group</th>
<th>Core Group</th>
<th>Year Level:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief outline of incident / concern (where, when and what happened):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Physical assault
- Threat of assault
- Mocking/teasing
- Spreading rumours
- Theft
- Property destroyed
- Cyber bullying
- Exclusion from friendship
- Picking on personal difference
- Personal rejection
- Other
There has been racism, name calling, sometimes pushing, shoving and that’s basically it. Sometimes they take stuff out of my bag. They take my books, my pens, my lunchbox. They always make jokes about things that are black and they look at me.

Today we were just playing and they mentioned something about blackshit, they saw some dogshit and they looked at it and then at me and went ‘Oooo’. They were meaning that the dog shit was me. Most times they call me fat, they say something about what I eat, how I eat and they say stuff about my Mum. Sometimes I am just walking down the stairs and they bump in to me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief outline of incident / concern (where, when and what happened):</th>
<th>Physical assault</th>
<th>Threat of assault</th>
<th>Mocking/teasing</th>
<th>Spreading rumours</th>
<th>Theft</th>
<th>Property destroyed</th>
<th>Cyber bullying</th>
<th>Exclusion from friendship</th>
<th>Picking on personal difference</th>
<th>Personal rejection</th>
<th>Other Racist comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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Mostly they just look at me. I hate that. I hate people staring. I have been made to feel different because of my colour. Racist jokes and all, saying that I’m from Jamaica, black Sambo, and I’m from Zimbabwe. I was in history and I got this answer wrong and this kid said I was a dumb ass and he got his book and started hitting me on the head. It happened yesterday in science. He calls me names like dumb ass and sometimes racist names and he says something about my Mum’s private parts. He said he ‘did’ her last night. He hits my head with books.
**What effect did the incident have? Feelings? Thoughts?**

It makes me feel quite sad. It made me feel sometimes angry. I have thoughts that no one wants me here. It’s ‘cause they always exclude me and stuff and on the weekends when things are going on, they don’t tell me about it.
I would like them to get to know me and so we can become friends.
I thought when I came here that no one would really care about my skin colour and that they would just look at me as if I was a normal person. This all started in Intermediate and it’s just the same now. I’ve told my parents and they say, ‘just go to school, do your work and ignore it!”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashamed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Depressed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Going crazy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I am different</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t belong</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less confident</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More aggressive</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Powerless</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punished</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
It hasn’t really affected me much. But when we were in P.E. sometimes they choose other people and leave me alone. I am all alone and it feels like I am an outsider. Yeah, it has affected some of my work. I stopped focusing in class, and I couldn’t do my work.
It’s got me to think about concentrating on what I should be doing, like school work. Sometimes I wish I could go to a different school. Heaps of Zimbabweans go to Pakuranga College and nobody gets bullied there, nobody really cares about who you are or where you come from. I wish I could change school but it’s too far away. I had thought about punching the kids who say rude things about my Mum, but I stopped because I know that you shouldn’t get angry. It will just make it worse. I sometimes would like to say things back, but I’m not that good at making smart comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What has the bullying got you to do or contemplate doing?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say something back</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yell at them</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hit someone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk to a teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk to my parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bully someone else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurt myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get in trouble with a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skip class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stay home from school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run away from home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Ideally, how would you like things to be?**

No racism, no name calling. We’d all just be friends. We’d make jokes and laugh. I don’t want them to be punished or stood down. I just want to be included by them. I’d like to be treated with respect, you know? That they’d be nice to me.

**Names of six classmates:**

1. Dylan
2. Caleb
3. Joshua
4. Martin
5. Megan
6. Leah
Hi Teachers

Luisa ... has told me a story about some bullying of the continual teasing, name calling, mocking family type, what others might think as “low level” but to her its big and causing her to switch off school. Together we think that an Undercover Team might work well to eliminate the bullying.

She has selected:

  Jamieson ...
  Filimoni ...
  Elyah ...
  Alwyn ...
  George ...
  Ebony ...

as students she wants to support her. Remember that in this group are the two “worst bullies”.

Considering what you know about these students and others in the class, can you suggest any others that may be more suitable?

If you think this is a good team to work undercover, searching out bullying when they see it and getting rid of it, don’t reply. I need to call the team together tomorrow during options so would appreciate your prompt feedback.

On the side of a bullying free school,

Mike.
Day 2: The First UATB Meeting

- Facilitator’s **tone** is one of concern and helplessness rather than anger and blame
- Young people will be confused and often worried
- Facilitator suggests **working together** to co-author a new story and efforts to be recognised by Principal
- No individual is “outed” or blamed
- Both “bullies” and “bystanders” will be probably be ashamed (provided the school ‘culture’ does not support bullying)
- Some confessions may be heard
- Bullies will often look for a ‘way out’ and try to blame others
- All students will probably be unsure what to do next
- ‘Bystanders’ will see an opportunity to act
The Five Point Plan

• Magic question: “If you were going through the same thing, what would make a difference for you?”
• Simple, practical, achievable ideas best
• Different people can do different tasks
• Plan for undercover aspect and plan for the reaction of those class mates not included in the team
• Team required to be ‘friendly’ rather than ‘friends’ and to act in accordance with their family/school values
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreements reached at meeting:</th>
<th>Team members participating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sit next to him when we can and include him – make small talk</td>
<td>Whole team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stick up for him if we notice anything wrong</td>
<td>Whole team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Try and make him happy</td>
<td>Megan, Martin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Look our for him</td>
<td>Caleb, Leah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Give him positive thoughts</td>
<td>Whole team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Monitoring

• Dominant **story line** of bullying **dislodged** and subverted through the actions of the Undercover Team

• New story line is grown throughout the life of the Undercover Teams and documented through this monitoring process

• New frameworks of meaning created about bullying and supportive behaviours
Team very excited and enthusiastic about the project. Ideas came thick and fast from all the team - even went to considering a name for the team. A great group of students who are keen to be on the team and help Julius. Caleb absent - will need to follow up

It’s pretty good. Everyone is asking me if I’m OK. They’re hanging out with me, they are talking to me more – It’s good. They stick up for me and they give me more positive thoughts. I feel better about school, projects are getting better, more people want me to be in their teams and groups and stuff. It’s good now. It’s better

Called in Caleb because he was absent on the day the team was set up. He was shocked to hear the story and agreed to do his part on the team. He seemed pleased to have been chosen.
It’s been easy doing this, normal for us. Whenever people mock him, I tell people to go easy on him. It was Alec. I don’t think he was being mean though, jus joking. He looks happier now. He’s getting involved with everyone, he contributes. I walked home with him and he was OK! We work together as a team and individually. I’m getting to know him now. He’s cool. He’s really happy, yeah he does look happier. I’ve been encouraging of him.

I think it’s good. They sit next to me in class, they talk to me now. The whole class is in on it. There has been no racist comments. We communicate more. I look forward to school now.
Day 5: Checking in with the target/victim

Check that:

• The UABT is sticking to the plan
• The victim is open to the group’s efforts
• Give feedback from support team
• The victim is maintaining secrecy
• Check also with teachers of any positive changes in class relationships and feedback to both parties
Day 6: Checking in with The Team – First Progress Report

• An **opportunity** to check on **progress**
• **Review** the plan and enquire how the team has been doing
• Check **commitment** to the plan
• **Plan** for long term strategies
Days 7 and 14: Undercover Team Monitoring

- **Meet at increasingly greater intervals**
- Meet maybe **2-3 times** in total
- Give **acclaim where possible**
- **Nurture** the group for **future** interventions
- Hear new story lines and encourage new developments
Day 9: Checking in with the Target

- Give **feedback** from UABT to “victim”
- Plan for **future** actions
- Find out if bullying has gone
- Discuss what still needs to be done if more work is needed by the team
- “Victim” **encouraged** to tell parents of UABT work
I think it’s good. They sit next to me in class when they can, they try to make me feel better. They stand up for me more. There has been no racist comments any more. It’s getting better. We communicate more. I feel kind of better. I kind of look forward to coming here now ‘cause everyone’s getting nicer.

Every day people are asking me where I came from, being nice to me. I don’t want to change schools now. I’m really happy here now. I’m hanging out with more people now. My group of friends is bigger. I think it’s worked because they know me a little and I’ve known them for quite a while. We never used to talk or do anything but now we kind of talk more, communicate more, hang out more. Dylan has been much nicer, we talk more, hang out more. Caleb, we make jokes and stuff. We hang out more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Monitored event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22/5</td>
<td>Bullying continues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>Bullying has reduced</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying has stopped</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Team intervened to stop bullying</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Team members are friendly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Attitudes toward victim are different</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitudes of victim are different</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victim still provoking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victim is happier</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Victim attends class more</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victim is talking more</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victim needs more support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Class atmosphere improved</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Class atmosphere the same</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teachers have noticed difference</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents have noticed difference</td>
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<td>What still needs to happen is ...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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</table>
Definitional Ceremony

- Future actions discussed
- New storylines revised
- Retelling of new story of transformed relationships by students
- Planning for long term change
- Principal’s Certificates given out
- Tuck-shop vouchers given out
- Evaluation forms completed
Team meeting and definitional ceremony. It’s back to normal. It’s opened my eyes up. I’ve recognised that people are being bullied without realising it. I don’t make funny jokes about people anymore and if I see people making rude comments, I tell them to stop it. It’s a happier class, now.
References


