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April 4th 2009

Clever boys dumb down to avoid bullying in school (UK)

Jessica Sheppard - The Observer

Clever children are saving themselves from being branded swots at school by dumbing down and deliberately falling behind, a study has shown. Schoolchildren regarded as boffins may be attacked and shunned by their peers, according to Becky Francis, professor of education at Roehampton University, who carried out a study of academically gifted 12- and 13-year-olds in nine state secondary schools.

The study, published in the Sociological Review, shows how difficult it is for children, particularly boys, to be clever and popular. Boys risk being assaulted in some schools for being high-achievers. To conform and escape alienation, clever boys told researchers they may "try to fall behind" or "dumb down".

One boy told researchers: "It is harder to be popular and intelligent. If the subject comes naturally ... then I think it makes it easier. But if the subject doesn't come naturally, they work hard and other people see that and then you get the name-calling." This may in part explain boys' perceived underachievement, Francis said. Clever girls, meanwhile, can be seen as less attractive and less popular in some schools than girls who manage average grades. One girl told the researchers: "My friends are all really nice people and have [a] really good sense of humour, and they're all really pretty and stuff, but because they do well in school they're not popular." But clever girls were, on the whole, under less pressure to fall behind deliberately.



"Mom. Can I go around to Charlie's website and play?"



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Cyberbullying

We recommend an interesting article by Harvard Law School Professor John Palfrey published March 31, 2009 on the First Amendment Center Online site. Palfrey's article is part of an online symposium titled Cyberbullying Public Schools. We include below a few short paragraphs and advise readers to check out the full article and a number of other items at:

http://www.law.harvard.edu/news/2009/04/01_cyberbullying.html
<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/analysis.aspx?id=21415>

Cyberbullying is a big problem, in more than one respect. By virtually all accounts, bullying of young people by their peers online is on the rise. The magnitude of this increase depends heavily on how exactly one defines the term “bullying” — results of recent studies vary widely in this respect — but no serious observer disputes that we are observing a significant increase in bullying online. The harm caused to young people by their peers, primarily psychological in nature, can be substantial. Sometimes the harm falls in the category of teasing that few would say we should regulate. Then again, sometimes the actions are so harmful in nature that they already violate civil or criminal law.

The data that show a sharp increase in bullying online need to be considered in light of a series of additional bits of context. First, overwhelmingly, most of the ways in which young people use digital technologies are positive. These technologies have become part of the fabric of life for young people. Most young people, at least in the United States, do not distinguish between their “online” and “offline” lives. As a result, many of the good things that have gone on offline also happen, in one form or another, online. So, too, many of the bad things that happen in everyday life play out in one form or another online.

The second important thing to note by way of context is that digital technologies themselves do not have a “nature.” The Internet, as one core part of the digital architecture, is famously a “stupid” network. A key design principle of the Internet, the end-to-end principle, calls for it to “pass all packets.” The network itself is not good or bad; it is merely a conduit for human and machine-to-machine interaction. It's important to focus on the behavior — how people use digital media — not on the technology.

Third, it's an open question among researchers as to whether bullying overall is on the rise or not. Again, it is quite clear that more young people are bullying one another than ever before via digital technologies. What is not clear is whether this replaces any traditional, offline forms of bullying. It could be that bullying is neither up nor down as an overall trend, but rather just shifting venues. It also may be that bullying is all of a sudden brought to the attention of adults who previously could not see it happening on the playground or in the schoolyard. It may be, too, that bullying is, for the first time, recorded for adults and others to see after the fact. That does not change the very real harm caused to individual young people by bullying online, but it does mean that we should be cautious before we call this bullying an epidemic.

Homophobic bullies 'not challenged' (UK)

Ninety per cent of secondary school teachers say that pupils in their schools have been bullied, harassed or called names because they are, or are perceived to be, gay. The Teachers' Report, commissioned by Stonewall, found that secondary teachers believe homophobic bullying is the second most common form of bullying after weight, and three times more prevalent than bullying because of religion or ethnicity. But it notes that half of teachers say that the vast majority of incidents go unreported or are never dealt with.

The report highlights concerns that use of homophobic language is widespread in secondary schools, with 95% of teachers saying they have heard pupils utter phrases such as "you're so gay", and eight in ten saying they have heard remarks such as "poof" or "dyke".

The YouGov poll carried out for the report reveals that homophobic bullying is also present in primary schools, with more than two in five teachers saying children have experienced it. One in five primary teachers said children have experienced homophobic verbal abuse in their schools.

Ewan, a secondary school teacher in London, told researchers: "It always seems to me that homophobia is 100% ingrained into the mentality and language of most teenagers."

The researchers found that two in three secondary school staff, and two in five primary school staff do not always respond when they hear homophobic language. One in five secondary school teachers say they never respond.

The report, which was commissioned as part of Stonewall's education for all campaign, also suggests that parents are a barrier to tackling homophobic bullying. Stonewall chief executive Ben Summerskill said: "This survey reveals how much remains to be done by our schools to demonstrate to all pupils that homophobic bullying is unacceptable."

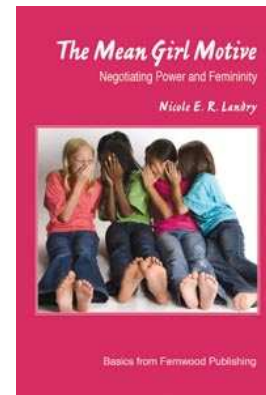
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New Book: The Mean Girl Motive

Negotiating Power and Femininity

Nicole E.R. Landry

Fernwood Publishing - Price: \$15.95 CAD



Prior to the 1980s, girls were completely excluded from research on childhood aggression, presumably because their 'sugar and spice and everything nice' made them averse to aggression. Not only were girls missing from research, their voices are frequently absent in current 'girl aggression' discourse. Despite this, 'mean' girls have received growing attention, especially in psychology. Besides conclusions that boys and girls aggress differently, much work has only offered a means of labelling, identifying and further problematizing girls' so-called mean behaviour. This book moves beyond the superficial to explore the social context of mean behaviour. It examines the intersection among structures of class, race and gender in the production of girls' aggression and draws on first-hand knowledge and experiences for a candid glimpse into a culture that raises critical questions about our 'taken for granted' knowledge of girls' meanness.

For more:

<http://www.fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/331>

Towards 2020: Canada's Commitment to Children

**CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL -
OTTAWA
APRIL 27-29**

**Justin Trudeau
Raffi Cavoukian
Sally Armstrong
Reginald Bibby
Phil Fontaine Ben Barry**

**Panels * Breakfast Sessions
Videos * Voices of Youth *
Lunches * Networking
Reception**

Towards 2020 will identify and examine the critical issues and emerging opportunities facing Canada's children and youth and their allies. It will also examine the collective roles and responsibilities of parents, communities, corporations and governments, and challenge Canadians to shape a vision of the future that protects and improves the lives of our children.

The conference presents an incredible line-up of speakers whose ideas, experience and ingenuity will enlighten, motivate and inspire.

Towards 2020 will showcase the voices of youth in a fast paced format, offer short five minute snapshot presentations, and provide early bird sessions and videos in a stimulating environment that allows attendees and speakers from a variety of constituencies to network, share and create!

Justin Trudeau

The education and empowerment of youth are priorities that have dominated Justin Trudeau's professional and personal life. The combination of his electric charisma and inspirational message leaves audiences educated, entertained and ready to make a difference.

Raffi Cavoukian

He is known to millions simply as Raffi: a renowned Canadian songwriter and performer, author and entrepreneur. Raffi will speak to about creating a viable future: a restorative, child-friendly world for ourselves and generations to come. His presentation will blend research, insight, and yes – music!

Sally Armstrong

Regularly receiving standing ovations, Sally is a powerful and engaging speaker, an Amnesty International award winner, documentary filmmaker, teacher, author of three best selling books, human rights activist and contributing editor at *Maclean's* magazine.

Dr. Reginald Bibby

His first three books (*The Emerging Generation*, 1985; *Teen Trends*, 1992; *Canada's Teens*, 2001) garnered huge readership in North America and his latest offering PROJECT TEEN CANADA will be launched at the Towards 2020 conference. Bibby's new 2008 national survey will provide an important update on Canadian youth that is particularly important in light of the dramatic changes in technology.

Ben Barry

Oprah Winfrey discovered him years ago and *Maclean's* named him "one of twenty-five leaders of tomorrow" He was one of the six recipients of the Governor General's Award in the Commemoration of the Persons Case and the first male winner! He serves as CEO of an international model consultancy headquartered in Toronto and is the author of the bestseller *Fashioning Reality: A New Generation of Entrepreneurship*. He also works with the Dove campaign focusing on issues relating to beauty and self image. Ben Barry recently turned 25!

For more:

www.toward2020.ca

'Square peg' students more often targets of bullies (Can)

yorkregion.com
KIM ZARZOUR

In a school system designed for round holes, "square pegs" often get bullied. Sometimes that "squareness" is simply red hair or glasses, or being a goth or geek. Other times, it's more complicated. Studies show students with learning disorders or attention problems are especially vulnerable to bullying. Author and educator Richard Lavoie says that's because these students may have a hard time negotiating the maze of social interactions and "hidden curriculum" in the schools.

See the full article:

<http://www.yorkregion.com/article/89392>

"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom.

It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather.

I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal.

In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized."

Haim Ginott, 1990

Restorative justice helped end years of terror (Can)

yorkregion.com
KIM ZARZOUR

"Something's wrong with Daniel." Jeremy Sebben was concerned. His little brother didn't want to goof around anymore. Mrs. Sebben had noticed it too. The 14-year-old had turned moody. "Hormones," she thought.

Then the principal called to inform them that Daniel was caught off school property at lunchtime. Daniel's parents came down hard. "If we can't trust you to stay in school, if you don't shape up, then you're going to spend the whole summer at camp or summer school." That's when it all spilled out: "Mom you have no idea what it's been like."

A group of hockey players at school had started calling him "faggot" - and far worse. He had tried dealing with it on his own, standing up for himself, telling them to get lost or "yeah whatever," but they kept it up - in the hall, in the classroom and on the bus. Mrs. Sebben spoke to Daniel's teacher. "Oh I know, I see the pain in his eyes," she told her. "I try my best to keep the boys separate."

The principal responded differently. "Well, you know what boys are like..." By the time Daniel had spoken up about the problem, the school year was almost through. "Hang in there," his parents said, "High school's coming. It will be a brand new beginning."

See the full article:

<http://www.yorkregion.com/News/Regional%20News/article/89681>

Teachers consider lobby over bad influence TV shows (UK)

Children & Young People Now
Charlotte Goddard

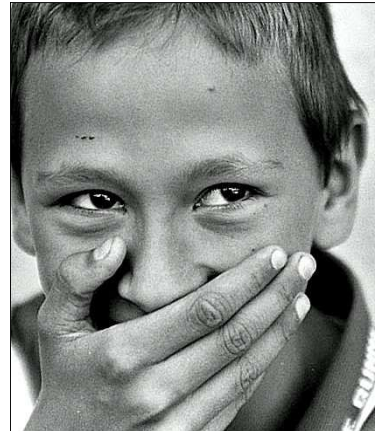
Teachers will vote on whether to lobby television broadcasters after a survey found that programmes like *Big Brother* and *Little Britain* cause bad behaviour in schools.

The survey of almost 800 education staff carried out by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) found that two-thirds said *Big Brother* caused poor behaviour among pupils. More than three in five cited *Little Britain* as a bad influence and more than two in five said *Eastenders* caused bad behaviour.

Types of behaviour caused by television programmes included general rudeness such as answering back, mentioned by 88 per cent of respondents, as well as using inappropriate language (82 per cent), aggression (74 per cent) and sexually inappropriate behaviour (43 per cent).

Members of ATL will vote at its annual conference next week on whether to call on the union's executive committee to lobby television broadcasters to consider the consequences of showing programmes containing examples of bad behaviour before the watershed.

Mary Bousted, ATL's general secretary, said: "It is worrying that some of the youngest pupils do not know what behaviour is acceptable and when they should use it, and cannot differentiate between what they have seen on TV and real life."



In 2002 we coordinated Canada's first national conference on bullying and went on to present yet another in 2005 and again in 2007. All three conferences were "sold out" and the rated as huge successes. We also write and promote productions such as 'You're Not the Boss of Me', a play about bullying which has been featured in various parts of Canada; and we were the driving force in the development of the Ottawa Anti Bullying Coalition (OABC).

Our youth built and maintained website www.iamSAFE.ca

**You can contact us at:
info@iamSAFE.ca**

The "IAMSAFE" electronically published newsletter focusing on news and resource information relating to bullying, safer schools and safer communities is produced in Ottawa by Kids-Can, a not for profit organization offering a variety of training and awareness programs for educators and students.

Our newsletter efforts are voluntary and carried out primarily by youth!