

**This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint *may differ* from the original in pagination and typographic detail.**

Author(s): Pörhölä, Maili; Cvancara, Kristen; Kaal, Esta; Tampere, Kaja; Torres, Beatriz

Title: Cross-cultural comparisons of bullying among university students : perspectives from Argentina, Estonia, Finland and the United States

Year: 2015

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Pörhölä, M., Cvancara, K., Kaal, E., Tampere, K., & Torres, B. (2015). Cross-cultural comparisons of bullying among university students : perspectives from Argentina, Estonia, Finland and the United States. In H. Cowie, & C.-A. Myers (Eds.), *Bullying among university students : cross-national perspectives* (pp. 127-142). Routledge.

All material supplied via JYX is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorised user.

CHAPTER 9
CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISONS OF BULLYING AMONG
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: PERSPECTIVES FROM ARGENTINA,
ESTONIA, FINLAND AND THE UNITED STATES

Maili Pörhölä (University of Jyväskylä), Kristen Cvancara (Minnesota State University Mankato), Esta Kaal (Tallinn University), Kaja Tampere (Tallinn University), and Beatriz Torres (Gustavus Adolphus College)

(Final draft)

The chapter compares bullying experiences among university students between four countries and aims to provide an understanding of the cultural features which might affect these experiences. We start by providing a summary of the results from a cross-cultural survey conducted among undergraduate students in Argentina, Estonia, Finland and the United States. We continue discussing the ways in which the current cultural, political, historical and economic status and challenges in each country might explain the cross-cultural differences and similarities detected in students' bullying experiences in higher education.

Previous cross-cultural research involving over 40 countries indicates that health patterns vary significantly across countries, suggesting that cultural characteristics may influence young people's well-being and health behaviors by creating health inequalities between countries and regions (Craig et al., 2009; Currie et al., 2012). Important to this research is the distinction that a country may encompass many cultures (due to varied ethnic, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability and/or socioeconomic status differences, etc.). Thus, cultural differences may exist within and across various countries. Currie et al. emphasize two implications from their cross-cultural work that prompted the current study. First, that the prevalence of detrimental health patterns among young persons documented across countries calls for international and national policies and actions to address the determinants of observed health inequalities. And second, that professionals working to improve young persons' well-being should consider how social environments support and/or deter the development of health-promoting behaviors. Educational contexts from kindergarten to university are among the most important social environments people experience that impact psychosocial development and well-being. In these contexts, young people meet with their

peers and are engaged in social relationships that can have a significant impact on their short- and long-term well-being.

For example, negative associations between well-being and experiences of victimization by peers in educational contexts have been clearly demonstrated in a number of studies (for reviews, see, Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Pörhölä, 2009; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010) that indicate peer bullying is an important determinant of well-being in an individual's social environment. For victims, studies indicate that the negative impact of being bullied on psychosocial and physical well-being are both short-term (Due et al., 2005; Houbre, Tarquinio, Thuillier, & Hergott, 2006) and long-term (Jantzer, Hoover, & Narloch, 2006; Newman, Holden, & Delville, 2005; Schäfer et al., 2004). A bully's well-being and health behaviour is also negatively affected over time (Glew et al., 2005; Nansel et al., 2001). Furthermore, individuals who have been victims and/or bullies in childhood and adolescence have a tendency to be engaged in abusive relationships in the same roles later in life (Chapell et al., 2006; Curwen, McNichol, & Sharpe, 2011; De Souza & Ribeiro, 2005; Pörhölä, 2011). As roles are carried forward throughout adulthood, an increased number of issues are likely to impact individual well-being. The means of providing health services and social support for these individuals varies across countries, which is speculated to contribute to the cultural inequalities noted.

Studying bullying phenomena within higher educational contexts across countries is especially relevant due to the variation of reported incidence rates that indicate cultural factors may affect the acceptance of bullying behaviors. Findings from international collaborative research projects, such as the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) surveys (c.f., Craig et al., 2009; Currie et al., 2012), indicate the number of students involved in bullying (i.e., bullying others, being bullied, or acting in dual roles as both a bully and a victim) at least 2 or 3 times a month ranges from 8.6% to 45.2% among boys, and from 4.8% to 35.8% among girls aged 11 to 15 years (Craig et al.). While research on bullying at school has substantially increased since the 1970s all around the world, this research has mainly focused on bullying in elementary and middle schools. However, a small number of surveys conducted in colleges, universities, and vocational higher education institutions indicate that bullying exists in higher education too, and suggest that its occurrence rates vary greatly between countries (Ahmer et al., 2008; BMA Medical students' welfare survey report, 2006; Chapell et al., 2004; Curtis et al., 2007; Mukhtar et al., 2010; NUS Student Experience

Report, 2008; Pörhölä, 2011a; Sinkkonen, Puhakka, & Meriläinen, 2012; see also Cowie et al. 2013, for a review). Since the measures, samples and analyses used to research higher education contexts have varied significantly between the individual studies, more research is needed to examine whether cultural factors within countries influence young adults' bullying experiences, and consequently contribute to inequalities in individuals' health and well-being between countries and regions which may transfer into adulthood. This chapter reviews findings from a cross-cultural study which demonstrates that bullying is a prevalent phenomenon among young adults at universities, and discusses significant similarities and differences across countries regarding its prevalence and nature.

Cultural variation and gender differences in bullying and victimization experiences among university students

In the following, we provide a review based on the main results from a cross-cultural study by Pörhölä et al. (in submission). For this study, data were collected by survey method from undergraduate university students in four countries: Argentina (N = 969), Estonia (N = 1,053), Finland (N = 4,403) and United States (N = 2,082). While convenience samples were used in Argentina and the US; in Estonia and Finland, the respondents represented the target population well for the background variables (i.e., educational sector [academic university vs. university of applied sciences], age group, duration of studies, study region, and field of studies), except for gender (males were slightly underrepresented). Therefore, caution must be taken when generalizing the results across the different countries. The study used similar measures and analyses, to examine university students' experiences of bullying.

Pörhölä et al. (in submission) found the number of students who reported having been bullied by their fellow students varied notably between the four countries compared. The highest rates of victimization were reported in Argentina (roughly 25% of Argentinian respondents indicated they had been bullied by other student(s) at least occasionally; US, 11%; Finland, 5%; Estonia, 2%). The highest rates of bullying other students at least occasionally were also reported in Argentina, followed by the US, Finland, and finally Estonia, with the differences between countries being relatively small. In each country, victimization was reported more frequently than bullying, suggesting that either a relatively small number of students bully a greater number of fellow students, or bullying behaviors remain unidentified by many of those who are perceived as bullies.

[Table 1 about here]

In the samples collected from university students by Pörhölä et al. (in submission), gender differences in bullying roles varied between the countries compared. Statistically significant gender differences among victims were detected only in Finland where female students reported being bullied by fellow student(s) more than males. The non-significant findings in the Argentina, Estonia and US data sets may indicate that females start to become less vulnerable to bullying and succeed to develop better skills to defend themselves against bullying in young adulthood. In contrast, gender differences among bullies suggest there may be continuity in the aggressive and abusive behavior of the masculine gender. For example, male university students reported having bullied their fellow students more frequently than female students did in Argentina, Estonia, and the US; gender differences in bullying behavior were found to be nonsignificant only in Finland. Previous findings from elementary and middle school levels indicate clear gender differences in both bullying behavior and victimization in most countries, with male students being more often engaged in bullying behaviors and female students being more likely in the role of victim (e.g., Craig et al., 2009; Currie et al., 2012; Nansel et al., 2001).

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) surveys among elementary and middle school students indicate some differences in the rates of bullying between some of the countries that were compared in the Pörhölä et al. study. While the rates of bullying victimization reported by students in the HBSC from age 11 to 15 years were on the average level in Finland and the US, Estonia differed from these countries in that, at age 11 and 13 years, the rates of victimization were among the highest, but then gradually decreased, being close to the average level at age 15 years. The rates of bullying others were also on the average level in Finland and the US, whereas students in Estonia reported higher than average levels of bullying behavior in all age groups (Currie et al., 2012). However, Argentina was not among the countries examined in the HBSC surveys. According to Lavena (n.d.), there are no formal reporting of school violence statistics in Argentina as most information comes indirectly through varied sources. For example, Roman and Murillo (2011) found Argentina has the largest number of reported insults and threats, robberies, physical mistreatment and episodes of violence in sixth grade compared to other countries in Latin America. Physical violence affects more than 40% of primary school children in Argentina. Similarly to other Latin American countries, in Argentina, more than half

of primary school students report having been bullied by peers. Roman and Murillo also found that in Argentina, and other Latin American countries, boys suffered more insults and threats, robberies and physical and verbal violence than girls. In another study in secondary schools, D'Angelo and Fernandez (2011) found in Buenos Aires that 66.1% of students in 2009 reported being subject to bullying, including experiences of mistreatment or humiliation by peers, being mocked, being excluded from activities by peers, and being told hurtful things.

Comparing the findings of Pörhölä et al. (in submission) to previous studies indicates that differential gender effects are associated with bullying behavior across countries and cultures, as well as different prevalence rates. Previous studies among university students also suggest that there may be cultural variance regarding gender differences in bullying. In the study by Chapell et al. (2004) in the US, male students reported that they had bullied other students in college significantly more than female students did, but both genders were equally victimized. However, in the NUS Student Experience Report (2008) in the UK, it was found that female students were more likely than male students to say that they had experienced bullying in the university. On the contrary, in the study by Bennett, Guran, Ramos, and Margolin (2011), male college students reported more electronic victimization than female students.

To conclude, the findings from the cross-cultural comparisons conducted by Pörhölä et al. (in submission) suggest some culture-specific trends in bullying to continue from childhood to young adulthood in the four countries compared. While the reporting of bullying victimization seems to remain high from elementary school to university in Argentina and moderate in the US, the results suggest a slightly decreasing trend in Finland, and a notable decreasing trend from elementary school to university in Estonia. Due to the differences in measurement across existing studies and the lack of extensive cross-cultural research, direct comparisons between the results from primary and secondary school and university cannot be made.

The nature of bullying reported by university students in Argentina, Estonia, Finland and the United States

Differences among university students' bullying experiences do not only vary across countries by rate and by gender, they have also been found to differ according to the nature of the bullying

behavior experienced. In the cross-cultural study on university students' experiences of bullying in four countries (Pörhölä et al., in submission), the most often experienced form of bullying reported by females across the four countries was found to be unjustified criticism, belittling, or humiliation related to studies (varying from approximately 13% to 15%, between countries). Male students in Finland and Estonia also reported this as the most frequent form of bullying they experienced (although males reported it to occur less frequently than females reported). In contrast, males in the Argentina sample reported verbal attacks (e.g., abuse, name-calling, threats) and males in the US sample reported mocking or criticism related to personal qualities (e.g., appearance, age, gender, religion, background) to be the most frequent form of bullying experienced.

An interesting shift from bullying others because they are successful in elementary and middle school to bullying others because they are less successful in college is a noteworthy trend reflected in the current study. The fact that study-related criticism occurred so frequently in the university samples may be explained due to the cognitive development of individuals who are able to criticize others' study performance because they have developed the intellectual capacity and understanding of learning demands and goals relevant in educational contexts, which is not yet developed at a very young age. Linking this finding to an implication beyond the educational setting, research on workplace bullying shows that persistent unjustified criticism, belittling and humiliation related to the target person's professional skills and work performance are among the most frequently reported forms of bullying at work (e.g., Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Salin, 2001). We speculate that the nature of bullying experienced in young adulthood (e.g., in the university setting) is likely to shift to reflect the forms typically reported in the workplace.

Beyond the most frequent forms reported, university students in the four countries compared (Pörhölä et al., in submission) reported other forms of bullying as well. Experiences of verbal attacks and mocking or criticism related to personal qualities were experienced to almost the same extent across the countries involved in the study. Damage to peer relationships or social discrimination was reported more often by female than male students in each of the countries except for Argentina, where the rates were higher for males than females. The experiences of technologically mediated insulting or harassment (e.g., via the Internet or phone) varied from less than 1% in Estonia to 4 - 5% in Argentina and the US. The least often experienced form of bullying in university was physical damage to the person or his or her belongings, the number of

students reporting these experiences varying from 0% among female students in Estonia, to approximately 3% among male students in Argentina.

Interpretations of the cultural characteristics in university students' experiences of bullying

To summarize, findings from elementary and middle schools (Craig et al., 2009; Currie et al., 2012), and university contexts (Pörhölä et al., in submission) suggest that significant cross-cultural differences exist in the ways in which various forms of bullying are identified and interpreted, tolerated, encouraged or discouraged, and sometimes even generated within a particular culture. By sharing our cultural experiences and theoretical understanding from different disciplines, we discuss in the following how some cultural differences and similarities might explain the variation in university students' experiences of bullying in the four countries examined. These countries (Argentina, Estonia, Finland and the United States) differ not only geographically and in size, but also culturally, politically, historically, and economically. In addition to having an impact in the societal decisions in important matters affecting individuals' lives (e.g., provision of education, care for children and the elderly, health care, work, and social services), these cultural differences may have resulted in such developments in higher education contexts in these countries, which can be reflected in university students' well-being and relationships with their fellow students. Factors such as equal accessibility of higher education; availability and costs of health services and student counseling; adaptation to the socioeconomic, ethnic/cultural, political and religious diversity among students; and manifestation of status hierarchies between students and students and teachers, may prompt different levels of psychosocial well-being; tensions and solidarity; competition and collaboration; and feelings and perceptions of inclusion and exclusion, among students and student groups, in different countries. Following is a brief summary of each country's characteristics to create a richer understanding of the potential elements embedded in culture that may impact bullying phenomena across the four countries studied by Pörhölä and colleagues. We begin with Argentina where the respondents reported highest frequency of bullying, and continue with the US, Finland, and finally Estonia where the lowest rates were reported. (Statistical facts are primarily based on the information provided on the websites of Central Intelligence Agency, Estonia.eu, Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (2010), Official Statistics of Finland, and the United States Census Bureau).

Argentina

Argentina is the second largest country in South America, with approximately 43.0 million inhabitants. It is situated between the Andes and the Atlantic Ocean and features a variety of climates and topographical regions, including rich plains to rugged mountainous regions. Argentina is a diverse country made of varied European immigrants (predominantly from Spain and Italy), which settled after its independence from Spain in 1816. Ninety seven percent of Argentines are white (Spanish or Italian descent), whereas 3% is mestizo and/or of Amerindian ancestry. Further, 95.5% of the population are native Argentines whereas 4.5% are foreign born, primarily from border countries. Throughout its history, Argentina underwent varied internal political conflicts, military dictatorships and several economic crises in some cases leading to violent public protests. Although Argentina is a republic, it has experienced many years of military dictatorships returning to democracy in 1983. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of Argentina is 14,760.20 USD (2013). The most common religion is Roman Catholic, however, other religions are openly practiced and recognized. A big gap between rich and poor and rural versus urban communities adds to the diversity of the population in Argentina. While almost 64% of the population has some form of health insurance, the rest (36%) lacks health insurance. Primary and middle school education is universal and free and by law children aged 6 through 14 are required to attend schooling. However, retention rates vary due to geographical location and socioeconomic status of individuals. Although free attendance to public universities enables a variety of students access to higher education, only 3.2% of the population completes a university degree.

The Argentinean sample was collected from university students in Cordoba, the second largest city in Argentina with 1.3 million inhabitants. Of the respondents, 94.5% identified themselves as Argentines and 5.5% Peruvians. In addition to several federal initiatives that encourage respect for diversity and multiculturalism, the National University of Cordoba has a specific program destined to promote the inclusion of diverse students in the university life. While a majority of students at the university have health insurance coverage through their parents, marriage, work, or university system, over a fifth does not have any health coverage. Nevertheless, the university offers primary care services as well as prescription medication for free to students (Secretaria de Asuntos Estudiantiles, 2014).

Regarding an awareness of school bullying, the fact is that there is not one term to refer to bullying in Spanish even though people can understand and identify the phenomenon. Even though the national congress recently passed anti-bullying legislation in schools in Argentina and

the English term “bullying” has begun to be used more frequently by the media, the term bullying was not widely used in 2012 when the data was collected. The fact of not having one term to refer to this phenomenon may have brought different interpretations in respondents’ minds when they were asked to respond to it in the questionnaire distributed as more students chose to report general experiences of bullying than did when more detailed bullying behaviors were listed.

There are several possible explanations for why Argentina data showed a higher frequency of bullying and violent behaviour. Noel et al. (2009) believe that the increase of certain forms of violence (particularly in schools) is a result of “the process of deterioration, decline in living standards, precarious economic conditions, and social fragmentation” (p. 48). Another explanation emerges from the countries’ experiences of political and economic instability. Noel et al. argue that one possible contributing factor may be the fact that Argentinean society is experiencing what the authors labelled as “a virulent egalitarianism” (p. 48) as authority symbols, currently under critique, are looked at with the suspicion of being “authoritarian.” This reaction to authority has its roots in previous experiences with dictatorship regimes where freedom of speech was censored.

United States:

The US is a large, diverse country comprised of many different cultures and geographic regions. Approximately 318.9 million people live in the US; however, 5.4 million inhabitants live in Minnesota where the sample was collected. Minnesota is a state located in the northern Midwest region of the country and shares a border with Canada. Compared to the US, Minnesota’s population is more homogeneous in that 86.2% of individuals report White/Caucasian ethnicity (compared to 77.7% in the US), and fewer Black/African American (5.7% in Minnesota, 13.2% in the US) and Hispanic/Latino (5.0% in Minnesota, 17.1% in the US) reside in the state. The US is a federal constitutional republic, governed by a democracy since the inception of the country in 1776. Both federal and state systems of power function to govern citizens, which results in some variation in services and laws across states (e.g., education systems, family law, contract law). The GDP per capita of the US is 53,142.89 USD (2013). Although Christianity is the most common reported religious affiliation (75.9%), many religions are practised. Social security and public assisted healthcare are services provided in the US, but these are reserved for the elderly and the poor.

Compared to Finland and Estonia, higher education opportunities are available across the US at private and public colleges and universities, but attendance requires acceptance and the personal funds to pay for tuition and living expenses. Financial assistance is available through state and federal agencies, but most students must incur large loans to obtain their university degree. Regarding cultural homogeneity, the US differs from Finland and Estonia in that there is greater diversity in the US population in general, which contributes to an even greater diversity of socioeconomic status and intellectual preparedness among students. This feature is accentuated through discourse involving diversity as a common topic on campuses, usually resulting in some controversy and at times open conflict. Although low cost healthcare is provided to students on most university campuses, the services provided are limited. As a result, it is typical that families bear the responsibility of covering healthcare costs for students in higher education, which complicates availability and access to services. While the US has actively focused on building public awareness of bullying in both primary and secondary education settings, there is little awareness of bullying or specific programs to diminish it in higher education.

Even though social knowledge of bullying is high in the US, the existence of bullying behaviors in schools is reported at some of the highest rates among the developed world. Why? It may be due in part to the cultural and economic diversity that exists across the country and throughout various regions that is expressed via tensions among students, the inconsistency of social practices with constitutional tenants identifying free speech and equality for all despite race, creed, or color, and the presence of mediated messages that are increasingly displaying violent messages on television and in advertising to youth (Anderson et al., 2003; Capella, Hill, Kees, & Rapp, 2010; Glascock, 2008). Embedded within the culture are themes of individualism, which when combined with a variety of negative family communication practices, may desensitize student notions regarding appropriate and acceptable behavior when interacting with others in educational settings.

Finland:

Finland is a small country with 5.5 million inhabitants, located in North Europe. It has been an independent country since 1917, after having been a grand duchy in the Russian empire for 108 years, and a part of Sweden for 600 years before that. Finnish and Swedish are the official languages. Finland's population (2013) is homogenous in that the native language of 89.3% of citizens is Finnish; 5.3% are Swedish speakers, and a small minority (0.04%) of indigenous people are Sami speakers. The number of people with foreign ancestry (e.g., Russian, Estonian)

is 5.3%. Finland is a republic with parliamentary democracy, and a member of the European Union since 1995. The GDP per capita of Finland is 47,218.77 USD (2013). Although Christianity is the main religion (75.3%), the increasing number of those who do not have the membership of any religious community is over 20%. Characteristics of the country include a high standard of public education, social security and healthcare, all financed by the state. There are only public universities in Finland.

Since higher education in Finland is free of charge, and financial aid is provided for all university studies by the state, all young people have equal access to higher education, regardless of their family background or financial situation. Students are selected through entrance examination, and usually enter university in a specific major or program of study. Once admitted, students do not need to compete with each other to maintain their student status, to finance their studies, or to earn an academic degree. This kind of security may decrease students' stress level and prevent competition between them, and partly explain the relatively low rates of bullying in Finland. A second point is that university students in Finland are socioeconomically, intellectually, and culturally homogeneous, which may prevent tensions between students and student groups. Intellectual differences between students within study programs are usually relatively small due to precisely determined student selection criteria and practices. Ethnic/cultural diversity is low: international students and staff members represent a small minority. Although international students in Finnish universities have reported more bullying victimization (social exclusion, in particular) than Finnish students (Lavikainen, 2010), tensions between Finnish and international students are not seen on campuses. Political and religious diversity is also relatively small and issues related to this diversity are rarely discussed on campuses. A third point is that health services are available for all university students at a very low cost, which can be helpful for students who have issues with their well-being, and may further decrease the level of bullying. And the fourth point is the increased number of studies on school bullying, the national-level intervention programmes developed to prevent it, and media attention directed to the phenomenon have increased general awareness of school bullying. Some universities and student unions have taken initial steps to increase awareness of bullying also in higher education.

Estonia:

Estonia is a small country with approximately 1.3 million inhabitants, located in the Baltic region of Europe next to Latvia and Russia. The republic of Estonia declared its independence in 1918, followed by the Soviet occupation period 1940-1991, and has been fully independent again since

1991, as well as member of the European Union since 2004. The GDP per capita of Estonia is 18,478.27 USD (2013). The majority of the population consists of Estonian nationals (69%), with the next largest ethnic group identifying as Russian (26%); the rest consists of small minorities of Ukrainian, Belarusian, Finns, and other nationals. The official language is Estonian. The country does not adhere to a common religion. Similar to the other countries in the current study, Estonia provides free public education to youth until the age of 16. Both public and private universities exist in the country.

Unlike in Finland, university studies have not been free of charge for the majority of students in Estonia, which may have some influence on the socioeconomic situation of students. Although very recent changes in Estonia have provided tuition benefits to students, those sampled in the current study did not have this benefit. Estonia is quite similar to Finland in that university students in Estonia are also socioeconomically, intellectually, and culturally homogenous and that health services are provided for students at a very low cost. Even though the lowest rates of bullying among university students were detected in Estonia, cultural differences may indicate a different explanation from the low rates reported in Finland due to the political history of Estonia. Being occupied by the Soviet Union for almost 50 years, the families in Estonia may have experienced such forms of cultural discrimination through which they could have learned to categorize some forms of abuse (e.g., verbal hurting, criticizing) as 'softer' forms, resulting in a desensitization to bullying. Through family communication practices, young adults might also have been socialized to understand that admitting one has been victimized may indicate weakness and vulnerability, which could be a risk for their personal safety. Therefore, even as anonymous respondents, Estonian students might avoid revealing their personal experiences of being bullied.

Conclusions

The research on bullying in higher education is still scarce and little is known about its cultural variation. In this chapter, we reviewed findings from four countries to demonstrate that bullying occurs also among higher education students, with significant cultural variation in its prevalence.

We indicated some cultural factors which might have an impact in university students' lives, thus explaining the cultural variation in bullying experiences. These include factors such as cultural and socioeconomic diversity among university students, education policies which can either encourage or discourage competition or collaboration, as well as availability of support on well-

being issues. Further, we suggest that the political and historical developments of a country could explain the ways in which individuals perceive and interpret different forms of bullying in their peer relationships, and how they react to them. Also, social awareness of bullying in educational contexts and intervention programs developed to reduce it, vary between the countries we compared. This might have an effect on the ways in which university students and personnel identify bullying and how acceptable they perceive different forms of it. However, a general notion in all four countries is that bullying in university is still under-examined, not identified, and rarely discussed in public.

The cultural features we discussed can have long-term effects on individuals' lives and well-being thus explaining the cultural trends detected in the bullying experiences from elementary school to university. While these society-level cultural factors appear important determinants to be considered to explain the variation in students' bullying experiences across countries, further research is needed to fully understand the roots of such differences. Future studies might also benefit from paying attention to differences in cultural norms and expectations related to individual's communication behaviour (c.f., Hofstede, 2001), particularly among peers in educational contexts. What kinds of communication norms and expectations are embedded in each culture and expressed and learned through the family and school systems in which children are socialized? For example, to what extent do these cultural norms encourage direct versus indirect expression of individual's thoughts and feelings; or perception and presentation of oneself as a unique individual with unique individual goals, versus a member of group, similar to others and with shared goals? Particular to families, investigations of parenting practices (e.g., Georgiou, 2008) and family interactions may also indicate relationships between communication patterns established in the home and the development of norms and expectations that may relate to the experiences and expressions of bullying reported in different cultures. Furthermore, media can also have an influential cultural role affecting general attitudes towards particular groups of individuals, identifying marginalized groups, and, consequently, affecting who bullies, who is victimized, and what forms of bullying are expressed and experienced in a particular culture.

To conclude, cultural variation in university students' bullying experiences calls for international collaboration in research and theory development, as well as international and national policies and actions. These need to address bullying as a significant determinant of health inequalities in young adulthood, and advise professionals working with young adults to consider how learning environments could be developed to support pro-social behaviours and discourage bullying.

References

- Ahmer, S., Yousafzai, A. W., Bhutto, N., Alam, S., Sarangzai, A. K., & Iqbal, A. (2008). Bullying of medical students in Pakistan: A cross-sectional questionnaire survey. *PLoS ONE*, 3(12), e3889. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0003889
- Anderson, C. A., Berkowitz, L., Donnerstien, E., Huesmann, L. R., Johnson, J. D., Linz, D., . . . Wartela, E. (2003). The influence of media violence on youth. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 4(3), 81–110.
- Bennett, D. C., Guran., E. L., Ramos, M. C., & Margolin, G. (2011). College students' electronic victimization in friendships and dating relationships: Anticipated distress and associations with risky behaviors. *Violence and Victims* 26(4), 410–429.
- British Medical Association (BMA) Medical students' welfare survey report. (2006). Retrieved 28 August, 2011, from: <http://www.bma.org/ap.nsf/content/WELFARE2006>
- Capella, M. L., Hill, R. P., Kees, J., & Rapp, J. M. (2010). The impact of violence against women in advertisements. *Journal of Advertising*, 39(4), 37–51.
- Central Intelligence Agency. The world factbook. Retrieved 19 December, 2014, from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>
- Chapell, M., Casey, D., De la Cruz, C., Ferrell, J., Forman, J., Lipkin, R., . . . Whitaker, S. (2004). Bullying in college by students and teachers. *Adolescence*, 39, 53–64.
- Chapell, M. S., Hasselman, S. L., Kitchin, T., Lomon, S. N., MacIver, K. W. & Sarullo, P. L. (2006). Bullying in elementary school, high school, and college, *Adolescence*, 41, 633–648
- Cowie, H., Bauman, S., Coyne, I., Myers, C-A, Pörhölä, M. & Almeida, A. (2013). Cyberbullying amongst university students: an emergent cause for concern? In P.K. Smith & G. Steffgen (Eds.), *Cyberbullying Through the New Media*. London: Psychology Press (pp. 165–177).
- Craig, W., Harel-Fisch, Y., Fogel-Grinvald, H., Dostaler, S., Hetland, J., Simons-Morton, B., . . . the HBSC Bullying Writing Group (2009). A cross-national profile of bullying and victimization among adolescents in 40 countries. *International Journal of Public Health*, 54, 216–224. doi:10.1007/s00038-009-5413-9
- Currie, C., Zanotti, C., Morgan, A., Currie, D., de Looze, M., Roberts, C., . . . Barnekow, V. (Eds.) (2012). *Social determinants of health and well-being among young people. Key findings from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study: International report from the 2009/2010 survey*. Copenhagen, Denmark: WHO

- Regional Office for Europe. Retrieved 24 June, 2012, from:
<http://www.euro.who.int/HBSC>
- Curtis, J., Bowen, I., & Reid, A. (2007). You have no credibility: Nursing students' experiences of horizontal violence. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 7, 156–163.
- Curwen, T., McNichol, J. S. & Sharpe, G. W. (2011). The progression of bullying from elementary school to university. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(13): 47–54.
- D'Angelo, L. A., & Fernández, D. R. (2011). *Clima, conflictos y violencia en la escuela*. Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia (UNICEF) –Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO). Buenos Aires: Argentina.
- De Souza, E. R., & Ribeiro, J. (2005). Bullying and sexual harassment among Brazilian high school students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 20(9), 1018–1038.
- Due, P., Holstein, B. E., Lynch, J., Diderichsen, F., Gabhain, S. N., Scheidt, P., . . . the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Bullying Working Group (2005). Bullying and symptoms among school-aged children: International comparative cross-sectional study in 28 countries. *European Journal of Public Health*, 15(2):128–132.
- Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C. L. (2003). The concept of bullying at work. The European tradition. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace: International perspectives in research and practice* (pp. 3–30). London: Taylor & Francis.
- Estonia.eu. Official gateway to Estonia. Retrieved 12 January, 2015, from:
<http://estonia.eu/about-estonia/country/estonia-at-a-glance.html>
- Georgiou, S. N. (2008). Parental style and child bullying and victimization experiences at school. *Social Psychology of Education*, 11, 213–227.
- Glascock, J. (2008). Direct and indirect aggression on prime-time network television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(2), 268–281.
- Glew, G. M., Fan, M.-Y., Katon, W., Rivara, F. P., Kernic, M. A. (2005). Bullying, psychosocial adjustment, and academic performance in elementary school. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 159(11), 1026–1031.
- Hawker, D. S. J., & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 41, 441–455.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Houbre, B., Tarquinio, C., Thuillier, I., & Hergott, E. (2006). Bullying among students and its consequences on health. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 21*, 183–208.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INDEC) (2010). Censo Nacional de Poblacion, Hogares y Viviendas 2010. Censo del Bicentenario. Serie B, Nro. 2, tomo 1. Retrieved 19 December, 2014, from:
http://www.censo2010.indec.gov.ar/archivos/censo2010_tomo1.pdf
- Jantzer, A. M., Hoover, J. H., & Narloch, R. (2006). The relationship between school-aged bullying and trust, shyness and quality of friendships in young adulthood: A preliminary research note. *School Psychology International, 27*, 146–156.
- Keashly, L., & Jagatic, K. (2003). By any other name: American perspectives on workplace bullying. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace: International perspectives in research and practice* (pp. 31–61). London: Taylor & Francis.
- Lavena, C. (n.d.). Primera aproximacion a la violencia escolar en Argentina (pp. 1–13).
 Universidad de San Andres, Argentina. Retrieved 28 September, 2014, from:
<http://www.udesa.edu.ar/files/EscEdu/Resumen%20Ma/Lavena.pdf>
- Lavikainen, E. (2010). *Opiskelijan ammattikorkeakoulu 2010. Tutkimus ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijoiden koulutuspoluista, koulutuksen laadusta ja opiskelukyvystä* [Student's university of applied sciences 2010. Research on the study tracks, views on the quality of education, and own ability to study of students in the universities of applied sciences]. Helsinki, Finland: Opiskelijajärjestöjen tutkimussäätiö Otus.
- Mukhtar, F., Daud, S., Manzoor, I., Amjad, I., Saeed, K., Naeem, M. and Javed, M. (2010). Bullying of medical students, *Journal of the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan, 20*(12): 814–818.
- Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S, Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B. G., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among U.S. youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 285*, 2094–2100.
- National Union of Students (NUS) Student Experience Report. (2008). Retrieved 3 March, 2011, from: http://www.nus.org.uk/PageFiles/4017/US_StudentExperienceReport.pdf

- Newman, M. L., Holden, G. W., & Delville, Y. (2005). Isolation and the stress of being bullied. *Journal of Adolescence*, 28(3), 343–357.
- Noel, G., Miguez, D., Gallo, P., Bianchi, M., Lionetti, L., Pomes, A. L., . . . Varela, P. (2009). *Violencia en las escuelas desde una perspectiva cualitativa*. 1a ed. Ministerio de Educación de la Nación. Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- Official Statistics of Finland (OSF). Helsinki, Finland: Advisory Board of OSF. Retrieved 29 December, 2014, from: http://tilastokeskus.fi/meta/svt/index_en.html
- Pörhölä, M. (2009). Psychosocial well-being of victimized students. In T. A. Kinney & M. Pörhölä (Eds.), *Anti and Pro-Social Communication: Theories, Methods, and Applications* (Language as Social Action, Vol. 6.; pp. 83–93). New York: Peter Lang.
- Pörhölä, M. (2011). Kiusaaminen opiskeluyhteisössä [Bullying in university community]. In K. Kunttu, A. Komulainen, K. Makkonen & P. Pynnönen, (Eds.), *Opiskeluterveys* (pp. 166–168). Helsinki, Finland: Duodecim.
- Pörhölä, M., Cowie, H., Cvancara, K., Kaal, E., Kunttu, K., Myers, C.-A., Tampere, K., & Torres, B. (in submission). Cultural variation and gender differences in university students' experiences of bullying and victimization in five countries.
- Reijntjes A., Kamphuis, J. H., Prinzie, P., & Telch, M. J. (2010). Peer victimization and internalizing problems in children: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34(4), 244–252.
- Roman, M., & Murillo, F. Javier (2011). America Latina: Violencia entre estudiantes y desempeño escolar. *Revista Cecopal* 104, 37–54.
- Salin, D. (2001). Prevalence and forms of bullying among business professionals: A comparison of two different strategies for measuring bullying. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10, 425–441.
- Schäfer, M., Korn, S., Smith, P. K., Hunter, S. C., Mora-Merchán, J. A., Singer, M. M., & van der Meulen, K. (2004). Lonely in the crowd: Recollections of bullying. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 22, 379–394.
- Secretaría de Asuntos Estudiantiles (2014). Subsecretaría de Inclusion y Ciudadanía Estudiantil. Retrieved 19 December, 2014, from: <http://www.unc.edu.ar/vidaestudiantil/gestion/secretaria-de-asuntos-estudiantiles>
- Sinkkonen, H.-M., Puhakka, H., & Meriläinen, M. (2012). Bullying at a university: students' experiences of bullying. *Studies in Higher Education*.

DOI:10.1080/03075079.2011.649726United States Census Bureau web site. Retrieved 4 October, 2014, from: <http://www.census.gov/population/international/data/idb/>

Table 1 Country Comparisons of the Rates of Victimization and Bullying and Gender Differences

Country	Rates of Victimization and Bullying		Gender Differences	
	<i>Victimization</i>	<i>Bullying</i>	<i>Victimization</i>	<i>Bullying</i>
Argentina	Highest	Highest	No	Males report more than females
Estonia	Lowest	Lowest	No	Males report more than females
Finland	Moderate	Moderate	Females report more than males	No
United States	Moderate	Moderate	No	Males report more than females