



Book Reviews

Reviews Editor: Professor Helen Cowie, University of Surrey, UK

Resilience is a theme that is central to each one of these reviews but with a special emphasis on the social contexts where children and young people engage in the everyday activities of their lives and where they form relationships with friends, family members, acquaintances, classmates, workmates and neighbours. Each of the authors identifies the critical role that the people in our social environment play in helping and supporting us. The family, of course, plays a key part in the quality of close relationships. In other settings, the bystanders have the potential to make a huge difference choosing to take action as “upstanders” when they observe a peer in distress. The final review concerns teacher education with a thought-provoking student-centred approach which complements the ideas presented in the other reviews. The books and articles here are inspiring and provide researchers and practitioners with constructive ideas on how to create more positive and enjoyable social environments where children and young people can flourish.

**Helen Cowie
Reviews Editor**

1. *Change Your World: The Science of Resilience and the True Path to Success*

Author: Michael Ungar
Publisher: The Sutherland House Inc., Canada
Year of Publication: 2019
ISBN: 978-19994395-2-1

In this book, Michael Ungar uses his wealth of knowledge as a family therapist and his extensive research experience of studying resilience in five contrasting cultures to propose a completely new way of conceptualising resilience. He argues convincingly throughout *Change Your World* that resilience has the power to help each person create a good and fulfilling life and maintain a strong sense of emotional health and wellbeing. But rather than celebrate inherent psychological qualities within the person, Michael Ungar's fundamental focus is on the social and physical ecologies of the well-resourced individual. He is scathing about self-improvement manuals that focus on strengthening the self or organisations that simply "blame the system". Instead, he argues, everyone can cultivate resilience by focussing on the resources that surround them. It is the quality of these "social and physical ecologies" that has the greatest influence on our capacity to cope with life's difficulties. His central argument is that everyone needs to connect themselves to a network of resources that will support them when life gets tough. His first chapter summarises this perspective in its title – "our success depends on others".

Ungar identifies 12 resources that recur in resilient lives. These include having at least one person in our lives who loves us unconditionally; this can even be a person who is no longer with us but who remains as a memory. Additionally, a key resource involves having a network of other relationships, such as colleagues at work, neighbours or an online community where we feel needed and valued, and which protects us against feelings of loneliness. A further resource involves having a sense of control over the decisions that affect our lives. It is also important to have a structure in our everyday world, like a daily walk, a routine, a realistic set of expectations; such a framework acts as a buffer against chaotic emotions. It is also important to have a strong sense of identity which, argues Ungar, is a co-construction that is central to our feelings of self-worth. A sense of belonging can also be sustained by a strong set of beliefs – whether religious, spiritual or political - which provide us with a sense of purpose in life beyond ourselves.

Even in extreme circumstances it is possible to find supportive resources. His wide-ranging case studies drawn from real life attest to this, even though some examples, such as South African miners working in extremely dangerous and toxic environments, push Ungar's model to its limits. Probably his argument is at its strongest when he stays close to the individual's struggles against adversity. He is less convincing when he moves into the realm of large social structures where change can only be won through collective action and protest as opposed to individual coping strategies.

The book ends with two exercises covering the twelve fundamental resources needed to “succeed” in life, obviously developed from Ungar’s clinical work with clients and families. I would have liked to see some commentary on the possible answers and how to interpret them. With the right guidance, as argued in the book, the exercises could provide a helpful framework and a pathway towards resilience in the face of adversity. Otherwise the exercises run the risk of becoming yet one more set of self-help tools.

Overall, however, I recommend this book for its sound basis in research and its strong underpinning of real-world experience.

Helen Cowie

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2. *Family, Bullying and Cyberbullying*

Author:	Raul Navarro Olivas (Editor)
Publisher:	MDPI, Basel, Switzerland
Year of Publication:	2019
ISBN:	978-3-03921-080-0, 978-3-03921-081-7

This is a collection of articles from the Special Issue Family, Bullying and Cyberbullying of the open access journal Social Sciences, 2018-19 published [online](#).

The entire focus in this Special Issue is on the role of the family in identifying the signs and symptoms when their child is being bullied or cyberbullied, in creating a home environment where children feel able to share emotions and talk about interpersonal difficulties they may be experiencing, and in supporting the school in any interventions that are to be put in place when bullying occurs. One theme that runs through this book is the critical role of communication within the family. Research has indicated that families who regularly engage in dialogue with their members, for example, at family mealtimes, are significantly more likely to detect the early indications that a child or young person is having peer group difficulties. These everyday conversations must be characterised by interest in the activities of the young person during the day and in details about their friendships, including the ups and downs that inevitably occur. It is important for families to encourage their children to talk about relationships and about their own emotions. Although having this kind of close family communication does not necessarily prevent the child from being bullied, it does ensure that the child is more likely to feel secure enough to talk about interpersonal difficulties that are happening in his/her life. The editor has gathered key researchers in the

field from Spain, Canada, South Korea, United States and United Kingdom to explore the importance of the family and to deepen our understanding of what can be done to help young people in this situation, whether at home, at school or in the community.

There is only space to mention some contributors here but suffice it to say that each has a particular stance to illuminate the issue. Jennifer Doty and her co-authors discuss ways in which parents can protect their children from online abuse and emphasise the role of parental connectedness as a buffer against cyberbullying. (This concept has been explored in previous issues of IJEE). Not only is monitoring important, they argue, but also a warm and caring relationship between parents and children. This is a theme that recurs throughout the articles. The bystanders are not forgotten. Michelle Wright and Sebastian Wachs identify the buffering effects of instructive parental mediation associations between bystanders of cyberbullying, on the one hand, and cyberbullying victimisation and perpetration on the other. They found that parental intervention with bystanders had an important effect on their behaviour one year later. This study shows how important it is for parents to realise the influence that they potentially have on their children's direct and indirect involvement in bullying and cyberbullying.

Based on their own research, Wanda Cassidy, Chantal Faucher and Margaret Jackson outline effective strategies that parents can use not only to prevent cyberbullying but also to promote "cyber-kindness". They too note the importance of trusting relationships between parents and their children as well the need for parental monitoring of online behaviour and activity. Additionally, they stress the need for regular consultation with children and young people in order to identify current issues in the school or community and to listen to young people's own suggestions for ways of combatting cyberbullying and other forms of online abuse in their own contexts.

For anyone, whether as parent, teacher, researcher or policy-maker, this is a valuable and up-to-date resource to illuminate our understanding of the role that the family plays in the social and emotional development of children from the earliest years all the way through to adolescence and beyond.

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3. *Emily is Being Bullied: What Can She Do?*

Author: Helen Cowie, Harriet Tenenbaum and Ffion Jones
Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London
Year of Publication: 2018
ISBN: 978-1-78592-548-1

This short, easy to read, primary-school age-appropriate story about bullying, is a resource which is written in child friendly terms, making it highly suitable as a tool which supports children and their parents or teachers to begin the conversation about bullying, and to explore what it really feels like as either the child being bullied, the child engaging in bullying behaviour and those bystanders who are part of the wider peer group who witness it. It captures the feelings, tensions and thoughts of the key character, Emily (the targeted child); Hannah (the child who engages in bullying behaviour); and two friends (Beth and Ravi) as they experience the friendship shifts, challenges and peer relationship changes associated with repeated bullying at school.

As a text-based resource, the reader easily enters the realm of Emily's school-world as they read, bringing their own unique voice to the storyline and characters, making it contextually relevant and believable for the reader: this could be their school, their friends, their situation.

It does however lend itself to being transposed into a digital format, so that children and their parents could interact with the various characters online and follow through their thinking, emotions and responses. In this way, this booklet could be an important first step in a potentially longer, ongoing series of culturally relevant stories for parents and children which could be navigated online together.

The content and context are evidence informed, and guided by knowledge derived from research, which is explicit in the "Information for Adults" section. There are hints also in the storyline, for adults in how to respond, through employing for example, a trauma-informed lens: where the focus is on what the child has experienced, rather than what is "wrong". There are also examples of good practice, such as positive circle time, where children can speak about and reflect on issues important to them, in a safe and supportive class climate. Most important, the key messages reflect that the child being bullied, is not at fault and that help is available if and when they are ready to reach out.

The perspective of the child engaging in the bullying behaviour (Hannah) also draws on clear evidence: that bullying is driven by the quality of the social connections, learned behaviours and relationships around that child; combined with socio-cultural influences and individual factors. It also highlights a key role played by teachers in empathic listening and recognizing if and when a child might be ready to embrace change in their behaviour. Teachers often know when a child is ready, willing and able to make a change to their behaviour, and again, this is founded upon evidence.

The Bystander perspective (Beth and Ravi) highlights that these children need support to recognize their passive role in supporting the bullying behaviours, and in getting help and support to speak out.

Importantly this resource does not paint a “Pollyanna” view that everything will be “happy ever after”. It lets the reader understand that this is a complex issue and that all relationships need support to work through the issue, through employing the multiple lenses of the students and adults involved. Help-seeking is a powerful, but quiet message here: knowing how to reach out, and to whom safely, so as to protect one’s self esteem and identity, and get the help needed is important. This resource provides important opportunities for discussion about that option.

All relationships, including friendships experience conflict in some form, and children need to learn that conflict is a normal aspect of all relationships, and then how to best manage it in the confines of a school setting where all parties have to continue to interact. Some conflicts cannot be resolved, and that is another learning and point of discussion to be had in the context of this storyline: knowing how to separate out conflict related to friendships and peers, from bullying. Bullying is about unequal power employed negatively in the transaction of a social relationship, but learning how to manage feelings of disquiet, conflicts, and responding to emotions and regulating those emotions is important for growth, mental wellbeing and development.

Emily, Hannah, Beth and Ravi were all provided with opportunities for self-reflection, seeking help, and for growing in self -confidence and assertiveness. These are great discussion and teaching points to explore the ideas above.

Overall, this is a very good starting point for children, teachers and parents who want to embark on those somewhat difficult conversations about bullying: without blaming anyone, and with a range of options for following through.

This resource could be developed into a series of stories, with different characters, scenarios, cultural contexts and developmental perspectives. It could be the starting point for many educational initiatives and provide the foundation from which many student driven stories emerge. I commend the authors on producing such a useful, integrated resource, with potential to shift with the changing contexts and knowledge base.

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4. *Cyberbullying at University in International Contexts*

Author: Wanda Cassidy, Chantal Faucher and Margaret Jackson
Publisher: Routledge, London & New York
Year of Publication: 2019
ISBN: 978-1-13873-039-7 (Hardback), 978-1-13873-044-1 (Paperback), 978-1-31518-940-6 (Ebook)

Cyberbullying has for the past decade emerged as a stand-alone social problem with its own research agenda. Although the debate is still rife between the differences of traditional forms of bullying and cyberbullying, one thing is clear, it is not going to go away any time soon. As technology advances and more social media platforms launch, if anything the demand for robust research led policy is going to increase.

With the majority of research focused on school aged children and young people, *Cyberbullying at University in International Contexts* begins to open up the debate, and contribute to the gap, in the research literature within the further and higher educational contexts, those in post-18 educational settings. It is an edited collection comprising of eighteen chapters and perhaps my only criticism is there could be even more included, notably more contributions from a lot of the work currently being undertaken within Europe. However, I acknowledge that there is only so much that can be included in one collection and Cassidy et al., have done a fantastic job of showcasing really interesting work within this volume.

The book itself is broken into four key areas for consideration: Nature and Extent, Impacts, Solutions and Policy. Each section has predominantly research led chapters, opening up the debates in a number of different fields of investigation, including education, psychology, sociology, media and communications, law, health sciences, social work, the humanities and labour studies. It is only by taking such an interdisciplinary approach that the complexities of a topic, like cyberbullying, can begin to be unpacked.

Furthermore, the chapters consider the interrelationships of cyberbullying behaviours by and against students, by and against faculty members, and complicated altercations involving both students and faculty, as well as institutional staff. A number of voices are heard across the university as an institution which is a welcome addition to existing knowledge about Cyberbullying.

This book is an invaluable resource for graduate students working within the disciplines mentioned above, practitioners, policy makers and university administration who have a duty of care to their students and staff. I would highly recommend this book and welcome the debates that it has highlighted.

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5. *Inside Teaching: How to make a Difference for Every Learner and Teacher*

Author:	John Blanchard
Publisher:	Routledge, London
Year of Publication:	2017
ISBN:	978-1-13871-229-4 (Softcover), 978-1-13871-228-7 (Hardcover), 978-1-31520-026-2 (ebook)

Inside Teaching: How to make a Difference for Every Learner and Teacher is written by John Blanchard, a former independent educational consultant, who has worked as a secondary school teacher and taught on initial training, Bachelor's and Master's programmes in education. In this book, Blanchard draws on his vast experience in education to provide a very handy resource for prospective, novice and experienced teachers alike. In this book, he sets out to support teachers to reflect on their practice and identify ways through which they can help students further their potential for success. To begin with, Blanchard puts forward in the introduction his view on what makes "satisfying and effective teaching and learning", which, he argues, has largely to do with "dialogue with learners and teachers about what they do, why they do it and how they can evaluate and develop what they do".

The book is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the learners; their different backgrounds and levels of support, their motivations, their abilities and their family background. The fact that the book starts off with this section is evidence of Blanchard's student-centred approach to education. There is a clear focus on student autonomy and the particular needs of the learners. He makes a very good case for enjoyment of learning and for paying attention to the motivation of your learners in order to cater for their physical, emotional and intellectual needs.

The second section delves into the roles of planning, teaching and assessment in education. It encourages teachers to reflect on what they do and how they do it, and deals with topical aspects of pedagogy. In this book, Blanchard cites a number of prominent educational theorists, philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists, presenting their work in a very accessible manner. He manages to merge seamlessly various educational theories with the practice of teaching, successfully keeping the text accessible for all readers who are concerned with what makes teaching more effective.

The third section, which is the shortest one by far, focuses on the teacher as a professional. It emphasises the twin pillars of job satisfaction and continuous professional development, providing useful information on the mentoring of teachers, teacher evaluations, peer observation and appraisals. Blanchard ends the book with ten examples of checklists which are succinct and provide teachers with a simple reminder of key tasks that have to be done in order to do their jobs well and enable everyone who is involved in education to share decision-making, methods and responsibility.

Although there is a clear flow from one chapter to the other, all chapters are written in such a way that they can also be read as standalone chapters. At the end of each chapter, Blanchard provides a list of key points which summarise the main takeaways of each chapter. He maintains a light and engaging tone, while still providing deep insights into what makes teaching effective. I believe that this would make for good reading for any teacher, especially those who are in the first few years of their teaching career.

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