

‘BURN AN IMAGE IN THEIR HEAD’: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A PLAY ON BULLYING

Howard Cassidy and Vivienne Watts
Central Queensland University

Abstract

Bullying is endemic in schools and may have a damaging impact on its victims. This paper reports on the development, presentation and evaluation of a powerful, purpose-made play – *Burnt* – which was written by Stephen Davis. The evaluation utilised qualitative program evaluation as a methodology to evaluate the impact of the program on participants’ understanding of the dynamics of bullying, the creation of empathy for the victim, the creation of audience identification with the bystanders and the identification of dilemmas and issues associated with the resolution of bullying. The play was performed to more than 2,300 young people in 15 schools representing city, coastal, rural and mining communities. All participants completed a post-program survey. Data revealed that the program was successful in developing empathy with the victim, and participants’ identification with the bystanders. The majority of students indicated that the play was realistic and that, in their opinion, the program could help to stop bullying.



Howard Cassidy was a founding member of Drama Australia. He has worked as a drama lecturer at the Faculty of Education and Creative Arts at Central Queensland University for the past twenty five years. As Artistic Director of the CQU Theatre-in-Education Company, he has produced many plays for children of all ages and annually toured the western towns of Central Queensland. Howard’s participatory TIE programs target current social issues in order to raise awareness of problems and to allow students to have a voice in their community.



Vivienne Watts is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Creative Arts at Central Queensland University where she has taught for the past fifteen years. She teaches in the areas of behaviour management, classroom communication and managing students’ diverse abilities. Her principal research interests are related to the teacher’s role in child protection, children’s personal safety programs, school bullying and other forms of school violence and she has written two books on these topics.

Keywords: PLAYWRIGHT-IN-RESIDENCE; THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE; QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Introduction

Bullying is endemic in schools and has a damaging and even tragic impact on its victims (e.g., Jackman, 2000; Rigby, 1996). Yet, for the most part, bullying is conducted in secret, out of the view of parents and teachers. As one means of getting help students are told to tell an adult — someone they know and trust. However, for various reasons, many students do not tell adults. One alternative is to encourage students to get help from their peers. *Burnt* is a play developed to target the bystanders, witnesses or friends of the victim who become crucial in raising the alarm and getting help. In fulfilling this role, these peers need to know what bullying is, that it is not appropriate behaviour, that it has the potential to cause significant harm to people and that, in order to obtain assistance in resolving bullying, it may be necessary to enlist the help of adults who know what to do and who have the power to act in the particular context.

Therefore, the major aims of *Burnt* were to raise awareness of bullying, create bystander characters with whom the audience could identify, help students explore the dilemmas associated with finding a realistic course of action and change students' ideas where these ideas may have provided a barrier to action. These aims are compatible with Boal's (1979:122) *Theatre of the Oppressed* that aims to transform the audience from 'spectators' — passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon — into 'spect-actors'. These 'spect-actors' assume the protagonic role, change the dramatic action, try out solutions, discuss plans for change — in short, train themselves for real action. In this way the *Burnt* program aimed to convert the witnesses to bullying into pro-active agents who would be willing to step in rather than stand by.

This paper reports the development, presentation and evaluation of a Theatre-in-Education play on school bullying with accompanying workshops.

Background to the study

The Development of the Play

Burnt was a collaborative project between the director Howard Cassidy, the researcher Vivienne Watts, the playwright-in-residence Stephen Davis (*Juice, Blurred*) and a group of student actors who were members of the Central Queensland University Theatre-in-Education Company.

During an intensive workshop of three weeks, the playwright, director and researcher worked with the actors who created improvised scenes based on issues, themes, memories and research findings. A set of special features and effects were identified for inclusion in the play. These features included:

- a. Raising awareness of what bullying is, its unique dynamics, and converting the discussion of bullying from a secretive topic to one which is freely discussed by adults and adolescents;
- b. The creation of victim empathy through a victim character who was 'different' yet credible and one who could be empathised with;
- c. Informing students of the potentially horrific consequences of bullying for victims and thus promoting action by the bystanders in the form of advocacy for the victim;

- d. The creation of audience identification with the bystanders if the play was to achieve its aim of initiating bystander action in bullying situations;
- e. Exploration of issues and dilemmas associated with bullying and, where possible, alter students' existing beliefs that may inhibit solutions to bullying.

In one play it is not possible to accomplish everything. Therefore, the team agreed that the play **would not**:

- a. Provide a list of actions and strategies that told students what to do, but rather would focus on exploring issues and encouraging the students to work out their own solutions;
- b. Be didactic or moralise.

From this array of aims and features, characters and issues began to emerge and specific incidents portraying bullying techniques and styles were generated. This material was recorded, reflected upon, then reworked to provide Stephen Davis with ideas which he shaped into written scenes. Over two months, Stephen produced several drafts which the director, researcher and actors helped to refine. While the final version of the play is founded on the experiences in the workshops, *Burnt* is very much Stephen Davis' play.

The perennial problem of what degree of realism should be used in the bullying scenes was explored by the team. That is, should the play make the scenes of bullying so explicit that students may later copy what they saw, causing a rise in the incidence of bullying? Or, conversely, should the play honestly depict bullying as it occurred in schools so that students could relate to it as being truthful and credible and an exposé of the bullying phenomenon? No satisfactory answers to these questions could be located in the literature, so the play was developed to be purposefully confronting in order to stimulate students' discussion and exploration of ideas. In an attempt to find out whether or not using this degree of realism helped to achieve the aims, audience members were asked: 'Do you think these types of things really happen to people?' The majority (82%) of students said they did happen and some added: 'because I have seen them here on a daily basis'. And, in relation to whether or not this approach was effective, students were asked: 'In your opinion, can *Burnt* help to stop bullying?' To this question, 54% of students commented that *Burnt* could help to stop bullying. These results are expanded below.

Plot and Structure

Burnt has a straightforward plot. Simon is an isolated boy whose sensitive nature and quirky behaviour, such as talking to ants, make him a target for bullying by Richard who is an all-round successful student and school leader. There are four main bullying incidents, each different in technique and effect yet all are graphic and disturbing. Richard spits into a can of softdrink and forces Simon to drink it; Richard uses his belt to whip Simon on his buttocks; Richard forces Simon to strip down to his underwear and to go in front of the school assembly. Finally, when Simon attempts to 'stand up for himself', Richard beats him up in front of a crowd of complicit students. Three bystanders become aware of the bullying episodes and each of them makes a different responses. These bystander characters provide models of a range of personality types and responses. Ever helpful and anxious, Emily tries many ways to help Simon but is continually rebuffed

and is ultimately unsuccessful. Hann and Jack are, in their different ways, superficial and oblivious to the signs of the seriousness of the situation. The bullying escalates, culminating in Simon's attempt to burn down the school.

The playwright created a powerful, non-linear narrative which builds tension as the audience waits to discover the nature of the victim's response to relentless bullying. The play is structured to interweave the bystanders' reflections and misgivings about the bullying among scenes depicting the events leading up to the final fiery outcome. Monologues and flashbacks are used in *Burnt* to allow the spectator to see inside the psyche of the victim. Empathy for the victim is developed as the audience 'listens in' to Simon's thoughts as he delivers four monologues, strategically-placed to provide a sustained emotional experience for the audience. The words of the closing monologue draw together various threads exposed in the play and highlight social ostracism as the issue at the crux of the bullying. Simon finally says, 'How nice it would be to just be part of something. To just belong. To just belong'.

Presentation of the Play

The play was performed 24 times to 2,300 young people in 15 state and private secondary schools, representing city, coastal, rural and mining communities. In order to maximise the emotional impact and sense of a shared experience, the play was intimately staged with the audience restricted to approximately 100, seated as close to the action as possible and on the same floor level. The play was set in a school context and, to facilitate touring, a simple canvas backdrop was painted with orange flames. A 'classroom' door opened and closed in the canvas to allow scene changes and effects. Contemporary music by groups such as *Pearl Jam*, *Silver Chair* and *Nirvana* was used between the numerous scenes to create atmosphere and set the tone. Each of Simon's four monologues was framed by his signature cello music which was delicate yet emotionally charged. Characters wore 'typical' variations on school uniform such as shirts out, baseball caps worn backwards, and knapsacks. The bully character, Richard, was the only one who was different in this respect. In an attempt to call into question the bully stereotype, Richard was dressed in white shirt, tie and long grey trousers. This reversal was not lost on students, one commenting on Richard's attire:

Wearing a full uniform, to perfection, many felt that he looked more like a victim of harassment than Simon. But we were proved wrong in that matter by actually watching his personality, which showed that he wouldn't have fitted the stereotypical black T-shirt, cargo pants pulled down, and cap turned backwards.

The atmosphere during the presentations was tense, with staff and students aware of the potential consequences for students of viewing such a confronting play. The realities of bullying were not glossed over or watered down. The view was taken that bullying was an issue of such serious concern that, in order to expose it for what it was, the matters had to be fairly represented. However, the debriefing undertaken in the whole group discussion and the smaller workshops that followed the play were essential in providing catharsis, reflection and the formulation of new responses and ideas.

Post-presentation Workshops

The post-presentation activities took place in two stages. First, a whole-group forum theatre aimed to extend the audience's empathy for the victim and explore any issues

that seemed pertinent to audience members. In this large group, the whole audience had the opportunity to ask questions of individual cast members, both in character and out of character, and to influence the actions of characters in role plays and replays. Second, in more intimate workshops, cast members conducted role plays, discussions of human interest, debates and/or arguments, problem-solving forum theatre sessions and question times.

Methodology

The student audience participated in a three-part program consisting of the play, whole-group forum-theatre hot-seat discussion and small-group workshops. This total package comprised a program and, therefore, program evaluation methodology was used to assess its effectiveness. The *Burnt* program is about bullying, a complex social issue, and so the evaluators selected a qualitative methodology for goodness of fit. Patton (1988, 1990), Stake (1967), MacDonald (1976), Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1985), developed methodological principles for qualitative program evaluation that differed from the experimental, positivistic principles that dominated program evaluation prior to the 1970's. Qualitative program evaluators replaced the earlier emphasis on experiment, objectivity, the truth of validity, credibility, normativity and generalisability, with a stance that was founded in interpretivist philosophy. This philosophy has been given various names such as qualitative, ethnographic, naturalistic and hermeneutic. Interpretivism aims to interpret (construct meaning), from the context since "social reality is viewed as significantly socially constructed" (Green, 1994, p. 536), and is "based on a constant process of interpretation and re-interpretation of the intentional, meaningful behaviour of people" (Smith, 1989, p. 85). The focus for social inquiry in the interpretivist paradigm is the "phenomenological meaningfulness of lived experience-peoples' interpretations and sense making of participants' experiences in a given context" (Green, 1994, p. 536). The purpose of this evaluation was to understand the impact of the play on the participants' understanding of the dynamics of bullying, the creation of empathy for the victim, the creation of audience identification with the bystanders, the identification of dilemmas and issues associated with the resolution of bullying.

Methods

Following the *Burnt* program, an evaluation was conducted by asking students at the completion of the small group workshops to complete a written survey. This method was selected for its practicability in relation to the purpose of the study and the constraints of the situation. The purpose of the survey was to allow all group members a voice so that those less dominant members could participate equally with other group members. Also, there was insufficient time for an interview or focus group discussion and tape recording was impractical. The questions on the survey were a combination of open and closed questions, allowing participants the opportunity to provide explanations for their choices. The term 'survey' is not used as it is normally used in quantitative evaluations, that is, the study does not claim to be generalisable but seeks primarily to understand participants' thinking about bullying issues. A representative sample was not used and there is no attempt to infer from the sample to the whole population. Rather, *all students* submitted their survey responses and the qualitative responses were analyzed for the themes they contained. Frequency tables were constructed to provide the reader with some feel for the numbers of students espousing a particular view and to substantiate

that the qualitative responses provided in this report are 'typical' rather than 'one-off' comments. Table 2 indicates how the survey questions related to the purpose of the evaluation and the research questions of the study.

Research Questions	Survey Questions
Did the play raise students' awareness of what bullying was and its unique dynamics?	Why does Richard pick on Simon?
Did the audience identify with the bystander characters and ?	Which one of the characters do you relate to most? Why? a) Richard b) Simon c) Emily d) Jack e) Hann
Did the play raise students' awareness of what bystanders could do in cases of bullying?	If you were Hann, Jack or Emily, what would you have done to help Simon?
Did the play change students' ideas?	Now that you have seen <i>Burnt</i> , have your ideas about bullying changed? Y N If Yes: Before I thought - Now I think

Table 1. Research Questions and Survey Questions

Results of the Evaluation

As stated above the purpose of this evaluation was to understand the impact of the play on the participants' understanding of the dynamics of bullying, the creation of empathy for the victim, the creation of audience identification with the bystanders, the identification of dilemmas and issues associated with the resolution of bullying. Each of these will be discussed in the following sections.

A. Awareness of Bullying Dynamics

The question of why Richard picks on Simon was of paramount interest to the students and occupied a large part of the discussion time in the whole group. In response to the question on the survey, Why did Richard pick on Simon? approximately half the students (n=2,306) attributed the cause to Richard and the other half to Simon. Figure 1 provides a frequency table indicating the relative numbers of responses in each category.

Some students felt that bullying occurred due to some factor *associated with the bully* such as: his personal insecurity; egotism; need for power; for enjoyment; or he knew he would win. They commented as follows:

- *Because he can't accept that Simon is different and maybe he is better than Richard and Richard is jealous.*
- *Because he has no other way of improving his self-confidence so he picks on Simon so that he feels superior and everyone sees him so he feels he has status.*
- *Richard enjoyed the power and was unable to accept that anyone could step away from his way of thinking.*
- *Because he gets enjoyment out of it and he thinks he is helping Simon.*
- *Richard was bigger and Simon was the only person he could beat.*

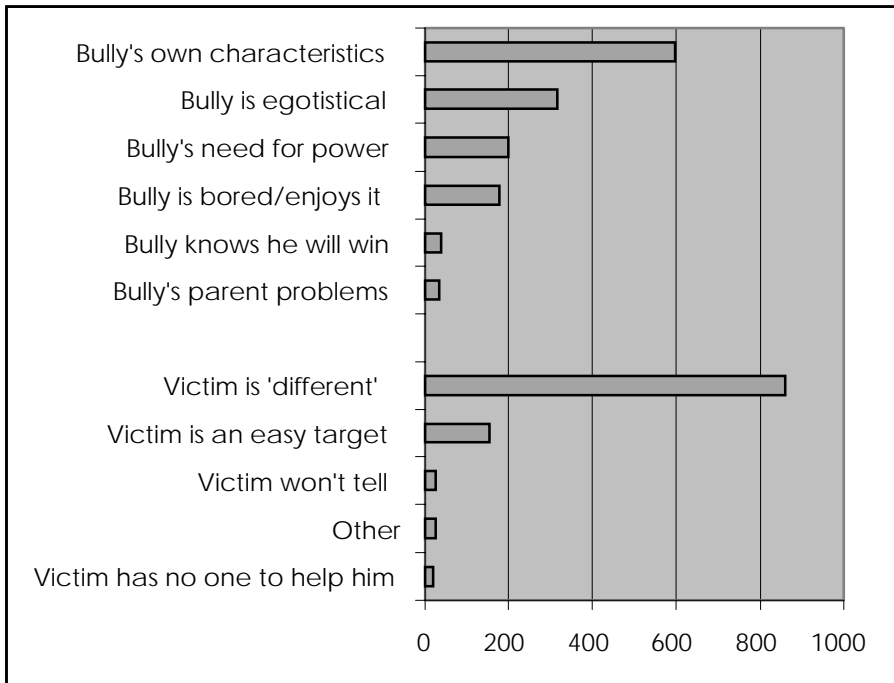


Figure 1. Dynamics of Bullying

Other students considered the bullying occurred due to some factor *associated with the victim* such as: his peculiar personal behaviours; because he was an easy target; the bully could feel assured that the victim wouldn't tell anyone; or that he has no support network to assist in resolving the problem. Their comments included:

- *Simon was a nerd; weird; loser; different.*
- *He was there to be picked on.*
- *There was an imbalance in the hierarchy of power.*
- *Richard knows he won't tell.*
- *He has no one to turn to.*
- *Maybe it's because Simon has no friends to stick up for him.*

Students' personal theories of the cause and dynamics of the bullying are important because it is assumed that those beliefs will influence their choice and design of strategies to deal with it.

B. Bystander Identification

Jack, Emily and Hann were the bystander characters and overall 68% of the students indicated that they identified with one of these characters. From Figure 2. it is evident that the students related to each of the bystanders more frequently than to either the bully or the victim.

CHARACTER IDENTIFICATION

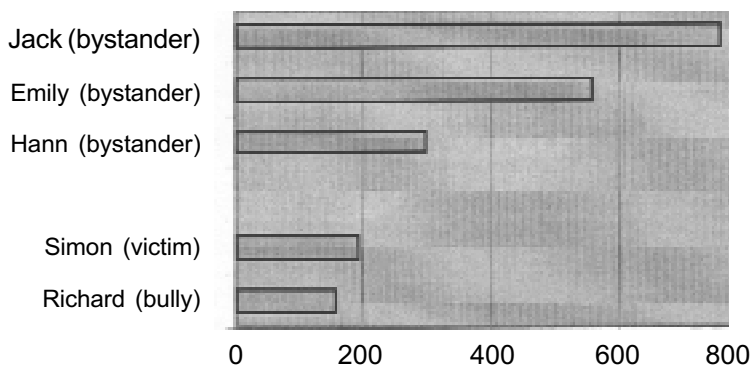


Figure 2. Character Identification

Jack was the bystander character that students related to most often. These students (32%) commented that they related to Jack because they thought he was: funny; cool; cute; normal; average; doesn't get involved; is neither a victim nor a bully. Several other thoughtful students commented: 'I would help Simon if I knew what was going on'; 'He's scared to stand up to Richard'; 'He's nice but can do the wrong thing sometimes'; 'I hate seeing bullying but don't want to jeopardise my reputation by doing something about it'.

Emily was created by the playwright as the empathetic bystander character, however fewer students (24%) identified with her than with Jack.

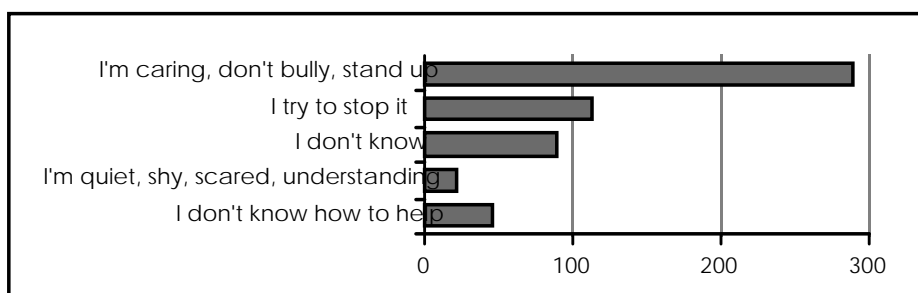


Figure 3. Relate to Emily

Students' individual comments included:

- I'm like Emily because I try to help but don't do much
- I don't know how to help. I try to help but can't
- Because I try to help but no one listens
- 'Cause I care a lot and try to put myself in people's places 'cause I've had friends who've been bullied
- Because I have been bullied once and, now I have changed schools, I want to help those who are being bullied

Those who identified with Hann (12%) did so because they considered themselves: weird; different; individual; outgoing; loud; talkative; liked movies. Other students added: 'I relate to Hann because mostly I do not think about what is happening till it's happened'; 'She is not a bully but also doesn't step in'. By comparison with the bystander characters, fewer students identified with Simon (the victim) and Richard (the bully). Those who related to Richard (6%) commented it was because: 'I'm a bully/mean'; 'I'm cool/funny'; 'I'm confident/popular'. Most of the students who identified with Simon (8%) did so because, like him, they were picked on (see Figure 4).

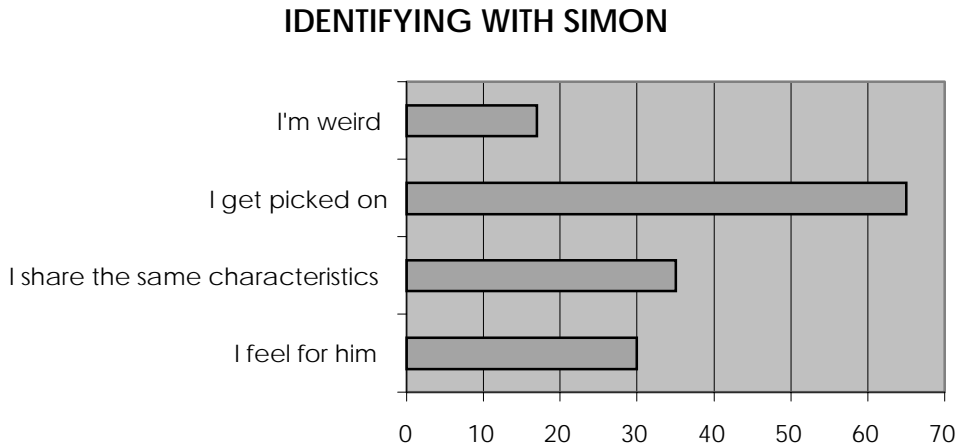


Figure 4. Identifying with Simon

Generally comments included:

- *I am being bullied, and am quiet and different.*
- *I am always bullied except I don't stand for it.*
- *I usually get punched for fun and enjoyment.*
- *I get picked on a couple of times each day.*
- *I have been teased in one way, shape or form all though school.*

In summary, the play targeted the bystanders and it appears that most students identified with these bystander characters for one reason or another. Jack and Hann played frivolous, disconnected but also concerned characters. They wore typical school dress of 'not-quite-right' school uniform and were more concerned with trite daily occurrences rather than responding to Emily's pleas to help Simon. However, some students related to the bully and victim characters. Most who related to the victim character did so because they had experienced some form of bullying themselves.

C. Bystander Strategies

What did the audience think the bystanders could have done to stop the bullying? Their responses are summarised in Figures 5, 6 and 7.

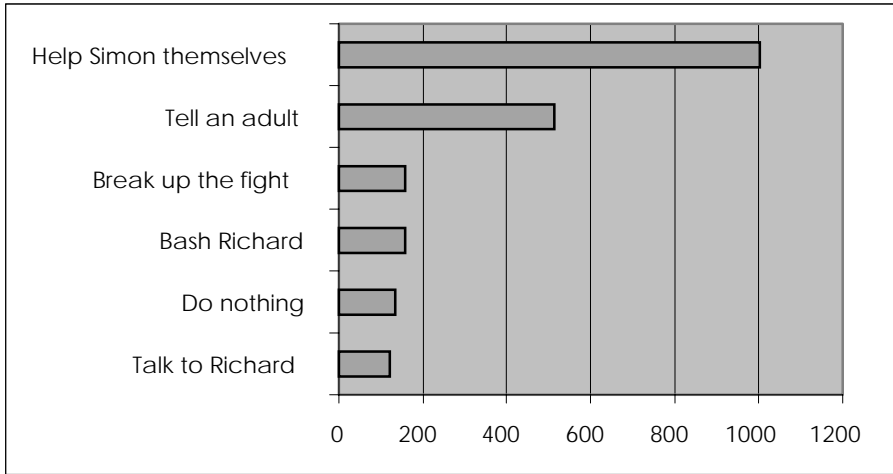


Figure 5. Bystanders' strategies

Students most commonly (44%) said the bystanders should do something proactive to help the victim such as befriend him, talk to him, advise him, help him in some way, or stick up for him. Students (22%) also said they would tell somebody such as a teacher or the principal. Some (7%) wanted to 'bash' the bully, and other students (7%) wanted to break up the fight. Few students said they would 'do nothing', however, it would have been interesting to understand their reasons for this choice. In summary, most students suggested predictable strategies commonly used by schools in bullying situations. However, a minority of students suggested other strategies that were creative and potentially effective. For example:

- *The victim gets to choose the consequences for the bully*
- *Victims and the bully should be counselled by the same counsellor, to address the problems*
- *Peer mediation program where students support other students and mediate between victims and bullies.*
- *Put a surveillance camera in each class*

Figure 6. Have your ideas about bullying changed?

D. Changing Ideas

Did the play change students' ideas about bullying? A reassuring interpretation of the fact that the majority indicated that their ideas hadn't changed, is that the play allowed students to assess and privately affirm their own perspectives and perceptions, namely, that they thought bullying was bad and *they still do*. In addition, a good percentage of students showed that their thinking had changed and the insights indicated in these responses are illuminating.

Personal beliefs are the foundation for action (Watts, 1997). The play gave students an opportunity to examine their existing beliefs, which is at least a first step to empowerment. Hearing other people's public responses also reinforces developing individual beliefs and allows people a public shared voice. For example, students may think: 'I believe bullying is bad, I always believed it was bad, now how can I go about doing something about it'.

Before I thought	Now I think
<p>Bullies were the ones to blame. That the effects of bullying were that drastic.</p> <p>It was nothing being bullied.</p> <p>People deserved it.</p> <p>eyes</p> <p>Bullying was mean and goes on everywhere.</p> <p>Life sucked. You have to beat the bully up with a strong blunt weapon.</p> <p>Bullying was only physical. Nothing could happen to help those people who were getting bullied. Pick on people. treated. That people would stick up for themselves and not let bullies get away with it. Verbal stuff was only for girls. That it didn't really happen.</p> <p>Didn't realise the extremeness and consequences felt by the victim. I thought it was wrong but I still did it does. That that type of daily bullying only happened (to that serious extent) in videos or American TV shows and that only minor bullying occurred.</p>	<p>Doing nothing is also harmful. Now I still think that people need to learn to deal with this sort of thing as it happens to <u>everyone</u> in some way, shape or form at some stage in their life. It <u>is</u> hard to face, and some people will need help to deal with it, but you cannot simply just separate the bully and the victim and hope it will never happen again. If people can learn to deal with this sort of treatment, it will make them learn to be stronger and more readily able to cope with the world. These things will happen in life and you need to be able to deal with it. The world is not a nice place - we need to be taught, if necessary, how to cope.</p> <p>I didn't think that the person would get so depressed. That they don't. I don't know how, but it has opened my more to detect all sorts of bullying.</p> <p>The same as before. More confident about it though. You can tell the teacher. That they don't.</p> <p>I didn't realise that the bully could be that resourceful. (I guess they have an imagination after all.) Don't do it. There's more to it. There is hope for people who get bullied.</p> <p>Treat people the way you want to be</p> <p>That everyone should stand up to people, befriend those who don't have friends. It's definitely for guys too. That it could happen anywhere including our school and it's hard to stop. I can have the power to stop it.</p> <p>I don't have to do it because everyone else because everyone else did it. That it is more serious than something that will pass by without effects.</p>

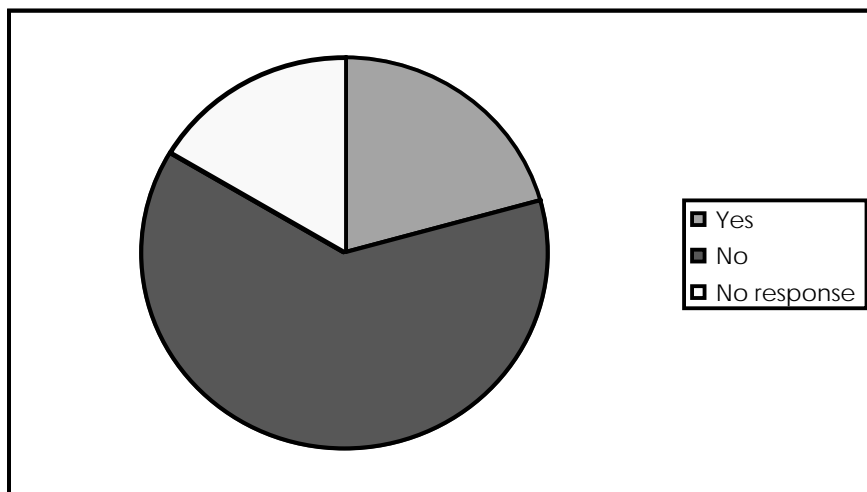


Figure 6. Have your ideas about bullying changed?

General evaluation

As a general comment, students were asked whether or not they believed that the *Burnt* program could help to stop bullying.

CAN BURNT STOP BULLYING?

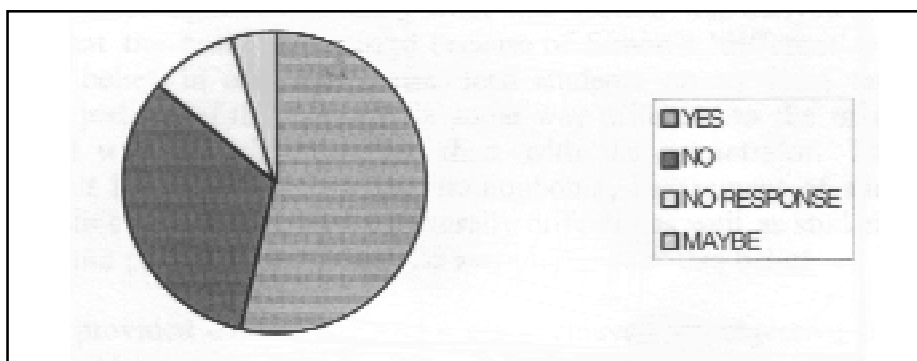


Figure 7. Can Burnt help to stop bullying?

Fifty-four per cent of students believed that *Burnt* could help to stop bullying while another 9% felt that it might do so. Students commented positively that it:

- shows what happens when people are aware of it
- teaches ways to stop bullying
- could inform people about what goes on at schools
- helps people admit to being bullied

One Year 9 boy said it *would* help to stop bullying because, '***It would burn an image in their head***'. Of those 32% who thought the play would be ineffective in helping to stop bullying, some commented that: 'bullies don't care or won't listen'; 'there will always

be bullies and they won't change'; 'people won't tell because they are too scared and won't stand up'. However, as stated earlier, the bystanders were the target audience and the play was not designed to alter the bullies' behaviour. As a student wrote:

I don't think that *Burnt* will stop a lot of bullies from harassing people because most won't want to recognise themselves in the character of Richard. I do think that it will encourage the peers of victims to not tolerate bullying and to stick up for and defend those who are being harassed. It could also give victims new hope that their situation might be resolved.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Teachers' perceptions that bullying is a problem in schools is confirmed in the literature (Rigby, 1996). However, the question is: can a TIE play and its associated workshops assist other school initiatives to stop bullying? The purpose of this paper was to explore the effectiveness of an anti-bullying program that includes a play, as one means in achieving a resolution to the problem of bullying. It is acknowledged that, of itself, a one-off program could not be expected to achieve this result. However, we agree with Jackson (1993) and Readman (1993) that it *is* possible for a program of this type to help students extend their questioning and ultimately to develop a new concept of the world and their place in that world.

We asked: what would have to happen for a TIE play to assist other school initiatives to address bullying? Five specific areas were identified in answer to this question:

- Students would need to be able to identify bullying
- they would need to be empathetic to the victims
- they would need to develop a willingness to help them
- they would have to gain some knowledge of what could be done to assist victims
- ideas that presented a barrier to action would need to be identified and modified prior to action.

Our evaluation of the play focused on assessing whether or not each of these processes had been achieved.

The dynamics of bullying are unique. They are separate and distinct from other forms of harassment and abuse. Being able to identify what constitutes bullying and what does not and then understanding the unique characteristics of bullying is the first step in addressing the problem. Immediately following the presentation of the play, students were strongly focused on the nature of the bully and the bully's motivation. They wanted to know: 'Why did Richard do it?' While the majority of students (57%) indicated that Richard was at fault, by far the most significant finding from this section was derived from those students who indicated that the bullying occurred because of Simon's 'different' characteristics (see Figure 1). This belief, in one sense, may lead students on to form an acceptance that bullying may be justified if the victim is in some way different to the majority. In this way blame is located with the victim rather than with the perpetrator. This belief has the potential to result in continuing bullying, homophobia, harassment of students with special needs and disabilities, students who are culturally different as well as students who hold value differences. Future programs could include ways to counter this belief.

The evaluation provided evidence that the play achieved its objective of highlighting the role and characteristics of the bystanders. Even though bullying affects large numbers of students — Rigby (1996) found one in six students were bullied on a weekly basis — most students will be neither victims nor bullies. Most students will be bystanders or witnesses who are able to help interrupt and/or resolve the situation. These bystanders play a key role. The majority of students in the study wanted to help the victim in some way. This was a most reassuring finding and countered the authors' personal expectation that most would prefer to remain uninvolved.

Students' responses indicated that they were capable of developing innovative strategies in response to bullying situations and therefore one recommendation of this study would be that school policy-makers should make space for students to be involved in the development of anti-bullying policies and strategies. The fact that the most common response (44%) indicated that students wanted to help Simon themselves has several ramifications. First, current educational programs focus on getting students to tell a teacher or parent. However, for various reasons, it appears students in our study wanted to help Simon themselves. This result would require further exploration but, if confirmed, would lead to the conclusion that students rather than teachers should be trained in what to do when receiving disclosures of bullying. Second, the reasons students do not consider teachers and parents as the first and/or credible collaborators in responding to bullying needs to be further explored.

It is very difficult to change students' ideas as a result of a one-off play. Perhaps the most disappointing result for the authors was the result that indicated that the majority of students said that they did not change their ideas as a result of the *Burnt* program. Some explanations for the lack of change indicated that they had always thought of bullying as bad and therefore there was no need for change. However, others indicated that they liked bullying others and intended to continue. On a more positive note, many students disclosed current bullying problems to cast members and sought their help in resolving it. In these cases, the play stimulated victims to act on their own behalf.

Limitations of the present study include its initial exploratory nature and the need to further test these descriptive findings by empirical means. Also, the play targeted students in Years 8, 9 and 10 of secondary school. Many teachers who saw the play expressed the view that the foundations for bullying had already been established in the primary school and that a drama-based anti-bullying program for primary school students and their teachers would be well received. Rigby's (2002) recent meta-evaluation of existing programs for primary and early childhood settings could provide a framework of research in this respect. At the other end of the spectrum, strategies to address workplace bullying have yet to be established.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Burnt* was a confronting play. It did not 'water down' the issues associated with bullying. Students who saw the play were provided with vivid images of bullying and the opportunity to discuss the emerging issues. It is acknowledged that it would be unrealistic to expect the oppression of school bullying to cease as a consequence of a single presentation of a play. Instead, it was the intention of the team that the effect of the play, and the accompanying workshop on the audience, would be similar to throwing

a stone in a pond. The play's impact would send ripples of awareness and action throughout the school community. In this way bullying is changed from a clandestine activity to one that is talked about openly by students and staff. This openness then may result in a situation where bullying is seen as a problem which *does* exist, is not tolerated and can be addressed.

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