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Biography:

Robert Thornberg is an Associate Professor of Education at the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning, Linköping University in Sweden. Dr Thornberg's current research is on school bullying, especially in relation to social processes, peer norms, moral disengagement, and children and adolescents' perspectives. His second line of research is on school rules and everyday moral life of school. Dr Thornberg uses a range of methods including questionnaires, psychological assessments, qualitative interviewing, focus groups, ethnographic fieldwork, grounded theory, and statistical methods.

Current (and in some degrees overlapping) projects:

- a. The social processes of bullying.
- b. Children and adolescents' perspectives on bullying.
- c. Bystander behaviour in bullying situations.
- d. Bullying and moral disengagement.

Annotated Bibliography:

Thornberg, R., Halldin, K., Bolmsjö, N., & Petersson, A. (in press). Victimization of school bullying: A grounded theory. *Research Papers in Education*.

This study investigated how twenty-one former victims of long-term school bullying perceived their bullying experiences. Qualitative interview data were analyzed by grounded theory methods. The research identified a basic process of victimizing in school bullying, which consisted of four phases: (a) initial attacks, (b) double victimizing, (c) bullying exit, and (d) after-effects of bullying. Double victimizing refers to a process in which there was an interplay between external victimizing and internal victimizing. Acts of harassment were repeatedly directed at the victims from their social environment at school – a social process that constructed and repeatedly confirmed their victim role in the class or the group. This external victimizing affected the victims and initiated an internal victimizing, which meant that they internalized the socially constructed victim-image and acted upon this image, which in turn often supported the bullies' agenda and confirmed the socially constructed victim-image.

Thornberg, R., Rosenqvist, R., & Johansson, P. (in press). Older teenagers' explanations of bullying. *Child & Youth Care Forum*.

This mixed methods study explored how 215 upper secondary school students explained why bullying takes place at school. According to the findings, the teenagers' explained bullying much more often with individualistic explanations (bully attributing and victim attributing) than non-individualistic explanations (social context attributing). Furthermore, girls tended to provide a greater number of bullying explanations, as compared to boys.

Thornberg, R., Tenenbaum, L., Varjas, K., Meyers, J., Jungert, T., & Vanegas, G. (in press). Bystander motivation in bullying incidents: To intervene or not? *Western Journal of Emergency Medicine*.

This study examined the reasons for children's decisions to help or not help a victim when witnessing bullying. Thirty students ranging in age from 9 to 15 years from an elementary and middle school in the southeastern United States were interviewed. A key finding was a conceptual framework of bystander motivation to intervene in bullying situations suggesting that deciding whether to help or not help the victim in a bullying situation depends on how bystanders define and evaluate the situation, the social context, and their own agency. Qualitative analysis revealed 5 themes related to bystander motives and included: interpretation of harm in the bullying situation, emotional reactions, social evaluating, moral evaluating, and intervention self-efficacy.

Thornberg, R., & Knutsen, S. (2011). Teenagers' explanations of bullying. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 40*, 177–192.

This mixed methods study explored how 176 lower secondary school students explained why bullying takes place at school. Results indicated that the teenagers tended to explain bullying in terms of individualistic reasons (bully attributing and victim attributing) than in terms of peer group, school setting, or human nature/society reasons. Girls were more likely to attribute bullying causes to the bully and much less to the victim, compared to boys. Moreover, participants classified as bullies were more likely to attribute the reason for bullying to the victim and much less to the bully, compared to victims, bystanders, and victims/bullies.

Thornberg, R. (2011). "She's weird" – The social construction of bullying in school: A review of qualitative research. *Children & Society, 25*, 258–267.

Qualitative research provides opportunities to study bullying and peer harassment as social processes, interactions and meaning-making in the everyday context of particular settings. It offers the possibility of developing a deep understanding of the culture and group processes of bullying and the participants' perspectives on peer harassment as well. It gives participants opportunities to discuss their own understanding and experiences of bullying in their own words. This article reviews qualitative studies on bullying or peer harassment in school.

Thornberg, R. (2011). Young people's representations of bullying causes. In M. Paludi (Ed.), *The psychology of teen violence and victimization* (Vol. 2, pp. 105–120). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

This chapter reviews research on how children and adolescents explain bullying. Based on the literature on young people's representations of bullying causes, the main themes in the chapter are: (a) the deviant victim, (b) the struggle for status, power, and friendship, (c) the disturbed bully, (d) having fun and avoiding boredom, (e) group pressure, (f) mindless bullying, (g) bullying causes from bullies' point of view, and (h) implications for practitioners.

Thornberg, R. (2010). A study of children's conceptions of school rules by investigating their judgments of transgressions in the absence of rules. *Educational Psychology, 30*, 583–603.

This study investigated 202 elementary school children's judgments and reasoning about transgressions when school rules regulating these transgressions have been removed in hypothetical school situations. As expected, bullying and kicking/hitting others were judged as more wrong than other transgressions (e.g., running in corridors, swearing, and talking during seatwork). Furthermore, the children used moral reasons (i.e., appealed to welfare or fairness, or pointed to the behavior's consequence of harming others) more often when justifying their judgments of bullying and kicking/hitting, as compared to the other transgressions.

Thornberg, R. (2010). A student in distress: Moral frames and bystander behavior in school. *The Elementary School Journal, 110*, 585–608.

This study investigated how and why students behave as they do in school situations in which they witness another student in distress. Fieldwork and interviews were conducted in two Swedish elementary schools and guided by a grounded theory approach. Five main moral frames of school

were identified: (a) the moral construction of the good student, (b) institutionalized moral disengagement, (c) tribe caring, (d) gentle caring-girl morality, and (e) social-hierarchy-dependent morality. The study highlights how moral action is generally inhibited by the conformity fostered in school settings and by moral dilemmas constructed by the moral frames. A revised model of bystander behavior adapted to the school context is also presented.

Thornberg, R. (2010). Schoolchildren's social representations on bullying causes. *Psychology in the Schools, 47*, 311–327.

This study investigated schoolchildren's social representations on the causes of bullying. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 56 schoolchildren recruited from five elementary schools in Sweden. Mixed methods (grounded theory as well as descriptive statistic methods) were used to analyze data. According to the findings, the most prevalent social representation on bullying causes among the children is to view bullying as a reaction to deviance. The second most frequently used explanation type is to view bullying as social positioning. Other social representations on bullying causes are to explain bullying as the work of a disturbed bully, a revengeful action, an amusing game, social contamination, and a thoughtless happening. Social representations of bullying causes could be linked to the more general process of social categorization and seem in many bullying cases to promote moral disengagement among the children.

Relevant web-based links:

Personal webpage:

<http://www.ibl.liu.se/medarbetare/thornberg-robot?l=en&sc=true>

The Center for Research on School Safety, School Climate, and Classroom Management:

<http://education.gsu.edu/schoolsafety/>

The NERA Network for Empirical Research on Value Issues in Education:

<http://www.liu.se/forskning/nera?l=en&sc=true>