SUE ROFFEY
CHRISTOPHER BOYLE


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# BELIEF, BELONGING AND THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN REDUCING THE RISK OF HOME-GROWN EXTREMISM


## INTRODUCTION

Recent world events have led to an increased sense of collective fear directed to those perceived as outside the mainstream. This chapter posits that much of that fear is generated by beliefs about others, often stirred by a negative media and political interests. This is also true of those who engage in terrorism – their acts are driven by beliefs that comprise not so much religious faith as a way of making sense of the world. There is much evidence to suggest that military responses to terrorism are counter-productive as are programs aimed at identifying at risk individuals (Byrne, 2017). It has been suggested that more effective anti-terrorism strategies need to focus on the 'normality' of people who commit atrocities and intervene early. This includes both community engagement and building an educational climate that breaks down stereotypes and addresses both values and compassion (Singer & Bolz, 2013).

There has been much debate across the world about the radicalisation of young men and women, some of them committing horrific acts of violence in the name of Islam. Because this is their stated purpose, millions of peace-loving Muslims become erroneously associated with these, compounding a negative cycle of mistrust and blame.

This chapter explores alternative constructions of motivation and how important a sense of belonging and purpose may be. It may not make sense to most of us, but when young people come to believe that they can achieve 'significance' and belonging by acts of terror we need to consider what is happening that makes them more open to adopting this stance and what might be done to reduce their vulnerability to persuasion. We make links with those who have committed acts of mass murder in schools in the US and what the research has to say about this. As many acts of terrorism are perpetrated by 'home-grown' terrorists most of whom have been educated in the country in which these acts take place, we suggest what schools might do to reduce the risk – especially in promoting a culture of inclusive belonging.

## THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN BELIEF AND EVIDENCE AND HOW THIS IMPACTS ON BEHAVIOUR

Although policy makers talk about the need for evidence based practice, the reality is that it is belief that often determines behaviour. This is not necessarily religious faith but a conceptual construction about how the world works, how people are or should be, and what values predominate. It is also about what you believe about yourself – and your place in the world. Kelly's personal construct theory (1955) posits that such constructs provide a filter through which experiences are both anticipated and perceived. The same experience may be interpreted differently by individuals, depending on the lens each has developed over time - predominantly in their interactions with others and the cultures in which these are embedded. One example of this is 'Belief in a Just World' (Lerner, 1980) that says people get what they deserve. This underpins the American Dream; if you work hard you will be successful, if you fail you have only yourself to blame. It follows, therefore, that no matter the background everyone has the chance to be successful if they put in the effort. Although there are elements of reality here this fails to account for chance, including to whom and where you were born and consequent opportunity. It risks demonising those who fall on hard

times despite their efforts and does not acknowledge that some people begin life with a significant advantage. You can see the impact of this belief on individual, community and federal decisions, reinforced in the media and in certain political rhetoric (Benabou & Tirole, 2006).

In the absence of scientific evidence, past communities have chosen to believe what makes sense to them – such as the earth is flat. With greater knowledge and evidence this particular belief has changed. However, we appear to be coming full circle, with the establishment of a 'post-truth' era where evidence is not only slanted but replaced by statements of what others would have us believe. One example is climate change. Those with a vested interest in the coal industry are more likely to be cynical about the raft of scientific evidence warning us of the dangers of anthropomorphic global warming – and will choose to believe those public voices who support their position.

But maybe it has always been the case that we believe what suits our purpose and/or fits with the dominant culture – or at least the one we feel an attachment to. If the rhetoric engages emotions that promote a sense of belonging and purpose this can build motivation to engage with a shared endeavour. When young people are told that they will achieve 'glory' if they kill those who represent 'western' values and practices, and there are few other avenues open to their feeling important, then fighting for such a cause may be appealing. Millions of young men died in the First World War doing their patriotic duty. So strong was the sense of shared belief in doing 'their part' that conscientious objectors were despised and vilified. These comparisons may be uncomfortable but perhaps bring greater understanding on which we can begin to build a useful response to the threats facing us.

We all live in something called 'society'. It is a term often used to convey a collective whole, but difficult to define as a place where we, as a group of people, exist. The collective notion of society eludes definition because the strands that intertwine form such a 'complexity of detail' (Steele, 2009). Therefore, when we read such terms as 'the effect on society' we know that at face value this holds little meaning. Nevertheless, we do have commonalities which bind

certain aspects of our functioning such as schools, neighbourhoods and families.

Although many nations today are built of historical immigration and therefore a powerful mix of culture, religion, language and DNA, there is a collective notion that others 'unlike us' are to be feared and that we have to protect what has become our own 'collective' interests. We create borders, security, tariffs, controls especially applied to people or organisations who are seen as attempting to gain access to whatever it is 'we' have. By doing this we advance the potential to feel unsafe, untrusting and in fear of others. This political zeitgeist exists in various forms and operates at different levels within structural units. The obvious and visible creations are that of the army and the need to have a large military to protect ourselves, and 'of course' they also must have nuclear weapons to be effective. This is done in the name of peace, as protection is supposedly the key to this. There are cameras in every location said to be for public protection. In schools, children are warned from an early age, of the dangers of strangers and in some schools there are security personnel on campus. Doors are locked and it is hard for anyone to gain entry without permission. All this creates a level of fear, despite the overarching message about protection and safety. The issue of terrorism in the UK (and elsewhere) has increased the perception of a lack of safety.

Alongside the raised security / fear levels a 'them and us' construct has been perpetrated that seeks to put whole sections of the community 'outside' the collective norm. Beliefs perpetrated in the media for instance often include the motivations, intentions and characters of others – such as refugees, asylum seekers and those from minority groups. The aberrant behaviour of one or a few can perpetrate beliefs about all others within the same category – such as 'all Muslims are terrorists' or 'the unemployed are all scroungers'.

### BELIEFS ABOUT HUMAN NATURE – ARE WE SELFISH OR ALTRUISTIC?

What we believe - not just about certain groups but about human nature itself - colours our world and how we position others, determining our actions towards them. There has long been a wide

spectrum of views about one of the most fundamental tenets of human nature. Has selfishness or sharing determined the path of evolution? One belief, long held in Western individualist culture, is that human beings are basically self-interested. This is at the basis of assertions that competition is more 'natural' than collaboration and life is about the 'survival of the fittest'. From Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651) to Dawkins (1976) this position has often been taken as a 'given'. In *The Selfish Gene* (1976) Dawkins says *"If you wish, as I do, to build a society in which individuals cooperate generously and unselfishly towards a common good, you can expect little help from biological nature ... we are born selfish".* At the other end of the spectrum are those who believe that human beings are basically altruistic and that the human race would have long died out if collaborative effort was not a fundamental for survival. Selfishness and actions taken solely for personal gain put the group at risk.

The argument put forward in Dawkins' seminal work suggests that we are all only 'replicating machines' and that the really important aspect of our existence is that of carrying, protecting, and passing on our genes. If this argument is agreed upon then it would suggest that we are inherently selfish beings. Dobbs (2013) suggests that this theory has no scientific or mathematical basis and that the original work of W. D. Hamilton (1964) was based on flawed assumptions. That aside, the notion put forward of *inclusive fitness* and thus the basis of kin altruism suggests that we calculate our work with others based on what we can gain or more accurately, what our genes can gain. The overarching theme is that we may work collectively but only if it in the interests of the individual. The notion of human selfishness is clearly not a new concept and Plato (1955) in *The Republic* wrote about the nature of human nature being 'good' unless it was believed that 'nobody is watching' "… *and then they can act without fear of retribution or besmirching of their own character, thus with impunity*" (Boyle, 2014a, p. 170). Plato explained this in the story of *The Ring of Gyges* (Plato, 1955) and whilst he was mostly discussing ethical and moral issues it clearly applies to the notion of inclusive fitness and the selfish gene argument. However, and quite importantly, none of these explain general acts of altruism where someone with no familial (and thus

genetic) connection saves another and puts their own life in extreme danger.

Despite Dawkins' original theory that in evolutionary terms our genes are 'born selfish', and Plato's assertion that we can act unethically if we have the opportunity, the evidence indicates that human beings are fundamentally social animals and this is evident from birth. Social connection is essential for optimal development, not only for survival into adulthood but also our ability to flourish and learn. Unless a human carer responds to their baby's attempts to engage them in social interaction the synapses between brain cells make fewer connections and both social and emotional development and learning are inhibited (Gerhardt, 2006). A baby's smile at six weeks is a survival mechanism as this fosters and rewards response in adults. Empathetic, supportive attachments and relationships are essential to optimize brain development and maturity (Seigel, 2012).

Magnetic resonance imaging shows we are hard-wired to connect with each other in many ways, confirming what psychologists have long known from observational studies - that we are interdependent beings and this is not restricted to childhood. We now know from epigenetic studies that what happens in the environment not only changes behaviour but may also alter the structure of our brains. It appears that the way others behave towards us may serve to enable or inhibit genetic pre-dispositions (Huttenlocher, 2002). The quality of our relationships with others matters even more than we imagined (Johnson, 2008; Roffey, 2017)

The human brain is not only primed for connection but also favours pro-social interactions. Although the hormone oxytocin has a primary function in the reproductive system, researchers are increasingly interested in its influence on social behaviour. Although still under investigation there is evidence not only for its essential role in maternal bonding, (Feldman et al., 2007) but also increasing trust (Kosfield et al., 2005) increasing positive communication (Ditzen et al., 2009) and reducing stress and anxiety, making it more possible to take risks in interactions (Heinrichs et al., 2003). There appears to be increasing evidence for a positive feedback loop at play in social interactions (Crockford et al., 2013). Positive interactions raise oxytocin levels that then foster greater warmth and cooperation

between people. The mirroring neurons in our brain makes emotions contagious and these may transfer beyond individual relationships to those that determine cultural norms. This is evident in political rallies where the power of the leaders is often determined by how much they can stir an audience to fellow feeling.

FEELING YOU BELONG

If our biology so clearly primes us for social connection it is unsurprising that feeling accepted within your social group is a factor for healthy functioning. Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that it counts as one of our basic human needs, along with sustenance and shelter. Identities are formed in our relationship with others - the groups to whom we are affiliated, shapes who we are and who we become.

A sense of belonging has multiple domains. It can exist within families, both close and extended, within friendship groups or within workplace or professional networks. Where cultures put a higher value on interdependence rather than autonomy belonging to the group can override individual considerations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991)

Positive membership of groups, whether they be friendship networks, strong families or healthy communities can provide social and psychological support, protect and aid in times of need and facilitate access to resources (Duncan et al, 2007). There is evidence that feeling that you belong, promotes resilience and mental health (Oliver et al, 2006; Werner & Smith, 2001) and where connections to *positive* groups are actively fostered this may inhibit violence and anti-social behaviour (Wilson, 2004; Wolfe et al., 1997)

Also, relevant in a discussion on belonging is what happens when people experience rejection. People have a powerful, negative, deep-rooted reaction to being socially rejected. The brain treats social pain and physical pain in similar ways and this is particularly evident in the emotional response to social exclusion (Macdonald & Leary, 2005). Unlike physical sensations however, this pain can return whenever the incident is remembered (Williams & Nida, 2011).

Social exclusion has been shown to quickly induce negative

moods within most people (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and inhibit feelings of belonging, self-esteem, perceptions of control over the environment, and perceptions of leading a meaningful existence (Williams & Zadro, 2005). Bernstein et al (2010) review research that supports the view that negative feelings are elicited just as strongly by being actively excluded from groups to which the individual does not have or seek a particular affiliation as by a group in which he or she seems themselves as an "in-member."

*Inclusive and Exclusive Belonging*

Exclusive belonging occurs when only those who 'fit' the group are seen as worthy of membership. Putnam (2000) refers to this as 'bonding' social capital. *"[This] is a term used to describe the particular features of social relationships within a group or community"* (Catholic Education Office, 2007). Feeling that you are one of a select group can be powerful agent for the wellbeing and self-esteem of those inside (Hewstone et al, 2002) but may be devastating for those outside. In order to maintain inner group cohesion, those outside can be positioned as inferior and possibly as 'objects', making them 'legitimate' targets for abuse. Students who are most vulnerable to being bullied in Australia are those against whom there is social prejudice related to race, disability, obesity, homophobia and material deprivation (Rigby & Johnson, 2016).

Inclusive belonging, on the other hand, places a high value on welcoming others, celebrating diversity and facilitating the active participation of all. It acknowledges and values individual strengths whilst seeking commonalities. Putnam (2000) refers to this as 'bridging social capital' - bringing people together in the interest of achieving mutually agreed goals. In Buber's (1923/1996) therapeutic dialogue such relationships are referred to as having an 'I-you' orientation. Goleman (2007) says that this is demonstrated in everyday actions of respect and courtesy moving to affection and admiration in closer relationships. In order to have an 'I-you' orientation you need to believe that others have value simply by virtue of being a fellow human being.

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HOW THIS PLAYS OUT IN THE RADICALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Many of the atrocities perpetrated in the name of a religious group are by young men – or sometimes women – who have mostly been living in the country of the crime they commit. Evidence is strong that religion is not the primary motivator for joining violent extremists like ISIS (Butler, 2015) but more likely to be used to '*legitimize personal and collective frustrations and justify violent ideologies*' (Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015, p.2). When there is a call for jihad only very few individuals respond – for most Muslims this is antithetical to their Islamic faith. Extremists are therefore not acting on the basis of religious belief but the belief that they need to matter. They are seeking a sense of meaning, of connection and of giving their lives some significance (Kruglanski et al., 2014).

The Australian Policy Unit (Jennings, 2015) found three shared characteristics of those young people who become violent Islamist extremists. They had a sense of injustice or humiliation, they had a need for identity and purpose and a need to belong. Most had completed school with qualifications but that evidently wasn't enough. *"Overall, our assessment shows a group of people clearly failing to gain satisfaction or friendship in mainstream Australian life"* (p.13).  Williams et al. (2015) also highlight the importance of friendships for countering the risk of radicalisation.

An individual example of this is Mohammed Emwazi, who later became known as Jihadi John. He achieved notoriety being filmed carrying out a beheading. Following this atrocity, he was reported in the UK media to have been a 'good student' who went to university and then worked successfully as an IT salesman in Kuwait (Chulov, 2015). In current educational terms, he was a success. It was also reported, however, that he was smaller and weaker than most students, was regularly bullied outside the school gates, had low self-esteem and at some point was given help with anger management (Topping, Halliday, & Ismail, 2015).

There is some synergy between the genesis of radicalization and other incidents of mass violence. Wike and Fraser (2009) explored similarities in the incidents of 109 killings in US schools since 1999, and found there had been high levels of social stratification where

some students were seen as stars and others rejected as losers. The primary recommendation from this research is strengthening school attachment.

A review of 'zero tolerance policies' by the American Psychological Association (Skiba et al., 2006), found that schools who quickly exclude students, not only perpetrate a 'school to prison pipeline' for disadvantaged youth, but that both behavioural standards and academic attainment deteriorate throughout the school. This is attributed to reduced trust and relational quality between students and staff. This study recommends promoting stronger community connections.

Other studies show that schools with less violence tend to have students who are aware of school rules and believe they are fair, have positive relationships with their teachers, feel that they have ownership in their school, feel that they are in a classroom and school environment that is positive and focused on learning, and in an environment that is orderly (Johnson, 2007).

Relational quality in a school therefore matters not only for academic outcomes (Hattie, 2009) but also for how people feel about themselves and their developing identity. It is the micro-moments of interactions that can make the difference and although often seen as the soft side of education it is becoming clearer that this has far more impact than hitherto acknowledged. Programmes in school that focus on wellbeing through utilising positive psychology (Seligman et al., 2009; Roffey, 2014, Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2017) and attributions retraining (Bosnjak et al., 2017; Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2014, 2016) alongside many others, demonstrate there is much more awareness of the importance of social interaction and wellbeing in schools nowadays. The school experience at the individual level is paramount. No matter how visible government initiatives may be, it is about the level of marginality that students experience from their own perspective; whether they are included or not within their peer group (Boyle, 2014b) In schools there can be different social groups that are created through social interaction and this can lead to some students being classified as popular and others who would be rejected (Boyle, 2015). This is especially relevant for students who have sought asylum in a new country and must join the schooling system

and who will face difficulties achieving satisfactory belonging in school (Gunasekera et al., 2014) This potential for marginalisation for some students is high within some school situations. The culture within the school can be crucial to ensuring that students are able to feel a sense of belonging.

THE CULTURE OF SCHOOLS

Schools often promote a sense of group identity that may be demonstrated in uniform policies, support for sporting teams and pride in academic successes. Honour boards list the names of star students. Whether everyone in a school experiences a sense of belonging however, depends on the beliefs and practices that predominate in school culture. Where that culture is positioned as the only one which is 'correct', and that 'others' need to conform to specific values, expectations and behaviours in order to be fully accepted as a member of that community, some students may experience marginalisation, or even rejection.

The cultural norms of schools are usually those of the dominant society.
Through the hidden curriculum, students often receive messages that re-inforce the values, beliefs and ideologies of mainstream society (Sari & Dogenay, 2009). Teachers who select classroom resources that reflect the majority culture may send a message to students that minority cultures are perhaps less valued. Students who are considered 'non-traditional' may not have that sense of belonging and feel disengaged or alienated (Dei et al 1997)
. Whereas Aldridge and colleagues (2016) found that school connectedness positively and directly influenced students' life satisfaction and sense of wellbeing, affirming diversity was negatively correlated. The authors cite Deardoff (2006), who asserts that although schools may welcome students from diverse backgrounds, the school community may lack the knowledge, skills and attitudes to meaningfully harmonise this diversity. Processes need to be put into place to develop the intercultural competencies within a school population in order to effect a fully inclusive culture. (Kickett-Tucker & Coffin, 2011)

Chiu and colleagues (2015) explored a sense of belonging in school with 193,841 fifteen-year-old students in 41 countries, and found that the quality of relationships with teachers and peers accounted for most of the variance. Specifically, students' perceptions of their teacher - encouraging participation, enthusiasm, friendliness, helpfulness, organisation, and preparation - accounted for nearly half of the variance in students' sense of belonging in class (Freeman et al., 2007).

More hierarchical cultures, however, had weaker relationships with teachers and this led to a lower sense of belonging at school. A lower sense of belonging was particularly noted for students who were first-generation immigrants, spoke a foreign language at home, were poorer or had less books at home. More similarity between students also increased a sense of connectedness at school. (Thompson et al. 2006)

Beliefs about students and the purpose of education, the vision of school leaders and the level of focus on relational values and skills determine whether or not social capital in schools is actively fostered - and the extent to which this is used for the common good or to privilege those who can succeed and boost the school's reputation (Roffey, 2013). There have been multiple nuanced definitions over time but social capital is not a new concept. In 1916, Dewey suggested social capital was a valuable resource that would develop when individuals connected to others in meaningful ways. He went on to say that social capital is lost to any society that does not provide the environment and education necessary to bring out the best in any individual. *'Men (sic) live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge – a common understanding – likemindedness as the sociologists say.'* (Dewey, 1916, p.4)

The link between the individual and the system that people operate within is fundamental to psychological wellbeing and psychology in general. If we consider it at the human level, then Maslow's theory about human needs (Maslow, 1943) comes to the fore in the context of this discussion. According to Maslow an

individual has different levels of need from basic needs such as food and water through other levels to those of self-fulfillment. As we have discussed in this chapter (and the theme throughout the book), the importance of belonging cannot be underestimated. In a school context in order to fulfil overall psychological needs there has to be some sort of relationship within the school, whether that be with peers, staff, or a combination but in essence the person needs to have friendships and feel that their presence matters. This is so that a connection becomes possible and thus, the all-important sense of belonging. Without this then it becomes difficult to realise other, more complex, needs such as Maslow's well known higher need of self-actualisation. This requires opportunities to achieve one's potential and could apply to various aspects of development including social and/or academic. If these needs are not met then there is the potential for a disconnect with school and the possibly the wider community. It could be argued that the longer this goes on for the higher the possibility that disaffection will become an issue first within school and then potentially in the wider community.

SO HOW CAN SCHOOLS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

*'The well-being of students in the school community is promoted through developing connectedness and social capital. Social capital is a term used to describe the particular features of social relationships within a group or community. This includes such things as the extent of trust between people; whether they have a shared understanding of how they should behave toward, and care for one another.'* (Catholic Education Office, 2007).

Human beings are primed to prefer associations with 'those like us' (Mitchell et al, 2006) which poses challenges for the healthy functioning of our multi-cultural world and an inclusive sense of belonging in schools. We do however know that there are differences between institutions and those that actively promote inclusion have higher levels of wellbeing and fewer incidents of violence (Johnson, 2009).

Catalano and colleagues (2004) define school connectedness as two interrelated components. The first is affective, supportive

relationships, and the second is commitment – where students perceive themselves as doing well and have an investment in being there. Schools need to provide a learning environment that is not only safe, caring and supportive, but also one where student strengths are identified so each individual sees themselves as progressing and achieving.

To feel a sense of belonging at school students need to believe that they matter, that their contributions are valued and others care about them (Boyle, 2007; Osterman, 2000; Solomon et al., 1996). In 2003, a National Strategy for School Connectedness in the US entitled the Wingspread Declaration asserted that: "*Students are more likely to succeed when they feel connected to school. School connection is the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals*".

Students who feel more accepted and connected in school are more likely to experience positive academic emotions, including pride, happiness, hope, satisfaction, calmness and relaxation (Lam et al., 2015) and less likely to feel bored, fatigued, anxious, ashamed or hopeless (Pekrun et al., 2002). A greater sense of school belonging and positive academic emotions may work together to create a positive appraisal of students' beliefs about their own learning abilities that consequently contribute to student academic success.

Students who feel rejected in school often feel depressed and helpless while learning because of social isolation (Buhs et al., 2006) This may undermine students' cognitive appraisal of their control over learning-related tasks because of their perception of a lack of support from their peers and teachers in school. This perceived lack of support may subsequently disturb the positive and stable emotional states (e.g. calm or satisfied) that are helpful for academic achievement.

Feeling connected at a school, however goes way beyond academic achievement. Students with higher sense of school belonging have also been found to have better psychological health, including less depression, lower rates of delinquency, stronger peer acceptance, fewer incidences of dropping out of school and less use of illicit drugs (Anderman, 2002; Finn, 1989).

Congruent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (2005)

relationships in schools are bi-directional and nested. A sense of belonging contributes to positive psychological and social factors while psychological and social factors influence a sense of belonging (e.g. Willms, 2003; Anderson & Boyle, 2014). Family and community contexts also impact on how connected students feel at school.

INTERVENTIONS

Inclusive belonging within the learning environment does not develop by chance. It requires the following:

- Leadership that honours and values the whole child and every child (Roffey, 2007; Hattie, 2009).
- School and student wellbeing as core school business (Wyn et al., 2000).
- Intercultural understanding that includes the skills to critically reflect on one's own culture as well as positive, cooperative, and respectful interactions between people of diverse cultural backgrounds at both an institutional and interpersonal level. (DEEWR, 2009).
- A focus on how intra and interpersonal understanding and skills determine the quality of relationships and the level of social capital across the organisation (Bird & Sultman, 2010). Social and emotional learning within an appropriate pedagogy (Roffey & McCarthy, 2013; Roffey, 2014).

When both students and staff develop a sense of shared humanity, focusing on and actively exploring commonalities, then it is possible that beliefs about the 'other' will change.

In Australia, many Indigenous students find school difficult, discouraging and alienating, and many respond to their disaffection from school by withdrawing or resisting education (Partingon & Gray, 2003; ). Resistance to formal education by Aboriginal students is often seen as a cultural response to schooling occurring when there are perceptions of inequality in the classroom (Rahman, 2013).

One way to foster resilience in young people is through meaningful youth participation. Over four years more than 50 young

women have been part of the Aboriginal Girls Circle initiative and there is evidence (Dobia et al., 2014) that there have been significant improvements in confidence, a sense of connection, relational skills and leadership qualities in some, if not all, of the participants. Several girls have changed their aspirations about their own future. Staff have seen positive changes in behaviour, attendance and engagement. Most of the adults involved have not only identified changes in the girls but also in themselves. This initiative has thrown up issues about the need for intercultural awareness and greater community engagement at the whole school level. Fiske (quoted in Byrne, 2017) also comments of the value of similar projects where people are working together to achieve a common goal. In order to break down stereotypes she says that it has to be something people care about and are prepared to invest in. "Success depends on understanding the minds of your collaborators - "rehumanising them". (p 34).

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Although direct and indirect political responses to terrorism have been documented, the psychological mechanisms underlying these responses remain isolated and less well understood (Stevens, 2013). We need to use the evidence that is available to develop a multi-faceted and long-term approach to make our communities safer for everyone.

Institutional cultures are key to student engagement and wellbeing. Culture is created in the way people talk to and about each other. It is demonstrated in the micro-moments of interaction and what can be heard in classrooms and seen on the walls of corridors. It is about what is both overtly and covertly valued. It is the opportunities people have to contribute, and whether or not they have an authentic voice.

The pathways to wellbeing identified in the Australian scoping study on student wellbeing (Noble et al., 2008) include: physical and emotional safety, pro-social values, a supportive and caring school community, a strengths-based approach and social and emotional learning. These pathways address various interrelated aspects of

connectedness within an ecological framework, including both the content and the context for learning positive relationships (Roffey, 2010, 2012).

Although not offered as an answer to the complex issue of radicalisation, it is valid to question what schools might do enhance a sense of wellbeing and inclusion within the educational environment that will reduce the need for individuals to find a sense of significance by committing atrocities. They may not do this whilst still at school but what they have learnt about themselves, their fellow learners and their teachers in those institutions will have far reaching outcomes for their future.

It is also relevant to ask whether education needs to re-prioritise social and emotional learning and the promotion of shared humanity - exploring what we have in common as well as valuing unique differences. One answer is to provide an environment in which students are not only treated equally and with respect but that there is a focus on connecting with each other by focusing on what they share. The overriding focus on academic outcomes has undermined the significance of learning about each other – and the development of empathy.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that human beings are social creatures with a need to belong and to feel that they matter. Schools are one of the many sites that young at-risk people find themselves. Sometimes we know which students are vulnerable but more often it is those who keep their head down and are given little attention who end up as home-grown terrorists. Research suggests that schools that find ways for these individuals to gain a sense of significance, honour their culture and promote a sense of 'shared humanity' with others that encourages understanding and empathy might just help make us all just that bit safer.

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AFFILIATIONS

*Sue Roffey*
*Graduate School of Education,*
*University of Exeter, UK*

*Christopher Boyle*
*Graduate School of Education,*
*University of Exeter, UK*