

Growing Great Schools  
Workbooks

## SCHOOL BELONGING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY:



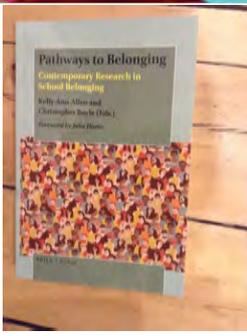
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- Paper based on chapter by Boyle, C. and Roffey, S. (2018)

“Belief, belonging and the role of schools in inhibiting home-grown extremism”

in Kelly-Ann Allen and Chris Boyle  
“Pathways to Belonging”



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## CONNECTION, CONNECTION...

- Feeling you belong, you are accepted and you matter is one of the strongest factors for wellbeing
- Resilience research
- Behaviour research
- Prevention of violence research

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## EXCLUSIVE BELONGING

- **EXCLUSIVE**
- bonding social capital (Superglue) (Putnam, 2000)
- Only those like me
- May be intolerant of difference
- Excluding those who 'don't fit'
- Can promote racism, homophobia etc
- An 'I-it' orientation – the potential to de-humanise others

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## INCLUSIVE BELONGING

- **INCLUSIVE**
- Bridging social capital (WD40)
- Open to all
- Accepting of difference
- Promotes equality
- An 'I-you' orientation – shared humanity

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## THE TWO DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL BELONGING

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>RELATIONSHIPS</b></li> <li>○ Students need to feel they matter, their contributions are valued and people care about them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>COMMITMENT</b></li> <li>○ Students see themselves as doing well and have a commitment to being there</li> </ul>
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 **BELONGING AND NOT BELONGING**

- **BELONGING**
- FEELINGS OF pride, happiness, hope, satisfaction, calmness and relaxation
- Better psychological health, less depression, higher attainment.
- **REJECTION**
- FEELINGS OF boredom, fatigue anxiety, hopelessness, shame
- Risk of delinquency, mental health problems, intergenerational difficulties.
- School to prison pipeline
- “Zero-tolerance policies”

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 **BELONGING TO A GANG**

- Malley & Beck (1998) A Pedagogy of Belonging say
- “it is better to belong to an antisocial group than to no group at all”.
- From “Dying to Belong” (2009, Centre for Social Justice) Majority of gang members were excluded from school or truanted – school therefore did not meet their needs for affiliation, purpose or achievement

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 **WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE WHO BECOME RADICALISED?**

- The Australian Policy Unit (Jennings, 2015) found three shared characteristics of young people who become violent Islamist extremists:
  1. They had a sense of injustice or humiliation
  2. They had a need for identity and purpose and a need to belong
  3. 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)
  4. Extremists are 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).

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 **TEEN KILLERS DON'T COME FROM SCHOOLS THAT FOSTER A SENSE OF BELONGING**

- Wike and Fraser 2009 (2009). School shootings: Making sense of the senseless. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 14(3), 162-169.
- Schools that promote a sense of belonging for everyone – not just those who are the stars – everyone matters, everyone can participate, everyone is valued for who they are
- That address bullying issues not just by cracking down on unacceptable behaviour but by focusing on friendship and inclusion
- That promote understanding and value

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 **BELIEFS**

- Extremist behaviour is not linked to religious beliefs so much as beliefs about the self and others.
- Beliefs are generated through experience and conversation
- We need to actively address student's beliefs about themselves and the world around them
- Many young people who carry out extreme violence believe they are acting for a higher purpose which gives their lives meaning and in order to feel significant
- Or they believe that they will enact revenge on rejection

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 **WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO?**

- *Leadership that honours and values the whole child and every child*
- *Foster an inclusive sense of belonging where every pupil feels they matter and people care about them*
- *Build positive relationships*
- *Increase psychological safety*
- *Focus on how education can become a more positive experience beyond academic success*

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### WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO?

- *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.*
- *Reject Zero-tolerance policies*
- *Give students a voice*
- *Social and emotional learning that enables pupils to get to know each other, reduce stereotyping and maybe develop empathy*
- *Whole school wellbeing policies and practices*

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### MORE INFO

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