

Forced Association Compounds Bullying

I had a student years ago that was the target of bullies. He wasn't as socially adept as others, and few people liked him. The fact that he didn't act pitiful made it so he didn't get the people who want to feel good about themselves to take his side.

One day, I see a group of older girls picking on him. This is to the point that he yells something very angry at them. Some teachers overheard and came over and lectured him about not saying mean things.

Another day, those same girls who liked to pick on this kid came up to me and said that he hit one of them. I blew it off. Eventually, it became a big issue and I kind of got in trouble for not making a bigger deal of it. The kid almost got kicked out of the organization I was teaching in for this instance. I told his mother and the board that I fully took this kid's side and that I knew those girls kept acting really jerky to this kid.

This is something people don't consider about rules, culture, forced association, and incentives. The incentives of this group made it so this kid could get bullied to the point where he lashed out, then the bullies could get him hurt more by getting "authorities" on their side to act against him for reacting to their behavior.

Bullying behavior emerges from the incentives of cultures and systems. By punishing bullies and making strict rules, you will often just make it so another brand of asshole behavior emerges.

Disassociation is the only thing that can align interests properly. People who want the money of the customer makes systems that protect their customers, while individuals can leave at anytime to other systems that they feel act in their interests better. This incentive structure protects people and ends bullying. Trying to end bullying without having freedom of association turns into a game of whack-a-mole. You make rules and punishments for one behavior and it just shows up in a slightly different form somewhere else.