Alternative Aggressions: What the Research Says

- Alternative Aggressions are defined as, the manipulation of group acceptance through alienation, ostracism, or character defamation.
- Frienemies are defined as a person who poses as a friend, but uses alternative aggressions in much the way an enemy would be expected to.
- Alternative Aggressions, also called Relational Aggressions, are typified by covert action and include telling secrets behind each other’s backs, group exclusion, turning group members against one girl, persuading group members to do things they do not want to do, as well as many others.
- Boys tend to use their aggression in an overt, physical, and easily-recognized manner.
  - The question arises: why do girls use alternative aggressions?
  - The answer lies in how girls are socialized.
- Socialization and Alternative Aggressions:
  - Girls are more likely to be rewarded for being nice, gentle, and altruistic in society whereas boys are more likely to be rewarded for being active, athletic, and competitive.
  - Because girls are expected to be nice and not show their aggression, they seek covert outlets for their aggression.
  - This leads girls to act in ways that are quite different from boys and are typified by alternative aggressions.
  - In the end, the differences seen in girls are heavily rooted in socialization: girls are not allowed by society to act out their aggression and so they must hide it in covert forms.
- Why are girls aggressive in the first place?
  - Studies show that girls’ aggression comes largely from the same place as boys’ aggression. Some research says that the aggression is the result of boredom.
  - This shows that boys and girls both bully, but do it in different, socially-acceptable manners.
  - In the end, it seems that the answer is that a dynamic mixture of influence ranging from nature to socialization exists.

Questions:

- After reviewing previous research on girl bullying, alternative aggressions, and relational aggression, we came up with these three questions to drive our study:
  - Does the same girl bullying described in the research exist in Chippewa Valley middle schools?
  - If so, does girl bullying have a negative impact on learning?
  - Finally, how might we work to remediate the problems caused by girl bullying as well as prevent it in the first place?
- Our final goal, after reviewing previous research, completing our own research conducted at the local level, and developing an anti-bullying curriculum, was to share that curriculum with middle school teachers and students.

Resources


Data Interpretation:

- Two groups were surveyed: 12 girls from an after school group, and one team of eighth graders using our bullying inventory survey which we adapted from Dellasega’s Girl Wars.
- Please see accompanying packet to view all questions listed in inventory.
- The study consisted of 112 eighth grade students with varying numbers of males and females.
- 12 seventh grade girls from the after school group were also included.
- Each student was given one copy of the “How Does Girl Bullying Affect You” survey.
- The results appear below:

![Alternative Aggressions Reported in Chippewa Valley Middle Schools](chart)

![Ally Behavior Reported in Chippewa Valley Middle Schools](chart)

Strategies for Preventing/Overcoming Girl Bullying

- As the research shows, Alternative Aggressions certainly do exist in Chippewa Valley middle schools. What can also be seen, however, is that many students are already exhibiting ally behaviors—those that help prevent bullying.
- In response to these findings, we developed a curriculum specifically aimed at preventing girl bullying.
- The curriculum was employed with an after-school group of 12 girls. After 8 weeks, we used the girls’ comments to produce a final version of the bullying curriculum.
- The central means and objectives of the curriculum appear below:
  - Informing girls about the types of bullying (cyber, relational, etc.)
  - Teaching girls through modeling and practice how best to respond to forms of bullying
  - Informing each other of the types of bullying in their school through sharing personal stories
  - Team-building activities to build trust amongst the group of girls
  - Student-led creation of skits presented before families and friends.

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