

A STUDY TO IDENTIFY THIRD GRADE STUDENTS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT-TO-STUDENT  
BULLYING EXPERIENCES

BY

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ABSTRACT

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A STUDY TO IDENTIFY THIRD GRADE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
(Title)

STUDENT-TO-STUDENT BULLYING EXPERIENCES

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The purpose of this study was to identify third grade students' perceptions of school related, student-to student bullying experiences. Students in a Western Wisconsin school district were surveyed in the spring of 2002. According to Olweus (1992), cited in Twemlow & Sacco (1996), about one in seven elementary school students will be involved in the bully/victim dyad. Research indicates that about 15% to 20% of children universally will be victimized by bullying activity during their school years (Clark & Kiselica, 1997). Hazler, Hoover, and Oliver, (cited in Garrity & Jens, 1997), suggest that 20% of children are frightened

throughout much of their school day. Olweus (1993) found that younger elementary school students were more likely to be the victims of bullying than older students. While general reports of bullying decreased as elementary school students got older, due to the decrease in physical bullying; however, reports of verbal bullying remained constant (Olweus, 1993). Seven research questions were answered by this study. This study consisted of general questions and statements about the prevalence of bullying, including incidents of witnessing, participating in, and being the victim of bullying. Also included were questions and statements that were developed to help understand students' perceptions of peer friendliness, victims ability to concentrate on schoolwork during the time of being bullied, and how helpful students perceived the adults within the school to be in the area of bullying. Statistical analysis included the use of Chi Square to calculate frequency counts and percentages between groups. A one way Analysis of Variance ANOVA for specific items as well.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

As many as 15% to 20% of the children attending elementary schools both in the United States and other countries are victimized by bullies (Dennis, 1999). Although being bullied can be one of the most painful experiences of childhood, many adults dismiss it as normal childhood behavior, a right of passage. Others do not seem to realize that it is happening. However, studies of elementary students in the United States, Sweden, Ireland, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and Japan portray bullying as a universal condition (Tritt & Duncan, 1997). The findings that between one in five and one in seven students in these studies are at risk for victimization makes a strong case that the prevalence of bullying and the plight of the victims in schools is a very serious problem that requires attention from parents, teachers, school counselors, and school personnel (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Although bullying is a serious problem in elementary schools, with more students being effected by physical bullying than any other form of violence within school, school personnel have generally responded both inappropriately or not at all in many incidents (Batsche & Knoff, 1994).

It has been reported that the victims of frequent bullying can experience a range of physical, psychological, psychosomatic, and behavioral symptoms. Victim's symptoms may include anxiety, insecurity, low self worth, low self esteem, loneliness, difficulty sleeping, nightmares, feelings of sadness or depression, frequent headaches and stomachaches, and bed wetting (Forero &

McLellan, 1999). More recently the United States has seen how bullying over a long period of time can be a major component in acts of suicide and incidents of revenge perpetrated by victims of bullying (Hazler, 2000). Clarke and Kiselica (1997) reported that 10% of victims of bullying actually stay home from school to avoid altercations with a bully or bullies. Thirty percent of victims had repeated thoughts about avoiding school.

The following are firsthand accounts of bullying, described by victims. These excerpts from stories are taken from [www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org).

Lyanne's story illustrates how devastating both physical and verbal bullying can be to a child's physical and emotional well-being. Studies have found that peer rejection relates significantly to later mental health problems (Twemlow & Sacco, 1996). Olweus (1993) also reported that victimization is associated with poor physical, psychological, and social well-being in elementary school children. This personal account also demonstrates how long some children may have to live with this type of abuse. This story also supports findings that school personnel often do not handle the problem of bullying in an effective and proactive way (Banks, 1997).

Lyanne, age 15 wrote:

My name is Lyanne and I'm 15. I have been bullied since the age of seven at my local primary school. The bullying I couldn't handle. I don't think any of us victims can. The children used to pick on me for stupid reasons e.g. my hair band wasn't the right color, or I was

playing with the wrong kind of people. It turned into violence. I was being pushed here, there, everywhere; I was punched and kicked. At one time, I had sprained my arm due to a bad fall. The children would chant things all the time and every night when someone came they would say "Get run over so that we can party" or "We hope that you snap on the way home" because I was so skinny. In year six, I was looking forward to the day it was time to leave for good. Unfortunately, the bullying got worse and I became very ill. I started having nightmares, flashbacks, and sleepless nights. I started to shake and tremble more and I had loads of panic attacks. I also used to cry over everything and anything no matter how big the reason. If that wasn't enough, I was admitted to the hospital due to a lack of white blood cells in my body. I was told that if I caught an infectious illness I could have died. In total I missed about two months of school. I decided to isolate myself. I went to the secondary school that no one wanted to go to just to get away from the bullies. To my surprise, the leader of the bullies also came to my new school. I'm now in year 11 and I have been bullied since age seven. I have tried committing suicide several times, cutting myself off from the world. All the teachers know, but none of them have done anything apart from sending me to a counselor. In September 1999 I applied for a job with TIO (talk it out), it is a

stamp out bullying committee. I am now a trained counselor and I help other people with their problems but I still haven't found a way to beat the bully. If you have any advice I would very much appreciate it ([www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org)).

The following is a small section of a personal account and a poem written by a girl named Rosie. Rosie's story shows that the pain of being verbally abused is not easily forgotten. It also shows similar psychological consequences as the aforementioned victim of bullying.

Rosie wrote:

To me the physical pain was not an issue. I could nurse my wounds at home and once they healed they would never bother me again. The thing that haunted me with nightmares and notions of suicide were things I would go to sleep with, wake up to, and think of for years to come. They were always there. The condescending remarks about my humble exterior; the way they moved my desk up to the front of the classroom everyday, to remind me that I was a social outcast, and was too repulsive to look at ([www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org)).

The following is written by a 22 year old man. This section of his story illustrates how a child may be bullied for years due to one perceived or real difference such as the skin color of a child, a child's religion, or if the child is perceived or known to be a homosexual.

Jeff, age 22, wrote:

When I was young they called me a girl. As I got older and entered junior high and high school, the insults turned into faggot, fairy, and every other synonym you could possibly imagine for being gay. I had teachers look the other way at my being picked on. I had teachers go to bat for me and put a stop to it sometimes ([www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org)).

However, victims are not the only people who are negatively affected by bullies. Children who witness bullying, the families of the victims, and the bullies themselves may all experience the negative affect. Also, the atmosphere of schools, on the whole, suffers from this type of hurtful behavior (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997).

Aggressive behavior tends to be stable over time (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997). If schools and society do not take bullying seriously and if well thought out interventions are not established in elementary school, bullies will have little ability or incentive to change. "Children who are bullies today will someday be our neighbors, coworkers, or bosses. They are likely to bully their spouses and children, thus perpetuating the cycle of domestic violence and spawning a new generation of aggressive children" (Farrington, 1991, cited in Clarke & Kiselica, 1997, p. 316).

Research of this type may aid in gaining further knowledge about how young elementary school students perceive the act of bullying. Findings indicate that bullying decreases in the upper grades of elementary school (Owleus, 1993).

Research on third graders may be important due to their ability to

understand the concepts and definition of bullying, and because they are still young enough to qualify as young elementary school students.

Findings on bullying and its relationship to loneliness, isolation, and interference in school related activities might aid school personnel in further understanding the implications of bullying on their young students, and further local proactive trends in the area of bullying prevention.

#### The purpose of this study

The purpose of this study was to identify third grade students' perceptions of school related, student-to-student bullying experiences. Students in a Western Wisconsin school district received the survey in the spring of 2002.

#### Research questions

There were seven research questions this study addressed. These were:

1. What percentage of the 3rd graders have been the victims of student-to-student bullying at school or on the way to or from school in the past?
2. What percentage of the 3rd graders are currently the victims of students-to student bullying?
3. What percentage of 3rd graders have witnessed student-to-student bullying at school?
4. What percentage of 3rd graders have participated in student-to-student bullying activities?
5. How, if at all, do perceptions of peer friendliness differ among the three groups represented? (students who have been bullied in the past, victims who

are presently being bullied, and students who have not been bullied)

6. What percentage of victims feel that their concentration during school related activities was effected during the period of being bullied?

7. What percentage of 3rd grade students feel comfortable reporting incidents of bullying to an adult working within the school?

### Definition

#### Bullying

For the purpose of this study the definition of “bullying” has been taken from Batche and Knoff (1994, p. 166):

Bullying is comprised of direct behavior such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a victim. In addition to direct attacks, bullying may also be more indirect by spreading rumors or by causing a student to be socially isolated through intentional exclusion. Whether the bullying is direct or indirect, the key component of bullying is that the physical or psychological intimidation occurs repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse.

Stephenson and Smith (cited in Roberts, 2000, p. 149) added another important component to their definition that was considered for this study. “A power inequity always exists between the bully and the target, one that is either real (as in strength in numbers) or perceptual (as in threats or intimidating actions).”

### Assumptions

There is one assumption that has been identified in this study:

1. The third graders sampled responded honestly and accurately in filling out the survey provided for this study.

### Limitations

There are two limitations that have been identified in this study. These are:

1. The third graders sampled may not respond honestly to the survey because of the potentially embarrassing nature of the subject.
2. This study took place in a middle to upper-middle class, Western Wisconsin town; findings should not be generalized to other populations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Literature

#### Introduction

This chapter includes a section on the extent of the problem of bullying, students' perceptions of bullying, response of school personnel, characteristics of victims and perpetrators, the effects of bullying on victims and perpetrators, interventions for victims and perpetrators, and prevention measures of elementary schools.

#### Extent of the Problem

According to Olweus (1992), cited in Twemlow & Sacco (1996), about one in seven elementary school students will be involved in the bully/victim dyad. Although these statistics were taken from students in Norway, studies of elementary school students in the United States (Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, cited in Batsche & Knoff, 1994) Great Britain, and Australia (Slee, cited in Clark & Kiselica, 1997), Japan (Prewitt, cited in Dennis, 1999), Ireland (O'Moore & Hillery, cited in Tritt & Duncan, 1997) and Canada (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, cited in Dennis, 1999) indicate that about 15% to 20% of children universally will be victimized by bullying activity during their school years. Hazler, Hoover, and Oliver, (cited in Garrity & Jens, 1997), suggest that 20% of children are frightened throughout much of their school day because, although, traditionally boys have reported being bullies slightly more often than girls, both girls and boys have been found to be subjected to basically the same amount of bullying (Dennis,

1999). However, the types of bullying that children experienced appear to differ along gender lines. Boys tend to experience more name-calling, which is often accompanied by physical assaults. Girls tend to use more covert forms of bullying such as intimidation, ridicule, spreading nasty rumors, and making friends jealous by excluding them from games or associating with someone else (Clark & Kiselica, 1997). Although these findings do constitute bullying trends along gender lines, more girls than ever are physically victimized by other girls (Clark & Kiselica, 1997). Additionally, girls have often been physically victimized by boyfriends who are bullies (Twemlow & Sacco, 1996). While boys bully both boys and girls, girls generally tend to bully other girls (Clark & Kiselica, 1997).

Olweus (1993) found that younger elementary school students were more likely to be the victims of bullying than older students. While general reports of bullying decreased as elementary school students got older, due to the decrease in physical bullying; however, reports of verbal bullying remained constant (Olweus, 1993).

#### Student's Perceptions of bullying

Studies indicate that students view most victims of bullying as unpopular, quiet, shy, and as students who don't fit in (Clark & Kiselica, 1997; Tritt & Duncan, 1997). Bernstein and Watson (1997) reported that nonaggressive students have similar attitudes towards victims as bullies do. Although the students showed little aggression over all, the aggression that they did show was

mostly targeted against the victims of bullies. Other students state that they felt that the victims were partially to blame for being bullied because of the way they acted (Hazler & Hoover, 1993). A study of children in the Midwest showed that a majority of the students surveyed thought that victims were at least partially to blame for bringing bullying on themselves. The same study found that students tended to feel that bullying toughens a weak person and teaches victims appropriate ways of behaving (Banks, 1997). Charach, pepler and Ziegler (cited in Banks, 1997), found that students tended to think of victims of bullying as “nerds,” “weak,” and “afraid to fight back.”

While these harsh views exist, Hazler and Hoover (1997) gave other examples of students who responded with empathy towards the victims. Garrity and Jens (1997) stated that the majority of students cared about the victims but remained silent while classmates were bullied. Forero and McLellan (1999) reported that most students do nothing to help the victims of bullying because they don't think that it is their place to get involved. Whether students react with empathy or with blame and judgment towards the victims of bullying, students can identify both victims and bullies at high rates of accuracy (Bernstein & Watson, 1997).

#### Response by School Personnel to bullying

Studies indicate that students feel that adults in the schools rarely intervene when they see students being bullied, and when they do intervene they are ineffective (Banks, 1997; Hazler & Hoover, 1993; Batsche & Knoff, 1994).

Studies indicated that the response of school personnel has been poor and generally unresponsive regarding incidents of bullying in schools. Research in different countries shows a similar picture. Over 60% of the victims of bullying reported that school personnel rarely respond to incidents of bullying. In a study conducted specifically with elementary school children, Olweus (1993) discovered that 40% of the students reported that adults in the schools did little or nothing to help reduce situations of bullying. When adults did intervene, students reported that the response was often poor or not helpful (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler; Boulton & Underwood; Olweus, cited in Batsche & Knoff, 1994). , Boulton and Underwood (1992) found that 75% of the students who responded stated that their teachers never addressed the issue of bullying. In a similar study, Olweus reported that 65% of student victims at the elementary level reported that their teachers had never talked to them about bullying (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997).

Stephenson and Smith (cited in Batsche and Knoff, 1994) reported several reasons why school personnel may be reluctant to intervene. Teachers may not recognize the fact that exclusion, isolation, and verbal threats are forms of bullying; therefore, if they do recognize that these are forms of bullying, they may feel that these more covert acts are not serious infractions. Also, the passive nature of many victims may be such that teachers are less inclined to help or intervene. Roberts and Walter (2000) reported that 10% of teachers were identified as bullies themselves, and others stated that bullying was not a

problem, but a normal right of passage. Boulton and Underwood (1992) found that children who were frequently bullied got less attention in the form of help and intervention than bullies receive.

Clarke and Kiselica (1997) suggested that when school personnel trivialize, tolerate, or ignore incidents of bullying, many children will come to the conclusion that adults have discounted their worth as people, and that their school is not a reliably safe environment. Students carry these messages with them into adulthood. The ways that teachers, counselors, support staff, and other school personnel deal with bullying within the schools teaches the children about “gaining, using, and abusing power; listening versus telling; negotiating versus demanding; considering the needs, behaviors, and feeling of other people; and the real value of cooperation” (Hazler, cited in Clarke & Kiselica, 1997, p. 313).

### Characteristics of Victims of Bullying

Olweus (1993) identified 7% to 10% of victims of bullying in schools as being repeatedly victimized by bullies. He found that victims tend to fall into two categories. The majority of victims were characterized as “passive victims.” As the classification indicates, most of these victims are extremely passive and almost never act out in an aggressive manner. Passive victims do not defend themselves, are generally insecure, and tend to be rejected by their peers. The second group of victims labeled by Olweus as “provocative victims,” tend to be highly aggressive and provoke the attacks of others. These “provocative

victims” make up a small percentage of bully victims (Olweus, 1993). According to Bernstein and Watson (1997) provocative victims have been identified as the most rejected of children.

Physical traits have been shown to have little to do with whether or not a child is victimized by bullying (Bernstein & Watson, 1997). Different studies have had highly conflicting findings. Lowenstein, (cited in Bernstein and Watson, 1997) found that victims tended to have more odd mannerisms and physical disabilities than the control group. Besag, (cited in Bernstein and Watson, 1997) found that victims had a higher incident of poor motor coordination and clumsiness. In contradiction, however, Olweus (1993) found the only physical characteristic that correlated positively with being bullied was that of boys with a smaller, weaker physical stature than their peers.

Olweus (1993) also found that victims tended to differ from the majority of nonvictims in relation to certain characteristics of their personality. Both passive and aggressive victims tended to have lower self-esteem than nonvictims. They also tended to be more insecure and anxious than nonvictims (Olweus, 1993; Clarke & Kiselica, 1997; Banks, 1997). Both types of victims were more socially isolated (Olweus, 1993). Passive victims tended to have a hard time controlling their feelings, while provocative victims tended to be hot tempered and unable to sit still (Olweus, 1993). Passive victims seldom fight back; in fact, studies indicated that in many cases they tried to continue the relationship with the aggressor. Provocative victims tended to follow the same

pattern, but they played an active role in provoking bullying behavior (Bernstein & Watson, 1997; Twemlow & Sacco, 1996).

In a five day study of six to eight year old boys and their interactive play, Schwartz, Dodge, Coie (cited in Bernstein & Watson, 1997,p. 486) found that children who were victimized by the end of the study showed distinct behavioral patterns from the beginning of the study. The children “rarely initiated prosocial behavior and demonstrated a passive, inflexible style of play.” The victimized children were also more submissive than the other children even when it was inappropriate, such as when the children were engaged in rough-and-tumble play.

It is important to report that while it has been found that victims tended to get lower grades in school than nonvictims, victims’ poor grades may be the results of being bullied. Victims may do poorly in part because of frequent school absences due to fear, and because of lack of concentration due to stress and a preoccupation with being victimized. The attention of victimized children may be drawn away from school and learning (Bernstein & Watson, 1997; Clarke & Kiselica, 1997).

### Effects of Bullying on Victims

Children’ self-esteem suffers greatly due to the experience of being bullied. Studies have also supported the belief that persistent bullying can result in many different negative outcomes for the victim. Besides low self-esteem, these included victim depression, isolation, loneliness, shyness, poor academic

achievement, and threatened or attempted suicide (Kidscape, 2001; Slee, 1994; Dennis, 1999). These feelings of poor self-esteem, isolation, and particularly depression have been experienced well into adulthood. According to Clarke and Kiselica (1997) victims of bullying were more likely to have low self-esteems, low social self-confidence, and suffered from depression in adulthood.

Self-declared victims have expressed thoughts of revenge, humiliation, helplessness, hopelessness, and self-pity. These feelings can have particularly harmful affects since they are highly correlated with thoughts of suicide and suicidal attempts (Hazler, 2000). Feelings such as anger and vengefulness have led victims to fantasies of revenge. In some cases victims have acted out aggressively towards bullies and other school peers, sometimes with tragic consequences (Hazler, 2000).

Decreased school attendance and achievement have also been correlated with victimization. Interest in school and grades may deteriorate because the victims' attention is drawn away from learning (Hazler, 2000). In a study conducted by Slee (1994) it was reported that 10% of victims avoided from school to avoid bullying; 29% of victims had repeated thoughts of doing so. Twenty percent of victims avoided certain areas in the school, 22% stayed away from certain places on the school grounds, and another eight percent stayed away from related events (Batche & Knoff, 1994).

According to Bernstein and Watson (1997) victims of bullying may have poor academic performance because as harassment escalates, victims become

afraid of school, which may lead to frequent absences, difficulty concentrating, and overall poor academic performance. Although the impact of bullying on academic performance has not been researched as extensively as issues such as self-esteem and depression, it would be logical to hypothesize that the effects of skipping school, avoiding school, avoiding school related activities and fear for one's safety would be disadvantageous to learning and functioning academically (Batche & Knoff, 1994).

Finally, and of particular importance to the study at hand, are the relationships found between the occurrence of being bullied and beliefs about peers. Studies indicated that students who experienced bullying withdrew from their peers and experienced limited acceptance by their peers. The more this happened, the more negative were victim's viewpoint about their peers. (Olweus, 1993; Batche & Knoff, 1994; Dennis, 1999).

#### Common Traits of Bullies & Effects of Bullying on the Aggressor

One study on bullying behavior found that while female bullies did somewhat better on intelligence test and received better grades than other children, male bullies by and large did less well on intelligence tests than other children and performed poorly in school (Bernstein & Watson, 1997).

Bullies also tended to show little empathy for others. Students who bully others also are inclined to value violence and are consequently aggressive toward teachers, parents, and siblings, as well as their peers. Bullies have a

propensity towards impulsivity and exhibit a strong need to dominate others (Olweus, 1993). Olweus also found that bullies appear to have little anxiety and insecurity. This finding went against the common belief that bullies have low self-esteem.

A bully's tendency to have an aggressive, impulsive temperament seems to contribute to an antisocial behavior pattern that puts bullies at risk for other problem behaviors, such as alcohol and other drug abuse and criminal behavior. These as well as other social and legal problems persist into adulthood (Bernstein & Watson, 1997). Olweus (1993) showed that former bullies had four times the recidivism for serious crimes than the average person. Also, bullies tend to grow into uncaring, punitive parents whose children often also became bullies, which adds to another generation of aggressive students for schools and society to manage. Consequently, when schools allow children to bully, they are not only doing a serious disservice to the victims but to the perpetrator as well, because bullying is ultimately detrimental to the children who engage in it.

### Intervention and Prevention

In order to assist the many people adversely affected by bullying, the culture of tolerance that exists in many schools must change systematically. Furthermore, the entire school must be involved in the intervention. In the following section the mechanism of a school-wide program are discussed.

First, the theoretical component of the intervention lies in the thought that bullying will continue to be accepted in schools until there is a philosophical shift

among all school personnel in how they view and respond to coercive behavior (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997). Teachers, administrators, school counselors and everyone who works within the school must affirm their position in opposition to bullying. This position should be public, continued and visible (Clarke and Kiselica, 1997). In order for this to happen, schools need to develop policies that involve a code of conduct that dictates that all members of the school must behave respectfully, with consideration for the human rights of every individual within the school community. As such, the school personnel must be models of humane behavior (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997).

Second, there must be a strong educational component that is taught to not only the students, but to the school personnel, parents, and members of the school board. Education should include bullying behavior, characteristics of bullies and victims, conduct that will and will not be tolerated by staff and students, and the procedure for responding to and reporting incidents of bullying. The aforementioned should be consistently enforced and actively discussed (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997).

Third, according to Olweus (1994) schools with little supervision in hallways, on playgrounds, lunchrooms, and anywhere else students congregate while at school have higher incidents of bullying. Consequently, it is suggested that schools increase supervision that is provided throughout the school day. As mentioned, adults need to be educated in exactly how to respond when faced with aggressive behavior (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997).

Fourth, according to Lochman (1992) education in the area of self-enhancing social skills education should be provided to children early in their education to prevent children from becoming bullies or victims. Children should be taught non-aggressive ways to deal with conflict as well as prosocial ways to interact with peers.

Finally, age appropriate assessment should be administered regularly so that schools can stay updated on the extent to which bullying still exists within the school. Such assessments should include a comprehensible definition of bullying with clear examples of the behaviors (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997).

#### Implications for Professional School Counselors

School counselors are a decisive component in stopping and changing the aggressive behavior of bullies. It is likely that bullying will continue unless it is looked at as a symbiotic relationship between the bully and the victim. The school counselor needs to address the source of reoccurring cognitive, affective, and physical injuries that make up bullying behavior or intervention and prevention are not likely to be effective. The bully should be viewed as a product of aggressive social learning that is likely to have started at home and is then reinforced by peer groups as well as the media (Roberts, 2000).

Bullies should be taught about school and societal rules of aggressive behavior. They need also to be held accountable for their actions. However true, accountability can only happen when bullies understand the ramifications of their behavior on themselves, their future, and their victims (Roberts, 2000).

According to Roberts (2000) bullies need the chance to explain their behavior from their own point of view. They may have their own logic for acting the way they do. School counselors need to take the steps necessary to both support and educate all students actively. Bullies need to be taught new ways of dealing with feelings and conflict, and should not be abandoned while they learn nonviolent behavior (Roberts, 2000).

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Introduction

This chapter describes the subjects used in this study and how they were selected for participation. Other factors discussed in this chapter include the instrument used and its validity and reliability, procedures for data collection and analysis, as well as methodological limitations.

#### Description of Subjects

The subjects who participated in this study were third graders from two elementary schools, in a Western Wisconsin school district. All third graders in the school had the opportunity to participate. The students who participated were between the ages of eight and nine at the time that the study was conducted. The sample's race and ethnic background of the participants was 100% European American. The students sampled consisted of 38 males and 27 females.

#### Sample Selection

For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose the cluster method of sample selection. All third grade students from four third grade classrooms were invited to participate. The third grade teachers identified the third grader students.

#### Instrumentation

A survey was specifically developed for this study. The survey contained

general questions and statements about the prevalence of bullying in the third grade. Other topics addressed on the survey included incidents of witnessing, participating in, and being the victim of bullying. Also included were questions and statements that were developed to help better understand students' perceptions of peer friendliness, victims' ability to concentrate on schoolwork during the time or times when they were being bullied, and how helpful the students perceive the adult within the school to be in the area of bullying. The survey was specifically developed using important points from the literature. This researcher's thesis advisor examined the survey and face validity was established.

#### Data Collection

All third graders in two Western Wisconsin elementary schools were invited to participate in the study. A parental consent form and a brief description of the study was sent home to parents in their third grader's Thursday folder. The cover letter informed the parents that participation was voluntary and confidential. The parents were asked to return the consent form to the classroom teacher by the following Thursday.

The third grade participants filled out the surveys in small groups so that they could ask questions. The students were informed that their participation was voluntary and that the information on the survey was completely confidential and anonymous. The students were reminded not to write their names on the survey, and everyone was asked to respond as honestly and

accurately as possible. The researcher read the survey to the students as they filled it out. Upon completion, the students' surveys were placed in manila envelope.

### Data Analysis

Appropriate descriptive and calculated statistical analyses were used on the data to answer the seven research questions. The statistical analysis included the use of Chi Square to calculate frequency counts and percentages between students who were bullied in the past (PAST-YES/NOW NO), students who were being bullied presently, (PAST-NO&YES/NOW-YES), and students who had never been bullied (PAST-NO/NOW NO). Items included in Crosstabs were numbers four through six and #10, 11, 12,14 and 15. A one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for test items seven, eight, nine, and 13.

### Limitations

Two Methodological limitation were apparent:

1. The sampling method used, while representative of the community, was one of convenience. Two elementary schools were sampled. Therefore the statistics cannot be generalized to other populations.
2. Nine students identified in the sample chose not to fill out the survey for undisclosed reasons.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

This chapter will present the results from a survey that identifies the bullying experiences of third grade students in two Western Wisconsin elementary schools from the same school district. The demographic information will be presented first. The remainder of the chapter will address the results of the statistical analysis of each of the seven research questions, including frequency counts and percentages that were obtained by the use of Chi Square and ANOVA.

#### Demographic Information

The sample for this study consisted of (n=65) third grade students. All students were either eight or nine years of age at the time of being surveyed. The students sampled consisted of 58% (n=38) males and 42% (n=27) females. However, gender of the students was not indicated on the survey. The sample surveyed consisted of 100% (n=65) European American children.

#### Researcher question 1

What percentage of the third graders have been the victims of student-to-student bullying at school or on the way to or from school in the past?

The following survey items address research question one:

#### Survey Item 1

“I have been bullied at school in the past.”

Seventy one percent (n=46) stated that they have been bullied in the past. Twenty nine percent (n=19) stated that they have not been bullied in the past.

### Survey Item 2

“I have been bullied on the way to/from school.”

Thirty four percents (n=22) stated that they have been bullied on the way to or from school, while 66% (n=43) answered that they were never bullied on the way to or from school.

### Research question 2

What percentage of the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are currently the victims of student-to-student bullying?

The following survey item addresses research question two:

### Survey Item 3

“Another student is bullying me.”

Thirty four percent (n=22) reported that were presently being bullied, while, 66% reported that they were not.

### Research Question 3

What percentage of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students have witnessed student-to-student bullying at school?

The following survey items address research question three. A Chi-square analysis was run on the data pertaining to these research questions. The results indicated that there was a significance difference between students who have

been or are currently being bullied and those who have never been bullied with regards to item four. (Chi-square=7.197, df=2, p=.027 > .05) (See Table 1)

#### Survey Item 4

“I have seen classmate(s) bully others in school.”

Of students who have never been bullied 23% (n=15)

(PAST/NO...NOW/NO), 47% (n=7) reported that they have seen classmates bully others in school. Fifty three percent (n=8) reported that they have never seen classmates bully others in school.

Of students who have been bullied in the past but are not currently being bullied 43% (n=28) (PAST/YES...NOW/NO), 75% (n=21) reported seeing classmates bully others in school. Twenty five percent (n=7) reported never having seen classmates bullying others in school.

Of students who are currently being bullied 34% (n=22)

(PAST/NO&YES...NOW /YES), 86% (n=19) reported that they have witnessed classmate(s) bully other in school. Fourteen percent (n=3) reported that they have never seen the behavior from their classmates in school.

#### Survey Item 5

“I have seen classmates bully others on the way to/from school.”

PAST/NO...NOW/NO:

Thirteen percent (n=2) reported that they have seen their classmates bully others on the way to or from school. Eighty seven percent (n=13) reported that

they have never witnessed such behavior from their classmates on the way to or from school.

PAST/YES...NOW/NO:

Twenty five percent (n=7) reported that they having seen their classmates bully others on the way to or from school. Seventy five percent (n=21) reported that they have never witnessed their classmates bully others on the way to or from school.

PAST/NO&YES...NOW/YES:

Eighteen percent (n=4) reported that they have seen their classmates bully others on the way to or from school. Eighty two percent (n=18) reported that they have never seen classmates bully others on the way to or from school.

#### Research Question 4

What percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have participated in student-to-student bullying activities?

The following survey item addresses research question four. A Chi-square analysis was run on the data pertaining to this research question. The results indicate that there is a significant difference between groups. (Chi-square=10.240, df=2, p=.006>.01)

#### Survey Item 6

"I have bullied other students before."

PAST/NO ...NOW/NO

One hundred percent (n=15) reported that they have never bullied another student.

PAST/YES...NOW/NO

Forty six percent (n=13) reported that they have bullied other students before. Fifty four percent (n=15) reported that they have never bullied other students.

PAST/NO&YES...NOW/YES

Twenty seven percent (n=6) reported that they have bullied other students. Seventy three percent (n=16) reported that they have never bullied other students.

#### Research Question 5

How, if at all, do perceptions of peer friendliness differ among the three groups represented?

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run on the data pertaining to research question five. There was no statistically significant difference among the three groups. (See Tables 2, 3, & 4 in regards to the results on peer friendliness).

#### Research Question 6

What Percentage of victims feel that their concentration during school related activities was affected during the period of being bullied? (See Table 5 for results in regards to concentration during school related activities).

### Research Question 7

What percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students feel comfortable reporting incidents of bullying to an adult working within the school? A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the information pertaining to research question 13. A Chi-square was run for items 14 and 15. No statistical significance was found.

### Item 13

“The grown-ups who work at my school are helpful to students who have Problems.”

PAST/NO...NOW/NO

Eighty percent (n=12) reported that the grown-ups at school were always helpful to students who have problems, while 13 % (n=2) reports that grown-ups were helpful most of the time. Seven percent (n=1) reports that grown-ups were helpful sometimes.

PAST/YES...NOW/NO:

Forty six percent (n=13) reported that the grown-ups at school were always helpful to students who have problems, while 43% (n=12) reported that grown-ups were helpful most of the time. Eleven percent (n=3) reported that grown-ups were helpful to students who need help sometimes.

PAST/YES&NO...NOW/NO

Sixty eight percent (n=15) reported that the grown-ups at school were always helpful to students who have problems, while 18% (n=4) reported that

they were helpful most of the time. Fourteen percent (n=3) reported that grown-ups were either sometimes or never helpful to students with problems.

Item 14

“I would feel comfortable talking to a grown-up at the school about a problem with a bully.”

PAST/NO...NOW/NO

Eighty percent (n=12) reported that they would feel comfortable talking to a grown-up in the school about a problem with a bully. Twenty percent (n=3) reported that they would not feel comfortable doing so.

PAST/YES...NOW/NO

Eighty nine percent (n=25) reported that they would feel comfortable talking to an adult in the school about a problem with a bully. Eleven percent (n=3) reported that they would not feel comfortable doing so.

PAST/YES&NO...NOW YES

Eighty six percent (n=19) reported that they would feel comfortable talking to an adult in the school about a problem with a bully. Fourteen percent reported that they would not feel comfortable doing so.

Item 15

“A grown-up in my school has helped me when I was being bullied.”

PAST/YES...NOW/NO

Fifty seven percent (n=16) reported that a grown-up in the school had helped them with a problem with a bully. Forty three percent (n=12) reported

that they had never been helped by a grown-up in the school with regards to a problem with a bully.

#### PAST/YES&NO...NOW/YES

Fifty eight percent (n=13) reported that a grown-up in the school had helped them with a problem with a bully. Forty two percent (n=9) reported that they had never been helped by a grown-up in the school with regards to a problem with a bully.

Utilizing a Chi-square analysis, statistical significance was established between the three groups represented for item four of the survey. Eighty-six percent of the students who were currently being bullied reported witnessing their classmates bullying others, compared to only 47% of the students who have never been bullied. In fact, only three of the twenty-two students who reported that they were being bullied answered that they had never witnessed other students being bullied by a classmate. Seventy five percent of students who had been bullied in the pass also indicated that they had witnessed classmate bullying others (See Table 1).

Through the use of a Chi-square, statistical significance was also established for item number six, which related to whether or not the student has bullied other students before. None of the 15 students who had never been bullied before reported being involved in the act of bullying others. With regards to bullying others, 13 out of the 28 students who have been bullied in the pass reported that they had also been involved in bullying other students. Six

out of the 22 students who reported being the victims of bullying presently reported that they had been involved in bullying others.

With regards to research question six, What percentage of victims feel that their concentration during school related activities was affected during the period of being bullied, it is the descriptive statistics that are relevant. Fifty four percent of the students who had been or were currently being bullied indicated that it was hard to do there school work after being bullied. Sixty-six percent of the same students indicated that at the time of being bullied, it was hard for them the think about anything else. Finally, 46% of the aforementioned students indicated that on the days of they were bullied, it was hard for them to do their schoolwork. These results point toward the conjecture that over half of the 66% of students who were being or had been bullied before, find it hard to concentrate during school hours due to the trauma of being bullied (See Table 5).

With regards to whether students felt that the adults in their school help student who have problems, 89% of the students reported that grown-ups either help students with problems always or most of the time. With regards to whether students feel comfortable telling a grown-up about a bullying incident, 86% indicated that they would feel comfortable doing so. Finally, with regards to whether a grown-up at school had actually helped students after they were bullied, 58% of students who had been bullied before indicated that a grown-up in their school had helped them with a problem with a bully.

With regards to peer friendliness, while no statistical significance was found in this area, it is important to note that when looking at item eight of the survey, all of the students who had never been bullied reported that they thought of all or most of their classmates as friends. Seventy-seven percent of the students who were currently being bullied felt that all or most of their classmate were friends. Twenty three percent of the students who were presently being bullied thought of only some of their classmates as friends.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Introduction

This chapter will review the purpose of this study and the methodology used. In addition, this chapter will address the significance of the study, conclusions drawn from the result, and recommendations for future research in the area of students-to-student bullying.

#### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gather information regarding the prevalence of bullying behavior in two Western Wisconsin elementary schools. Also, this study hoped to discover students' perception about peer friendliness, adult helpfulness and support with regards to bullying, and whether students' attention and performance with regards to school related activities was affected during the time of being victimized.

There was a statistically significant difference between the students who had never been bullied and the ones who had been and/or were being bullied presently. The research indicated that many students who have never been bullied tend to have similarly harsh views towards victims as perpetrators do (Bernstein & Watson, 1997). This may be why less than half of these nonvictims acknowledged having seen their classmate being bullied. The significant difference between students who either had been bullied or were presently being bullied could be due to the students' sensitivity and heightened awareness in this

area. It could also relate to their over all feelings about their peers. Studies have shown that children who experience bullying withdrew from their peers and experienced limited acceptance from their peers. In tern, the more students were bullied, the more negative their viewpoints about peers (Owleus, 1993; Bstche & Knoff, 1994; Dennis, 1999).

All of the students in this study who reported that they had bullied others were also students who reported being bullied in the past and/or were presently being bullied. The significance in this area is consistent with other research that indicates that the bullying relationship is interchangeable, with a small percentage of victims, "provocative victims," also taking part in bullying other students (Bernstein & Watson, 1997). The same study found that while interacting with children who engage in mainly prosocial interaction, the child with a tendency towards bullying displayed more prosocial behavior as well, and did not bully the child (Bernstein & Watson). This prosocial behavior could be the reason why the students who had never been bullied also never bullied other students.

The percentages in the area of adult helpfulness, while still too low, are promising when compared to past research in this area, which indicted that school staff were generally avoidant, reluctant, and unhelpful when it comes to the problem of bullying (Banks, 1997; Hazler & Hoover, 1993; & Batsche & knoff, 1994). In fact, one study reported that 65% of student victims at the elementary level indicated that their teachers had never talked to them about bullying at all.

This may indicate that while the problem of bullying does not appear to be decreasing, adults within the schools are making an attempt at understanding and addressing the issue that they have dismissed as a “right of passage” in the past.

### Conclusions

Over 70% of the sample of third grade students who made up the population of this study indicated that they have been bullied in the past or are currently being bullied. This is a much higher finding than is supported by past literature regarding bullying at the elementary level, which indicated that anywhere from 15% to 20% of students will be bullied during their schooling years (Dennis, 1999).

These findings seem to conflict with the high number of students who felt positive about their peers as well as school staff. This may have been due to the level and pervasiveness of the bullying that was actually inflicted. With regards to peer friendliness, it is interesting that between 20% and 30% of the students who were presently being bullied had a relatively poor attitude about peers, reporting in the “sometimes” or “never” range when confronted with the questions about their peers. These findings are more inline with the over all statistics on prevalence. This may indicate that these are the students for which bullying was more severe and pervasive. It is possible that this is especially relevant due to the fact that the vast majority of them indicated that they were both bullied in the past as well as presently.

### Recommendations for Further Research

The ideas that follow are areas of this study that could be explored further for clearer and more precise results.

1. A survey of the prevalence of bullying activity should also have survey items that address the pervasiveness of the bullying. A measure of time as well as a measure of extreme would make findings more relevant.
2. The area of, concentration during school related activities during the time of being bullied, is an area where little research has been done. Further exploration of the relationship to the student's ability to function during school hours would be important and valuable. Most research on this topic has been done in the areas of self-esteem, loneliness, depression, and isolation, which are more indirectly related to academics.

Finally, it is important for both teachers and staff to be trained to educate students on the topic of bullying, and on how to be responsive to both victims and perpetrators in the school setting. School wide policies should be implemented so that all know the expectation and rules in this area.

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Table 1

Research Question 3...Survey Item 4, What percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have witnessed student-to-student bullying at school?

Students	1 (yes)	2 (no)	Total
1 past/no...now/no	47% (n=7)	53% (n=8)	100% (n=15) *
2 past/yes...now/no	75% (n=21)	25% (n=7)	100% (n=28)
3 past/yes & no...now/yes	86% (n=19)	14% (n=3)	100% (n=22)
Total	72% (n=47)	27% (n=18)	100% (n=65)

(Chi-square=7.197, df=2, p=.029 > .05)

\*Statistical differences lie between group 1 and groups 2 & 3.

Table 2

Research question 7, "My classmates treat me with respect."

Students	1 always	2 most of the time	3 sometimes	4 never
1. Past/No...Now/No	27% (n=4)	67% (n=10)	7% (n=1)	
2. Past/yes...Now/no	32% (n=9)	53% (n=15)	14% (n=4)	
3. Past/yes& no...Now/no	27% (n=27)	41% (n=9)	27% (n=6)	5% (n=1)
Total	29% (n=19)	52% (n=34)	17% (n=11)	2% (n=1)

Table 3

Research 5...Item 8, "I think of my classmates as friends."


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Students	1 All	2 Most	3 some
1. Past/No...Now/Yes	60% (n=9)	40% (n=6)	
2. Past/Yes...Now/No	39% (n=11)	57% (n=16)	4% (n=1)
3. Past/No & Yes...Now/Yes	46% (n=10)	32% (n=7)	22% (n=5)
Total	46% (n=30)	45% (n=29)	9% (n=6)

Table 4

Research Question 5... Survey Item 9, "My classmates are nice."


---

Students	1 Always	2 Most of the time	3 Sometimes	4 Never
1. Past/no...Now No	27% (n=4)	60% (n=9)	13% (n=2)	
2. Past/Yes...Now/No	25% (n=7)	61% (n=17)	14% (n=4)	
3. Past/No & Yes...Now/yes	23% (n=5)	50% (n=11)	23% (n=5)	5% (n=1)
{ Total	25% (n=16)	57% (n=37)	17% (n=11)	2% (n=1)

Table 5

Research Question 6, What percentage of victims feel that their concentration during school related activities was affected during the time of being bullied.

Items	1 (yes)	2 (no)	Total
Item 10, It is hard to do school work after being bullied	54% (n=27)	46% (n=23)	100% (n=50)
Item 11, When bullied, it is hard to Think of anything else	66% (n=33)	34% (n=17)	100% (n=50)
Item 12, On the days I am bullied, I don't do my schoolwork as well	46% (n=23)	54% (n=27)	100% (n=50)

## Appendix A

Parent Letter and Permission

To The Parent(s) or guardian(s) of a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student:

My name is Elizabeth Smith and I am the long-term substitute filling in for Chris Strop as school counselor at North Hudson Elementary. I'm also in my last semester of graduate school in Guidance and Counseling. For my thesis, I will be doing a study on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students' perceptions of school related, student-to-student bullying experiences. Students will be asked to voluntarily fill out a short survey that includes general questions about the prevalence of the bullying that the students witness and encounter. The survey will also focus on how students feel about their peers as well as how helpful the staff is with regard to helping students who come to them because of being bullied. The study will be completely confidential and voluntary. The students will not put their names on the form and the forms will not be divided by class or by gender.

I hope that you will allow your child to participate in this important study. The results of this study will be given to teachers and administrators in the two elementary schools that will be participating. I hope that the findings will help the elementary schools' staff gain insight as to the prevalence of bullying in their specific school and how the bullying is affecting the students. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Smith  
Substitute school counselor  
North Hudson Elementary  
(715) 386-4242  
bumperjane@yahoo.com

\_\_\_\_\_ has my permission to fill out a survey on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students' perceptions of student-to-student bullying within the school. I understand that the students' identity will be kept both anonymous and confidential, and that the teachers and administrators will be receiving the results of the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

Appendix B  
Bullying Survey

A Survey to Identify Third Grade Students' Perceptions on Student-to-Student  
 Bullying Experiences

Please answer the following questions by circling the answer that best fits your feelings and experiences.

- |  |               |                         |                                |
|--|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. I have been bullied at school in the past.                                | <b>Yes</b>    | <b>No</b>               |                                |
| 2. In the past, I have been bullied on the way to or from school.            | <b>Yes</b>    | <b>No</b>               |                                |
| 3. Another student is bullying me.   | <b>Yes</b>    | <b>No</b>               |                                |
| 4. I have seen classmates bully others in school.                            | <b>Yes</b>    | <b>No</b>               |                                |
| 5. I have seen classmates bully other students on the way to or from school. | <b>Yes</b>    | <b>No</b>               |                                |
| 6. I have bullied other students before.                                     | <b>Yes</b>    | <b>No</b>               |                                |
| 7. My classmates treat me with respect.                                      |               |                         |                                |
|  | <b>Always</b> | <b>Most of the Time</b> | <b>Sometimes</b>               |
|  |               |                         | <b>Never</b>                   |
| 8. I think of my classmates as friends.                                      |               |                         |                                |
|  | <b>All</b>    | <b>Most</b>             | <b>Some</b>                    |
|  |               |                         | <b>None</b>                    |
| 9. My classmates are nice.   |               |                         |                                |
|  | <b>Always</b> | <b>Most of the time</b> | <b>Sometimes</b>               |
|  |               |                         | <b>Never</b>                   |
| 10. It is hard to keep my mind on my schoolwork after I have been bullied.   | <b>Yes</b>    | <b>No</b>               | <b>I have not been bullied</b> |
| 11. After I have been bullied, it is hard to think about anything but that.  | <b>Yes</b>    | <b>No</b>               | <b>I have not been bullied</b> |
| 12. On days when I am bullied, I don't do my schoolwork as well.             | <b>Yes</b>    | <b>No</b>               | <b>I have not been bullied</b> |

13. The grown-ups who work at my school are helpful to students who have problems.

**Always**

**Most of the Time**

**Sometimes**

**Never**

14. I would feel comfortable talking to a grown-up at the school about a problem with a bully

**Yes No**

15. A grown-up in my school has helped me when I was bullied.

**Yes No**

**I have never been bullied**