

Recognizing Bullying as Aggression: A Guide for School Counselors

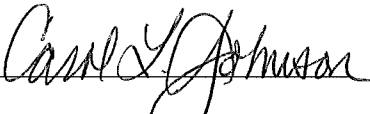
by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
In

Guidance and Counseling

Approved: 2 Semester Credits


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August, 2009

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Title: *Recognizing Bullying as Aggression: A Guide for School Counselors*

Graduate Degree/Major: MS Guidance and Counseling

Research Adviser: Carol Johnson, Ph.D.

Month/Year: August, 2009

Number of Pages: 47

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 5th edition

ABSTRACT

Bullying continues to be an issue in public education. Bully-proofing programs assist in raising awareness of identifying bullying, establishing consequences and developing strategies for students to use to cope with bullying situations. School counselors continue to be leaders in developing classroom guidance lessons that identify ways to recognize this type of aggression and strategies to minimize the impact of bullies.

Research indicates that most bullying occurs on the playground, in the school hallways when there is minimal supervision, and in the school cafeteria in large groups where supervision is often a challenge. Teachers and parents can work together to monitor Internet use, cell phone texting and other media forms of online bullying. Though both boys and girls bully, boys are more often involved in physical forms of bullying; whereas girls tend to be involved in relational bullying. As technology, cell phone and Internet use continue to grow more recent studies indicated that both boys and girls will bully others

using this approach. It is also thought that early elementary students may not have the skills necessary to interact pro-socially with others and as they get into the upper elementary grades and middle school, students' social skills may be more developed but they may also lack empathy toward others and feel treating others in disrespectful ways will help them gain popularity and status with their peers.

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Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my husband Mike, for his unbelievable support. For the past three years, you were often a “single parent” while I was attending school part-time on the weekends and during summers. I know this was difficult; especially while I was also trying to keep up with my responsibilities as a full-time teacher. Being a mom, a wife, a teacher, and a student made for a very stressful time for all of us including Micaela, now 6, and Hayden, 4. Thank you for the sacrifices you made to allow me to reach my career goals. I happily look forward to focusing my time on all of you now!

Second, I would like to thank my parents, sisters and in-laws for their continued support. Thank you for taking the kids for a day or two and thank you for all the supportive telephone calls. You always seemed to know when I needed them the most. I am thankful that the Lord was there to carry me, while also providing me with a wonderful family. And thank you Dad. It took your passing unexpectedly in November 2008 to help me put things into perspective. Thank you for your love and support for so many years as I know you are proudly looking down.

I would also like to thank my colleagues of Weyerhaeuser School District. You are truly a second family who has always supported my personal, career, and academic goals. Thank you for your emotional support through this difficult past year.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Carol Johnson and Dr. Amy Gillett, who assisted me in writing my thesis. Your patience, time, expertise, and support were greatly

appreciated. I understand the sacrifices you both make in order to help many students be successful. You did so unselfishly. I would also like to thank Rich Boardman and Molly Welch Deal for the support given to me throughout this program. I am truly thankful to all of you and I feel so fortunate to have had our paths cross over the past three years. You all make a difference!

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Chapter One: Introduction

What do the names Golden and Johnson, Harris and Klebold, Weise and McInerney have in common? Those who watch television or read the newspaper may find these names familiar as these young men are known for school shootings in their hometowns. They did the unthinkable in what most people consider a safe place—our schools (Sullivan, Cleary, & Sullivan, 2004).

According to the National Education Association (n.d.), schools are the safest place for children—safer than the street, the mall, or even the home. Donohue, Vincent, and Zeidenberg (1998), stated that 99% of children's deaths occur away from school. However, what the public may not know is that the shooters, who took the lives of school staff members and classmates, were all former victims of bullying. All these shooters had a common thread as major motive for the shootings; they were bullied in school (Crawford, 2002). Nearly 70% of young people who commit extreme acts of school violence were later found to have been either victims or perpetrators of bullying in their schools (Center for Health and Healthcare in Schools [CHHCS], 2004).

According to Canter (2005), 70% of all students are affected in some way by bullying. Students may be involved as the bully, target, bystander, or a combination of these. Sullivan, Cleary, and Sullivan (2004) defined bullying as having four main components: 1) that it is an act perceived as negative, aggressive or manipulative; 2) it may involve one or more people against another person or group of people; 3) it usually happens over a period of time; and 4) there is an imbalance of power either physically, emotionally, or psychologically.

The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center (n.d.a) stated that 30% of youth are involved in bullying as either the bully or the target. Because of this high rate, schools

may not be as safe as previously thought. Bullying may be a bigger problem than schools—and even parents—want to acknowledge.

A study by Sheras and Tippins (2002) found that 160,000 students miss school daily due to bullying problems (cited in Trautman, 2003). This should be a concern of parents and teachers for the well-being of their students. Some may justify bullying by saying it is okay, that it is a part of growing up, it is fun, or that boys will be boys (Ditzhazy & Burton, 2003).

Researchers have found that bullying generally occurs most frequently in schools where adult supervision is lacking. The three locations in schools where students indicated bullying occurs most often due to lack of supervision include bathrooms, hallways when passing to and from classes, and the cafeteria. Since much of the verbal bullying includes lies, threats, and name-calling, it makes it difficult to curtail this behavior unless heard by the adult supervising one of these areas (Borg, 1999).

Schools also need to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, an initiative to provide a safe and drug-free school environment. Some schools have accomplished only the minimum standard of having a policy in place regarding harassment. Failure to provide a safe school environment may result in less federal funding from the government. With budget shortfalls, funding for reputable anti-bullying resources puts even more pressure on school districts to come up with solutions—sometimes forcing them to use anything they currently have available to them. However, some schools have implemented comprehensive bullying programs such as Bully Proofing Your School, Oleweus Bullying Prevention Program, Sticks ‘n Stones, and Second Step. These programs were studied using program evaluation forms included in the program kit, or by researchers who piloted them, and found that these programs have reduced bullying in their schools (Stop Bullying Now, n.d.).

Technology is another cause for concern for those being bullied. With technology used for school projects and homework, it is inevitable that students will become exposed to more and more information—some good and some bad. Because schools are requiring Internet use in school assignments, educators are allowing for creative access to information on the Internet, which when used inappropriately, can be misused for the wrong purpose. It is now a requirement in Wisconsin schools to incorporate the Information and Technology Literacy Standards (ITLS) suggesting eighth graders must prove proficiency in “the ability to responsibly use appropriate technology to communicate; solve problems; and access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information to improve learning in all subject areas and to acquire lifelong learning skills in the 21st century” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, n.d., n.p.).

Although the ITLS book was published in 1998 and updates were added, none of the standards addresses safety; however, in October of 2008, “the Children’s Internet Protection Act was amended to require that E-Rate recipient schools provide internet safety education to students,” (Hancock, Randall, and Simpson, 2009, p. 4). E-Rate is the discount eligible schools and libraries can receive for subscribing to telecommunication services, Internet access and internal connections necessary for deploying technology into the classroom (United States Department of Education, 2003).

Bullying has taken on yet another form—cyberbullying—as a combination of inappropriate Internet access and lack of supervision often missing in many homes. Cyberbullying is the use of e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, or other Internet applications for the purpose of harassing other individuals (National Criminal Justice Reference Service [NCJRS], 2006). According to Beran and Li (2005), cyberbullying is defined in broader terms: “harassment that is directed at a peer through the use of information and communication

technology” (p. 265). This would include cell phones and video cameras. The Beran and Li study indicated that email and instant messaging services rated the highest percent of cyber harassment (53%) followed by Internet bullying (46%) and misuse of cell phones (25%).

The Center on Media and Child Health (n.d.) indicated that 22% of children ages 6-9; 60% of children ages 10-14; and 84% of teens ages 15-18 have cell phones (n.p.). With so many students having access to cell phones and the number of teen users growing constantly, concerns of inappropriate cell phone use in schools is a concern. Issues such as taking pictures with cell phones of students dressing in locker rooms that have the capability of posting things on the internet adds yet another way for students to harass others. It also makes it difficult for schools to address this issue especially when this type of harassment initially may have occurred outside of school (Magid, 2009).

Parents are also taking more of an interest in this type of bullying. Due to the ever-increasing number of children with online access, children may be exposed to or become the targets of cyberbullying. Although children and young adults adapt well to the online environment—navigating through chat rooms, instant messaging, multiple email accounts, and Internet sites—the adults responsible for their protection may not fully understand who children have access to and who has access to them.

Research has also indicated that other areas of society, besides schools, are taking interest in this bullying phenomenon including the medical field in the area of mental health (World Health Organization, n.d.; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003). Much of the literature stated that youth involved in bullying are at a greater risk for being involved in activities that would later put them in jail or cause individuals to become depressed and/or commit suicide (Werle, 2006).

According to *A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet* (cited in Netday, 2002), nearly 75% of 14-17 year olds and 65% of 10-13 year olds use the Internet. They have access at home, in school, friends' homes and other public places. In 1999 one in five children received sexual solicitation or was approached by online predators and only 25% of those children told a parent. As of 2004, almost 90% of public schools—including over 1 million classrooms—in the U.S. are connected to the Internet. Over 40% of American households own computers and one-quarter of all households have Internet access (United States Department of Justice [USDOJ], 2004).

This is definite cause for concern for the safety of all children, especially since many of the young victims of cyber crimes are not always being supervised or protected by the people who should be keeping them the most safe—parents and teachers. Quite often, parents and teachers assume that children are safe within the confines of their homes or at school. However, statistics are clearly showing that this is not the case as children are at even more risk of bullying and being recipients of other violent acts that involved Internet use (USDOJ, 2004; Cooper & Snell, 2003; Ditzhazy & Burton, 2003; Werle, 2006; Delisio, 2007).

Schools can expect increased public and judicial scrutiny for a troubling problem that is increasingly viewed as contributing to school violence and involving illegal or possibly unconstitutional harassment and discrimination. There are federal laws and court cases that have been used to make decisions about bullying and harassment in schools. In an article on bullying by the CHHCS (2004), an important court case was shared.

The seminal case guiding what courts may decide about school district responsibility in bullying cases is a 1999 U.S. Supreme Court decision in a case known as *Davis v.*

Monroe County Board of Education, parents of a fifth grader sued the school board and

officials under Title IX for failure to remedy a classmate's sexual harassment of a student. The Supreme Court held that private damages may lie against a school board for student/on/student harassment when the recipient of federal funding (which includes virtually all public schools) 'acts with deliberate indifference to known acts of harassment in its programs or activities (n.p.).

The Court also noted that the "harassment has to be so severe as to interfere with the victim's access to education" (n.p.). The CHHCS went on to state:

Two factors may make it harder to ignore bullying in the future. One is that recent police investigations of shootings, suicides, and other violence in schools have found that the student perpetrators had been bullied or had engaged in bullying. The other factor is that schools are being sued for failing to stop harassment of which they knew or should have known (n.p.).

With bullying happening outside the school day and now more frequently being carried over into schools, dealing with bullying becomes even more complicated. Schools will need to continue to monitor all forms of bullying, as it is an issue that schools can no longer ignore.

Statement of the Problem

Bullying is a problem that continues to exist in communities across the country with new technological sources being added venues for bullying. Despite bullying prevention programs in schools, bullying still occurs. According to some researchers (Epstein, Plog, & Porter, 2002; Olweus, Limber, & Mahalic, 1999; and Kocs, n.d.) who have evaluated the effectiveness of the comprehensive bullying prevention programs—Bully Proofing Your School, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, and Sticks and Stones—bullying was reduced. Specifically, the Olweus,

Bullying Prevention Program reduced bullying by 50 percent or more and the Sticks ‘n Stones program reduced bullying by 30 percent or more (Stop Bullying Now, n.d.).

Many of these comprehensive programs that are available to schools do not require teachers or those implementing the program to be trained (Stop Bullying Now, n.d.). One important fact that seems clear is that teachers need to be trained and updated on how bullying has evolved in order to raise awareness, identify, and stop bullying incidents, including cyberbullying (Olweus, 1993; Ditzhazy & Burton, 2003; Trautman, 2003; CHHCS, 2004; Shore, n.d.; National Middle School Association, 2006; I-Safe, n.d.; SafeYouth.com, n.d.). Students, parents and school employees need to know what bullying is, how to recognize it and how to stop it. Therefore, the problem becomes how can bullying be identified, and how can educators stop it from escalating in the schools?

Purpose of the Study

With an increased interest in keeping children safe at school, raising awareness in detecting bullying and monitoring online bullying should be a priority for adults responsible for the safety and welfare of children. The purpose of this study is to define bullying, explore options to review programs that work to inform students, parents and teachers to minimize bullying. A review of literature will include research regarding recognizing bullying, assisting the victim and informing others while raising awareness to keep students safe at school and in the community. Literature will be reviewed in the spring and summer of 2009.

Research Questions

The following questions will be addressed during the review of literature.

1. What types of bullying are students experiencing?
2. What are parents and educators doing that works to minimize bullying?

3. What programs are having success at educating students and parents regarding bullying?
4. When teachers see bullying, what strategies work to intervene and stop the bullying?
5. What are new strategies being developed to decrease technology-type bullying behaviors?

Definition of Terms

This study includes several terms that may need to be defined for clarity and understanding.

Bully. A person or group who repeatedly cause harm to others who are perceived as weaker or more vulnerable. (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, n.d.a)

Bullying. A negative and often aggressive or manipulative act or series of acts by one or more people against another person or people usually over a period of time. It is abusive and is based on an imbalance of power (Sullivan, Cleary, & Sullivan, 2004, p. 3 & 5).

Bully/Victim. Individuals who repeat the harassing behaviors used against them and who are also victims of bullying by others.

Bystander. A person who watches bullying take place and does nothing to intervene (CHHCS, 2004).

Cyberbullying. The use of e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, or other Internet or technology applications for the purpose of harassing other individuals (NCJRS, 2006).

Victim or Target. The person or group the bully attacks verbally, physically, writing or texting, or with gestures or other nonverbal actions (Sullivan, Cleary, & Sullivan, 2004, p. 5)

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

It is assumed that children are currently still being bullied in schools, and that parents, educators and other caring adults want ideas to intervene to keep children safe in school and in the community. While there are many types of bullying, the literature reviewed in this study will be limited to bullying occurring commonly at school. Another assumption is that the literature reviewed came from credible sources and is accurate information. It is further assumed that school counselors play a leadership role in school and desire to create an environment where children of all ages feel safe. One limitation to this literature review is that while cyberbullying is relatively new to the bullying scene there are always new technologies added that this literature review may have overlooked due to the new technology available. While there are many studies and much research and literature on this topic, a final limitation is the time and resources available to the researcher and some research may have been overlooked.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will begin with a brief history about bullying followed by information about several leaders in bullying research. In addition, the impact of bullying at different age-levels will be addressed, followed by highlights of intervention programs and their effectiveness. The chapter will conclude with strategies for students and teachers to identify and minimize bullying.

Brief History

Bullying has its roots from many years ago. It seems the pattern of people with power in different forms have treated others with little power in degrading ways. Rigby (n.d., n.p.) stated, "Bullying has been with us at least as long as recorded history." Take for instance the Salem witches of 1692. Richard Trask (n.d.), a leading authority on the Salem witch hunts explained that, "In most witchcraft cases, the status and sex of the witch had much to do with who was accused." He went on to say "They could be of any age, from four years old to those into their nineties" (n.p.).

Time passed, but using power over others throughout history existed and was generally accepted. It wasn't until the 1970s that this notion of power over others for personal gain through bullying was challenged. This challenger—now a pioneer for changing the way this behavior is perceived—was Dan Olweus of Sweden (Conn, 2004; Shore, n.d.).

Much of the research on the topic of bullying began with the work of Olweus in the 1970s. His research challenged social thinking that bullying is an acceptable right-of-passage or "growing up" behavior. This researcher from Sweden focused his study on the behavior of individual students (Walton, 2005) and that bullying that took place at school. It wasn't until

1982, when three 14-year-old boys committed suicide as the consequence of being bullied, that bullying issues were addressed in European countries (Olweus, 1993).

Olweus continued to do research on school bullying over the next several years including a two-year study in the late 1990s on the effectiveness of an intervention program now called the *Bullying Prevention Program*—a systematic bully-prevention approach used worldwide.

Olweus's research and intervention work has played a key role in changing the views of bullying in many countries including Norway, Sweden, England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Germany, Australia, and Japan. The perception that bullying was once a natural part of growing up to a paradigm shift recognizing that it is now a pressing social issue which must be taken seriously and be systematically addressed by the schools/school authorities and society at large was the major contribution of Olweus. Due to his theory on bullying, researchers have now begun to build on this foundation to investigate why it occurs with such frequency in schools.

It was not until the 1990s that the United States—mainly researchers—began to take more interest in the subject of bullying. During that time, several school shootings took place—most notably Columbine, a high school in Colorado. Since then, bullying has become high profile with teachers, legislators, and medical professionals. Several studies have focused on bullying ranging from developmental stages, (Craig, Pepler & Atlas 2000; and Boulton, Trueman & Flemmington, 2002) and gender differences, (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Boulton et al., 2002; and Vaillancourt, Hymel & McDougall, 2003) to more recent technological types of bullying incidences such as cyberbullying and sexting (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008; and Long, 2008).

Despite efforts to deter the problem in the United States with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (P.L. 107-110), which basically states that schools will be held more accountable for the safety and welfare of children, bullying is still an issue.

According to CHHCS (2004):

It hasn't been much studied in the United States, it isn't part of most teacher training curricula, and many educators think there's little they can do to stop it. But bullying at school is getting new attention, as researchers find mental health implications in the fact that as many as one-third of students say they have either bullied someone or been the target of bullying (n.p.).

Historical Perspective of Bullying Research

As researchers begin to unravel this complex issue, many are studying the impact it has on the mental health of those involved in bullying—especially victims and bully/victims. “Those who are bullied report higher levels of anxiety, depression and lower self-esteem into adulthood, and childhood bullies are more likely to engage in criminal behavior,” (Coyle, 2009, p. 406).

One of the newest forms of bullying is cyberbullying. This form of bullying involves using e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, or other Internet applications for the purpose of harassing other individuals (NCJRS, 2006). The most recent type of bullying may involve sexting. According to a survey by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2008), which surveyed 1,280 teens and young adults, it estimates that 90% of teens are online (p. 5). Of those teens with access to online systems, 38% of them age 13-19 have either sent a sexually suggestive message to someone via e-mail, instant messaging, or texting, Using the same media, 19% of these teens have sent a nude or semi-nude picture or video of

themselves (p. 11). Young people seem to be unaware of the impact this may have on their often fluid relationships as the survey also indicated that 29% of these teens had a nude or semi-nude picture/video (originally meant to be private) shared with them. Interestingly, 83% of this group also responded that they “might regret it later,” (p. 14) and 75% felt sending sexy messages and pictures/videos “can have serious negative consequences” (p. 14), yet young people still engage in it as the data shows. So why do young people behave in ways which are socially unacceptable or even illegal?

In order to systematically look at the problem of bullying, it is essential to look at each part and analyze it. Different theories have also had an impact on findings by researchers as suggestions for intervention are based on the results of the findings. There are several theories as to why bullying occurs. Some believe it is human nature to bully and exercise power over others based on their personality traits. Others suggest that bullying is a learned behavior and society condones it. Pellegrini, Bartini, and Brooks (1999) reported that some adults maintain a belief that students must learn to deal with bullies by themselves (tough it out).

Negative feelings, combined with a mixed array of bodily changes, fluid relationships with their peers and adults, and roller coaster emotions may increase the risk factors associated with bullying. By looking at much of the research, it is clear that several factors, such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, family structure, and social skills are being evaluated to determine why bullying takes place so that intervention strategies can be effective in stopping bullying tactics.

Types of Bullying

Most people are aware of the physical act of bullying. Olweus (2001) described bullying as “repeatedly exposed to negative actions on the part of one or more other students,” (p.24) and

includes “verbal abuse, or making faces and rude gestures” (p. 24). Olweus suggests that it involves an imbalance of strength either physically or psychologically or both. Yet others, including Nansel et al. (2001) and Sullivan, Cleary, and Sullivan (2004), believe bullying comes in other forms. These forms of bullying include: physical; nonphysical verbal bullying; nonphysical/nonverbal bullying, which also includes both direct and indirect nonverbal bullying; and damage to property. From the book, *Bullying in Secondary Schools* (2004), Sullivan, Cleary and Sullivan define physical bullying as the form that is “probably the most obvious of all forms because it can be seen. Physical bullying occurs when a person is physically harmed such as punched, kicked, hair pulled, tripped, or spit on.” Nonphysical verbal bullying “may be seen as threatening phone calls, threats of violence, name calling, teasing, sexually suggestive, or spreading false and malicious rumors” whereas nonphysical nonverbal bullying (direct and indirect) “would include things such as making faces or sexual gestures. Indirect nonphysical nonverbal bullying is “when individuals or groups purposely and often systematically exclude, ignore or isolate another individual from the group.” Lastly, damage to property bullying “could include when clothes are ripped, books are damaged, or things are stolen by the bully.” (p. 5)

The most difficult form of bullying to detect—indirect bullying—causes the greatest amount of suffering on its victims which often may include depression and suicidal ideation (Van der Wal, de Wit, & Hirasing, 2003).

Differences of Bullying by Gender and Age

Several studies on bullying (Borg, 1999; Boulton, Trueman & Flemington, 2002; Warden & Mackinnon, 2003; Thunfors & Cornell, 2008; and Jankauskiene et al., 2008) addressed bullying by gender and age developmental stages. This information has helped educators in

understanding how much gender and age play in both the extent and types of bullying that take place in schools.

In one of the largest studies dedicated to understanding the bullying differences between males and females, researcher Tonja Nansel and associates of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development analyzed data from a representative sample of 15,686 students in grades 6 through 10 in public and private schools throughout the United States who completed the World Health Organization's Health Behavior in School-Aged Children survey during the spring of 1998. In the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2001), Nansel, et al., found that boys tend to bully physically—pushing, shoving, or even injuring their victims—while girls tend to use social exclusion and gossip (relational bullying). This conclusion is supported by other researchers and bullying studies (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Whitney & Smith, 1993; Ahmed & Smith, 1994; Borg, 1999).

Male bullies were viewed as more athletic but less attractive than female bullies (Vaillancourt, Hymel & McDougall, 2003). According to study by Warden and Mackinnon (2003), girls are more likely than boys to display prosocial behaviors. In a study by Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster (2003) who looked at students from schools in low-income communities and whose schools received Title I funding composed of ethnically diverse populations, boys were still the most involved in bullying, but especially in the bully/victim category.

Researchers have found that bullying and how it is addressed by individuals varies depending on age and/or grade levels of the students involved. One point of interest found in a study by Borg (1999) is that most victims and their bullies are from the same age group. Bullying is experienced somewhat differently by each level at the elementary school, middle school, and high school.

Elementary School Bullies

As students begin formal education, bullying begins to occur at an early age. Thompson and Cohen (2005) stated that 80 percent of elementary children are not at serious risk of teasing because they almost certainly have friends (p. 17). However, this leaves 20 percent involved in bullying incidences. In a study by Borg (1999), 25 percent of students were frequent victims of bullying while 15 percent were frequent bullies. The study also indicated that name-calling, fighting, and telling lies were the types of bullying done in the elementary years. Physical bullying seems to be more prevalent in grade schools. Boys at this age displayed more physical aggression which declined as they got older (Vaillancourt, Hymel & McDougall, 2003, p. 166).

Bullying most often occurs during the elementary years (Frisén, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007). The most common location is on the playground (Borg, 1999). Student appearance is noted as the most common characteristic of why elementary children are bullied, and traits such as having freckles, wearing glasses, being obese or having ears that stick out were easy targets for bullies at this age level (Frisén, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007). Elementary students are often also bullied based on their social goals and self-efficacy (Erdley & Asher, 1996). Students are likely to achieve popular status with prosocial behavior at this age and bully/victims are often the least popular kids (Warden & Mackinnon, 2003). It is believed that the older students in this age group are the best ones to implement prevention and intervention efforts, because adult influence is decreased heading into the middle school years (Coyle, 2009, p. 407).

Middle School Bullies

As students begin middle school, around the age of 12, there is an increase in bullying incidents when children move from elementary to middle school. Pelligrini, Bartini & Brooks (1999) stated, ". . . early adolescence witness an increase in aggression while youngsters look for

new friendships, for as soon as peer groups are formed, many of the aggressive behaviors subside" (n.p.)

Bullying at this level takes on many forms. Physical and verbal bullying continues for boys while yet another type of bullying—relational aggression—is preferred by girls. According to the October issue of *The APA Monitor Online* (1999) as many as 80% of middle school students engage in bullying behaviors, and Jankauskiene et al. (2008) stated that the “peak of involvement in bullying manifested in the eighth grade” (p. 150). According to Thunfors and Cornell (2008), bullies at the middle school age made somewhat below average grades (p. 76).

In a recent study by Borg (1999), it was found that 27 percent of middle school children were victimized and 16 percent were self-confessed bullies. It was also found that most bullies disclosed that they had bullied during the middle school years (Frisén, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007).

About half the children said, for example, that they had been bullied “at least once in a while.” When asked what they did about bullying when it happened, almost half said they fought back, one-fourth told an adult, and 20% did nothing. Nearly two-thirds said they tell or try to stop bullying when they see it, but 16% do nothing, and 20% join in. Primary reasons for bullying: "to get popular" and "to get their own way" (CHHCS, 2004 n.p.).

High School Bullies

As students transition into high school, bullying continues, but begins to decline. According to the CHHCS (2004), high school campuses have anywhere from 20% to 30% of students who are frequently involved in bullying as either the bully or victims, and students reported that bullying seriously affects their physical, social, and academic well-being. However, in a recent study by Borg (2008), it was found that 10 percent in high school were victimized and

7 percent were self-confessed bullies. A study by Frisé, Jonsson and Persson (2007), found that most students are not bullied in their later high school years.

Either study supports the fact that bullying declines in high school. At this age, bullying is often most visible, and possibly most dangerous, among older adolescents, where bullying may include sexual harassment. Boulton, Trueman, and Flemington (2002) stated that physical bullying is still common for boys but not for girls, who are most likely to engage in relational bullying. Borg (1999) indicated name-calling and lying to be the most prevalent forms of bullying. However, Conn (2004) stated:

High school students reported that the most common forms of bullying were being called names and being left out of activities, followed by being hit or kicked or threatened. And the bullying happened almost everywhere at school—in classrooms, the lunchroom, at break, at extracurricular events, at initiations for clubs or athletics, and on the way home or on the way to school (p. 175).

Bullying and Pro-social Behavior

There seems to be a debate among researchers on whether or not bullies and/or victims are socially deficient. School-wide preventative programs focus on targeting aggressive behaviors (The Psychology Review, 2003). Having an understanding on whether students do not have the social skills necessary to intervene, or whether they do have the skills but use them to manipulate others, may require two different approaches to intervention. Researchers have indicated that bullies lack empathy and social problem-solving skills (Coyle, 2009; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Warden & Mackinnon, 2003; Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001; Sutton, Smith & Swettenham, 1999) and victims lack emotional control and social problem-solving skills (Ditzhazy & Burton, 2003; Warden & Mackinnon, 2003; Canter, 2005; Gini, 2006).

Other research shows that children who bully may not realize they are bullying, especially young children, as they may not have the cognitive ability to possess the necessary social skills for their age. Warden and Mackinnon (2003) found young bullies are “significantly less aware than prosocial children of the possible negative consequences of their solutions,” (p. 381). However, according to CHHCS (2004) “. . .children in grades 4 to 9 at twelve health education centers in seven states, found even the youngest children in that age group were completely aware of what is called "bullying" and thoughtful about the reasons it happens and the possible consequences” (n.p.).

A study by Gini (2006) also indicated bullies know exactly what they are doing and use their intellect to gain power. However, just because bullies can process emotional information does not mean they can process the emotional feelings of others—they lack in the “ability to appreciate emotional consequences of their behaviors on others’ feelings,” (p. 536). Gini also found that victims of bullying showed difficulty in understanding others’ thoughts, beliefs, and intentions in social behavior.

Sutton, Smith and Swettenham (1999) found bullies to have superior theory of mind skills—that they understand mental states (beliefs, desires, and feelings) of others and use that information to their advantage. They also found that these bullies lack empathy and understanding the emotional impact of their actions. Hoffman (2000) further showed that moral transgressions and empathy are closely connected. Others (Gini, 2006; Sutton, Smith & Swettenham, 1999) have confirmed the tendency of bullies to show higher levels of moral disengagement, and the presence of a profile of egocentric reasoning. Bullies use this mindset to justify the use of violent and aggressive behaviors (Gini, 2006, p. 535). Further research into this debate may be helpful in implementing bully prevention programs.

Social Status

Research surrounding social status of bullies has been investigated by several researchers (LaFreniere & Charlesworth, 1983; Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998; Adler & Adler, 1998; Vaillancourt, Hymel & McDougall, 2003). Vaillancourt, Hymel and McDougall (2003) found that “liking/disliking is not necessarily synonymous with perceived status or popularity; being rejected is not the same as being viewed by peers as unpopular or low in status” (p. 160). The results of the study indicated that bullies are viewed as more powerful and popular but were generally disliked (p. 164).

Thunfors and Cornell (2008) also indicated that higher power was linked to more aggressive behavior in both physical and relational bullying. “Powerful bullies were viewed more favorably by their peers, who saw them as more attractive and as better leaders compared to moderate and low power bullies” and were seen as more aggressive (p. 168). In fact over half of the bullies in this study were viewed by their peers as powerful bullies as compared to 14% of low power bullies. Powerful bullies had a combination of both positive and negative characteristics—forms of both explicit and implicit power.

Thunfors & Cornell (2008) determined that in the top-third of the students who were peer nominated as popular, almost half were identified bullies at the middle school level and were more likely to be female. Less powerful bullies may use aggressive bullying behavior to attain more power in the peer group without realizing the other differences between them and the powerful bullies, which include traits of being more attractive, better leaders or status athletes.

Warden and Mackinnon (2003) stated that “prosocial behavior is not cool, is not valued and that children who behave in prosocial ways may not be popular with their peers” (p. 369)

Juvonen, Graham and Schuster (2003) found that teenage bullies, who have high social status within their peer group, feel bullying behavior is encouraged to be popular (p. 1235).

Why Does Bullying Occur?

Although much of the research seems to focus on student demographics, researchers are beginning to delve into the reasons behind the behavior. Not only does research indicate frequency of bullying incidences but also researchers are asking students and teachers for perceived reasons bullying occurs. In a study by Vaillancourt, Hymel & McDougall, (2003) "Bullies identified by peers did not fit the stereotype of psychologically maladjusted, marginalized individuals," (p. 168).

So why does bullying occur? Some believe it is because of personal characteristics. Espelage, Asidao, and Vion, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign found that (1) many students tease their peers to go along with the crowd, but feel uncomfortable with their own behavior; (2) students who are physically different (i.e., in race, body size, clothing) are more likely to be victimized, as are those who "are not good at things that everybody else is; and (3) those who report bullying to others often state that they are bullied themselves (Monitor Online, 1999, n.p.)

Borg (1999) specifically studied the relationship of physical height and bullying. His research, however, did not indicate that height was cause for bullying. In fact, the average victims' and bullies' height were not different (p. 151).

Some believe bullying has to do with one's social skills. In a study by Vaillancourt, Hymel and McDougall (2003) over half the bullies who were peer-nominated had a high degree of social status within their peer group, many of whom were well-liked. In a study by Warden and Mackinnon (2003) social status, empathy, and social problem-solving were examined in

elementary students. Prosocial students were more empathetic than bullies. They, along with victims, tended to use directly assertive solutions to solve problems, and bullies tended to use passive or indirectly assertive solutions. It was also found that “prosocial boys are no more empathetic than boys who are bullies or victims” (p. 381).

Some believe bullying occurs because of choices they make. Students may perceive the connection between bullying strategies to facilitate the attainment of popularity (Thunfors & Cornell, 2008, p. 75). The most common reason bullies pick on other children is because the victim provoked them (Boulton & Underwood, 1992).

In a study by Jankauskiene et al. (2008), students who were obese, smoked, drank alcohol, and who were less open with their parents, were teased about their appearance, and/or were not involved in sports tended to be bullies. Interestingly, these same issues were reasons students became victims. However, bullies had higher percentage rates in the areas of being smokers and using alcohol as well as being teased by teachers about their appearance. Victims were affected more than bullies in the areas of being obese, not drinking alcohol, not playing sports, being unhappy and having lower self-esteem, were less open with parents, and teased by their family about their appearance.

Frisén, Jonsson, and Persson (2007) found most victims were bullied because of their appearance (40%) followed by the victim’s behavior (36%). The characteristic of the bully was the next highest, but substantially lower (7%). The reasons children bully others is that the bully either has low self-esteem (28%) or feels cool (26%).

Teacher Awareness

Ignoring inappropriate behavior is not an effective intervention strategy. Frisén, Jonsson, and Persson (2007) stated that adults are only aware of a small amount of bullying found in

schools. This could be another reason why teachers' awareness of bullying goes unnoticed.

“Teachers may not recognize bullying in part because the students engaged in bullying are so popular with their classmates and do not fit the stereotype of the socially maladjusted bully” (Thunfors & Cornell, 2008, p. 77).

Boulton, Trueman, and Flemington (2002) found that relational forms of bullying—especially exclusion—are more difficult to observe and this may be another reason why teachers do not take action (p. 367). In a study by Frisé, Jonsson, & Persson (2007), only 14 % of students believed that teachers intervening is what stopped bullying. Since students are less likely to use exclusion as part of their definition of bullying, it may be another reason why students engage in this activity and why others do little to help (Boulton, Trueman & Flemington, 2002, p. 367).

Teacher training programs need to be certain that bullying is part of the curricula especially the harder to detect relational bullying. Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster (2003) indicated that teachers lack training in how to effectively deal with bullying—more specifically the best way to intervene. Their study also found with these teachers prior to having classroom training, that relational bullying was less serious than other forms of bullying; they are less empathetic for victims of relational bullying and less likely to intervene; and would take less severe actions on the bullies and victims in relational bullying. They also stated that prior to bully proof training, “teachers recognized the importance of bullying as a problem to a greater extent than did the seasoned teachers and they did not have better ideas about how to cope with the bullying in the school” (n.p.).

Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster (2003) found that there were relatively high levels of self-reports of psychological distress, but teachers did not rate victims as having significantly

more internalizing problems than students who were uninvolved. Intervention strategies encouraging students to seek help about bullying issues is necessary, and teachers and parents need to support those efforts.

Lack of connections between clinicians and school staff may further complicate intervention. Quite often psychological services are the best resources in serving youth with severe emotional problems (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003) but may be inaccessible to students for various reasons. If school policies specifically address zero-tolerance for violence as well as some verbal bullying, then teachers have written documentation that they are supported when disciplining students who bully. Most schools do not address the relational forms of bullying in their school policies. This lack of support may be a reason for teachers not intervening.

Despite efforts to combat bullying, researchers find bullying still continues. Borg (1999) also stated that “most bullies (53.4 percent) victimize on their own in violent behavior/beatings. A close second is with the help of the group (40.1 percent) and lastly with a single friend (33 percent),” (p.150). This should raise interest to those who have made the assumption that bullies need an audience. Socioeconomic status may affect bullying as well.

Programs to Reduce Bullying

Although research on bullying has been studied over the last 40 years, there is still much to be learned about the dynamics of bullying and the methods to reduce bullying. Many preventative programs have been established in order to combat this unacceptable behavior. Olweus’s Bullying Prevention Program, which is a systematic approach to bullying prevention, has gained both national and international recognition. Among other things, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program was recently selected as one of ten model programs (only 10 out of 450

programs were approved) to be used in a national violence prevention initiative in the United States, supported by the US Department of Justice (Olweus & Limber, 1999).

One of the criteria for the selection of the model programs was that the program had been exposed to rigorous, scientific evaluation (with positive and long-term results). The program includes formal lessons for both students and parents and includes participation and implementation from students, parents, school staff, and community members. Since Olweus's Bullying Prevention Program was endorsed by several countries, other programs have been implemented, many based off of his program.

Chapter Three: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

Summary

While bullying continues to be a major challenge for schools today, teachers need to be aware of what bullying is and have strategies in place to stop bullying in order to keep kids safe at school. This proves to be a monumental task, as supervision of hallways, playground and classrooms is just a starting point. Now schools have to monitor Internet use and cell phone misconduct of students too. Parents need to accept responsibility for monitoring students at home by setting firm guidelines for safe internet use and clear expectations for appropriate use of phone, messages photos and texting. By working together in partnership, parents and school personnel can develop strategies to keep kids safe.

Bullying is defined in part as having an imbalance of power. If relational bullying becomes more of a problem in middle and high school this could be why more bullying incidences go unnoticed. In summary, Jankauskiene et al. (2008), suggested that bullying was more frequently done by children in rich families and that poorer children were more often the victims in comparison to middle and high socioeconomic status.

Bauman & Del Rio (2006) reported that there is less understanding, empathy, and teacher involvement for relational bullying. They also found that teachers' responses to victims rarely suggested contacting their parents or authorities for relational bullying in comparison to verbal and physical forms of bullying.

Young victims of bullying seem to have poorer social adaptation, unhappiness and social-behavior problems at school that are later associated with anxiety and social phobias in adulthood (Gladstone, Parker, & Malhi, 2006). Borg (1999) stated that many students were "silently suffering great physical and psychological pain, humiliation, and stress" (p. 152).

Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster (2003) noted that teenage victims of bullying “report elevated psychological distress” and “having trouble fitting in,” (p. 1235). Not only are they targeted by bullies but also ostracized by many of their classmates. The research also indicated that bully-victims were the most involved in conduct problems and most likely to be disengaged in school, as indicated by teachers. They also had higher levels of depression and loneliness. Bullying takes a toll on all those involved. Bullying continues despite efforts to at least reduce the occurrence of bullying.

Discussion

How will educators manage this long-time problem of bullying in schools? Prevention needs to begin with looking at bullying systematically. Although most comprehensive anti-bullying programs aim at addressing the school as a system including all school staff, individual students, parents, and the school culture (Shore, 2005), more emphasis may be needed for the foundation of the program—including training for school staff, addressing key topics on bullying based on age and gender, teaching social skills, developing positive leadership skills—especially for bystanders.

First of all, the literature addressed that school staff, especially teachers lack training on the issue of bullying (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Cooper & Snell, 2003; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Yoon, 2004; Thompson & Cohen, 2005; Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Hancock, Randall & Simpson, 2009). Teachers and staff often do not know how to recognize the different types of bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006), where bullying takes place (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Cooper & Snell, 2003), who may be at risk (Espelage & Swearer, 2003), and how to intervene (Yoon, 2004; Hancock, Randall & Simpson, 2009).

Despite the information that supports teacher training, most comprehensive anti-bullying programs do not require staff to be trained on the program (Stop Bullying Now, n.d.) Teachers need to be taught about bullying in detail—the different types, where it occurs, typically by whom, and how to respond. They, along with students and parents, need to be aware of the impact bullying has on everyone, especially the victims. According to the literature, bullying can affect one's grades, school attendance (Limber, 2003), school safety, and mental health. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.), six percent of students did not attend school because they felt unsafe and another indicated 160,000 student absences each day due to bullying related stress.

Other negative effects of non-stop bullying may include the victims bringing weapons to school (6 percent), damage to personal property on school grounds (27 percent), physical fighting (36 percent), and the inability to become productive citizens as adults. It is estimated that “by age 24, up to sixty percent of people who are identified as childhood bullies will have at least one criminal conviction” (Whitted & Dupper, 2005, p. 168).

Espelage and Swearer (2003, n.p.) noted in their review of the research surrounding bullying, as referenced in Vossekui's et al. study (2002) that 78% of the shooters in school shooting incidences had a history of suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts, and 61% had a history of serious depression. Aluede et al. (n.d.) also indicated that “26% of girls who were bullied reported depression as opposed to 8% of girls who were not,” (p. 156). Because of this, it may be especially important for school staff and parents to be aware of the signs and symptoms of depression among youth (Limber, 2003).

The research also showed that even though both boys and girls bully, boys are often involved in physical forms of bullying; whereas girls tend to be involved in relational bullying

(National Institutes of Health: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2001; Boulton, Trueman, & Flemington, 2002). However, as technology use continues to expand, more recent studies are indicating that both boys and girls will bully others using this misused technology approach. Cyber etiquette for students, ethics and legal rights should be addressed to students regarding proper use of technology.

It is also known that early elementary students may not have the skills necessary to interact pro-socially with others (Gini, 2006; Coyl, 2009). As students get into upper elementary and middle school, their social skills may be more developed but they may lack empathy toward others and feel treating others in disrespectful ways gains popularity and status with their peers (Warden & Mackinnon, 2003). As students reach high school, without intervention, some of the same forms of bullying still may occur as they did in middle school, but relational bullying seems to be the most used at the high school level.

It may be helpful for schools to focus on age-appropriate strategies to develop social skills and friendship skills, empathy, and positive leadership skills—especially for bystanders—through the use of bully-awareness curriculum and school activities. Establishing a mentor program, buddy or peer helper system may help deter bullying as well (Trautman, 2003; Coyl 2009).

Because research indicates that most bullies are popular but not well-liked (Warden & Mackinnon, 2003; Thunfors & Cornell, 2008; Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003; Pelligrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999) having groups of bystanders trained in addressing bullies may be an effective preventative measure in reducing bullying. Some counseling group work may also be needed to address the ways in which girls and boys differ in their bullying tactics.

Using the existing research and adjusting preventative approaches to include newly acquired data is important. New rules need to be put in place in the student handbook regarding text messages and sending inappropriate pictures. Realistically it may be impossible to monitor all Internet, cell phone and other technology use effectively and efficiently, but schools should raise awareness, set guidelines and training on appropriate use and develop contracts for student use of Internet to establish safety for all. By the sixth grade, relational bullying, physical aggression and verbal harassment need to be addressed with both males and females in every school system.

Last but not least, maybe the term bullying should no longer be used. Maybe the actions of students—and adults, for that matter—need to be called what they are rather than a general term to group this behavior known as bullying. As research indicates that teachers' definition of bullying differs from students' definition (Boulton, Trueman & Flemington, 2002; Cooper & Snell, 2003; Frisé, A., Jonsson, A., & Persson, C., 2007), maybe bullying is too broad a term and all encompassing and each individual issue should just be addressed separate from bullying and called harassment. If a student calls another an inappropriate name, have him/her correct the behavior by calling the student by name. And where does teasing come into the picture? According to Jankauskiene et al. (2008), teasing is more complex than bullying because it involves hostility, ambiguity, and humor. How is this more complex than bullying itself? Maybe humor and hostility should not be in the same definition—maybe that is why ambiguity is in the middle.

If a student hits another student, let the student know it is not okay to hit others as it is an act of violence. Some schools are now notifying the police or school resource officer; and through their involvement, students are issued tickets for assault. Notice in the last two sentences

that bullying was not used; rather, it addressed the specific behavior. If students help in writing anti-bullying/harassment policies which include a definition, and supported increased levels of discipline for each repeated offense of harming another student, maybe there would be deeper understanding of the consequences (Cooper & Snell, 2003).

Recommendations for Further Research

Boulton, Trueman, and Flemington (2002) stated that little research has been done to directly address the issue of how students define bullying. In order to effectively understand bullying, the researcher believes that bullying needs a clear definition so those involved are not confused. Further research is needed on the use of Twitter, Facebook and MySpace and other ways of communicating what could be harmful words or pictures. If peer intervention is the key to anti-bullying efforts, clearly more research is needed in this area. Examining issues related to bullying in the area of disability, gay bashing and religious harassment are also suggested areas for further research.

Further research may need to be done in the area of bullying to achieve popular status or to determine if popular students feel it is a social expectation. Finally, further research is needed on bullying outside the school day such as when parents bully teachers and coaches bully players. With further research and deliberate continued efforts schools and parents can continue to reduce this ever-evolving, hurtful epidemic known as bullying.

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