Preface

Beginning with Prof. Dan Olweus' systematic study of bullying among Scandinavian school children decades ago, there has been an unprecedented increase in the study of bullying among school children worldwide. The continuous study of bullying has become necessary because in spite of public exposure, therapeutic interventions, penalties, etc., incidents of bullying are increasing at an alarming rate in the past decade. This special issue is an effort to provide increased knowledge to readers/ practitioners about bullying, and prescribe better intervention strategies for its amelioration in the school system and society at large.

In this special issue, Hymel, Rocke-Henderson and Bonanno's article examined how the construct of moral disengagement contributes to our understanding of bullying among Canadian students (grades 8-10). Results indicated that reported experiences of victimization were also related to moral disengagement. Kenny, McEachern and Aluede revealed that although not all children are victims or perpetrators of bullying, it does occur across gender lines; and that bullying presents itself in a unique form with females when compared with males.

This special issue has an international focus, with researchers providing information on bullying around the world. Pillay's work reviewed peer victimization in relation to the multifarious stressors endured by African children orphaned by the AIDS pandemic. He emphasized the efficacy of the memory book that centered in the oral tradition and the use of stories, fairy tales, narratives, etc. to reduce psychological fragility and inoculate the child to cope better with victimization that may occur as a result of having lost one or both parents to AIDS. Moswela's paper investigated the nature of peer victimization and its causes and effects on victims in Botswana secondary school students. The study revealed that peer victimization is very prevalent in schools and that boys are the worst perpetrators. Peterson's article examined the relationship between classroom peer victimization and other forms of discrimination and violence from a cross-national point of view, suggesting a link between the social atmosphere, and the classroom problem of bullying.

McEachern, Kenny, Blake and Aluede's paper reviewed literature across cultures with regard to the prevalence of bullying, the characteristics of both the victim and the bully, and the dis-closure by children of bullying behavior. In the case of Beran, a survey of students in a teacher preparation program at a Canadian university on bullying prevention was made, which reveal-ed that the majority of pre-service teachers held negative attitudes about bullying.

Bedell and Horne's work revealed that bullying or peer aggression is a pervasive problem in schools in the United States, and suggested that without appropriate bullying prevention or intervention strategies children may perceive the school environment as hostile and not conducive to learning. They propose the benefits of adopting the Bully Busters Program, an empirically validated prevention and intervention program for elementary and middle schools.

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