

Bully Prevention in Schools: A United States Experience

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Rachel was a new sixth-grade student. She became acquainted with a group of popular girls at her school. They enjoyed each other's company. Betty, their leader, had been away during the first two weeks of school. When she returned, she found that her circle of friends had befriended Rachel. Betty felt threatened by Rachel's increasing popularity with her clique and among some of the other students. After awhile the popular girls began snubbing Rachel. Rachel could not understand what had happened or how she had offended the girls. She was finding it unusually difficult to make new friends among the other students in her classes. She felt so alone at school. Her grades began to plummet because she lacked motivation. One day during lunch Rachel learned that negative rumors about her were being spread around the school. She became distraught because she did not know how to correct the situation.

Billy was able to make the students in his class laugh at the practical jokes that he played on other students. One day a new student, Johnny, joined the 7th grade class. Whenever the teacher called on Johnny to answer questions, he would stutter while trying to answer them. Fortunately, his teacher was patient with Johnny; however, Billy grew tired and jealous of the special attention that the teacher gave to Johnny. Billy made fun of Johnny's stuttering, which caused the other students in the class to laugh at Johnny. The teacher's warning did not stop Billy's taunting. Some of the students began to ignore Johnny because they did not want Billy to bother them. Over the next couple of days Billy taunted and physically intimidated Johnny during lunch and recess. Johnny stopped participating in class activities as a result. He became angry, upset, and withdrawn because he did not know of any other way to stop the bullying.

BULLYING – STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

These two vignettes are examples of bullying that are commonly found among school children in the United States: relational and verbal aggression, respectively. The characters in the vignettes depict the common bully-victim-

bystander triad. Bullying or peer aggression is a severe problem in childhood, especially among elementary and middle school students, where group identity is important to their socioemotional and cognitive development. As microcosms of prevailing cultures (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004), schools are socializing institutions (and communities) where children spend the majority of their waking time developing academic and inter-personal skills and building character. If no other appropriate role modeling or effective parenting is available to teach and model to children how to act civilly in a democratic society, children will learn from others in school and from society (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004), the media (particularly television), video games, and the Internet (Brinson, Kottler, and Fisher, 2004; D'Andrea, 2004) to resolve conflicts and misunderstandings with aggressive and violent means. Consequently, children may resort to bullying their peers (and school personnel) at school. If the bullies do not receive appropriate assistance, especially in their early childhood, their aggression continues throughout later stages of childhood, adolescence, and into adulthood (Loeber and Hay, 1997; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998; Patterson, DeBaryshe, and Ramsey, 1989), detrimentally affecting their personal and professional lives. Victimization resulting from bullying leaves many children scarred psychologically and emotionally (Derosier, 2002; Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004; Opinas, Horne, and Staniszewski, 2003) if the bullying is severe and chronic, and the victims do not receive appropriate aid. The bystanders, or those students who witness the bullying and choose not to intervene, do not escape the negative consequences of bullying either: as a result, they also "lose a sense of security and academic accomplishment" (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004, p. 259).

The two vignettes also illustrate a school's uninformed response to bullying or its lack of a discernable code of conduct (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004). Because the schools did not have an established school-wide policy for handling bullying situations, the victims felt powerless to stop the bullying or attempted to

resolve the conflict inappropriately (as in the case with Johnny in the second vignette). The bullies' behaviors were encouraged by the silence or cheering of the bystanders and by the school administrators and the teachers' intentional or unintentional sanctioning of those behaviors (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004, p. 260). The teacher's responses (in the second vignette) show either a lack of awareness about bullying behaviors and victimization or a lack of training and self-efficacy to intervene.

RELATED LITERATURE

Aggression and the history of the United States are intertwined (D'Andrea, 2004; Hazler, 1996; Horne, Glaser, and Sayger, 1994; Horne and Opinas, 2003; Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004; Patterson, 1986). D'Andrea (2004) identified domestic and sexual violence and the portrayal of violent images in the media and video games as new forms of violence that are prevalent in contemporary American society. Brinson et al. (2004) identified other social contributors to violence such as the proliferation of gangs, of students carrying weapons, and the growing use of violent video games and Internet sites. Serious acts of school violence emerged in the 1990s, for example, multiple-victim crimes and student shootings, and became a widespread national concern and a primary worry for school administrators, parents, students, educators, and researchers who wanted to improve the safety in schools and the academic success of all students (Brinson et al., 2004; D'Andrea, 2004; Smith and Sandhu, 2004; Stanely, Juhnke, and Purkey, 2004).

These serious acts of school violence are rare; however, other acts of violence such as the "low level" aggressive and antisocial behaviors (Smith and Sandhu, 2004), or bullying, are widely prevalent in schools (Oliver, Hoover, and Hazler, 1994; Smith and Sandhu, 2004) and are an international phenomenon (Hoover, Oliver, and Hazler, 1992; Munthe and Roland, 1989; Olweus, 1978). In the United States bullying begins early and is evident in elementary school but typically escalates to its highest level in late elementary and middle school years and then declines during high school (Orpinas and Horne, in press; Smith and Sandhu, 2004). Derosier (2002), for example, found that 80% of students reported being bullied at some time during the school year, with 15% being bullied on a regular basis. Stanley et al. (2004) reported that other students had bullied

an estimated 15% or more of all grade school students. Statistics from another study on middle school bullying revealed that 13% of the children surveyed had bullied other children, 10% were victims of bullies, and 6% had been both the victim and the bully (Nansel, Overpack, Pilla, Ruen, Simone-Morton, and Scheidt, 2001).

Definitions of Key Terms

"Low level" aggression involves intimidation and harassment of students, including teasing, fighting, name-calling, ridiculing, and threatening (Smith and Sandhu, 2004). Olweus' (1994) definition of bullying includes a student's attempt to or intent of inflicting injury or discomfort on another student. Orpinas and Horne (in press) differentiated between violence, aggression, and bullying though the concepts are frequently used interchangeably. Orpinas and Horne (in press) subscribed to the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition and classification of violence. In general, the WHO defines violence as intentional use of physical force or power against oneself (intrapersonal), another person (interpersonal), or a group or community (collective), that can or does result in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, and Zwi, 2002). As defined by Orpinas and Horne (in press), aggression is a less extreme form of intentional behaviors (i.e., hitting, pushing, isolating a peer on purpose) that may cause milder degrees of psychological or physical harm to others. Orpinas and Horne (in press) considered bullying as a subset of aggression in which the bully is more powerful than the victim and commits aggressive behaviors intentionally and repeatedly over time. This definition of bullying is sometimes described as "Double I R" (Imbalance of power, Intentional acts, and Repeated over time) (Newman, Horne, and Bartolomucci, 2000). The major distinction between aggression and bullying is that the former may be a dangerous or physically painful isolated event while bullying is repeated over time, "thereby instilling a deeper level of fear and intimidation in the victims" (Orpinas and Horne, in press, p. 4). The four common types of bullying behaviors are: (a) physical (e.g., slapping, kicking, destroying property), (b) verbal (e.g., taunting, name-calling), (c) relational aggression (e.g., passing rumors, isolating), and (d) sexual harassment (e.g., sexual comments, sexual gestures) (Orpinas and Horne, 2004).

Bully-Victim-Bystander Triad

Bullies: In addition to the four common types of bullying behaviors, there are three types of bullies: aggressive, follower, and relational (Orpinas and Horne, in press). The most common type of bully is the aggressive bully, who initiates the aggression. Aggressive bullies usually rely on physical or verbal aggression, including threats and intimidation, to achieve their goals. These bullies can be either popular or unpopular among their peers and may be skilled manipulators or socially inept. Most aggressive bullies tend to have “fake” high self-esteem because their self-esteem is usually derived from denigrating others, manipulating peers, and exerting power through threats and physical superiority (Staub, 1999).

The followers (or passive bullies) usually follow the aggressive bullies’ lead if such behavior is rewarded. They may take the role of “assistants” who help the bullies or “reinforcers” who encourage the bullies by cheering or laughing (Salmivalli, 1999). The followers tend to be anxious, insecure, and attention seeking (Olweus, 1991) and bolster their self-esteem by joining the bullies (Salmivalli, 1999). Relational bullies inflict harm by damaging victims’ friendships, personal relationships, or reputations. These bullies usually use covert or indirect forms of aggression, such as intentionally isolating another student, excluding peers from groups, threatening to withdraw friendship, or spreading negative rumors or lies about a student.

Victims: There are three types of victims: passive, provocative, and relational. The victim, the person whom the bully systematically and repeatedly harasses or abuses, is also referred to as the “target of aggression” (Sjostrom and Stein, 1996), indicating that he or she is the recipient of the aggression but not necessarily without power or the ability to respond more effectively. Passive victims are singled out without provocation because they may have few friends or no lasting friendships, have fewer verbal skills to respond to verbal taunting, appear shy and anxious, or are different from the mainstream of students (Olweus, 1993).

Provocative victims antagonize a bully or an entire classroom through their annoying or teasing behaviors until someone lashes out at them, and then these students complain of victimization. Like passive victims, provocative victims lack skill development in appropriate social and interpersonal interactions, but they still want

to be engaged with others and often create that engagement by provocatively connecting with bullies or others who may be aggressive. These students tend to be the most rejected students of the class and may be at increased risk for suicide (Pellegrini, 1998; Perry, Kusel, and Perry, 1988).

Relational victims are victims of relational bullying, which is a subtler, covert form of aggression. These students may be left out of groups, have cliques of students exclude them in social settings, or may have rumors started about them; girls most often become the victims of relational bullying. Relational victims often are selected by peer leaders or sometimes even by friends to be targets of the aggression as a power play on the part of the leader or because the victim has done something that irritates or angers a member of the group. Other times, students are victims of relational aggression because they have no support group or friends, and thus they become ostracized by classmates.

Bystanders: There are two groups of bystanders who witness the aggression: (a) those who are part of the problem, and (b) those who are part of the solution. Bystanders in the former group encourage bullies to continue the aggression or to retaliate. Within this group of students are bystanders who chose to condone the aggression by remaining silent or doing nothing to stop it, but it also includes those who are entertained by the bullying and essentially reinforce it by being bystander participants, at times even cheering on the aggression while being careful not to join in. Bystanders in the latter group attempt to solve or diffuse the problem by soliciting the help of an adult, saying or doing something to deescalate the tension, or inviting the victim to join their group. Bystanders who feel that they do not have the skills or the knowledge to stop the bullying often feel guilty because of their inaction to provide support or assistance to the victim. As a result, they may become a secondary victim of the bullying process (Newman et al., 2000). Bystanders who have attempted to address the problem have at times become the target of the bully.

Bullying usually takes place in the presence of peers in social situations, for example, during the lunch hour, and bullying “thrives in the silence of the victim and the acquiescence of observers” (Orpinas and Horne, 2004, p.6). As situations change, the bully in one setting may be the victim in another, and the victim, often to get even for

mistreatment experienced, may begin bullying others. At times, bystanders, as observers, may become bullies as they have learned that there may be a pay-off for the behavior.

The Role of Prevention

One way to combat school violence is through prevention aimed at promoting positive youth development (Aspy, Oman, Vesely, McLeroy, Rodine, and Marshall, 2004), which is based on the belief that all youth can use their strengths or assets for the betterment of society. Specifically, this approach emphasizes the development of those assets that enable youth to make positive contributions to their families and communities (Leffert et al., 1998). These assets are seen as protective factors that prevent or decrease youth involvement in harmful behaviors. Aspy et al. (2004) found that "family communication" and "responsible choices" were associated with no physical fighting in the past 12 months across their sample of middle/high school students. Female peer groups that do not condone physical fighting provide a protective effect for female youth (Aspy et al., 2004). Other studies found that identification with school, conflict management skills, and a safe neighborhood or school environment were significantly associated with no physical fighting and with school success (Aspy et al., 2004). In addition, constructive use of time, such as participation in sports or other after-school group activities, was found to decrease youth risk behaviors (Larson, 2000; Stanley, Juhnke, and Purkey, 2004). Based on their findings, Aspy et al. (2004) recommended designing intervention programs that included the youth assets identified above.

Other researchers, such as Smith and Sandhu (2004), also advocated a positive approach to preventing school violence, which is unlike a traditional problem-focused approach that attempts to repair psychological disease and dysfunction. The positive approach promotes optimal levels of psychological health and well-being because it is "preventive, solution-driven, and systemic in its efforts" (p. 287). Smith and Sandhu's (2004) review of literature found that this approach fosters a set of social and emotional strengths that are incompatible with antisocial behavior. Specifically, these strengths include:

...developing emotional literacy skills, such as empathy and respect for the rights of others; boosting resiliency factors, such as self-esteem

and academic success; and establishing a high degree of "connectedness" between students and their families, peers, schools, and communities. (p. 287)

Creating a learning environment that promotes positive social skills, effective problem solving, and responsible conflict resolution is a responsibility of the school, particularly the classroom teacher and administrators. Too often teachers see their role as being "conveyers of knowledge" rather than advocates for responsible social development, and fail to take the educational steps necessary to provide a positive and safe learning climate; yet, we have sufficient evidence that effective academic learning prospers in a classroom that has a healthy, respectful, and safe environment. Developing prosocial interpersonal skills can teach children how to behave civilly and to respect human differences, cultural and racial diversity, and different point-of-views. Families are also responsible for creating healthy and respectful environments, and a positive school-family cooperation is important to carry the values across the school and family settings.

Risk and Protective Factors for Childhood Aggression and Bullying

What causes some children to develop aggressive behaviors while others adopt prosocial behaviors? To answer this question, we need to understand the role that risk and protective factors play in childhood aggression and bullying. Orpinas and Horne (in press) defined risk factors as "characteristics of an individual or an environment that increase the likelihood that a person will behave in a certain way. In this case, risk factors are those factors that predispose a person to behave aggressively" (p.2) such as the destruction of family values, exposure to violent media, poverty, easy access to weapons, drug abuse, gender, and oppression (i.e., racism and sexism). Other risk factors are juvenile delinquency, single-parent households headed by a mother, and dropping out of school (Aspy et al., 2004; Horne, Orpinas, Newman-Carlson, and Bartolomucci, 2004). However, it takes the impact of a sum of risk factors to predict aggressive behavior in an individual (Garmezy, 1993; Orpinas, Horne, and Multisite Violence Prevention Project, 2004).

Orpinas and Horne (in press) defined protective factors, on the other hand, as "characteristics of an individual or an environment that help

diminish the possibility that an individual will engage in detrimental behavior or reduce the likelihood of disease and injury” (p. 2). Participation in extracurricular activities and positive parent-child relationships are two examples of protective factors that reduce the likelihood of a child adopting aggressive behaviors (Aspy et al., 2004; Orpinas and Horne, in press; Orpinas, Horne, and Multisite Violence Prevention Project, 2004; Smith and Sandhu, 2004).

Orpinas and Horne used an ecological model to identify risk and protective factors for childhood aggression and bullying. An ecological framework assesses the personal and environmental factors from multiple levels of an individual’s life, including the individual or intrapersonal, family, friends, schools, community, and cultural levels. Their review of the literature identified risk and protective factors at each level. This model assumes that risk factors are changeable and that protective factors can be enhanced. (For a complete listing of the risk and protective factors for childhood aggression and bullying, see Orpinas and Horne, in press.)

Intrapersonal Level: Orpinas and Horne (in press) identified some common risk and protective factors found at the intrapersonal level. The risk factors include gender; biological and behavior characteristics, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); school failure; psychological characteristics, such as perceived low self-efficacy and outcome expectations to meet goals; ineffective resolution, prosocial, and problem-solving skills; and a lack of self-awareness. Protective factors are a commitment to learning, positive values, social competence, and positive identity.

Close Relationships: Family and Peers: The risk factors involved in familial relationships include poor parenting skills, poor parent-child relationship, prevalence of violence within a family, and the degree of neglect or parental rejection present in a home. Protective factors found in familial relationships include positive, loving parental presence; proactive parents, who serve as role models for solving conflicts, managing anger and other emotions, and setting limits for their children’s behavior; and parental attendance at and involvement in school meetings and activities.

The risk and protective factors associated with peers are influenced by the child’s personal

dispositions (e.g., academic achievement vs. drug use), which are strongly influenced by parenting practices (Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, and Steinberg, 1993). Positive parenting practices can influence the child’s choice of peer group, the group’s level of influence on the child (Borgensneider, Wu, Raffaelli, and Tsay, 1998), and the child’s ability to establish positive, close relationships with peers (Lieberman, Doyle, and Markiewicz, 1999).

A risk factor for serious aggressive behavior at school is having been bullied (Nansel, Overpeck, Haynie, Ruan, and Scheidt, 2003). The Aspy et al. (2004) review of the literature revealed that the perpetrators of the school shootings (i.e., at Columbine High School) had targeted those students who had repeatedly and severely bullied the perpetrators prior to the shootings.

School Environment: The risk factors that are unique to the school environment include teacher’s lack of classroom management skills, poor teaching abilities, and low expectations of student success (Bear, 1998; Hyman and Perone, 1998; Olweus and Limber, 2002; Sugai and Horner, 2002), ineffective school discipline plan, lack of school policies against bullying, lack of adult supervision in school, and aggressive and bullying behaviors from adults. Protective factors, on the other hand, include positive teacher-student relationships, interesting curricula, high academic expectations of all students, school’s adoption of definitive policies against bullying, caring and supportive learning environment, and strong extracurricular activities.

Community, Culture, and Media: Risk factors associated with bullying include (a) repeated exposure to aggressive behaviors in the media; (b) the prevalence of and exposure to violence in the communities and within the culture of the United States; and (c) the amount of time watching violent films and TV programming, visiting Internet websites, or listening to violent musical lyrics. In examining protective factors in communities, Scales and his associates (Scales et al., 1999) reported several characteristics that serve to shield young people against aggression and violence. They indicated that when the community places a high priority and value on caring for and valuing young people by providing them with activities, supervision, adult role modeling of conflict-resolution skills, positive police-resident interactions, and respect for multiculturalism and diversity, there is less

aggression from youth.

This discussion paper has so far focused on the nature of childhood bullying and aggression found in schools as well as the risk and protective factors associated with it and the role of intervention. We now turn to specific bullying interventions that have addressed many of the concerns that have been empirically tested to decrease the incidences of bullying in schools.

SCHOOL-BASED BULLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

The impact of bullying is felt on many levels: among students, teachers, and the community-at-large, the destruction of school property, and the interruption of educational processes. Many students, who are either victims or bystanders, fear bullying or becoming a target of bullying (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004; Olweus, 1978; Smith and Sandhu, 2004). One study estimated that 160,000 children miss school each day because of fear (Lee, 1993). As a result, bullying creates an unsafe school environment that is not conducive to learning (Batsche and Knoff, 1994; Orpinas, Horne, and Staniszewski, 2003).

Despite the numerous recommendations for using school-based intervention programs for reducing bullying, few empirical studies have been conducted to validate the effectiveness of these programs (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004; Orpinas and Horne, *in press*). The Norwegian school-based intervention program developed by Olweus (1978) was the first bully reduction program to be evaluated by systematic research. Olweus developed a broad, comprehensive intervention program to reduce bullying that included having teachers: (a) learn more effective skills for managing student behavior in the classroom, (b) teach effective conflict resolution skills to students so that they would be better prepared to manage the conflicts encountered with other students, (c) become aware of the extent of bullying and aggression in the classroom and school settings, and (d) develop specific consequences for bullying actions within the school setting. He also developed materials for the school to use in working with families to help parents become more aware of the extent and nature of the problem of bullying and the types of actions they could take to alleviate bullying as a problem from the family perspective. The program also included engaging other school and community personnel, including

legal services, to work cooperatively for the reduction of bullying. The intervention program significantly affected existing victimization, while concurrently reducing the number of new victims. Olweus (1993) found that the frequency of bullying incidences decreased by approximately 50% in the two years after the initial intervention, thereby making it feasible to reduce bully/victim problems in school. Despite the success of his program, his results have had limited evaluation and empirical support in the United States because of the differences in cultural and educational conditions. In addition, his program is comprehensive in scope, which is an ideal approach to reducing aggression in schools but which may not be feasible for many schools in the United States to implement readily. Orpinas and Horne (2004) recommended that less comprehensive programs be tested in schools in the United States to determine if such programs will yield results of lower aggression.

Teachers are often identified as a key factor in sanctioning bullying and victimization in their classrooms, mostly unintentionally (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004). They are the ones who have the opportunity to create safe learning environments in their classrooms; however, teachers may not be willing to intervene until they feel adequately equipped to stop the bullying behaviors (Stephenson and Smith, 1989). At times, they feel that intervening may only intensify the bullying or force the problem "underground" (Besag, 1989; Hoover et al., 1992; Horne, Bartolomucci, and Newman-Carlson, 2003; Newman, Horne, and Bartolomucci, 2000; Olweus, 1994). Often students perceive that teachers are not cognizant of bullying problems and victimization because of the teachers' lack of intervention (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004). An intervention developed for teachers appears to be an effective process for helping stopping aggressive behaviors and bullying.

BULLY BUSTERS: A PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION FOR REDUCING BULLYING BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS

Newman, Horne, and Bartolomucci (2000) developed the bully prevention program (referred to as Bully Busters) based on what was empirically supported by the research literature at the time. The developers instituted the program

at the behest of community middle school counselors, teachers, school administrators, and parents who wanted to address the increase in bullying occurring in the school.

Newman et al. (2000) identified three intervention treatment goals for the bully buster program: (a) to increase teachers' knowledge and use of bullying intervention skills, (b) to increase teachers' personal self-efficacy and teachers' self-efficacy related to working with specific types of children, and (c) to reduce the amount of bullying and victimization in the classroom. The program's developers identified four types of bullying behaviors, which they wanted to confront: physical, verbal, relational aggression, and sexual harassment.

The Bully Busters program is generally implemented in the form of a staff development-training workshop, which is typically held over the course of three weeks for two hours per meeting. The contents of the program include information pertaining to bullying and victimization, recommended interventions, prevention strategies, stress-management techniques, and classroom activities. The training program is a composite of seven consecutive modules, each focusing on specific goals: (a) increasing awareness of bullying, (b) recognizing the bully, (c) recognizing the victim, (d) taking charge (interventions for bullying behavior), (e) assisting victims (recommendations and interventions), (f) understanding the role of prevention, and (g) developing relaxation and coping skills.

Teacher training for the original program development was conducted by the program originators, but in subsequent applications the training has been provided by educators involved with the schools, including school counselors, staff development personnel, assistant principals, and other educators. In several cases the trainers have been teachers from the school or other schools who have been engaged with the intervention and feel comfortable training their colleagues in the intervention process. The program staff provide training to all trainers in conducting the Bully Busters program in the Schools.

After each workshop, teachers share with the students what they learned in the workshop by using this knowledge in class activities. There are more than fifty activities provided to teachers, and they select exercises that they believe are relevant and needed for their students. An

example is "Drawing A Bully" in which students are given blank sheets of paper and are asked to draw their perception of a bully and then discuss their drawings with the class. This procedure allows teachers to integrate the workshop materials into their curricula. Upon the completion of the psychoeducational workshops, teachers participate in supervision/team meetings for one hour, every two to three weeks, for eight weeks. These team meetings provide ongoing resource and support for the classroom teachers. Generally, the team meetings are facilitated by the school counselor, a lead teacher in the school, or some other facilitator who assists the teachers in identifying what aspects of the program are working well (sharing successes) and what still presents problems (solving problems). The support is very important to maintain the program for it provides teachers with the opportunity to share with one another, to provide encouragement, and to practice alternative ways of conducting the bully-reduction exercises.

Each teacher is provided with a manual containing the seven workshop modules, including classroom activities and worksheets for each module. The instructional manual serves as the educational guide as well as the classroom curriculum resource.

Key Elements of the Bully Busters Prevention Model

The Bully Busters prevention model is based on three basic values or beliefs: (a) all children can learn academic content and behavioral skills to establish positive relationships; (b) all people in the school community are to be treated with respect and dignity; and (c) there is no place for violence, bullying, or aggression in school. The motto "Setting up for Success" is incorporated throughout the program, specifically in developing a positive school environment and increasing students' social competence.

Studies have found that positive school environments reduce bullying and aggression (Bear, 1998; Orpinas, Horne, and Staniszewski, 2003; Howard, Horne, and Jolliff, 2001; Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004; Somersalo, Solantaus, and Almqvist, 2002; Sugai and Horner, 2002) and promote academic achievement. Orpinas and Horne (in press) developed the School Social Development and Bully Prevention Model: The School Climate. This model includes eight critical areas in which the development of a positive

school climate takes place: (a) excellence in teaching can help to prevent bullying and bully prevention strategies may enhance academic performance; (b) school values that promote a safe and positive environment; (c) awareness of strengths and problems or areas that need improvement; (d) policies for the prevention of bullying and for handling bullying problems and accountability of the offenders; (e) celebration of diversity that includes fostering caring and respect among students and teachers; (f) cultivation of teacher's positive expectations of student achievement; (g) support for teachers because they play a key role in creating a positive school climate; and (h) physical environment characteristics that include cleanliness, organization, safety, and recognition of school members' work, achievements, and talents (Orpinas and Horne, in press).

Another important component for reducing bullying in schools is to increase students' social competence. Children's social competence leads to more friendships, positive relationships, and academic success (Welsh, Parke, Widaman, and O'Neil, 2001). Orpinas and Horne (in press) defined social competence as "a person's age-appropriate knowledge and skills for functioning peacefully and creatively in his or her own community or social environment" (p.2). The student component of the School Social Competence Development and Bullying Prevention Model is designed to build a student's social competence in six areas: (a) awareness, (b) emotions, (c) cognitions, (d) character, (e) social skills, (f) mental health, and (g) learning disabilities (Orpinas and Horne, 2004).

Empirically Validated Studies

The Bully Busters program, developed at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia and piloted at a public elementary school in Athens, Georgia, a small city in the southeastern United States, was found to be effective (Orpinas, Horne, and Staniszewski, 2003). In this study with elementary school-aged students, the pupils reported a 40% reduction in their aggressive behaviors and a 19% reduction in their victimization experiences. The program was replicated at a public middle school in Athens, Georgia and was also found to be effective (Newman-Carlson and Horne, 2004). In this study the authors reported a significant increase in teachers'

knowledge of specific skills for reducing bullying and aggression, a significant increase in their sense of efficacy for managing bullying and aggression problems in their classrooms, and a significant reduction in office referrals for behavioral problems. Howard, Horne, and Jolliff (2001) replicated the program at a middle school in a similar urban setting but with different facilitators, and the program was also found to be effective, yielding similar results as found by Newman-Carlson and Horne (2004). The results have not always been so effective, though. For example, Van Overbeke Brooks (2004) tested the elementary school version of the Bully Busters program, *Bully Busters: A teacher's manual for helping bullies, victims, and bystanders (Grades K-5)* (Horne, Bartolomucci, and Newman-Carlson, 2003) and found that the Bully Busters program was effective in increasing teachers' knowledge and use of bullying prevention and intervention skills and their self-efficacy in working with bullies and victims; however, the impact on students' behavior was minimal. Upon a review of Van Overbeke's sample it was determined that while there was an overall positive change in teacher knowledge and efficacy, the program effect upon children was determined by the number of classroom activities the teachers implemented. That is, teachers participating in the training report increases in their knowledge and efficacy, however it is only through the application of the activities that children's behavior changes. The program has been the subject of several dissertation studies and is currently being implemented in schools in five states in the United States.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While it is known that bullying and aggression are problems encountered around the world (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg and Zwi, 2002), and that some interventions appear to work effectively in some settings, it is still unclear how effective the evaluated programs will be when taken from the community or setting in which they were developed. A true test of effectiveness of programs will be whether they do generalize to other settings.

In order to reduce bullying it is clear that several steps must be taken. First, it must be agreed upon that bullying and aggression are wrong, damaging to healthy development, and

painful. This is not yet agreed upon by all, for some adults and children see the process as "building character" as has been reported to us by teachers and students in schools where we have worked. A step to take to address this position is to have clear evidence available that shows at the local or regional level that not only is bullying damaging, but those who participate in the process would like to see it changed (Orpinas and Horne, 2004). Second, it must be determined how much of the problem is occurring. Measures are available to determine the extent of the problem (see Orpinas and Horne, in press), but they may also be locally developed and can have student input into the development of the instruments. To measure the extent of the problem and share the awareness is a powerful step. The third step is to implement a program to change the problem, and it is essential that the program be tailored to the setting and to the problems. Treating problems of children's lack of empathy is very different than treating problems of adult abuse. Fourth, the program's effectiveness must be evaluated, and the results shared with the community. If the program is working, it should be expanded; if it isn't then revision or tweaking needs to occur. At any rate, steps must be continued to reduce the violence, aggression, and bullying that permeate the world.

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KEYWORDS Bullying; peer aggression in the United States; intervention; elementary secondary education; prevention; teacher role

ABSTRACT Aggression in the United States is a major problem. Bullying or peer aggression is a pervasive problem in schools in the United States. As microcosms of culture, schools are socializing institutions where children spend the majority of their waking time developing academic and interpersonal skills and building character. Without appropriate bullying prevention or intervention strategies children may perceive the school environment as hostile and not conducive to learning. This discussion paper gives an overview of peer aggression in schools in the United States, the bully-victim-bystander triad, and effective prevention and intervention strategies. The Bully Busters Program, an empirically validated prevention and intervention program for elementary and middle schools, is an example of teachers' involvement in stopping peer aggression in their classrooms. In conclusion, we discuss implications and recommendations for an international audience.

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