Preventative Measures for School Bullying

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Nature and Scope of the Problem

Rates of bullying are increasing—not just in the US but around the world:

- 14% of students 12 to 18 years bullied in the six months preceding study (USDOE, 2005).

- 30% to 50% of students report that they have ever been bullied.

- 10% to 15% report that they are bullied regularly.

- 15% to 25% of U.S. students in elementary through high school report being bullied each year (StopBullyingNow.HRSA.gov, 2010).

- 42% of students in 4th to 8th grades bullied online in past year (iSafe, 2006).

- Youths who perceive violence in schools as a very serious problem increased from 36% in 1992 to 50% in 2000 (Bibby, 2001).

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Pernille Due and colleagues (2005) carried out the largest study of the prevalence of being bullied (sometimes or more often during this school term) among nationally representative samples of 11 to 15-year-olds in 28 industrialized Western countries (surveying over 4,000 students per country on average). Overall, 18% of boys and 15% of girls reported being bullied according to this criterion. In the US, 16% of boys and 11% of girls were bullied.

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Bullying Underreported

Only 18% of the worst cases of bullying, including cyberbullying, are estimated to be reported to the authorities (USDOJ, 2001).

An estimated 160,000 children stay home each day out of fear of being bullied.

FAQs

Causes of bullying include lack of empathy for bullying victims, the belief that it will enhance one's social status, peer pressure, the need for attention, previous bullying victimization, personal problems, the need to be in control and the desire to be "one up." Many bullies curiously view their behavior as an attempt to protect themselves from an actual or perceived threat.

Research demonstrates that bullies generally do not suffer from low self-esteem. Rather, they tend to be narcissistic and therefore lack empathy for their victims.

Boys bully differently than girls.

Bullying Defined:

The ongoing use of psychological, verbal, or physical means of causing distress to others.

(Reynolds, 2003; Olweus, 2006)

The definition of school bullying includes several key elements: physical, verbal, or psychological attack or intimidation that is intended to cause fear, distress, or harm to the victim; an imbalance of power (psychological or physical), with a more powerful child (or children) oppressing less powerful ones; and repeated incidents between the same children over a prolonged period (Farrington 1993). School bullying can occur in school or on the way to or from school. It is not bullying when two persons of the same strength (physical, psychological, or verbal) victimize each other.

Five Components of Bullying:

1) Intention to harm the victim publicly, usually emotionally not physically;

2) Perceived power imbalance between the bully and victim;

3) Multiple incidents over time increasing in cruelty;

4) Humiliation and distress experienced by victim; and

5) The instigating factor for the victimization is jealousy; need for social status; and/or retaliation for a perceived attack on the bully or the bully's status.

(adapted from MacKay and Sutherland, 2006).

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Distinguished From Teen Aggression:

Not all aggression or violence involves bullying;

Not all bullying involves aggression or violence.

Bullying may include name-calling; being rejected, ostracized, or excluded from activities; being the subject of rumors; having belongings taken away; teasing; and threatening (Baldry and Farrington 1999).

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Global Term "Bullying"

To ensure definitions are valid, resaarchers ask for information about particular acts, such as "hit him/her on the face" or "excluded him/her from games" (Smith et al. 2002, p. 1131; Kalliotis 2000, p. 49; Pateraki and Houndoumadi 2001, p. 174).

Bullying increasingly treated
as a public health issue

24% of bullying victims suffer reactions that may have life-long effect on their mental health.

60% of young bullies will have a criminal conviction by age 24.

22% of students report academic problems due to bullying.

- causes serious functional difficulties for targeted youths (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005);

- has been linked to later offending (USDOJ, 2002); and

- in some cases, suicide by targeted youth (see Zash, 2003).

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Problems Arising
From Bullying for Victims

Peer-on-peer violence and school bullying result in numerous problems for its victims, including:

- Antisocial behavior, including drug use, isolation, and aggression;

- Disengagement from school and poor grades;

- Difficulty forming relationships;

- Lowered self-esteem;

- Depression and anxiety; and

- Suicide

   (Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Newman, Holden, & Delville, 2005; Ladd, Buhs, & Troop, 2002; Rusby, Forrester, Biglan, & Metzler, 2005).

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Elements of the Othering Process

In general, othering occurs in an ongoing cycle that

includes varying degrees of the following:

Target identification: Identifying a target typically involves locating as association between the person or group and those designated "undesirable."

Projecting negative characteristics on the target: Negative characteristics are amplified such that everything that makes members of the group recognizable is further evidence of their "bad" qualities and undesirable nature. Against that backdrop, few actions or statements are free of the negative interpretation. Over time, the negative framework reinforces their perceived bad characteristics.

Attributing negative thoughts or value sets to the target: A narrative of hostility, resentment, animus or brewing violence toward the "in" group is attributed to the targeted group. This breeds suspicion of the targeted group and a generalized sense of unease when they are around. The more ill-formed and amorphous the suspicions, the greater the threat the out group appears to be to everyone else.

Dehumanizing the target: By stripping the target of empathetic qualities and humanity, the targeted groups becomes something truly "other" than ourselves, and they are thus more easily abused.

The language of may reflects the repulsive qualities we worry exist in ourselves; that point of self-reference becomes the impetus to purge, expiate, or punish those who have those dangerous characteristics.

Reinforcing processes: These othering processes recycle on each other and self-reinforcing. They may be reinforced by the target's "lack of resilience," which invite victim blaming and further othering; by a lack of action by bystanders, suggesting that the target can permissibly be attacked; or by lack of external social controls that successfully circumvent the othering process.

Stepwise implementation to escalate violent feelings and acts, which can be viewed as part of a larger learning process about the tolerability of the othering.

Identification with the otherers: Outcomes that result in "rewards" for the offenders, often in terms of stronger identification with the "in" group, admiration by the group for acts that express othering, or insignia that publicly announce one's affiliation with the "in" group, such as tattoos or jackets.

Bullying is a crime of bias

Teen and adult aggression stems from bias and prejudice.

Bullying is a process of "othering"

Othering is the development of the us-them framework that establishes

who is part of the accepted "in" group and who is relegated to the "out"

group.

Teen bullying can lead to suicide (adult aggression in the form of bias crime leads to homicide)

"Bullycide" is associated not with individual level factors, but the pervasiveness and severity of the harassment that comprises the bullying.

The ability to adequately address bullying is often hampered by the adult-teen gap in understanding social relations

Bullying scholars and theorists view bullying as both *impersonal* and

interpersonal, meaning that the target is chosen for the suitability of his or

her attributes; it could be any target that is deemed suitable.

Bullying is interpersonal in that does not require or primarily involve property

or necessarily even physical harm.

It is primarily a "crime" about the power of us over the powerless "them"

whose external identity (disabled, minority, gay, etc.), school reputation, and

vulnerability.

This describes all forms of othering.

Current Literature on Bullying Focuses on Prevention:

Educational literature: How do administrators and teachers identify signs of bullying?

Legal literature: Bullying can lead to injuries, including suicide, so how can legislate to stop it? Psychology: Why do children bully and what does it do to the individuals harmed?

Criminology: Why do some children become bullies and others do not?

Victimology: Who are the victims and how can the harm be addressed?

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)

South Carolina Program

Dutch Antibullying Program

KiVa, Kiusaamista Vastaan, "against bullying"

Kia Kaha, means "to stand strong"

Greek Antibullying Program

Youth Matters

30 Highest-Quality Antibullying Programs

The most important program elements associated with a decrease in bullying are:

- disciplinary methods;

- parent training;

- improved playground supervision;

- information for parents;

- school conferences;

- classroom rules and management;

- teacher training; and

- duration and intensity of the program for children and teachers.

Elements of Success

- Tailored: Modified in light of program elements that were most effective

- Transparent to participants: Transparent implementation procedures

- Intense & Long-term: Intensity and duration of a program (linked to effectiveness)

- Informal Social Interactions: Enhancing playground supervision

- Firm Follow Through: Disciplinary methods (i.e., firm methods for tackling bullying), does not mean punitive

- Accountability: Focus on accountability of bully, bystanders, community as a whole

- Older age groups: Applied to older children (more effective)

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Recommendations

- Continuing accreditation requirements for effective programs based on knowledge about what worked to reduce bullying

- Organized by an outside body: e.g., International Observatory on Violence in Schools

Whole School Approach

The key elements include the whole school taking responsibility for bullying and giving it a high priority; increasing awareness of bullying by teachers, students, and parents; publicizing explicit school policies designed to reduce bullying; and discussing bullying as part of the curriculum.

Bullying & Academic Success

Because of the deficits associated with bullying, one way to significantly improve school academic scores is to eliminate bullying.

Restorative Approach

- Focuses on resolution, not punishment.

- Resolution requires understanding of harm.

- Actions addressed, not character of individual.

- Promotes on-going obligations to restore.

Applying Restorative Practices

Focus on the victim or potential target;

Examines the circumstances of the victimization;

Assesses the dynamics that lead to the victimization;

Addresses victim's subjective experience of harm;
and

Seeks restoration, which includes changed dynamics
for future interactions.

Restorative Practices & Antibullying Program Success

- Tailored: Context driven

- Transparent to participants: Participants shape content of the processes

- Intense & Long-term: Ongoing obligations

- Informal Social Interactions: Focus on relationships

- Firm Follow Through: Restorative agreement

- Accountability: Bully is accountable to all

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