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Teachers' Perspectives on Bullying: Understanding Educational Interventions

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Teachers' Perspectives on Bullying:
Understanding Educational Interventions

By

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Abstract

During the last number of years, middle school bullying has received wide spread attention across numerous media sources. Coverage of the most troubling accounts of bullying have even led to criminal charges and the introduction of legislation against acts of bullying. A substantial body of research has shown that bullying leads to negative social and emotional outcomes for both the victims and the perpetrators of such acts. The same body of research also shows how much difficulty there is for teachers and other school personnel who attempt to control these fluid acts of aggression on a daily basis in and outside of their classroom. This study interviewed 12 teachers from a middle school in the Midwest of the United States. The interviewer worked to uncover when, where, and how teachers intervene in bullying situations that they encounter during their school day. Once this information had been established the respondents were asked to give information about any obstacles that they felt hindered them in effectively intervening in bullying situations. Whereas teachers felt they did a good job controlling acts of aggression within their classroom, they reported not being as successful in the common areas of the school. Those responding listed several reasons why strategies used inside the classroom were not appropriate for use outside of the classroom. Supervision strategies were not only different in these two areas but behavioral expectations were also different in these areas of school. These differences led to uncertainty among teachers and students about who was ultimately in charge of defining potentially harmful actions in the common areas of school.

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Dedications

This project is first and foremost dedicated to my children. Who each have special talents and gifts and therefore choose different paths to deal with those who would try to control their existence through daily bullying and intimidation. As parents searching for answers, this project was less about the fulfillment of an academic endeavor and more about our desperate struggle to help our children survive in this type of environment and work to change that environment so our younger children do not face these same unchecked assaults.

I would also make a dedication to the teachers who really are attempting to assist students in establishing positive socialization among peers. Their daily dedication to their students should be rewarded not only with recognition but also financial incentives to stay in the classroom where they are so badly needed. These fine individuals are unfortunately over shadowed by a minority of educators who are either unable or unwilling to engage in a process that at times seems to provide diminished returns.

I would also like to say thank you to my parents, brother and sister who for years watched, played and loved a little boy who struggled to understand himself and the actions of others. The struggle that you faced with me every day preserved a little amount of dignity which carried me until that time where maturity allowed me to better carry myself. Even though I cannot always find the words I hope you know how thankful I am for your love and support all these years.

I am also thankful for the love and support of my wife. In my zeal to so deeply understand these social encounters I fear, at times, I became that which I so desperately tried to understand and explain to others. As I continue to assist young people in learning positive socialization skills I will always be reminded to look introspectively and consider my own actions in interactions with others.

Genesis 32:22-32.
I have wrestled with You for almost 39 years. It is time to stop. I will not let You go but I will not wrestle you as I did in my youth. I will hold on to your promises and look for the blessing, which only You can give.

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Bullying is not new to society or to the school setting in particular. Numerous studies indicate significant numbers of students reporting being the victims of bullying. England, Whitney and Smith (1993) indicate that about 27% of primary students and 10% of secondary students report being victims to bullying during the school year. Other studies indicated that a greater proportion of students may be affected. Sharp (1995) demonstrates that of 377 secondary students in her sample, 18% indicate that they had been bullied in that year and 50% had experienced bullying at some time at school. More alarming data by Seals and Younge (2003) demonstrate that of the 450 secondary students in their sample 32% reported being targets of physical bullying, 23% received threats, 50% were called derogatory names, 44% where subjected to mean teasing and 32% reported being excluded from a friend group. These results demonstrate the need to look at bullying and how it is being managed in school. A number of incidents of child suicide attributed to bullying continue to make national news. To better understand the severity of the situation, we will look to the true story of 15-year-old Phoebe Prince.

Phoebe Prince was the new girl in school. Having recently moved from Ireland to the United States, Phoebe started attending school in Massachusetts. The bullying started within the first month. Phoebe's mother approached school officials, but the bullying acts continued and intensified. On January 7, 2010, Prince reported that other girls had repeatedly made derogatory comments directed toward her in the cafeteria. The assistant principal responded by sending her back to class while he dealt with another matter. Cindy Kele, a substitute teacher, inquired of the class why Phoebe was not present. She

remembers the students telling her that Phoebe was in the counselor's office, leaving her with the impression that this was common and not to worry. When Phoebe finally arrived for class, her aggressors had followed her and stood in the doorway continuing their verbal assault until the substitute teacher was able to get them to leave. Teachers on duty in the cafeteria and in the classroom both reported the incidents to the principal and he took immediate action, suspending one of the girls for the next day (MSNBC 2010).

Various reports indicate that this type of activity continued for the next few weeks. On the morning of January 31, Phoebe confessed to another freshman girl she had been accused of taking someone's boyfriend and also indicated that the threats were getting physical (MSNBC 2010). On this day, Phoebe went to see the counselor Sally Watson- Menkel. In interviews after this incident students reported that the counseling office at the school promotes a work-it-out strategy to most issues between students (MSNBC 2010). After this meeting with the counselor, Phoebe endured one more day of verbal taunting at school before taking her own life (MSNBC 2010). Six of Phoebe's classmates were indicted by District Attorney Scheibel on March 20, 2010, for bullying Prince for months in school and through social networking websites (New York Times 2010).

Phoebe Prince's death and the death of many others underscore the need to understand the bullying phenomenon through the eyes of those who are asked to intervene in these situations on a daily bases. Once understood, effective action can be taken to significantly reduce levels of bullying in the school setting. When studying bullying, it is not only necessary to look at how middle schools are defining and managing bullying, but also to understand the policies in place and teachers' practical

experiences with the behavior. The following review of literature offers a framework from which to define bullying, examine what policies schools use to manage bullying and what role all school personnel perceive they play in combating these negative peer interactions.

With a firm understanding of the literature this study then employed a grounded theory method to uncover strategies that teachers used to control bullying within their school and any obstacles that interviewees felt hindered them from decreasing the levels of bullying among their students.

Review of the Literature

Definition of Bullying

Dan Olweus, one of the first to do research in the area of peer aggression among children in the 1980's, attempted to overcome the obstacle of defining the interaction by establishing a concise, but encompassing definition for individuals to employ when witnessing the phenomena. In his early works, Olweus offered the following definition: "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students" (Olweus 1994:1173). In a later work, Olweus and his colleagues clarified that an imbalance in strength or power must exist between the two parties for an act to be labeled as bullying. If the two parties possess equal strength or prestige then the conflict does not meet the standard of bullying (Olweus etal. 1999). Smith etal. (2002) suggest narrowing the definition to acts encompassing three distinct elements: intention, repetition, and power. Their research centers on the idea that bullying acts are first of all intentional, secondly repetitive, and thirdly that these aggressive actions are inflicted upon an individual or group with less power (victims who cannot easily defend themselves). For the purpose of this research, I have adopted the definition of bullying from Smith et al. (2002), which speaks to the two primary modes of bullying: direct actions and indirect or verbal bullying.

Direct bullying, which encompasses negative actions, usually involves physical contact. Direct bullying may include but is not limited to punching, kicking, biting, choking, spitting, and the destroying, damaging or stealing of someone else's property (Liepe-Levinson and Levinson 2005).

The second form of aggression, and the one I have focused my analysis on, is indirect bullying which refers to actions that do not normally require physical contact. These are actions such as repeated incidents of name calling, teasing and verbal threats that are directed at those individuals who possess less control over the social situation (Bauman and Del Rio 2006). Raskauskas and Stoltz (2004) also include "the damaging of peer relationships as well as psychological attacks such as gossip, taunting, rumors, writing notes, and social exclusion" in their concept of indirect bullying (p. 210). Other scholars have asserted that individuals are indirectly bullying their peers when they manipulate, persuade or dare peers to enter into harmful actions (Crick and Nelson 2002). These definitions were also used in research by Liepe-Leveinson and Levinson (2005) but they noted that along with the actions enumerated above, "gestures such as stares, eye rolling, sighs, frowns, sneers, and other hostile body language were also a significant component of the aggression" (Liepe-Leveinson and Levinson 2005:4).

I have used the descriptions and definitions above as the backdrop from which to build a deeper understanding of how children initiate negative interactions with their peers and how these interactions escalate. In most cases, direct bullying is quite easy for teachers to define and identify. Indirect bullying can be, and many times is, more covert. Val der Wal, De Wit and Hirasing (2003) find that indirect bullying has a greater chance of going unnoticed by teachers than direct bullying, but causes a greater amount of suffering. It is this type of bullying that is the most damaging to self-esteem (Crick and Grotpeter 1995). The suffering of children has motivated me to study peer aggression from the viewpoint of the educator, hoping to uncover the most effective tools they use to identify and intervene in indirect bullying situations.

Bullying in the Middle School

Development of a Bully

Over the last twenty years research focusing on childhood aggression indicates that reactive and proactive acts of bullying are consistently found within schools across the United States (Pepler et al. 1994; Perry et al. 1998; Whitney and Smith 1993). Reactive aggression within a classroom is seen when children immediately overreact to misperceived threats (Wood and Gross 2001). Youth presenting with these characteristics may have some trust issues and can enter into therapy where they can learn to take others' intentions into account in order to prevent violent responses (Dodge 1991). I have focused on proactive aggression. This aggression is organized, premeditated and purposeful (Galeszewski, 2005). Over time, a child may find success achieving what they want by using this form of aggression on their peers, parents, or caregivers (McAdams and Lambie, 2003). In her 2004 book, "*The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander*," author Barbara Coloroso indicates that children who exhibit pro-active aggression, especially as they get older, are many times two different people in the eyes of authority figures and their victims. These children have matured into the understanding that it takes different social actions to effect different social groups. Adults in authority react more positively to respectful socially acceptable actions while peers with less social power react more quickly when presented with displays of social force. Due to its remorseless and predatory nature, indirect aggression is considered the more damaging of the two described. It is this pro-active aggression that is most troubling to teachers and school personnel who must make judgments and form opinions about what children

intend with their actions. It is the maturation of this type of bullying in a child's development that I have briefly outlined in the next section.

When interviewing children in kindergarten, Koschenderfer and Ladd (1996) uncovered that nearly half reported experiencing some form of bullying. Perry, Perry, and Boldizar (1990) have argued that young aggressive children in a new social environment, such as a school setting, direct their aggressive behaviors at a variety of peer targets. After the aggressive students are able to witness the reaction of peers to their actions, they will return to those targets, who have exhibited the response that they desire, for continued victimization. Their findings on childhood difficulties attributed to the new social environment are echoed by Boulton and Underwood (1992) who find that child victimization experiences coincide with adjustment difficulties to new social environments that introduce new peer groups. The new peer group offers aggressive children an opportunity to identify new targets on which to test their power. Koschenderfer and Ladd (1996), find that of this target group, only about 10% will respond in a way that would warrant continued victimization.

Boulton and Underwood's (1992) research with children moving into the elementary grades found that bullying victimization will begin to stabilize by age eight or nine. These targeted students tend to be statistically predisposed to continually bullying and exclusion during their school years. What is more disturbing is that any attempt to rise above the bullying becomes almost impossible for the targeted children who have been placed into this social category by their aggressors (Roecker 2001). Koschenderfer and Ladd (1996) hypothesize that children at this age begin to develop an idea of each others' physical and mental capabilities. In so doing, children develop knowledge that

assists them in making order out of their situation by placing their classmates into categories or roles based on their evolving knowledge of their classmates. Whereas children this age and older can identify social exclusions based on race or gender as being wrong or unfair, they do not, however, consider friendship exclusions as unjust (Killen, Lee-Kim, McGlothlin and Stangor 2002). The unfortunate altercations that are all too common in this age group of peers telling others, "You can't come to my sleepover!" may be seen as an assertion of autonomy rather then an attempt to inflict social harm. Horn (2003) indicates that beginning at this age: children see social exclusion as an acceptable action towards peers who just don't fit within the social norms of the group.

Studies done with students moving into adolescence show that children 11 to 14 years old consistently report less victimization then they did just a few years earlier (Whitney and Smith 1993). At face value, it may seem that adolescents report less victimization because natural maturation may lead to fewer incidents of victimization as they mature both physically and mentally. Research findings also seem to support the idea that, as children grow older, they exhibit more behaviors that support societal norms (Whitney and Smith 1993). Craig (1998) finds that along with an increase in age, children's verbal and cognitive skills are refined in order to socially manipulate their environment. When aggressive children mature, they develop not only the ability to better understand their relationships with others, but also the ability to elevate levels of relational aggression in increasingly covert ways (Craig 1998). It appears that aggressive girls may favor more indirect strategies, whereas aggressive boys often use direct forms of bullying on their peers (Crick and Nelson 2002). Nasel et al. (2001) finds that starting at this age and continuing through the 10^{th} grade, as many as 29% of children in schools

are bullied moderately or frequently. Harter (1999) also finds that peer social encounters at this age shape their ideas of themselves and their understanding of what is normal and acceptable behavior. It is within this age group that we see children begin to form social networks. Within these networks negative interactions are contrived, escalate and are concealed by the group (Dishion, Andrews, and Crosby 1995). These findings are echoed by Craig and Pepler (2003), who also show that direct bullying peaks in early childhood, and gives way to more indirect means as children move into adolescence. These repetitive aggressive attacks begin to assist the bully or those with more perceived social power in assigning roles not only to themselves, but also to all those involved in the social interaction. These roles begin to be reflected, both publicly and privately, by many of the children involved in the social situation (Huesmann and Eron 1984).

It is interesting to note here that even when aggressive children are in effect "calling the shots," they report feelings of alienation two times more frequently than their victims (Simons-Morton et. al.1998). This confusion seems to be carried forward into the interpersonal relationships of those who bully others. Children who bully others are likely to start dating at an earlier age and those relationships progress at a much faster rate than students who do not engage in acts of bullying. These relationships also exhibit much higher rates of physical and social aggression toward the dating partner those who did not bully others during adolescents (Connolly et al. 2000).

Effects of Bullying

The effects of indirect bullying on the bully and the bullied cannot always be easily observed like those of direct bullying. Nearly 160,000 students report missing school every day due to the fear of continual bullying (Brewster and Railsback 2001).

After so many absences, some just drop out (Buhs and Ladd 2001). Weinhold and Weinhold (1998) find that among students who have dropped out of school, as many as 10% dropped out due to repeated bully victimization. Those who report being victims of indirect bullying in their youth also report higher levels of adult depression, (Crick and Bigbee 1998; Olweus 1993) peer rejection, loneliness and feelings of social isolation (Crick and Grotpeter 1995). More than half of children identified as bullies in school had a criminal conviction by the time they were in their twenties (Olweus, Limber, and Mihalic 1999). Of those students who resorted to gun violence in the United States, nearly two thirds of them indicate they felt bullied and harassed by other students before their attack (Bowman 2001).

Studies support the assertion that being bullied impacts physical health. Bullied students report higher rates of sleeping problems, bed-wetting, headaches, and stomach aches (William, et al. 1996). Students also report higher rates of neck, shoulder and lower back pain, tension, irritability, tantrums and fatigue (William et. al.1996). All these factors combine to negatively impact a student's attendance at school (Kochenderfer and Ladd 1996), and are the most damaging to self-esteem (Crick and Grotpeter 1995). Indications are that even if victims are able to attend school, many find it difficult to concentrate on schoolwork because of an overall fear of victimization (Sharp 1995).

Indirect aggression has the potential to be more harmful than direct aggression because it is often inflicted by those whom victims consider to be their friends (Sullivan 2000). Quality social relationships in adolescence play a key role in the child's ability to become independent and to achieve an adult identity (Raskaukas and Stoltz 2004).

Students who bully show an increased lack of social acceptance and bond less at and to school (Mynard, and Joseph 1997). In a longitudinal study of relationally aggressive students from the third to sixth grades, the aggressive students were found be more disliked and rejected at a higher degree by peers over the course of a school year (Crick 1996). These high levels of rejection prevent children from fitting in and belonging at school. Feelings of belonging have been found to protect children from risky behaviors, such as violence, teen pregnancy, and maladjusted peer relationships (King, et al. 2002).

While some studies may differ on the magnitude of the effects, there are a number of studies that show a negative relationship between those who bully and academic achievement (Mynard et. al.1996). Many students report difficulty concentrating on homework because of the fear of being victimized (Sharp 1995). Research suggests that as many as 20% of students are preoccupied during the school day with apprehension about falling victim to bullying (Brewster and Railsback 2001). Along with the effects on individual children, a national survey of teachers reported that as peer aggression within schools increases, a teacher's ability to offer creative engaging lessons decreases (McAdams and Lambie 2003).

Suicide may be the most serious effect of relational aggression. Bullies and their victims have been shown to have equally high rates of suicidal thoughts (Roland 2002). In a comprehensive study Borg (2006) finds that 25% of the participants who listed themselves as a victim of bullying said they felt helpless. In another study, victims expressed feelings of self-blame for relational aggression that is inflicted on them. This self-blame and the thought that they have no escape can lead to depression, withdrawal, and in some cases suicidal thoughts and actions (Rigby and Slee 1999).

School Intervention Policies

There are many programs designed to combat bullying within schools. Most, if not all, are based on an ecological framework or understanding. Those with an ecological perspective do not solely concentrate their attention on the individual bullying interaction, but endeavor to understand the whole context of the interaction (Atlas and Peplar 1998:86). By using this ecological framework, researchers look for ways to address bullying by exploring the culture of the family, peer groups and schools. Once these aspects are understood in concert, children can be provided tools to combat bullying either individually or as a group (Smith and Sharp 1994).

Robert Jacobson (2007) did a wonderful job describing three different and distinct categories of programs or approaches that educational communities use to address bullying problems, including the informal approach, the master of skills approach and the surveillance and incentives approach.

In the informal approach, students that bully are thought to not fully understand their actions and the effects that they have on others. When the child has a better understanding of the victim's feelings and that their actions are causing others pain, the offender will have a revelation that they need to change their actions. Some of the methods commonly used to discover this deeper understanding are reviewing of the anti-bullying handbook and role playing (Robertson 2007:1935)

The second approach Robertson (2007) discusses is the master of skills approach (p.1935). Victims and bullies are seen as not possessing the skills to live peacefully with one another. The victim must be taught to be less "victim like" and the bully needs to receive empathy and anger management training. When these interpersonal skills are

mastered and rational ability is proven to be successful, a positive change in behavior will occur.

The final approach is surveillance and incentives (Robertson 2007:1947). In this approach, rules are made very clear and in some case students sign pledges not to violate anti-bullying rules. The assumption is that only a few anti-social children bully, and that with coercive rewards and a teacher's physical presence, children will experience positive behavioral change. Below, I review how these three approaches are used individually or in concert to develop anti-bullying programs within current educational systems.

Cowie and Sharp (1996) encourage schools to invest resources into peer counseling programs instead of other school faculty or staff programs. These active listening programs are based on their research that indicates that good friends can and are the best defense against relational aggression. The program trains peer-mentors to actively listen and give feedback to students who are having social difficulty. Carty (1991) finds that this peer-counseling program improved adolescents' ability to cope in socially-aggressive situations. Black et al. (2000) find that the trained peer-mentors model positive behavior in and outside of the classroom, assisting the program in its overall effectiveness. The peer-led counseling approach seems to work particularly well with students who have trouble accepting adult authority and not as well with younger children because of the training needed to be an effective peer mentor (Salmivalli 2001).

The whole school approach is based on the ideas of bullying researcher Dan Olweus and his theory that bullying is a systemic problem in schools, directly correlated with the level of bullying present within its walls (Solberg and Olweus 2003). Olweus used his research to develop a whole-school anti-bullying program entitled: *The Olweus*

Bullying Prevention Program for Schools (Olweus 1993). Many current whole-school programs seem to be centered on Olweus' four main ideas. The first goal is to create a school environment that does not foster bullying behavior. The second offers definitions and sets limits on unacceptable behavior and the third requires consistency in application of sanctions. The fourth asserts that adults need to take ownership and be role models and authority figures (Olweus 1999). Other features of his program call for many members of the community to come together to establish clear anti-bullying policies. Once the policies are developed, they are reviewed with the entire school community including parents, students and teachers. All members of the community are encouraged to fully understand what bullying is and what participants look, sound and act like, in order to be able to better implement well-defined intervention strategies (Smith, Cousins and Stewart 2005).

Another Norwegian, Edward Roland (1983), in his book, *Strategies Against Mobbing* lays out a different strategy for schools to use to address the problem of school bullying. He advocates reading and discussing fictional bullying stories, role playing bullying interactions, journaling about personal feeling and the feelings of others, peer sponsorship, and class meetings. Roland feels that if students had a deeper understanding of the bullying dynamic from all perspectives, they would naturally turn away from the harmful behavior (Roland 1983).

Two British researchers also developed anti-bullying programs for schools in the mid 1980's. St. John-Brooks (1984) advocates students always telling someone if they have been bullied and Stead (1990) advocates for weekly student-led anti-bullying courts in schools. Also in the 1990's, Andrew Mellor of Scotland (1990) suggests schools

acknowledging they have a bullying problem as the key step towards effective intervention. He believes that students would not come forward unless the school has strongly condemned the acts of aggression.

In 1997, Susan Wellmen, started the "Ophelia Project" to develop positive character in girls that would prevent bullying. The program has since moved on to be gender inclusive. Like other programs that have been listed above, this one has evolved to include the same tenets as many of the others. It calls for a community, family and school supported programs with common language and consequences for bad behavior that are consistent.

The Committee on Children, an organization begun by Dr. Jennifer James, distributed and promoted an anti-bullying program entitled "Steps to Respect" in 1987. Along with utilizing many of the other programs approaches this program has an added a component of friendship curricula for children from kindergarten through the sixth grade. This friendship curriculum focuses on developing friendship skills and empathy as the primary way to control episodes of peer aggression in school.

Jenny Foster developed a literature-based approach using the book, "*I Am Jack*" written by Susanne Gervay in 2009. The book uses a bullied character named Jack to engage students in dialogue about the negative situations that are imposed on him during each chapter. Gervay believes the effectiveness of the program lies in the idea that with this program a teacher can engage all of the language arts giving children many opportunities to explore bullying and learn defensive bullying strategies in non-threatening ways (Gervay 2008). Through literature activities, students are provided the opportunity to be a part of incidents that they may not have directly experienced. They

are also given the opportunity to show empathy and discuss bullying situations in a non-emotional context with others to reach workable solutions (Linning, Philips, and Turton 1997).

Jim Wright (2003), a school psychologist from Syracuse, New York wrote a booklet for teachers suggesting ways to coach students to decrease levels of bullying at school. The booklet lists techniques to work with bullies on restraining their bad behavior, includes a section on how to help victims deal with bullying situations they may find themselves in, and offer a section for teachers to work with bystanders on what to do when they see or hear of others being bullied at their school (Wright 2003).

A "zero tolerance policy" is another strategy widely implemented to deter not only bullying in schools, but also drug and weapons possession on school grounds. Zero-tolerance policies make the intervention for direct bullying very easy for the teacher that witnesses it occurring. The teacher relies on the standard policies and procedures written in the handbook to respond to the incident (Nishina 2004). Therefore, the uncertainty of what intervention is warranted is taken away and the course of action is clear. Unfortunately, this is not the case when dealing with indirect bullying. A teacher's uncertainty about how, when and in what situation to intervene and apply a zero-tolerance policy has been labeled by Vernberg and Gamm (2003) as one of the greatest barriers of success within anti-bullying programs. In some cases, students who are targets of relational aggression lash out physically when they feel they had no other options for defense (Pepler et al 1998). This policy leaves no room for understanding the desperate students' actions. A policy that was designed to protect them can end up labeling them as

aggressors, convicting them of bullying violations and leaving the true aggressors looking for their next target.

Zero-tolerance programs employ strict sanctions to deter students from negative behavior. There is little or no instruction for students who are labeled as offenders or counseling for students who may have fallen victim to bullying. Proponents of these policies can show no data indicating that these policies improve school safety or lead to a more positive school climate for students and teachers (Skiba 2000).

Teacher Intervention

If we understand that a large majority of bullying begins in schools, then teachers and school personnel are key to any long-lasting intervention efforts (Salmivalli, et al. 2004). Even though teachers consistently report fewer occurrences of bullying than their students (Stockdale et al. 2002), students still report being more confident in their teachers to intervene than in their own ability to do so (Menesini, Eslea, and Smith 1997). Gervay (2008) finds that when these interventions are consistently positive, children become more secure individuals, understanding that the world can be a safe place, and trust the systems in place to address difficult situations. However, teachers that tolerate bullying in their classrooms will continue to see occurrences of bullying rise in frequency and level of intensity when the children in their charge see few if any consequences for bullying behavior (Espelage and Swearer, 2002). In this section I discuss not only what the literature reveals surrounding teachers' assessment of bullying situations, but also why they choose not to intervene in some of these same situations.

Studies show that teachers believe that occurrences of bullying are definitely detrimental to the school environment and do feel a responsibility in their classrooms to

intervene (Boulton 1997). However, after years of not receiving adequate training, not feeling confident in methods of intervention, and feelings of frustration from continued failed interventions with the same students, teachers have begun to "see" bullying more infrequently and intervene for students even less (Boulton 1997). Stephenson and Smith (1989) found that as many as 25% of teachers reported that ignoring bullying behavior was helpful in being able to accomplish their teaching assignments.

Teachers do report that bullying is a serious problem, but see physical bullying as the most severe and damaging form of bullying, while viewing relational bullying such as teasing, name calling, gossiping, taunting, rumors, writing notes, social exclusion, and strategic friendship manipulation to be less serious (Boulton 1997). It is unclear where the roots of these feelings begin, but studies by Baumann and Rio (2006) confirm that even pre-service teachers do not consider relational aggression as serious as physical aggression.

In order to be able to intervene effectively, school personnel need to understand where, when and by whom bullying is most likely to occur. If supervisory personnel are not present and punctual in the area they are assigned to observe, the opportunity for them to witness and confront relational bullying is reduced. Research shows that indirect bullying is more likely to occur in the unsupervised classroom or hallway setting than on the playground (Craig, Pepler and Atlas 2000). Kikkawa (1987) finds that 63% of students surveyed indicate that most bullying occurred in the hallways while only about 11% of school staff indicated that hallway bullying was a problem.

Without a deliberate process of continuous classroom observation and evaluation teachers will continue reporting lower levels of student bullying than students do (Borg

1998). Studies find that one of the largest factors in failing to observe relational aggression is staff being late or in attentive to the students' interactions when in a supervisory role (Besag 1989). More experienced teachers are found to become desensitized to bullying. Studies have found these teachers ignore relational bullying because of a personal perceived lack of skill when evaluating and responding to incidents in their classroom (Baumann and Del Rio 2006).

Many times the level of intervention in relational bullying is based on the degree to which the victim appears to be affected by the incident. This parallels research by Yoon (2004), who measured the level to which teachers felt empathy and compared it to how serious they felt the bullying incident to be. Teachers who felt a high degree of empathy and felt the offense to be of a high degree of seriousness reported higher levels of intent to intervene. However, one variable that did affect levels of intervention was the degree to which teachers felt confident and trained to do so (Baumann and Del Rio 2006). These realizations make intervention in bullying situations problematic, to the extent that children display distress in different ways and at different levels. If teachers do not take the time to become familiar with their students' culture, they could be mistaken in their perception of the seriousness of bullying incidents and the level of intervention that is warranted (Baumann and Del Rio 2006). Some teachers even report that they do not consider exclusion or name calling bullying and indicate that this is typical childhood behavior (Boulton 1997). Other research shows that when pressed for information about relational aggression or indirect bullying, teachers admit not knowing much about it or how to intervene in those types of situations (Townsend-Wiggins 2001).

When teachers were asked to name three most effective ways of solving the bullying problem at school, 41% indicated tougher discipline, 34% indicated better supervision was necessary and 17% indicated that more counseling was needed (Kikkawa 1987). This was in stark contrast to the students, who ranked counseling (43%) as the greatest need, followed by tougher discipline (26%) and better supervision (22%) (Kikkawa 1997). A later study by McAdams and Schmidt (2007) seems to agree strongly with the students' assertion and argues for using counseling to help students who indirectly bully others in order to develop moral reasoning, an inner motivation for a behavior change, and a clear path to more effective means of achieving social acceptance. These were all shown to be far more effective then punitive sanctions or punishments.

Methods

Procedure

This study explores the role that middle school teachers perceive they play in addressing peer aggression in their classroom and school. A grounded theory method was chosen for this research project because the approach gave the researcher the opportunity to conduct semi-structured interviews with teachers that explored not only the administrative mandates placed on them to control bullying, but also how these mandates manifest themselves in teacher-student interactions in and out of the classrooms (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2006). Comparing the commonalities of how individual teachers daily addressed incidents of bullying at their schools offered the opportunity to discover social meanings that teachers not only assign to the individual situations, but more broadly, to how bullying is confronted and dealt with at their school.

The data for this thesis was obtained from interviews conducted with 12 teachers from one middle school in Southern Minnesota. The interviews were semi-structural and conversational lasting about 50-60 minutes. The interviews provided data surrounding the themes of how teachers identify bullying in their schools. After this foundational piece was laid, the interviews moved on to explore how each teacher individually controls bullying in and outside of their classrooms on a daily basis. The final portion of the interview asked the interviewees to consider where and how they developed the strategies they use to address bullying situations and what, if any, obstacles prevent them from effectively implementing those strategies.

I suggested that the interviews take place at the school, in the teacher's classroom, but did make the offer to interview the teachers somewhere else if it would make them feel more comfortable. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. The transcripts utilized pseudonyms to refer to each of the participants to preserve their confidentiality. All respondents were asked to sign an informed consent form and gave verbal consent at the beginning of each interview.

Data Analysis

The data obtained in these individual interviews was analyzed using Atlas. ti Qualitative analysis software. The transcripts of the interviews were coded to identify themes. The technique of memo writing, using the constant comparative method, as suggested by Charmaz (2006), were employed to distill theme categories into salient points that a preponderance of respondents made that directly addressed the areas of research interest stated above. These points were then developed into the findings of the study that are listed in the following sections. The first section uncovered teacher's strategies to address and reduce occurrences of bullying within their school. The second section uncovered barriers that teachers reported held them back from implementing their chosen bully-reduction strategies.

Strategies to Reduce Bullying

By strategies to reduce bullying, I mean the ways that teachers intentionally operate to decrease acts of bullying either in or outside of their classrooms. In this section, I discuss the bullying reduction strategies that respondents indicated they directly use in their classrooms, the strategies that they personally used outside of their classrooms, and also an overall institutional strategy of getting to know students to foster a solid student-teacher relationship.

Managing Peer Aggression through Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

The first strategy that teacher's reported was one of fostering strong relationships with students referred to as "knowing their students." When teachers talk about "knowing their students," they indicate that strong relationships with their students are vital to being able to address bullying in their schools. Institutionally, the mandate on teachers to develop relationships with students seems to be focused on the garnering of "useful" student information. This "useful" information is mentally stored and shared with other teachers and administration later in what is known as a team meeting. This sharing of information is seen as a way to "head off" problem situations that may occur. The administration also sees these relationships as one of their first lines of defense. If students are engaged in negative behavior, the school falls back on these relationships with the expectation that through student-teacher discussions the offending student will make amends if needed or, at the very least, cease the harmful behavior.

Interviewees indicated that the school attempts to foster at least one of these relationships for every student through the homeroom program. The homeroom curriculum seems to be vague to some degree. The indication is that because of budget

cuts, the homeroom curriculum committee is down to two members who offer curriculum to the homeroom advisors for each week. Advisors report that the time allotted for homeroom is 27 minutes but the first 10 minutes of that is (SSR) Silent Sustained Reading. It is the understanding of some of the advisors that the given curriculum can be followed or as Jennie points out," We always have the option to replace with something, but you just can't play games." It is within this 17-minute window of time that teachers seem to be charged with forming a productive bond with their homeroom students. Those consenting to be interviewed even began to refer to themselves not as advisors but as the student's adult advocate or parent at school. Jennie responds this way when parents ask her about the program:

> I tell my 7th graders this because parents come in and didn't understand homeroom. I'd say I'm the mom at school for them. So I have more of an interest in those kids. I'm the one that celebrates their successes. I'm also the one that gets on them a little bit more about picking up themselves. I'm the mom!

Bruce focused more on being their advocate but covered the thoughts of many of those interviewed:

> I think, ah, you know, I think with a group of homeroom students your bond's different, you know we act as their parent advocate, here at school, you know, you have a closer relationship with those 20-25 kids. I think you're much more in tune to their moods and their behaviors than you would be the general population that you may serve for a 45minute period a day as opposed to having those kids each and every day for a homeroom period. I think that my job as the homeroom advocate is [that] I have more of a responsibility to make sure that I'm looking out for my 20-25 kids in making sure that they are taken care of.

While these last two comments affirm the teachers' understanding of their homeroom advisor role and their commitment to it, most if not all of those who listed the role as parent or advocate quickly followed up their assertion with what might be

considered unsure or apologetic statements, clarifying their commitment to all students. Bruce clarified it this way:

> I look out for my 20-25 kids in making sure that they are taken care of and it doesn't mean that, you know, with that being said it doesn't mean that I would view the other 140-150 kids differently, you know, you treat them all as best as you can and love them all the same, um, just take care of them.

Those interviewed also felt that these relationships of knowing one's students can also be done by spending a short amount of class time communicating about student interests and spending time in the hallway "chatting". Greg handles his student relationship building this way:

> I think in a middle school it is easy to because they are so eager to build that relationship with you. I give them the time that they need to talk to me. A kid comes in and wants to tell me about their weekend. I'll wait 5 minutes to start the class if, you know, if it's a productive conversation.

Aaron feels he builds relationships by chatting with students, and states that these conversations not only build that relationship but keep students engaged in quality conversation during this unstructured hallway time:

> Weeks like this week are the best because you got the homecoming dress-up days; so you show up in your jersey, or yesterday was Wacky Day, today was Pajama Day, so you're out there commenting on kids' wackiness or their pajamas, and they're commenting back to you. When you're engaging the kids and stuff like that, they're less likely to do the crap that you don't want to happen.

Many respondents discussed the importance of showing students that they are good role models so that student-teacher relationships can be built on a student's trust and respect for their teacher. Greg stated it in a matter of fact way, "I think, just being a good role model. I think they can see that I do care about them, um, things like that, and I think it slowly builds that relationship."

These attempts at relationship building should be viewed as an overall strategy by schools to keep teachers close to the students' culture so that they are able to accurately interpret said culture should the need arise. Participants in this study felt that the stronger their relationship with a student, the better the chance that their discussions with offending students would affect a change in that given student's behavior. Greg talked about his belief that, for at least a few students, his relationship with them does make the discussion he has with them more effective.

> Do I think that there are some kids that I have a strong enough relationship with and this is probably being realistic, it's probably a very small percentage but I do think there, is a small percentage of kids that it actually does affect, you know, "Mr. Greg knows that I goofed up. I need to change."

Hank described a meeting with a homeroom student to let them know of his personal disapproval. He feels that this talk will be more effective because of the closer connection that he has with the student:

> So, say I have one of the students in my homeroom and then other teachers might have two of them and things like that, we'll pull that student out, not together. We don't talk to them together, but we pull them out as our homeroom student because we feel we have a little bit better connection with them as our homeroom student and just talk to them, "Hey, we noticed that you're not being nice to other people and you're with this group. Um, just letting you know that we're seeing it."

In this middle school it is clear that the administration feels that teachers should build quality relationships with their students. The teachers feel they do this through communication with students using their words and actions both in and out of the classroom to build those relationships. Teachers who reported, "knowing their students" indicated that they felt more comfortable interpreting peer interactions and stopping offenders in the act. Some reported that they were confident that students would let

them know if aggressive situations became serious. The quality of these student-teacher relationships is imagined to directly reflect in the effectiveness of the re-directive efforts that teachers make on behalf of other students. If the relationship with the teacher is perceived to be strong, the teachers report feeling confident that the student who is redirected will be more likely to make a positive change in his or her conduct. If the relationship is weak the teachers have less hope that change will occur or be long lasting.

Managing Peer Aggression in the Classroom

The second strategy for reducing bullying within the middle school is effective classroom management. Three main themes emerged that those interviewed felt were key to a quality classroom management strategy: setting expectations and structure for students at the beginning of the year, designing lesson plans that decrease the opportunities for negative behavior, and a general awareness and responsiveness to students' negative behavior within the classroom.

The first theme that became clear early in the interview process was that respondents felt that defining the classroom structure by sharing clear expectations at the beginning of the year was of top importance. Aaron builds a structural foundation for his classroom for the whole year in the first six class periods.

> You have to start with the basic things that you want to accomplish, and you have to literally teach the kids what to expect and what to do so that they can be self-sufficient when they walk in your door. This year, our first day of school was the 9th, and I did not teach a math lesson until the 17th. I spent literally - six class periods, not just teaching them, but setting up the building blocks so that when they walked through the door on the 17th when we were gonna teach our first lesson, they already knew what to expect and they already knew what to do so that you could spend your time teaching and not disciplining.

Bruce builds his structure with constant reinforcement of themes:

> The bullying, it's a zero tolerance policy in my classroom, you know, when you walk into my room I have our core values posted above the door, so even as they leave, I wish them a good day and tell them to make good choices. It has gotten a little redundant, so much to the point that they tell it back to me by the end of the year, and that's what I'm all about. It's not so much the English to me as it is helping young people be good citizens.

Respondents were clear that even after expectations were given and classroom structure is clear some classes lend themselves to more bullying opportunities then others. When asked to think of classes that lend themselves to these types of activities, P.E., Science and FACS (Home Economics) were at the top of the list, primarily because they incorporate group work or activities. To Mary, an 8th grade science teacher, the structure that she fosters for her students comes not only from clearly setting expectations, but also by strategically planning classroom activities that avoid "down or transition time." She expresses relief about not being totally responsible for the class during the times her students are transitioning to their group lab stations. "So that's why I am thankful that in most of my classes I do have a paraprofessional, I think this year I only have one class that does not, so there's a second set of adult eyes." Greg, a 7th grade science teacher, had the same concerns and voiced it this way, "I know what I run into with this class is the time in between getting to your lab stations. That's when it [bullying] will occur!" Anna, a physical education teacher, agreed that transition time is a concern but when asked how teachers might improve their strategies to reduce bullying, she responded by suggesting that other educators examine their classroom structures and lesson planning: "How do they prepare their lesson plans to identify the students in their class even as far as seating charts? Which kids do you put with which kids, and how do you monitor groups when they're in group-work?"

While the majority of individuals in the study were definite that bullying happens very little if at all in their classroom, most indicated, in one way or another, that they have a "zero tolerance policy" when it comes to bullying in their classroom. The procedures, expectations, structure and perception of swift consequences will not allow it. Bruce was the most definitive of all interviewees, stating:

> You know bullying and harassment is a nonissue in my classroom because I don't allow it to be. I feel as though I'm a pretty good monitor of those things and whenever I get a vibe of situations that might be uncomfortable for students or I'm picking up on things that seem as though they're going into a direction or road that I don't want the kids to travel down, it's dealt with and it's over.

Others made shorter more definite statements about the presence of bullying in their classroom:

> Stacy: "I don't allow it, and we talk about it the first week of school."
> Steve: "I have control of this class and that behavior is not allowed in this class."
> Hank: "Umm I don't think it happens, I mean it does not happen."

However, other individuals were quick to point to classrooms that are perceived to have bullying problems and indicated that a lack of classroom management skills is to blame for the presence of bullying activity. Anna describes it this way:

> Some teachers have better classroom management than other teachers, and when a classroom is not managed efficiently, it's not effective. What's going on in the class does become not relevant to the students, and they end up making their own relevance. And that's when you're going to have a lot of bullying, drama, lack of paying attention. You know, whatever level certain kids are on, those things are gonna happen if the classroom isn't managed well.

Even with the presence of an effective structure and well-developed lesson plans for their classrooms, respondents indicated that faculty still need to "pay attention" in their classroom because they may not see bullying behaviors that are very covert. Teachers who constantly miss bullying behaviors in class and do not "see it" are said to

be, in effect, encouraging more bad behavior in future classes. Anna, a P.E. teacher, described this fear this way:

> It's really important that you're paying attention. You know, because, if you're the teacher who stands there and lets those three soccer players call the un-athletic kid the name, and you turn your back, you've just sent those soccer players - the message, "We're not gonna do anything about it. Do whatever you want to that kid!" That's terrible! If I were that un-athletic kid I wouldn't even want to come back to class.

Even with most respondents indicating that there is little bullying in "their" classroom, it is interesting that most, if not all of those interviewed, said they were very good at identifying bullying in their classroom and they have gotten better at this identification with more years of experience. Aaron, who has 14 years of experience, talks about becoming better at recognizing where the problems are occurring:

> You know, for as many years as I have been teaching, you just kinda learn to recognize things. I'll admit that I can recognize stuff going on now that I wouldn't have as a first-year teacher, because you just learn to see that stuff happening.

Greg, a teacher with only four years of experience, agrees that with more experience you are aware of more of the social interactions in your classroom, but this awareness may not always be put to full use in a classroom.

> Just experience, I think. I'm trying to think back to my teacher training and I know there was not a class at my university on the subtleties of junior high bullying. (laughing) I definitely first picked it up in student teaching, you know, I just started to notice the little things, you know, and I think if you're paying attention you'll see it (bullying). I do my best to be aware of it. I think we get so busy on a daily basis. I have to teach this today! That it's very easy to phase that (bullying) out and I think everybody here does their best to make sure that they pay attention to that, I guess to me that's more important than the daily science lesson.

Those interviewed reported just "having" these skills and that the responsibility of honing them over time is left to each individual at the school. Some reported working with

mentors or student teaching supervisors to develop skills and others had found seminars and conferences to attend that deal with bullying in the junior high school setting.

When asked if the district provided whole school or faculty training to develop skills to reduce bullying system wide, many of those included in this study could not come up with how many times in the last five years the school district had offered these types of training programs. These three responses summed up more than half of the sentiments:

> Hank: "No. Not that I've been a part of for that kind of stuff, no.
> Greg: "Unless I'm mistaken there's been none, um, we focus on the kids a lot.
> Steve: "I don't know a specific number. It would be really hard for me to come up with that."

In follow-up questions, others verbalized that meetings in the beginning of each year called in-services, along with weekly and monthly team meetings, always take on some discussions of bullying and strategies to deal with issues at the school. So instead of one training session, the training dealing with bullying is ongoing at their institution. Stacy's comments reveal the impact that these periodic brief discussions seem to have on those involved:

> I think we talk about it at least every other year. That's part of our beginning of the school year… a psychologist [or someone] comes in and talks about it. I couldn't tell you how many times, I know we had a newspaper article about or some article about the bully, bullying, the bully, the bullier, [Colorso, 2004 "The Bully the Bullied and the Bystander"] and the bullied or something. Yeah, so we did talk about that as a staff and um, I think if we notice it happening…somebody brings it up at a staff meeting.

In this section the respondents reported that classroom management is the key to controlling levels of peer aggression in their classrooms. Good classroom management encompassed for them the seating assigned in the classroom, engaging lesson plans, and

responding to problem situations effectively. All indications were that if students are having social problems in a classroom, it is the management style of the supervising teacher that should be in question first. Most, if not all, respondents indicated that they believed that their management styles were effective in keeping the levels of bullying low in their classrooms. The institution, however, is not given credit for development of these quality management styles and skills. Respondents indicate that they are "born with" these skills or develop them individually over time in various ways.

Managing Peer Aggression Outside of the Classroom

The third strategy to reducing bullying at this middle school was more effective supervision of common or unstructured areas. It was clear from the respondents that some students use these unstructured areas as "opportunities" for bad behavior.

Respondents informed the interviewer that to them the ratio of supervising teachers to students in non-classroom areas of the school directly affected levels of bullying behavior. They followed up by clarifying the need to not only to be "in" the hallways to be visible but also to be "active" in the hallways. According to respondents, being proactive and attentive is the key to decreasing the levels of bullying behavior. The administration uses the catch phrase "active supervision" to remind teachers of these added responsibilities when they are in non-classroom areas. Active supervision includes the idea that teachers need to pay attention to student interactions especially when they are outside of the classroom, and when bullying is identified it must be dealt with or "squashed". Others echo Bruce's sentiments on active supervision:

> It's just one of those being readily accessible, being visible, is probably one of the key components to reducing the number of accounts and you know in the building. We have moved towards the active supervision,

> where it is the expectation that classroom teachers are in the hallway in that we have hall supervision in some of those areas that are grey areas.

Teachers know that indirect bullying is undercover in these unstructured areas and their "radar" really has to be up to see it. The participants in this study indicate that they must focus on many stimuli in the hallway and assess which ones are signals of possible danger, drawing on their knowledge of peer relationships and active supervision experiences to determine bullying intent. Hank mentions his knowledge of friend groups:

> I guess, whom the two kids are, that's I guess the first thing that I look at, "Have I ever seen those two together?" If they have been hanging around together all the time then I am assuming that they are friends and they're just messing around with each other and things like that.

Teachers who are not assigned to "active supervision" in the hallways are strongly encouraged by the administration to be out there, but understand that no one will be reprimanded for checking their email or getting a cup of coffee instead. This unwritten rule is followed by some teachers during the four minutes of time students' move from one class to another, most respondents indicating that they get out there in the halls when they can. Anna expresses the sentiments of many of the respondents toward the "rule."

> Um, but even if you're not *on* active supervision, you're asked to be in the hallway as much as you possibly can. So *strongly encourage* um, you know you're not gonna lose your job if you're at your computer checking e-mail in the morning.

Kathy shared her morning routine and indicated that others may do the same, "We need to get our coffee so we're awake, but if we can all make an attempt to get out in the hallway in between classes, usually there's at least one teacher standing outside at any given time, I think that prevents a lot of problems."

Teachers in the middle of the school building may be able to be more flexible because numerically more teachers are in the middle of the school than at either of the ends. Hank made clear that students would bully more if the ratio of supervision is low.

> I guess my opinion there is bullying when more students around. I don't know why they feel that it is ok. I guess, more students and less staff, I suppose in those areas. You know, when you start getting' into those halls and you're in the middle of the school there's a teacher every, twenty, twenty-five feet, and when you get to the edges of the building there's obviously not gonna be as many people out there.

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Respondents, however, did voice concerns that extended instruction is also expected in the four minutes of passing time, and if one is giving a student extra help they cannot be monitoring the hallway. Anna was particularly frustrated about being given these two different directives; "I mean there are a few times where teachers will be helping the student after class. I mean they can't be out in the hallways and giving extra help at the same time!"

Teachers do not see physical actions in the hallway, sometimes referred to as "horsing around," as serious of an offense as punching or fighting. Teachers believe that serious fighting usually starts before or after school, not during the day, and if it happened during the day it would be in or near the lunchroom. Teachers indicate that in the hallways boys use impulsive physical indirect aggression such as shoving, pushing or jumping on another's back for two different purposes: to bond with friends and to show physical power over the other student they are subjecting to physical indirect aggression. Whereas some teachers indicated that there is a "no touching policy" at the school, a majority of the teachers indicated that they are sometimes unsure in assessing if these are two friends "tripping or hitting" each other, or if this is an individual who is being physically dominated and the victim has become good at "taking it."

Respondents who are unclear on how to intervene in this situation seem to default to addressing the situation as a safety issue rather than a behavioral issue. This default strategy is clearly stated by Hank:

> I guess what I try and process quickly is, "Are those two friends messing around?" But either way I always talk to them and tell them, "Hey, I know you're just messing around, but somebody can really get hurt. You know, they trip and fall, and break an arm…something like that, so…just try and make them understand why, just a simple little thing, whether it was playful tripping or actually tripping them, 'cause either way someone could accidentally get hurt.

In this section I presented what those interviewed reported were strategies they used to reduce the incidents of bullying at their school. The respondents, independent of one another, all divided the institution into two parts. Describing their classroom and the strategies employed there as one area and outside of their classroom and strategies used there as another distinct area. Only after these areas had been defined did participates backtrack to define an overall bullying reduction strategy used by their institution that encompassed both areas listed above.

All participants reported feeling confident in their ability to implement effective strategies to reduce peer aggression inside of their classroom area. Most were equally as confident in their ability to build relationships with individual student and were quite sure that these relationships helped to reduce bad behavior at the school. Even though none of the teachers in this study listed themselves as having problems with forming relationships or controlling episodes of in class bullying, all claimed to know someone at the school who did. Those interviewed were clear to assign blame to the individual's lack of effective expectations, classroom management, and general awareness of students as key

reasons for the increased levels of aggression in their classrooms and low to nonexistent levels in their own.

Those interviewed were not as quick to assign blame to those who are not having success reducing bullying incidents in areas outside of the classroom. Those in the study, who are also assigned to supervise these areas, did not see a lack of individual skill as the primary reason levels of bullying activity were perceived to be elevated in these locations on school grounds. Most focused on issues of not have enough supervisors in this area, supervisors who are multi-tasking, or student activity being too covert to be uncovered by even the most trained observer.

Obstacles to Successful Bullying Interventions

While teachers discussed teacher-students relationship, classroom management and better supervision of unstructured areas as strategies for reducing bullying behavior, the faculty interviewed expressed frustration that they experience obstacles that prohibit them from being successful in situations that they intervene in. Respondents reported that assessing their students' interactions for the intent to hurt one another is a very difficult process. Teachers must see the encounter to be able to make educated determinations of intent. The distance over which the actions are observed adds special challenges because middle school aged children become very good at hiding negative behavior. Teachers also realize that they see actions in only a fraction of the context and that hidden baggage may be brought to the interaction from outside sources that they are not aware of. Thus, even if all of the strategies above were put into place, it become clear during the interviews that several factors mitigated their personal and collective ability to control such behaviors. The inability to come to a clear definition of bullying, the technology that students seem to be using at an ever-increasing rate, and the defensive measures that students employ when they are caught bullying were three themes that become salient in the interviews conducted.

Unclear Definitions hold back Successful Bullying Interventions

The first barrier uncovered during the interview process was the lack of a clear and usable definition of bullying for the entire school or district. Those interviewed for this study were asked to give a personal definition for bullying. The responses are quite diverse. Teachers do not reject the idea that bullying is a real concept or action. When asked for a definition, they all took a moment to think about their personal definition.

Most definitions included inflicting either physical or mental harm on another by exercising power over another by employing unwanted verbal or physical actions. Greg's response sums up the statements of those focusing on unwanted verbal or physical actions when he says," I think bullying would be unwanted behaviors toward another. It could be physical bullying, verbal bullying, and emotional bullying and now we've got the cyber bullying which are all unwanted actions by the victim." Respondents were also clear that the actions needed to be repetitive. Fran said it in this way "I would say picking on someone to the extent that it's relentless and it's offensive. It doesn't stop. I would say it's an extensive picking on, you know, where it interferes with their academics, with their behavior, with their life in general." For those who focused more on the power exchange the answers were shorter, but most had Anna's sentiments," I would probably say that it's when a person is trying to empower themselves so they try and take power away from someone else."

During this question in the interviews it seemed unclear to the respondents how they should or could apply their definitions to situations that they encounter. The lack of clarity centered around the question of who has the right to define a given situation as bullying. Does the school or teacher decide what constitutes acts of bullying and then make the judgment call? Does the offending party have the right to define their action as playful and not intended to harm the victim, or is the victim always allowed to name the situation as bullying if they feel harm has been done to them? Bruce was the most outspoken on students being the ones to define the situation. "It's based on perception, if you [the student] feel you've been bullied or harassed, and then you've been bullied or

harassed." Hank, however, seemed to feel that intent of the participants' played a key role in the ability to define the situation as bullying:

> I guess to me, bullying would be either physical or name-calling or, stuff like that when the intention is to make the other person feel bad or hurt the other person in some way. I guess like I said, I know…And I don't know. Maybe doing it as a joke to your best friend would be considered bullying but I guess in my opinion bullying is when the intention is to hurt the other person.

When asked about the district's definition of bullying, teachers expressed that they knew a district definition of bullying and harassment did exist. However, few would venture a response on what the verbiage might be and over half even displayed puzzlement or unbelief that they would even be asked to have committed such district material to memory.

> Steve: "I guess it's like the golden rule or something like that."
> Anna: "That's a really funny question this is where it becomes really grey."
> Aaron: [Silence]
> Greg: "Um, I don't know it word for word."
> Bruce: "Not verbatim, I can't give a district definition verbatim, man come on!"
> Fran: "I don't know that I could quote it."
> Mary: "MmmHmm. Do I have it memorized? Nope! I can't recite it."

After these brief disclaimers most quickly expressed knowledge that the information could be located either in printed or digital form in the institution's student handbook. The following responses were short but to the point:

> Aaron: "Our middle school student handbook."
> Greg: "I'd have to look it up in our handbook."
> Bruce: "I'd go into my student handbook "
> Jennie: "On line the district website - just google it."
> Steve: "I would look in our student handbook."
> Fran: "Hmmm, a staff handbook or to the website."
> Kathy: "I believe it's on the district website and staff handbook."
> Anna: "No, I could find it if we looked in our district website."
> Mary: "I'd look it up on the school website or the district website."

A few mentioned that while they were not able to verbalize the policies for themselves, they felt comfortable that the principal or administratior of the school had a full working knowledge of the definitions, policies and procedures that dealt with bullying in the district. Stacey said it this way, "I know our principal has a procedure manual. We (the faculty) don't all have a procedure manual but we have the statutes or whatever they're called." Fran was even more confident in the administration," The principal and the administration has full command of that policy! There is a manual that we all have access to in our principal's office. I assume it is there? It used to always be there?"

Though most respondents had knowledge of where they could physically locate an institutional definition of bullying, almost all could not verbally describe the definition from memory. Those interviewed did not exhibit concern about this lack of ability but seemed to rely on the administrators in the building who were thought to have a procedures manual to follow should these situations arise.

In order to effect change in a given situation those involved need to agree on a working definition of what may be occurring. Once armed with a clear definition of the elements that are present in a given encounter, participants should be able to feel confident in assigning meaning to situations that contain the previously agreed upon criteria. In this particular case it is apparent that respondents have clear personal definitions of bullying, but are not sure or have not been trained to clearly define how the institution they work for defines what bullying may be and what effective responses are to these acts of peer aggression. However, any feelings of uncertainty or alarm at the lack of professional preparedness are quickly quelled by the confidence, substantiated or not,

that if a clear determination of student actions, as either bullying or not bullying, is warranted the school administration will be able to do so at a later date.

Social Media Holds Back Successful Bullying Interventions

Social media was the second area identified to be a barrier to effective bullying interventions. Social media provides each subscriber the ability to share information about others with a large audience at a moment's notice. One of those interviewed referred to aggressive acts between students using social media as a "nightmare." Another respondent was quoted as saying," If there were no Facebook, I think the world would be a better place."

Aggression against others using technology was seen as potentially more damaging than face-to-face aggression. Respondents indicated not having to face those that they are abusing may give young people a false sense of power and could even in some cases escalate the intensity of the abuse than in a face-to-face encounter. Jennie echoed the sentiments of others when she said, "Now they can do the cyber bullying on the Internet.. I think that gives the bullies the feeling of more power and then it becomes even more vicious." Along with the degradation and hurt of a personal attack, respondents indicated that the added factor of countless numbers of friends and family seeing these posts on one's facebook wall is an added level of embarrassment that is tough to overcome. Kathy talks about these two levels of violation this way;

> I think those type of things are twice as damaging in some ways because it's like a ripple effect in a way because to that victim it's obviously insulting and degrading, disrespectful, but if their mom sees it or their aunt sees it or their aunt's friend sees it or even their neighbor and asks about it, the embarrassment continues.

Students are seen by those interviewed to be largely unsupervised at home and thus unregulated when it comes to cyber bullying. The teachers in the study seemed unsure of their role in cases of cyber bullying. Some, like Greg, even wondered at what point he would be violating the law if he went searching for the evidence. "I have zero control over it and I will never see it, I mean it's probably against the law for me to see that stuff. You know? I can't go into their account; I can't go into their cell phone."

Respondents reported confusion when intervening at school because of the never-ending pile of back and forth cyber-volleys that have been launched by both sides. Anna states that she is not sure which comes first, the cyber bullying or the bullying in school, but she is clear that technology adds a new element to dealing with bullying.

> I don't know which comes first - the chicken or the egg - in this instance, because a lot of times things might start at school, where they decide that they don't like each other or one doesn't like the other and then it goes home. And something will happen on Facebook or texting or phone calls or whatever and then that comes *back* to school, because it's worse from the night or the week before - however long it's been - and now they're face-to-face in school again. So it's this constant back and forth. Um, and I can't tell you where it starts. Does it start on Facebook and then it comes to school? Or does it start at school and go to Facebook? - I'm not really sure. But there's no question to me that the two are intertwined. If kids have access to technology, and they're bullies, they're gonna use it to hurt the kids they're bullying. It's just a matter of time.

Those interviewed feel that even with all the in-school training that focuses on the subject of bullying, students are not telling parents that they are the victims of cyber bullying. This is problematic in light of the fact that respondents listed parents as the first line of defense against detecting cyber bullying. New training programs and PTA programs encouraging parents to become more tech savvy have been effective to some degree but respondents felt that the percentage of parents who actually checked their children's activity in the cyber world is still pretty small. Steve summed it up this way; "I think their

parents are a little bit more aware of how to read the text messages and how to log into their child's Facebook so they're kind of tracking that behavior. Unfortunately, not all parents do, so I think some of that, you know, is a big problem."

When parents do detect bullying activity and bring it to the school administration, students can be talked to, but most of the time the institution is powerless to effect sanctions because cyberspace is not on schools grounds, leaving the principal and vice-principals apologizing to victims because there is not more that they are able to do. Anna feels that the administration at her school may be trying to become more involved in incidents of cyber bullying:

> If it's Facebook or texting, where they're more verbal or name-calling - things like that - then our principals have gotten involved or assistant principal, counselor and parents have been asked to come in. The students have met with the principal. So I mean the counselor doesn't have to just say, "Ok well this is all I can do for you."

In the section above the assertion was made that a clear definition of bullying is important in order to effectively manage bullying situations. However, even with a clear definition, the addition of technology leaves school administrations and teachers searching with great frustration for what part they play when only a fraction of the negative behavior has happened in areas that they directly control. As they look to parents for assistance, many are unaware of the victimization that their own children may be inflicting or being afflicted with every day. Most of the time, it seems parents and teachers are alerted *after* insulting information has become public knowledge and even at that point they can give only a measured response to the victimization.

Lack of Situational Definitions Holds Back Successful Bullying Interventions

The third barrier to successful bullying interventions was a lack of situational definitions by those involved in an act of peer aggression. One of the most common frustrations reported by those intervening, is that an assessment of whether the students are joking with one another or bullying one another needs to be made in order for an intervention to occur. Teachers indicate that quick decisions need to be made largely upon what they "know" about students and their friend groups. Hank shared his uncertainty about the situations he encounters in the hallway.

> I know I have, in my mind, thought it was just playing around, and just went and started class instead of intervening. I mean I know I have done *that*, but I guess who knows? I hope I wasn't incorrect in that but I guess that if I, if I feel it was just, I call it "seventh graders being seventh graders" - If I felt it wasn't just playing around and they were friends, then I would definitely do something.

Occasionally quick assessments may lead to mistaken appraisals of the situation. Students will use this incorrect appraisal as a defense when caught in a situation that a teacher defines as bullying. The student does not attack the teacher's assertion that the incident occurred but instead challenges the interpretation of the action as "bullying." Aaron describes students using this defense in an incident outside of his classroom:

> "Well, you really think that that slap on the back to your classmate was necessary?" "Oh, we were just goofin' around." I said, "Well, that's *your* story. How about if you were the one who just got slapped on the back like that? I guarantee that didn't feel real good!" And, the other kid's just walking along thinking, "Yeah, it didn't, feel really good," but he wasn't going to say anything, he still had a smile on his face. And I said, "I think he probably deserves an apology."

In some situations victims try to redefine the situation. They will accept an aggressor's invitation to move them from the position of victim to the position of advocate. In these circumstances, aggressors offer their new confidant the honorary

medal of being able to "take it." Of course, in this context, not being able to "take it" moves the student into a new level of victimization. Aggressors see the ability to "take it" as a normal response to indirect aggression, therefore absolving themselves of any wrongdoing.

The issue of power and the culture within which that power is used seems to be a key component to continued victimization. An individual must not only witness but be an active role player in a number of bullying incidents in order for the learned responses of "taking it" to be exhibited correctly before, during and after questioning by those in authority. By the time the teacher intervenes it may be difficult to assess the real harm done if the victim has become good at "taking it." Anna uses visual cues to assess that the student in question has been harmed and responds accordingly:

> I said, "That's not funny." "Oh, we're just kidding, we're just joking, look - he can take it." I said, "He doesn't even have a *smile* on his face. How is that joking or kidding?

Teachers indicate that during their intervention, they try to put the aggressor in the place of the victim. This may, however, not be as easy or productive as the intervening teacher may think. Aggressive students may not be willing or able to place themselves psychologically in the position of the subordinate. Those intervening must also be aware that even if the student has the ability to verbally explain the feelings of their victims, there is no assurance that the aggressor will be able to apply the same moral and social compass that is desired by that those that intervene. Anna talks about trying to make the other student seem more real to the bully.

> I think it's two-fold: to take some of the power away from them, you know, by saying that it's not ok, people are not just gonna look the other way. And I think the second thing is to humanize the victim to the bully, to say, you know, this is a person who has feelings, a family, and friends,

> goes through their day, and doesn't need you doing these things to them. You know. Um, but - does that happen?

Respondents report being in a constant state of redefinition of the situation by admitting that they are unclear to what level they can hold aggressors accountable for their actions. Many begin to gravitate toward a position in defense of offenders by raising questions of levels of accountability. These levels of accountability are based on the idea that, whereas middle school students may look like young adults, many still think like little kids. Respondents expressed some understanding of rates of emotional maturity, cognitive maturity, physical maturity and brain development. Most made it clear that within this maturation process these students have nearly another 10 years before they are legally considered mature enough to make responsible decisions. Fran was asked if teachers can expect junior high schools students be fully accountable for negative socialization:

> I guess I always keep in mind that they're adolescents and the chemicals are going, you know, so it's easier for me to hold an 18 year old accountable than a 13 year old. The testosterone and the estrogen and just the general hormones and the growth and um, the sugar imbalance, you know, because their bodies are growing so fast and, um, just all of it, um, and then their serotonin levels, you know their happy drug that's going on in their brain and it's different all the time. They need to understand that the feeling I get when I bully someone else isn't necessarily good power; I can get it somewhere else if that's my need. And I don't think that they really think about why they're doing it, you know, unless they have someone to process through. An unfortunate thing is some of the kids don't get a chance to have someone process it through with them and it doesn't get resolved and so therefore they don't. It's never fixed.

This section has discussed how all parties involved in a bullying situation define and redefine the situation during the intervention process. The challenge of arriving at a situational definition makes it difficult for those in the position of supervision not only to define the situation for themselves but also to clearly share that assessment with the

victim and offender. The confusion is heightened when students refuse to be defined in situational roles and continually provide alternate meanings to the situation. Current strategies voiced for working with individuals to come to lasting positive change may at times be ineffective in light of the many physical, mental and social changes that growing young adults experience during this time in their lives.

Discussion

Middle school personnel all over the country continue to ask, "What is bullying and how do we stop it among young people?" However, are these the right questions on which to focus? Even worse, if answers are discovered, would they be too narrow to provide the scope of information needed for teachers to decrease the levels of bullying at their schools? In this section, I will discuss three questions middle schools may want to focus on when forming a foundation from which to establish a behavior management program that directly addresses bullying as an institution or district.

First, what is the focus of the school or district's behavior management policy? Does the policy offer opportunities for emotional growth for children or a policy against bad behavior? Does the policy focus the counseling office on leading quality student socialization or on sanctioning bad peer interactions? Does the policy assist all school employees in understanding the behavioral expectations and what part they play in developing quality socialization opportunities for children on a daily basis? Is the policy at the school proactive or reactionary? Each school must endeavor to look at their behavior management policy and assess whether it focuses all within the institution in a positive direction for the long term. From the literature that was reviewed on successful bullying programs for schools, many, if not all, of these programs are focused on managing all student behavior not just that behavior that is considered "bad" or "anti-social." These programs provide age appropriate socialization goals that provide reinforcement of positive socialization but also a road map for student growth away from learned negative socialization patterns.

Administrators must start by taking a look at the policies that are currently in place and the assumptions that school personnel collectively have about student behavior. The findings of this study show that respondents are not in agreement on what types of social interactions can be expected from students in this age group. From the findings it is clearly evident that expectations are not only different from classroom to classroom but also individual teacher's expectations changed depending on the physical location of the student or group of students. Within the classroom, respondents report students understanding and limiting their actions to clear behavioral expectations. These expectations are set at the beginning of the year and are reinforced by individual teachers providing quality lesson plans, being vigilantly aware of student interactions and a well-planned classroom management strategy that provides clear sanctions for bullying behavior within their classroom. Respondents even showed signs that they felt animosity for those co-workers who had elevated levels of bullying occurrences in their classroom and pointed to a lack of competency in one of the areas listed above as the reason for such student behavior. It was only after participants fully asserted that acts of bullying did not happen in their classroom that they were able to take time to explain why these same effective strategies could not be implemented efficiently in the common student areas outside of their classroom.

It was during the discussion of these common areas where respondents confessed a perceived lack of success when intervening in potential bullying situations. Some respondents report not being sure if they could assume that children know what positive and negative behavior is in and around a school setting. This reported uncertainty and lack of success outside of the classroom was surprising. Just minutes before respondents

had exhibited signs of having a mastery of controlling bullying situations within their classroom, but those assertions of mastery quickly faded when situations presented themselves outside of the classroom. Lack of staffing in problem areas was then offered in defense of those assigned as supervisors to those areas. Where moments before, animosity was shown for individuals with perceived bullying problems within their classroom, little to no animosity is now shown for those who are reported to have higher perceived levels of bullying occurring right outside their classroom door.

Teachers clearly feel responsible for student social interaction within their classroom and take credit for perceived low levels of negative interactions during class time. Administrations need to take the same amount of time and responsibility for the rest of the school. It is not enough to have low levels of bullying inside the classroom. A teacher within an effective behavior management model is part of a whole-school effort to model and reinforce positive social interactions within a school system. Pride for decreased levels of bullying can only be taken when levels of bullying decrease school wide, not just within certain classrooms.

The second question a school or district must answer once they have focused their efforts on behavior management model, is what are the standards for social behavior at school and what are the growth opportunities in place to assist students in meeting that level of behavior? All responding teachers reported a reluctance to name an act as bullying because of unclear definitions either personally or institutionally, and differing situational definitions caused by many factors including covert actions and the use of social media. All responding seemed to indicate in one way or another that if the school or a district could achieve a working definition of bullying, supervisors would be able to

use that definition to diagnose situations as bullying. This may be easier in theory than in application. Respondents displayed knowledge of different portions of Smith et al. (2002) definition for bullying listed at the beginning of this study. Most asserted in one way or another that peer aggressive situations must contain three distinct elements intent, repetition and power to be labeled an occurrence of bullying. These elements can be very difficult to establish in the small window of time allotted during a supervisor's investigation of an altercation. Unlike a classroom setting, each encounter in an unsupervised area at school is a fast and fluid social interaction. When asked for what the behavioral expectations are in common areas, some listed the golden rule, others spoke of respect for others, and some even spoke of the "no touching" policy. This variety of standards from those who are supervising student behavior in common areas leads to very little uniformity in behavioral expectations as students move through these areas.

Teachers report making quick decisions about what may be happening based not only on what they witness but also on their foreknowledge of students and their social groups. Most reported talking to students and allowing them to go to the next class, admitting that some Non-Positive Social Interaction (NSI) had occurred, but they hesitated to label it as a bullying situation. By NSI, I mean any actions that would not be in keeping with social interactions expected within the schools current conduct policies but it is unclear if the individual action possesses all three elements of bullying: intention, repetition, and power. Examples of NSI could be but are not limited to; pushing, jumping on others, exclusion, shunning, hostile body language, inappropriate gestures or inflammatory/degrading comments. When respondents reported hesitations in making assertions about the above listed actions or similar actions, the reluctance seemed to

manifest itself in the unwillingness to cast aspersions on the intent of a student's action toward another. Many of those interviewed reiterated ideas from their earlier definitions of bullying, that "intent to harm" needs to be present to be labeled as a bullying situation. At face value this reservation of judgment and hesitation to hang the term of bully upon a student may seem admirable. It is precisely because of these moments of hesitation, that supervisors need to rethink the role they play within the schools behavior management model. Is their documentation of such actions seen as a condemnation of an individual, who must carry the label of bully for the rest of a semester or should their documentation be seen as an attempt to separate isolated NSI from a pattern of NSI behavior? Those who supervise students within a schools' jurisdiction must stop focusing on the intent of the student and begin assisting the school in establishing patterns of behavior. Why is there such confusion in this area? The answer may be simply that those supervising do not have a system for tracking Non-Positive Social Interactions (NSI). If there were a way to track NSI, the focus could move from intent to the frequency of occurrences, which in itself may assist in making a clear determination of intent and in turn assist in labeling some interactions as bullying. A child will have far more trouble attempting to redefine their actions five or ten times than just one time. Thus, those supervising could feel free to establish intent in clearly defined situations but document those actions that were uncertain as an incident of NSI. Research would need to be done to find what the number of saturation may be for students in each age group. At what number of NSI in a semester have students shown a pattern of behavior that needs to be addressed? All teachers need to be given an electronic system by which they can quickly and efficiently document NSI or bullying incidents. More research must be done on why teachers make

intent such a large factor in the definition of bullying or why they would allow the uncertainty to stop them from intervening. School administrators need to clarify within their behavior management plan what acceptable behavior is in the common areas of school. All supervisory personal at the institution must hold to those definitions even if they personally have an opposing view. With these measures in place, common area supervisors would have to take time to document actions of students who violate the common area conduct policy.

The last question that needs to be addressed regards respondents' concerns whether young people at the middle school are mentally developed enough to be fully accountable for their actions. Again, is the right question being asked? What does fully accountable mean? Are we speaking of fully accountable by the standard of law or full accountability by district standards? Full accountability by a standard of law does not occur in the hallway or classroom; it exists in the criminal court system. Only when students have offended to a degree perceived as criminal by law enforcement is a student held to this standard. Full accountability within a school district setting would include standards of conduct and sanctions for violating those standards. If, within a behavior management system, expected behavioral conduct is designed for a given age group at a given educational institution, those assigned to administer sanctions for violating that code of conduct should feel no apprehension about becoming an active part of a quality behavior management system. It was unclear from the data if teachers were confused to which standard they were holding students or if they did not agree with the standards. Research on the maturing human brain continues to be done. It is unclear at this point how this research would affect how schools develop codes of conduct and sanctions for

students at different levels of brain maturity. Currently, students must be held to a consistent standard that allows all students involved opportunities for social growth.

Recommendations

A quality school behavior management plan must start with enumerating desired behavior that is developmentally appropriate for children at each grade level. When focusing on the middle school we see that this is the perfect age to reinforce positive social behavior because at this age students shape their ideas of themselves and their understanding of what is normal and acceptable behavior (Harter 1999). This clarifying of desired behavior should, by default, go a long way to clarifying what non-positive peer social interactions may be. Whereas not all undesired behavior can be determined to be acts of bullying, Non-Positive Social Interactions should be seen as potential precursors of bullying behavior and should be taken seriously. With a dedicated and well trained staff fully committed to becoming an active part in the school behavior management plan, incidents of bullying and NSI will be accurately documented so that growth opportunities can be required in a quick and effective manner for the students who need them. These individual growth opportunities can be correlated with large group, community forum and class activities that work to provide a school culture that values the goals set forward by the behavior management plan. Many of these opportunities for growth are currently found at schools but are working independently and not in conjunction within an overall system. By coordinating counseling programs, student body presentations and even student lead advocacy groups, an overall behavior management system can be focused on providing opportunities for students to not only learn but also experience positive social interactions on a daily basis.

This positive socialization can and should not stop within the school walls. Schools need to create strong partnerships with law enforcement that provide clear paths

for victims to bring forward proof of bullying incidents that occur outside of school and especially through the use of social media. Parents must begin to take ownership of the technology they make available in their home, because they are liable for how minors make use of it. Clear instruction must be offered to parents and students to understand what types of activity fall into the category of bullying or harassment. When these activities are documented, offending students and their parents/guardians must be given the opportunity to select either school district driven mediation and growth opportunities or criminal court proceedings. The opportunity for choice removes from school administration the uncertainty whether actual events of bullying were perpetrated within their jurisdiction, and focuses the energies of all parities involved on meaningful resolutions.

Quality resolutions in a behavior-management system give growth opportunities not only to offenders but also to victims of bullying. Those who have been victims of bullying activity need to be presented clear paths to bonding opportunities with peers and their school. Without these opportunities, these students will find it difficult to see themselves as anything more than victims.

Clearly schools must leave reactionary management behind and strive to proactively have a behavior management system that works in concert with new documentation technologies and growth opportunities to give all students a clear path to positive peer socialization.

Limitations

Limitations to this study need to be acknowledged. There is debate on how generalizable grounded theory studies may be. A source of comparison is consensus theory developed by, Romney, Batchelder and Weller (1986). These researchers used a mathematical proof to make the case that experts in a given social area agree more than those not considered experts in that given area. At the time this study was conducted, all potential participants had to possess a college degree in education, pass two standardized educational teaching exams and hold a teaching license in this particular state. The range of years of teaching experience was from four to twenty years with the mean at 13.5 years at the current institution. It was from these credentials that the reported opinions and views were deemed credible for this study.

Also, questions may be raised about the sample size used for this study. I worked very hard to provide a data set of no less then twelve individuals with the above listed credentials. This number of respondents parallels a study of qualitative data saturation done by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006). In their research, they found that after the analysis of twelve interviews 92% (100) of their codes had been developed and very little new thematic information emerged after that point. Therefore, even with the limited resources that were available for this research, twelve credentialed respondents were deemed as sufficient for credible data to be obtained.

Where there could be concern about the homogeneity of the participants in this sample, a study of this type with limited resources assumes a certain level of homogeneity because the sample is chosen from a certain set of criteria. In this study admittedly, the subjects were homogenous with respect to their assigned duties of

supervision in and outside of the classroom at a given middle school in the Midwest of the United States. However, care was taken to make sure that those participating represented educators of varied age, gender, subject matter taught and grade to which they were assigned to teach (either 7th or 8th grade). I encourage other researchers with more resources to do similar experiments to test in fact how generalizable these findings may be. I encourage those researchers to use other data collection methods to substantiate these findings or find them lacking in one area or another.

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Appendix A
Thesis Interview Questions

Introduction Questions:

Before we begin: I just need you to confirm that you read and signed the consent form?
How long have you been teaching?
What subject matter do you teach?
What's the average age of the students here at the middle school?

Short Narrative

I included a short personal narrative about experiences with bullying in my youth and my teaching.

Interview Questions

1. Have you had any bullying experiences as a child? Can you tell me about a time that you bullied or got bullied?
2. Do you see the same thing among the student in your classroom?
3. If you could, describe for me typical students "acting up" or "getting on one another" in your classroom? What does is that look like?
4. Do certain classes act up more than others? Why do you think this might be?
5. Can tell me about an incident of students pick on one another that you witnesses lets say in the last three years? Can you describe that for me?
6. What types of measures do you take in these situations to curb that behavior?
7. Would you consider verbally picking on, getting on someone or ostracizing them from the group as bullying?
8. What about ostracizing from the group do can you remember and incident were this occurred?
9. If someone asked you to define what bullying is what would you say?
10. Tell me how you learned to intervene? Probes: Is that from training or drawn from district policy for the school, or from experience?
11. What do you think was the effect on the bully? Victim? Other children? On you?
12. What in your observation of student causes you to intervening? How do you decide when to step in?
13. Do you intervene in most bullying situations that you see or hear of?
14. Is there a school policy on bullying? What is it? Is the anti-bullying policy in the school district clear and usable for the teachers? What makes it that way?
15. Can you tell me about an incident where you intervened and you feel that you really handled it well?
16. What gives you the feeling that it turned out really well for everyone concerned?
17. What advice would you give other teachers about dealing with bullying behaviors?
18. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about this that I haven't asked?