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Mary K. Gutiérrez
The Ecology of Bullying:
How Might Counselors'
Reflections on Bullying
Improve School-Based
Interventions?

ABSTRACT

Schools are struggling to find intervention and prevention plans that will be effective in preventing and intervening in bullying. Phone interviews and online surveys were conducted with 16 respondents - a cross-section of child and school counselors - to find what they have found most and least helpful.

Overall, participants agreed that they continue to struggle to find effective ways of preventing, managing and responding to bullying incidents and the overall culture that induces bullying. The majority of respondents felt their schools' policies and/or actions were not effective or not effective enough, however, those who worked in schools that used a curriculum perceived greater effectiveness than those participants who worked in schools that only had a policy. There was no significant difference in perceived effectiveness between those respondents whose schools paid for a curriculum and those who used a free or self-created curriculum.

Although there were groupings of similar ideas for improving positive outcomes in bullying situations, such as mental health services for bullies and/or victims, increasing parent involvement or encouraging student bystanders to intervene, the counselors typically named different interventions as helpful.

This paper highlights ecological factors that appear too often forgotten in bullying curricula and echoes Smith's (2011) encouragement that we "need to consider the wider societal

context in which [antibullying] programs take place” (p. 420). Perhaps the time has come to look beyond the microsystem of the school to the mesosystem, to examine “the interrelations among the major settings containing the learner” (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, p. 5).

**THE ECOLOGY OF BULLYING:
HOW MIGHT COUNSELORS' REFLECTIONS ON BULLYING
IMPROVE SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTIONS?**

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2013

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
III. METHODOLOGY.....	18
IV. FINDINGS	22
V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	44
REFERENCES	52
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Advertisement in Enewsletter of SSWAA.....	62
Appendix B: Online Questionnaire.....	63
Appendix C: Phone Interview.....	65
Appendix D: Online Consent Form	68
Appendix E: Phone Consent Form	70
Appendix F: H.S.R. Approval Letter	71

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Participants at Schools by Grade Level	26
2. Breakdown of Client Demographics for Each Participant by Gender and Age	27
3. Typical Sources of Referral	36

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Bullying has likely been a problem since children first started going to school together. Perhaps because of this long-standing association between children and school and bullying, most people have come to see bullying as a natural part of schooling and growing up. In the wake of so many recent high profile deaths attributed to bullying, schools are struggling to find intervention and prevention plans that will be effective.

The objective of this study is to investigate a cross-section of those on the frontlines of bullying intervention – child and school counselors – to see what these professionals have found most and least helpful in preventing and intervening in bullying. By looking at the experiences and opinions of counselors from various schools across the country, it is hoped a more generalizable picture can be made of the state of bullying intervention and prevention.

The goal of this study is to review the techniques and opinions of counseling professionals who work with victims of school bullying to uncover what they have found effective and ineffective in preventing and/or intervening in bullying. Through careful questioning of clinicians working with child victims of bullying, I expect to answer the question: How do the stories and experiences of counseling professionals who have worked with victims of school-age bullying add to the discourse on bullying and its interventions? These answers are sought in the hopes that they will provide new avenues of discovery for future quantitative and

qualitative research on antibullying measures. Likewise, it is hoped that this information will prove helpful not only to researchers but also to schools and practitioners.

The goal of this study was to find new directions for future quantitative and qualitative research on bullying prevention and interventions by investigating how bullying is perceived and reacted to by counseling professionals. This goal was aimed for through a three-pronged investigatory approach, consisting of: a) examining the responses of counseling professionals to incidents of bullying, b) hearing about specific incidents of bullying - not just categories, frequencies, etc. – to add to the narrative of experiences; and c) learning the strengths and weaknesses of current initiatives by asking counseling professionals what has worked and what has been unhelpful.

Since bullying is so prevalent, it is hoped the findings here may be helpful to most professionals working with and/or studying children including researchers, practitioners and school administrators. The use of any resultant theories is similarly hoped to be multi-faceted. Though there may not be transferability of findings to all schools from a qualitative study of this size, the resultant data might be useful to future research. Educators, clinicians, school administrators and staff at juvenile detention centers and group homes are a few examples of the professions hoped to benefit from additional research on antibullying measures.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The literature review has been organized as follows: 1) a general overview of bullying research followed by a) a brief definition of bullying and b) an explanation of how bullying differs from discrimination; 2) an overview of bullying research terminology and the different types of bullying, including a detail of a) relational bullying and b) cyberbullying, then c) a comparison of girls' and boy's bullying experiences; next, 3) prevalence of bullying is discussed, followed by a) its causes; and b) its effects; finally, 4) schools' responses to bullying, followed by a) Ecological Theory as it relates to school environment and bullying, and b) the success of different school-based interventions, and the effects of involving different parties in bullying situations including parents, teachers, counselors and bystanders. The goal of this study is to find new directions of investigation for future quantitative and qualitative research on bullying and its prevention and interventions, by investigating how and when relational bullying, in and of itself, is reacted to by adults and youth.

Bullying Research

Per many researchers (Walker, 2010, for example), there is still much to understand about bullying, how to prevent it, and how to intervene. To date, much of the information available on bullying has been collected quantitatively (Athanasiaides and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010; Cullingford & Morrison, 1995, Smith & Brain, 2000, Thornberg, 2010) – surveying large numbers of children and teachers of grades K-12 at one particular school. Despite the findings

of these many surveys, there is still so little *known* about bullying. And while qualitative research on the subject has been conducted, it has, perhaps, been under-utilized. According to Smith and Brain (2000), “qualitative research strategies may have much to offer in terms of insight into the kinds of bullying experienced and the understandings of these behaviors in the peer group” (p. 6).” Bullying in schools is reportedly very difficult to measure and predict (Berger, 2007), because it relies on so many factors such as age, race sexual orientation and social class of victim and bully, type of school, location of school, grade level, etc.

Definition of bullying. Regarding definition, most scholars agree with Olweus’ definition of *bullying* among schoolchildren as repeated negative actions, with intent to harm physically or psychologically, perpetrated by a child with power over a child with less power (Olweus, 1995; Olweus, 1996; Solberg, Olweus, & Endresen, 2007). Researchers distinguish bullying among schoolchildren from school violence, by defining *school violence* as only physical aggression and typically singular events, and which may or may not be predicated on differences in power between victim and offender (Ttofi, Farrington & Baldry, 2008). For the purpose of this study, I will abide by this differentiation between bullying and school violence.

Distinctions have also been made about types of bullying, with researchers distinguishing between *direct* bullying (which can include physical and/or verbal aggressions) and *indirect* or *relational* bullying (which can include slander, social isolation and exclusion, and manipulation) (Felix & Green, 2010; Olweus, 1994; Olweus, 2010). While there will be some information on direct bullying, the bulk of this chapter will address indirect or relational bullying.

Bullying and bigotry. It is important to note that some researchers (Ringrose & Renold, 2010) have voiced displeasure with the term “bullying” in general and the ambiguous ways it is used by researchers, media and the general public alike. Ringrose and Renold (2010) feel that

when “bullying” is used to mean all types of repetitive direct or indirect aggression at school it blurs the true nature of many of these events and disguises a pervasive social problem with a less confrontational term which puts the blame more on the perpetrator(s) alone and less on the school’s administration. These writers have documented instances where sexual harassment, homophobia, and racism have been termed “bullying” instead of hate crimes- leaving less legal recourse for the victims and their families and forcing less accountability on the schools (Ringrose & Renold, 2010). They also argue that when the definition of bullying includes gender-, sexuality-, class-, faith-, and race-based harassment, it normalizes these actions. Ringrose and Renold (2010) argue that bullying is usually portrayed as a specific event between pathologized bullies and victims when, in many instances, the “bullying” actions are representative of the culture (a culture with sexism, homophobia, racism, classism). Ringrose and Renold (2010) posit that the most common bullying interventions are largely ineffective because they ignore and thus perpetuate violence based on inequality and social norms. Unfortunately, many researchers have not made the distinction between bullying and discrimination, making it difficult to determine the prevalence of each or distinguish what it is truly occurring in the schools already investigated (Ringrose & Renold, 2010).

Types of bullying.

Terminology. Relational or *covert* bullying is different from direct or *overt* bullying, in that relational bullying focuses more on harming a child’s relationships and social standing with other children (Archer & Coyne, 2005, Nishioka, Coe, Burke, Hanita, Sprague, & Regional Educational Laboratory at Education Northwest, 2011; Smith, 2011). Beyond distinguishing from overt bullying, some authors differentiate relational from *indirect* bullying, while others use a third term – *social bullying* (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Cole, 2010; Walker, 2010). Finally, there

are some authors who consider relational and indirect bullying to be the same phenomenon. Archer and Coyne (2005) describe the preference of one term over another as a “conflict” (p.212), which creates unnecessary confusion in the study of relational bullying. Archer and Coyne (2005) conclude, after a thorough comparison of the three terms (relational, indirect and social bullying), that they all “measure comparable alternative strategies to physical [i.e. overt] aggression” p.225. This thesis, likewise, uses the three terms interchangeably, with a preference for the term relational bullying.

Relational bullying. But what is relational bullying? Walker (2010), in his commentary in the *School Psychology Review*, states that, while it is definable, there is a scientific lack of clarity with regard to relational “aggression” (as he terms it):

It is unclear whether relational aggression is a distinct subset of bullying or is rather a parallel construct with a different etiology and developmental course and, as a result awaits further investigation and longitudinal studies that can track bullying and relational aggression across time, social contexts and responsiveness to intervention. (p. 594)

Young (2011) echoed Walker’s sentiments on the ambiguity of relational bullying. Examples of relational bullying include ostracism, gossiping, and spreading rumors (Archer & Coyne, 2005). Pronk and Zimmer-Gembeck (2010), from interviews of adolescents with high and low aggression levels, identified five types of relational aggression described by participants: inconsistency in friendship, rumor-spreading, exclusion, social intimidation and written (including internet and texting) aggression. Though relational bullying and verbal bullying are similar in that neither produces direct physical energy, verbal bullying (taunts, slurs, name-calling, etc.) is directed at the victim, while relational bullying is not. For example, in September

2010, videos were streamed to the internet of a college student being intimate with another man (Schwartz, 2010). While this could undoubtedly be called sexual harassment and homophobia, it also provides an example of relational aggression - while the student was undoubtedly the target, the bullying acts were not directed at the victim but at the bystanders (viewers of the internet video). The student, Tyler Clementi, killed himself soon after he realized what had happened (Schwartz, 2010).

Cyberbullying. Several interventions have been designed with the location of bullying in mind. It has been noted that bullying most often occurs in places at school with less structure; described as playgrounds, cafeterias, areas where students congregate during short breaks between classes (e.g. hallways with lockers, etc.), and areas used for recess (Meraviglia et al., 2003). Often neglected, however, are other “places” with little supervision or structure - cellular phones and computers. Cyberbullying, as it has been termed, is a recent phenomenon due to the large advances that have been made to communication availability, technology, and affordability. Cyberbullying is believed to be a growing problem - with one study finding that 10.1% of children in grades six through ten are victimized through cyber methods (Wang, Iannotti, Luk, and Nansel, 2010). (That this study is already three years old should be noted, as children’s access to cyber technology has likely increased significantly in these three years.) The reach of cyberbullying is large; it has been known to occur on social networking sites, in chat rooms, on YouTube (children posting embarrassing and/or misleading videos of classmates), and via email and cell phone texting - all of which can happen inside and outside of school hours. Many researchers have noted that as a relatively new phenomenon, cyberbullying is not well understood and still requires much more study (Klomek, Sourander & Gould, 2010).

Girls' and boys' experiences of bullying. Researchers have noted that girls' bullying is often quite different from boys' (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Crapanzano, Frick & Terranova, 2010; Felix & Green, 2010; Wang et al, 2010; Nishioka et al, 2011; Olweus, 1995); most agreeing that girls use relational forms of bullying more than direct forms (Felix & Green, 2010; Nishioka et al, 2011; Olweus, 1995). Researchers, however, continue to disagree as to whether girls use relational forms of bullying more (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Benjet, Thompson, & Gotlib, 2010; Dukes, Stein, & Zane, 2010; Nishioka et al, 2011; Wang et al, 2010) or less (Olweus, 2010) frequently than boys. Archer and Coyne (2005) attribute the differences in outcomes to differences in ages of participants and sample sizes. Other researchers insist the confusion lies in girls' aggression being less studied than boys' (Besag, 2006; Cruddas & Haddock, 2005; Simmons, 2002; Ringrose, 2008). Besag (2006) posits that this lack of study (relative to the study of boys' bullying) is due to the typically less visible forms of aggression used by girls and the difficulty in identifying a primary instigator when a group of girls is excluding one girl (i.e. relational aggression). In a British study, Cruddas and Haddock (2005) explain that resources for behavioral treatment are typically used more for boys, with girls receiving less than one-third, and attribute this discrepancy to girls "struggling silently" (p.1) with issues like bullying. Wang, et al (2010) found, though, that boys experience bullying on an only slightly smaller scale to girls – with 37.8% of boys and 41.3% of girls in their study experiencing some form of bullying (physical, verbal, social exclusion, rumor spreading, cyber-based, or a mix of these types were measured).

Amidst the disagreement on girls' experiences of bullying, there is apparent agreement that girls' experiences need to be studied more fully (Felix & Green, 2010; Olweus, 1994; Ringrose, 2008) and examining gender differences in bullying is important in terms of creating effective

interventions (Felix & Green, 2010; Ringrose, 2008). The importance of studying girls' experiences is further demonstrated by findings that bullied girls are more likely than boys to be suicidal (Gruber & Fineran, 2007), more likely than non-bullied girls to experience later sexual harassment and dating violence (Felix & Green, 2010), "more distressed by victimization" (Benjet et al, 2010), have a greater likelihood of injury and weapon-carrying (Dukes et al, 2010) and have poorer health (Meyer, 2009) than non-bullied girls.

Bullying Cause and Effect

Research has shown 9% to 25% of schoolchildren are victims, while 33% are involved in bullying as bully, witness or victim (Limber, 2003; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1994; Viding, Simmonds, Petrides, & Frederickson, 2009). In a study of college students, 56.4% reported having been bullied as a child, though the researcher admitted to using a broader definition of bullying than commonly used in research (Pontzer, 2010). Despite its ongoing prevalence, the phenomenon of bullying among schoolchildren was not studied until the 1970s, and then mainly in Scandinavia (Bennett, 2009; Olweus, 1995; Pontzer, 2010). In the 1980s and 1990s, researchers in other parts of the world, including the United States, became more interested in studying bullying among schoolchildren (Olweus, 1995). Researchers in the United States are believed to have become more interested in bullying in the late 1990s by the increased lethality of school violence, as in the Columbine school shootings (Bennett, 2009).

Causes of bullying. Several authors have made connections between parent relationships and attachment (Olweus, 1995; Walden & Beran, 2010), empathy (Crapanzano, Frick, & Terranova, 2009; Raskauskas, 2010; Viding et al., 2009), and attitudes about violence (Olweus, 1995; Pontzer, 2009) with the likelihood that a child will bully. Similarly, Olweus (1995) found that male victims of bullying tended to be more anxious and submissive and

physically weaker than their peers. The likelihood of a child bullying has also been attributed to being male (Juvonen, Graham & Schuster, 2003), having low affective and cognitive empathy (in the case of cyberbullying) (Ang & Goh, 2010), having high impulsivity (Joliffe & Farrington, 2011), being a male with low affective empathy (Joliffe & Farrington, 2011), wanting revenge, amusement, or to elevate his/her social status (Thornberg, 2010), having poor school performance (Harlow & Roberts, 2010), and being socially contaminated, disturbed, and thoughtless (Thornberg, 2010).

Additionally, there are theories as to what makes a child more likely to be bullied. Being of “minority” status was determined to be not associated with bullying in a Welsh study (Lambert, Scourfield, et al., 2008), while a different study found African American children as more likely to be bullied (Harlow & Roberts, 2010). Children are also at a possible risk of being bullied if they have a negative self-identity, behavioral disorders or difficulties (Asberger’s was used as an example), if they are not living with both parents, if they have fewer developmental assets, have low self-esteem and depression (both cause and effect), or if other children consider them overweight, unattractive or with disability. Also, having a lower socioeconomic status (Lambert, Scourfield, et al., 2008) or being considered socially deviant (Thornberg, 2010) have been linked to bullying victimization. Similarly, children are believed to be more likely victims of bullying if they are academically gifted (Peterson & Ray, 2006) or if they have a below-average academic record (Harlow & Roberts, 2010). The latter is also considered an effect of having been bullied (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010).

Effects of bullying. As the news media has made clear, bullying often results in deleterious consequences for the victim. Bullying has been linked to: depression, lower self-esteem, an increased likelihood of injury (Dukes, Stein & Zane, 2010), poorer health outcomes

as adults, emotional and behavioral problems (Gruber & Fineran, 2007; Olweus, 1995; Pontzer, 2010; Walden, et al., 2010; Yeung & Leadbeater, 2010) and diminished academic performance (which leads to problems of its own) (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). Bullying is now also widely seen as violating the basic human rights of children (Bennett, 2009; Olweus, 1995).

Bullying has also been shown to have consequences for witnesses of bullying, negatively affecting their psychological, physical, and social adjustment (Crick, 1995; Rigby, 2000; Sharp, 1995). Bullies themselves are also believed to suffer negative outcomes as a result of having been bullies. For example, bullying has been linked to an increased likelihood of later criminality (Gruber & Fineran, 2007; Olweus, 1995; Pontzer, 2010; Walden, et al., 2010) as well as anxiety, depression, violent behavior and psychiatric symptoms (Kloumek, Sourander & Gould, 2010).

Research has also linked bullying to irreversible damage to schools and communities at-large. There have been documented instances of widespread school violence, perpetrated by long-ignored victims of bullying (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). In 2002, the U.S. Secret Service, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Education, released a study of 37 cases of national school violence (including shootings and knife attacks unrelated to gang or drug activity) spanning a period of 25 years as part of the Safe School Initiative. The findings of this study showed that 73% of these events resulted in the murders of one or more people (students, faculty and/or staff). While the researchers could identify few commonalities among the attackers (no patterns of race, age, religion, academic performance, extracurricular activities, mental health or behavioral disorder, substance use or social circles among other identifiers), it was discovered that 71% of the attackers had felt “persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked or injured by others prior to the incident” (Vossekuil, et al, 2002, p 21). Indeed, it is

even believed now that Adam Lanza, the shooter at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, had suffered severe physical and emotional bullying while a student at Sandy Hook (Kleinfield, Rivera & Kovalski, 2013). It also cannot be ignored that bullying has resulted in many suicides, so much so that a name was coined in popular culture for the phenomenon: *bullycide* (Marr & Field, 2001). Of the many who were believed to have committed suicide due to bullying, four recent tragedies include: Tyler Clementi, age 17; Seth Walsh, age 13; Asher Brown, age 13; and Billy Lucas, age 15 - all of whom committed suicide during the same month of September 2010. Bullying experience is believed to increase the threat of suicide by a magnitude of 1.4 to 10.0 (Kloumek, Sourander & Gould, 2010).

Schools' Responses to Bullying

Precedents have been set in many states of schools being held civilly and financially accountable for failing to protect their students from bullying while at school (Jordan & Austin, 2012). Despite this, many schools have developed plans that did little, if anything to stem bullying, with some interventions believed to have made the bullying worse (Ttofi, Farrington, & Baldry, 2008). Anti-bullying interventions have been created since bullying first began to be studied in Sweden in the 1970s by Dan Olweus. Since then, many interventions have been developed, but for most the track record is poor, even when they have been supported by or created based on empirical data.

Interventions. Researchers disagree on the effectiveness of interventions in stopping or lessening bullying among children (Finn, 2010; Merrell, Gueldner & Ross, 2008; Smith, Schneider & Ananiadou, 2004; Thornberg, 2010; Ttofi, Farrington & Baldry, 2008). Berger (2007) describes recent results as “disappointing” (p.111) when citing her research on the attempts to eliminate bullying. However, Berger also noted that some programs, more in Europe

than elsewhere, have shown some successes. Thornberg (2010), of Sweden, feels many of the successes of bullying programs, to-date, have been ephemeral. This short-lived success is likely due to the constantly changing nature of the school culture and the children within.

Three meta-analyses in the last six years have shown that bullying interventions have not been as successful as hoped. Ttofi, Farrington, and Baldry (2008) found that of 30 internationally-used, empirically-based interventions, eight had little to no effect on bullying or created more harm. Ttofi and Farrington in a later (2011) analysis found that interventions that were longer-term and more intense and included as many of the following elements as possible were most effective in decreasing bullying: “parent training/meetings, improved playground supervision, disciplinary methods, classroom management, teacher training, classroom rules, a wholeschool anti-bullying policy, school conferences, information for parents, and cooperative group work.” (p.41) Conversely, they found that interventions that included work with peers had no effect or could even increase bullying.

The authors of the other two analyses examined only those interventions in the United States, and found marginal effects (both positive and negative) or no effects from over 90% of the interventions studied (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008; Smith, Schneider & Ananiadou, 2004). In her 2008 study, Ringrose argued that school interventions were not as effective for bullying amongst girls because of lack of understanding about girls’ friendships, conflicts and heterosexualized competitions. It has been found that girls account for 28%-34% of total bullying in schools (Solberg, et al., 2010; Viding et al., 2009), which implies that empirical findings and their related interventions are likely to be more attuned to the specifics of bullying by boys than by girls. Meyer (2009) points out that most researchers on bullying have only examined what is easily observable (i.e. physical bullying) and that when bullying is studied

with relation to gender, researchers have focused on that which is easily measurable, i.e. frequency and type of bullying experienced by boys and girls. Brown (2003) argues a related point; interventions focus on what is seen by and reported to teachers. But since much of relational bullying is invisible to outsiders, relational bullying remains largely unstudied and thus unaffected by interventions.

Smith (2011) summarizes that in most meta-analyses interventions have been proven unsuccessful, except the above-cited meta-analysis conducted by Ttofi and Farrington (2008). Smith added that since the data used by Ttofi and Farrington spans 25 years, it is unclear how useful their results will prove. He concludes,

There is still much to understand about why programs vary in effectiveness, and much to learn about making prevention and intervention efforts more successful in the future. Beyond the actual program components, there is also a need to consider the wider societal context in which programs take place. (Smith, 2011, p. 420)

Since many programs were created with physical bullying in mind, however, researchers are unsure of how useful any current methods of intervention will be on relational bullying (Low, 2010; Walker, 2010). While, quantitative data has proven to be invaluable, it is clear that there is still much more to be learned about this phenomenon of bullying.

Even school-based interventions meant to curb all forms of violence, not just bullying, have proven to be less effective than once thought. For example, the American Psychological Association's Zero Tolerance Task Force found in 2008 that zero tolerance was under-researched, despite being a federal policy for over 15 years. The task force's report went on to

add that the research that does exist shows zero tolerance policies as often creating more harm than good for students (American Psychological Association, 2008).

School Environment and Ecological Theory

Recently, research has been published using an ecological approach to examine bullying in schools (Hong, Cho & Lee, 2010; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Jordan & Austin, 2012; Lee, 2011). Jordan and Austin (2012) suggest treating bullying “from an ecological perspective, within the child’s social ecology (micro, meta, and macro levels), which includes the parents and the educators”.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) created Ecological Theory as a response to the one-sidedness he perceived in developmental psychology research. Bronfenbrenner found that, despite the common assertion in behavioral science that “behavior evolves as a function of the interplay between person and environment” (p. 16), the majority of research in his time focused on the person alone, with little investigation into the person’s environment. One of Bronfenbrenner’s early writings on ecological theory advocated for improving the study of educational systems by looking at the student and his/her environments.

Bronfenbrenner termed this study the “ecology of education” (1976). His theory originally included several systems: (a) microsystem, “an immediate setting containing the learner (e.g., home, day care center, classroom, etc.” (p. 5); (b) mesosystem, “the interrelations among the major settings containing the learner” (p. 5); (c) exosystem, “an extension of the meso-system embracing the concrete social structures” (p.6); and (d) macrosystem, “the overarching institutions of the culture or subculture” (p.6) (e.g. social, legal, and educational systems). Later, he modified his theory to include a fifth system (e) chronosystem which he

defined as “examining the influence on the person's development of changes (and continuities) over time in the environments in which the person is living” (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 724).

A 2008 study of Italian youth showed that relationships with teachers and parents had more impact on whether a child would bully or be victimized by bullying than relationships with peers (Nation, Vieno, Perkins and Santinello, 2008). Specifically, power differentials in relationships with teachers (for younger adolescents) and parents (for older adolescents), functioned as predictors of whether a youth would bully or be a victim of bullying. Nation et al (2008) found “that teachers, schools and teacher training programs may need to work on developing teaching methods that support and maintain students’ voice and choice throughout adolescence.” (p.228) Ttofi and Farrington found in their 2008 meta-analysis of school anti-bullying programs’ efficacy that work with peers (which they defined as including mediation, mentoring and encouraging bystander response) tended to increase rates of bullying victimization. The authors recommended that future programs not focus on work with peers. These and other studies give credence to ecological theorists’ ideas that bullying in schools should be examined through lenses that look at environments as well as individuals. Though there are many theories for why children bully, and why children get bullied, and copious descriptions of typical victim and offender characteristics, researchers have reported that these theories have not necessarily improved the effectiveness of interventions (Frisen & Holmqvist, 2010; Jimerson, Swearer, & Espelage, 2010).

Summary

Given the literature and its gaps, how do the stories and experiences of counseling professionals who have worked with victims of school-age bullying add to the discourse on bullying and its interventions? This question is posed with the hope that their stories and ideas

will help in crafting interventions more effective in attaining a safer school environment for all victims of bullying. The next chapter will review the methodology used for arriving at the answers to this question.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This study is a qualitative investigation into counseling professionals' opinions of what makes for effective and ineffective bullying interventions. According to Smith and Brain (2000), "qualitative research strategies may have much to offer in terms of insight into the kinds of bullying experienced and the understandings of these behaviors in the peer group." (p. 6) Hopefully, a study with rich, detailed narrative data will provide a deeper look into the events and effects surrounding bullying that current data [on bullying] does not provide. Per many researchers (Walker, 2010, for example), there is still much to understand about bullying, how to prevent it, and how to intervene. To date, much of the information available on bullying has been collected quantitatively (Athanasiaades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010; Cullingford & Morrison, 1995, Smith & Brain, 2000, Thornberg, 2010) – surveying large numbers of children and teachers of grades K-12 at one particular school. Despite the findings of these many surveys, there is still so little *known* about bullying. And while qualitative research on the subject has been conducted, it has, perhaps, been under-utilized. This study proposes that narrative information from counselors working with victims will provide new understanding of bullying and new ideas on how to go about getting answers to researchers' questions.

Sample

All respondents were required to speak and/or read English and be certified or licensed mental health professionals who have at least a master's degree and a minimum of two years

counseling experience. Respondents were also required to have experience working with victims of school bullying. In order to find an adequate number of people meeting these requirements, information about the study was distributed to and targeted at counseling professionals. Telephone interview respondents were found through word-of-mouth advertising among professionals in the counseling field. The internet questionnaire participants were informed of the survey through word-of-mouth advertising among counseling professionals as well as an advertisement in the electronic newsletter of the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) (Appendix A).

Ethics and Safeguards

Participants were given the choice to provide information via phone interview or on-line questionnaire. The participants were also given the choice to be entered in a drawing for \$75. Given their nature, the phone interviews were not anonymous, and all phone participants entered the drawing. The on-line questionnaires (Appendix B) were anonymous, so participants were offered a choice to opt-in to the drawing by providing their email address at the end of the survey. The email addresses were entered through a separate link, so no person's answers could be tied to a specific survey response.

The on-line questionnaire was estimated to take approximately 20 minutes. Because of the data collection method, no names or other identifying information were collected and therefore cannot be connected with data. For this reason, participants were warned that on-line questionnaire responses could not be withdrawn once submitted.

The phone interviews (Appendix C) were estimated to take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. All participants were interviewed only once. Participants were informed they could stop participating in the research at any time, even mid-interview. Phone participants were also

given the choice to withdraw their interviews from the research by contacting the researcher before a given date.

Participants were notified that the data from the on-line questionnaires would be exported to an Excel file and downloaded to and stored on a jump drive mechanism. Phone participants were notified in the consent form (Appendix D) and before beginning the interviews that their interviews would be digitally recorded (audio only), and would later be transcribed. Both the digital and typed versions of the interviews would be kept in locked and encrypted files. Similarly, the online participants were notified in their informed consent form (Appendix E) that questionnaire files would be locked and encrypted and stored in a safe, secure place. Since the consent forms from phone participants contain their first and last names, participants were told the forms would be kept in a secure, locked location, separate from their interview recordings and transcripts at all times. All participants were notified that their data would be kept for three years as required by Federal regulations. After three years time, the data will be destroyed or continue to be kept and secured for as long as needed.

The informed consent paperwork explained to all participants that the information collected in the interviews and questionnaires would be used for a master's level thesis and would be submitted for publication and presentation. Both the phone and on-line participants were notified that within the thesis, only general information would be mentioned of individual participants (type of agency, years of experience, etc.), and that participants would be referred to by an invented name. All participants were reminded that as mental health professionals, it would be their duty to keep confidential their clients' information, and that at no time during the questionnaire would they be required to divulge protected information about their clients.

Data Collection

Data was initially intended to be collected solely via phone interviews, however, when several months had passed with few respondents to the request for information, an on-line questionnaire with similar questions was posted on SurveyMonkey, in the hopes that a more convenient method of participation would yield more respondents.

The on-line questionnaires used the same questions as the phone interviews, but were modified to facilitate response. Online respondents had been assured they would not be contacted, so some questions were worded more explicitly or examples were given. Certain closed-ended questions were followed with multiple-choice answers. For example, to the question, “What was your most recent agency of employment counseling bullied youth?” were added the choices “School”, “Non-profit”, “Private practice”, or “Other (please specify)”.

Data Analysis

The audio recordings of the three interviews were transcribed by this researcher. Responses received via the internet questionnaire were imported to an Excel spreadsheet, with each question receiving a separate sheet. To compile the data received from the two sources, each phone interview transcription was partitioned into discrete question responses, which were then added to the corresponding Excel spreadsheet. The compiled responses were then examined and coded by noting patterns among participants, themes and outliers.

Summary

The survey questions were crafted deliberately to maximize the information culled from participants while minimizing the burden of response on participants. The next chapter will review the findings from the questions presented here.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Introduction

This chapter contains the findings from three phone interviews and thirteen narrative on-line questionnaires conducted with 16 certified or licensed mental health professionals from across the nation who have at least a master's degree and a minimum of two years counseling experience with victims of school bullying. Data was initially intended to be collected solely via phone interviews, however, when several months had passed with few respondents to the request for information, an on-line questionnaire with similar questions was posted, in the hope that a more convenient method of participation would yield more respondents. In the end, three phone interviews were conducted and 21 individual responses to the on-line questionnaire were collected. Of the phone interviews, all three were complete, whereas of the 21 on-line responses, only 14 individuals completed the questionnaire. One of the 14 on-line participants had already completed a phone interview, so his/her phone and on-line responses were compiled, so as not to be counted twice.

For the purposes of data presentation, each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Since, in the case of on-line participants, gender was not known (participants were not asked to identify their gender as part of the questionnaire), each participant was assigned a gender-neutral pseudonym (e.g. Alex, Jamie, Sam).

The interviews and questionnaires were intended to generate feedback from child and adolescent therapists and counselors on the complicated nature of dealing with bullying both on a macro level (in schools) and a micro level (with clients). Participants were asked about their experience working with bullied youth, their training and self-perceived readiness to confront bullying. Participants were also asked how supported they felt by their institution in dealing with bullying; which, if any, curricula and/or policies were in place to counter bullying; and how bullying concerns would get typically fielded to them or other counselors. Participants were also asked to describe their client base, the most common types of bullying they would hear about in therapy and any commonalities among bullying victims. Finally, participants were asked for their impressions on what helps or may help resolve bullying situations and what may counteract the negative effects of having been bullied. Participants were also asked to share a success story, where a bullying situation was resolved to the satisfaction of the victim.

Participant Profiles

Alex works in a co-ed, public middle school (6th – 8th) as a school based social worker and consultant. The school has 270 students. Alex has worked at this particular school for 6 months, and has 4 years total experience working with bullied youth.

Billie works as an 8th grade guidance counselor. Billie works in a co-ed public middle school with a population of 830 students. Billie has worked for this same school for 8 years and has 18 total years of experience in a counseling profession.

Cam works as a social worker for a public charter school. The school is a co-ed middle school with a population of 300. Cam has worked for this school for 15 months, but has 10 years total experience in the counseling field, including working as a residential counselor and social worker.

Cory works for a public co-educational high school with a population of 460 students. Cory has worked as a school social worker for this school for 3.5 years, and has a total of 7 years experience in counseling.

Dev works as a school counselor for a public co-ed elementary school (kindergarten through sixth grade). The school has a population of 400. Dev has worked at this school for 3 years, with an additional 8 years experience as an in-home therapist and as a child and family social worker for a state department.

Jamie works as a school social worker for a co-ed public school with a population of 1660. The school teaches 6th through 8th grades and 9th through 12th grades. Jamie has worked as a school social worker for 27 years.

Jo is a school-based mental health clinician, meaning, Jo works for an agency that provides counseling services for multiple schools. Jo has worked in this position for three years. Jo listed no other experience working as counselor for bullied youth.

Kelley has been working as a school social worker for a public co-ed high school for one year. The school has a population of 450 students. Kelley also reported previous experience working for a child protection agency and as a school-based therapist.

Kim has worked as social worker for the same public, co-ed middle school (6th through 8th grades) for the last four years. The school has a population of 1050 students. Kim has 11 years experience working as a mental health counselor with youth, and has worked with about 100 bullied youth during this time.

Kris estimates about 20 years experience working in a mental health capacity with youth, and has worked in the same school district for 6 years. Kris works as a school social worker to

the 695 students attending a public middle school (grades 5th through 8th) and high school (9th through 12th grades).

Max has worked as a public high school social worker for four years and worked previously for one year as a school-based therapist. Max listed a total of seven years experience working with bullied youth in a mental health capacity. The high school where Max has worked for the last two years has a population of 1050.

Mickey has been employed as a school social worker for a public charter middle school for 1.5 months. Prior to this position, Mickey worked as a an elementary school social worker for 1.5 years and a foster care reunification and case planner for one year. Mickey estimates working with a “couple hundred” victims of bullying during this time.

Morgan works as an in-home therapy clinician as part of a wrap-around team for a non-profit community agency. Morgan works with the entire family of each young client, as well as the school, psychiatrist, outpatient therapists, etc. Morgan has worked for this agency for three years – two as paid staff and one as a master’s-level intern. In this time, Morgan has only worked with one client victimized by bullying – a seventh grade girl.

Sam has one-and-a-half years experience as a school social worker for a public charter school serving grades pre-kindergarten through 8th. The school is co-ed and serves 650 students. Prior to this, Sam worked as a clinical social worker for 1.5 years.

Shawn works for a public junior high school (6th through 8th grades) as a school social worker, and has worked for the same school for 22 years. The school serves 650 boys and girls.

Syd worked as a teacher for nine years prior to becoming a special services counselor at a public co-ed high school of 650 students. Syd has now worked in this position for four years

Demographic Data

School demographics. Of the 16 participants, 12 worked as counselors for a specific school, 2 worked between 2 schools (in both cases they worked in a middle and a high school), 1 was employed by an outside agency and worked in various schools, and 1 worked with youth as an in-home family therapist. Of the 14 stationed at specific schools, all worked at co-ed public schools – 3 of which were public charter schools. Table 1 provides a breakdown via grade level for the 14 participants working in schools. The schools housed as few as 270 and as many as 1660 students. The majority (n=12) of participants at schools worked with youth between 5th and 12th grades.

<u># of Participants</u>	<u>Grade Level</u>
1	K – 6 th
1	PreK - 8 th
5	5 th /6 th – 8 th
2	6 th – 8 th & 9 th – 12
5	9 th – 12 th

Participant demographics. All participants were employed as counselors at the time of the questionnaire or survey and had worked in their current positions as few as six months and as many as 27 years. Participants reported 3 to 27 years total experience counseling bullied youth. During these years, participants estimated as little as 10% and as much as 85% of their time was spent working with bullied youth, and reported working with as few as one bullied youth to as many as 1000 youth.

Client demographics. All participants save one (Jamie) reported that a greater percentage of their bullied clientele were female. Billie reported a near even ratio of bullied female (45%) to male (42%) clients, with the difference being made up by transgender clients

(3%). Five of the sixteen participants reported bullied clients who were transgender. Table 2 provides an overview of participants' report of client demographics with regard to gender ("female", "male", and "transgender" were all provided as options) and average age, compared with total number of bullied clients reported served throughout employment in that position.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Female %:</u>	<u>Male %:</u>	<u>Transgender %:</u>	<u>Avg. age:</u>	<u>Total # of Bullied</u>
Jamie	20	70	5	12-17	30
Billie	45	42	3	12	150
Mickey	50	50	0	<i>nd</i>	<i>nd</i>
Alex	60	40	0	13	25
Sam	60	40	1	12	35-60
Jo	65	35	0	12	20
Kelley	65	35	0	15	175
Max	70	30	0	9	70
Cam	75	20	5	13	25
Shawn	75	25	0	14	60
Syd	78	20	2	15	100
Cory	80	20	0	15	25
Dev	80	20	0	11	50
Kim	95	5	0	14	25-40
Kris	95	5	0	14	1000
Morgan	100	0	0	<i>nd</i>	1

Note. ND signifies No Data was provided by participant.

Bullying Types

Types of bullying experienced. The participants were asked to provide examples of the types of bullying experienced by their clients. All participants provided examples of both direct and indirect forms of bullying. Five respondents answered "direct and indirect", without further elaboration. Others gave examples that were still ambiguous. For example, six participants mentioned "cyber", "cyberbullying", and "social media" which can refer to direct or indirect methods of bullying. Two of these six gave specific examples of how the social media is used – for starting rumors and gossiping and for making direct threats. Similarly ambiguously, "slurs"

and “threatening” were mentioned several times. Verbal abuse is considered a form of direct bullying, but slurs, threats and “talking about family members” can be used in direct and indirect ways. Used generally, homophobic and racial slurs can create a hostile environment for a person who identifies with a certain race, gender or sexuality. “Talking about family members” can be done directly to the victim or indirectly, in the form of rumors.

Types of bullying most often reported by clients. Respondents were also asked what types of bullying seemed to occur most often to their clients. Nine of the 14 respondents gave more than one answer. One respondent gave examples for the most common direct and most common indirect forms of bullying encountered, while three specifically differentiated whether direct or indirect bullying was most common. Responses included “verbal”, “social” or “relationship”, “gossip”, “dirty looks”, “internet”, “threats”, “indirect”, and “physical.” Less common responses were “excluding”, “writing notes to them”, and “direct”, with each only being mentioned once. The most common response was “gossip”, with six respondents mentioning it explicitly and a seventh saying s/he believed “gossiping causes alot [sic] of the fights but it’s hard to say since I don’t hear all of it”. The next most common responses were “verbal” and “cyberbullying” with six respondents mentioning some form. For example, “name calling”, “verbal slurs”, “verbal aggression” and “verbal slurs” were all counted for the purposes of this study under the umbrella term “verbal”. “Posting on social media”, “bullying via the internet”, and “Facebook” (which had three mentions) were all categorized under “cyberbullying”. Two respondents categorized cyberbullying as “indirect”, two respondents said Facebook was used for gossiping, and the final two just mentioned bullying via internet, without further explanation as to what or how.

Demographic Patterns Among Bullying Victims

Participants were asked if they noticed any demographic patterns among their clients who were bullied. Some respondents described multiple patterns. The most common response was given by the six respondents who said they had noticed no patterns. Three respondents said bullying occurred more often amongst girls; two narrowed it down to a specific grade level of girls, with one saying “10th graders” and the other saying “mostly freshman girls who are either pretty or super nerdy” (Shawn). The third respondent who mentioned girls alluded to bullying among boys simply being underreported: “Mostly girls but boys are becoming more open to telling an adult” (Kim). Four respondents mentioned ties between bullying and socioeconomic level, though one did not explain further. The other three of these respondents said bullying occurred more often to those with lower economic levels, though Mickey pointed out that the perception of being poor “doesn’t even have to be accurate”. Three participants mentioned students’ sexuality or perceived sexuality (including being “unsure”) made them more prone to bullying. Three participants mentioned characteristics often perceived as positive increased the likeliness of a girl being bullied; two explained this phenomenon by describing increased competitiveness among girls seen as “pretty”, “developed”, or “popular”. One participant (Mickey) described a contradictory pattern for boys: “So, ideally, for the boys you need both pieces; you gotta be the cool kid with all the material things and the prettiest girl but you also gotta be tough enough to protect it, so you’re not a target.”

Bullying Policy

Prevalence of bullying policies at agencies and schools. All 16 participants were asked whether the agency or school where they worked had a bullying policy or curriculum. Kelley, who works as a high school social worker, was the only school-based participant whose school

did not have a bullying policy. Morgan, who works as an in-home therapy clinician, did not know whether the school attended by his/her sole bullied client had a bullying policy, but said that the client and client's parent felt unsupported by the school. The agency where Morgan works does not appear to have a policy about bullying but "they err on the side of caution and precaution" with regard to getting the police involved.

The 14 remaining participants were then asked to describe the policy and/or curriculum used. Eight participants described a policy or disciplinary procedure for students found bullying other students. The most common policy given was "zero tolerance", with six respondents listing its use (Alex, Billie, Cam, Cory, Kris, Mickey). Five respondents (Cory, Jo, Sam, Kim, Mickey) described what actions are taken by the school when bullying is reported, some listing more than one action – two mentioning "investigations", two mentioning contacting parents, three mentioning "mediation", and two mentioning "suspension". One participant (Dev) said his/her school uses the district policy [district name redacted], and one participant said the school's policy on bullying "defines the discipline process" (Jamie), but neither participant gave further details on what the policy is, though Jamie added that the policy is focused on intervention and prevention. Three participants also described the use of anonymous methods for collecting information about bullying – a "bully tip line" (Max), Safe2Tell (Syd) and a "bully box" (Mickey).

Only one participant, Mickey, explained what "zero tolerance" looks like when enacted. The school where Mickey previously worked had no policy or curriculum. Mickey's current school has a zero tolerance policy towards bullying, where a student's account in their token economy system will be purged whenever that student is reported as bullying other students. Mickey says because the token accounts are so important to the students, and the students see

that there is no tolerance for bullying, “It’s almost cooler now to just tolerate the bullying and just deal with it then to tell an adult.” Mickey says the schools anonymous bully box “kind of counteracts that issue around snitching... and seems to be working really well”. There is no current anti-bullying program or curriculum in use, but Mickey’s school is currently looking into different possibilities.

Seven participants described or listed the use of an anti-bullying curriculum or program (Syd, Max, Sam, Kris, Shawn, Alex and Cory). Some participants mentioned using more than one program. Syd’s middle school uses Second Step, Safe2Tell and Why Try. Max’s middle school also uses Second Step, and started using Rachel’s Challenge in the 2012/2013 school year. Kris’s school uses Salvaging Sisterhood and “the prevention curriculum of ‘Mrs. Ruby’s Lessons for Life’”. Shawn’s school uses “Solution Teams from No Bully”. Alex described a curriculum “designed by this clinician which focuses on promoting kindness and acceptance as well as anti-bullying.” Sam said grades 3-5 of the pre-kindergarten through eighth grade school used Second Step in the 2011/2012 school year, but was not sure if that curriculum was currently being used. Shawn, Sam and Cory each mentioned a curriculum being taught to the students themselves in health class (Shawn) or advisory (Cory, Sam).

Policies’ focus, cost, how chosen. To the question of whether their school’s curriculum or policy was focused on intervention, prevention or both, eight respondents said their schools’ policy and/or curriculum was focused on both intervention and prevention of bullying. Three either described solely intervention techniques or mentioned intervention as the main focus of their schools’ policy and/or curriculum. For example, Kim explained, “Peace circles and mediation can be used but for the majority overt bullying will be dealt with by suspension,” – all of which are described as interventions to be used after a bullying incident occurred. Three

responses to the question were unclear. Syd responded, “Mostly intervention but looking more at intervention,” though it is likely s/he meant for the second “intervention” to read “prevention”. Cam simply responded “Yes” and Dev responded “No curriculum”, without explaining the focus of the district policy s/he had mentioned in an earlier response.

Participants were asked whether there was any cost attached to the curriculum used by their schools. Max, Kris, Sam and Shawn all worked with schools that paid for anti-bullying curriculum. Syd thought the school had “probably” paid for the Second Step and Why Try programs. Jo was not sure whether the school had paid for a program, but had only described intervention, and no curriculum, in previous answers – “...the administration conducts a ‘full investigation’ by questioning all students who were named...” The other participants either provided no answer to the question of cost for the curriculum or responded “no” or “n/a”.

Of the 14 respondents who said their school or agency had a policy or curriculum, four respondents referred solely to themselves when asked how their policies were chosen. Alex said their curriculum was "created by this clinician after conversations with school administrators about the school's need around anti-bullying." Shawn had picked the No Bully curriculum for his/her school, and Mickey had plans to research anti-bullying programs for future use. Billie did not know how the zero tolerance policy at his/her school had been chosen and added, "I write my curriculum when I need it." Five respondents (Jamie, Cory, Max, Kris, and Sam) referred to administrators in the determination of policy. Jamie referred simply to “administrators”, while Max specified "district administrators" and Cory both "administration and district policy". The other two respondents (Kris, Sam) referred to themselves in the selection process, but admitted that the school had the final say. For example, Sam added that s/he had proposed the school use the "No Place for Hate" program, but that it was "tabled because of all the things going on in

school. People are generally putting out fires rather than thinking about school-wide prevention". Three respondents gave unclear answers - Kim did not answer the question, Dev answered "unknown" and Cam responded "determined". The final two respondents mentioned tragic events that had happened which had led to the creation of policy. Jo assumed the "high numbers of suicides by students in the last 2 decades" led to the policies, while Syd said they were created "after Columbine and not changed much."

Participant opinions of perceived effectiveness. Alex was the only respondent to feel the school's policy and curriculum (in this case, a no tolerance policy coupled with an anti-bullying curriculum designed by Alex) was "effective", while adding "there is always room for improvement". Shawn found the Solution Teams from No Bully s/he picked "pretty good" in terms of effectiveness. Mickey and Cory had more mixed feelings. Mickey seemed to like that the school takes bullying very seriously, but worries, "the kids are almost afraid now to report bullying because they don't want to be labeled as a snitch." Cory responded that the combination of a strong zero tolerance policy with mediation, letter to parents and anti-cyberbullying class curriculum is "fairly effective, best the school can afford."

Max, Billie and Kris found their schools' policies to have smaller effects. Max, whose school just started using Rachel's Challenge, but had already been using Second Step and a tip line, described a "low effect in comparison to my own school direct interventions" and would prefer a curriculum "based on school assessment [instead] of a canned program." Billie described the school's zero tolerance policy as "maybe 20-25% effective" depending on the situation, but after working in a district where less was done says, "I am grateful... It's much better to be guided by policy." Similarly, Kris saw a "25% decline in incidents reported", with

the school's combination of a zero tolerance policy and Salvaging Sisterhood curriculum. Kris believes, "...we continue to adapt the policy to meet the needs of our students."

Six of the participants (Dev, Jamie, Sam, Jo, Syd and Cam) found their schools' policies and/or curricula ineffectual. Of these, Syd and Cam simply described the policies as "not effective". Dev, Sam, Jamie and Jo made similar statements that the schools where they worked were not doing enough when bullying occurred. Jo, who had described the school's policy as "focused more on intervention", called it a "bandaid approach rather than a preventative school climate approach." Dev and Jamie both cited a lack of follow-through on the schools' parts when incidents are reported. Sam, who saw that bullying was a "huge problem" and that his/her school "could definitely be doing more," recognized that "other problems relating to poverty and community violence seem to be more pressing" adding, "the push for high test scores and academic growth puts an emphasis on academic interventions and very little time is dedicated to the social/emotional needs of the students." One participant (Kim) did not answer the question.

Participants' desired changes. When asked if there was anything they would change about their schools' responses to bullying, 11 of the 14 school-based respondents generally wanted change in one (or two) of three ways – with teachers, with students and/or with policy. Kim did not answer the question, Shawn was "not sure", and Billie responded ambiguously, "Not at this time. It's hard to get into the classroom."

Of those who wanted to change teachers' responses, Alex wanted to see teachers "more actively involved in addressing bullying", while Syd wanted to "use mental health professionals [to] train school staff." Mickey felt like s/he relied on teachers' reports, but "we're relying on a team of mostly overwhelmed educators to... flag things... sometimes what that means is that

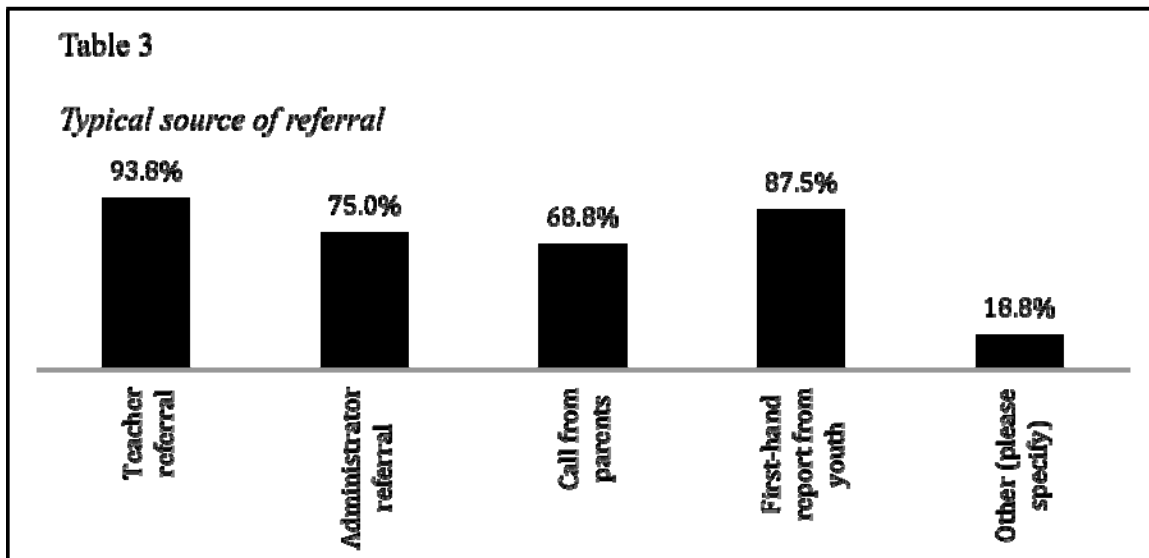
things don't get to our attention until it's too late." Mickey also added feeling "disheartened" when bullies' parents "take no accountability or responsibility."

For changes among students, Cory wanted more of a focus on "building up/encouraging the bystanders", while Max wanted "more help or counseling services for bullies". Jo said his/her school "has worked very hard in the last year or two on improving climate and culture", but did not say if this had been helpful and had no recommendation for future work.

Kris wanted his/her school to "take more initiative to investigate and punish the online bullying." Similarly, Dev wanted his/her school to "increase implementation and consequences." Cam also wanted more changes implemented "via policy and curriculum". Max, who, as mentioned above, wanted more counseling for bullies, also wanted "stronger policies" on bullying of gay students. Jamie, who had early said the school's policy "needs real support and reaction when incidents occur" wanted to "revamp and make it real". Sam though having students sign a "clear student handbook" that "explicitly states a bullying policy" would help.

Referral process. Participants were asked how they typically become involved in a youth's bullying situation, and were given a selection of choices, including an "Other" choice, where they could specify a referral process that was not listed, and/or list any additional comments. Respondents could pick as many options as applied to their work. All 16 respondents answered the question. Table 3 provides a percentage breakdown of how referrals are received. The choices "Teacher referral" had the highest tally, with 15 respondents each choosing this option. "First-hand report from youth" had the next highest tally, with 14 respondents. Syd, who had selected "First-hand report from youth", had also listed "child self-referral" in the "Other" box. Mickey mentioned that self-referrals were more likely to come from

youth s/he was already working with on other issues, adding “The kids who... have no reason to interact with me, they’re less likely to come to me. But they might come to another adult in the building and then that adult will come to me. But usually it comes to my attention in the form of a crisis.” “Administrator referral” had the next highest count with 12 making this selection. In the comment section, Kim specified that s/he received “referral from Deans”. Eleven respondents marked “Call from parents”. Mickey specified that s/he mainly gets such calls “from parents with kids who are more severe with mental health needs,” such as children with “severe autism who are high functioning enough to be in the public schools...” Three participants added referral options that were not listed. Jamie said that s/he would also “witness occurrences [sic]” of bullying. Sam made a similar remark that s/he would become involved in a bullying problem during a crisis intervention after a fight had happened. Sam also added that bullied students’ peers would make referrals. Morgan, who works as an in-home therapist, found out about his/her client’s problems with bullying from the referring clinician.



Perceived Readiness & Support

Training. Nine respondents stated they had received formal training about bullying. Of these, eight had received training from their employer. Some respondents specified that these employer-provided trainings were given by the agency where the clinician works (Morgan), by the school and district (Shawn) or by the school district (Billie, Kim), while others only specified “employer” (Alex, Jamie, Max, Syd). Only three respondents specified the topic of the training they had received. Some of the employer-provided trainings were for specific bullying curricula such as No Bully (Shawn) and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, Talk, Walk Squawk, and Second Step (Kim). Morgan’s employer provided training on a general bullying problem – cyberbullying, “I’ve only been to one so far, but they do monthly trainings and... each year they try to focus at least one on bullying and school issues.” Two respondents (Max, Syd) said they had personally sought out education on bullying issues, either through reading and “personal experiences” (Max) or “professional conferences and workshops that I personally paid for” (Syd). Sam had also received training at a “school social work conference.” Three respondents had received education on bullying from a university – Syd from “Master’s, doctoral program,” Sam from Master’s, and Billie from “a cooperative arrangement with [local university]”. Alex was the only participant to mention receiving training from “online webinars.” Mickey said s/he had not received training but tries to “do my own research – I read a lot, I try to talk to other colleagues.” Mickey added, “In my current position it’s been said to me, whatever training, whatever I want to implement, there’s school funding for whatever I need, including bullying.”

Feeling of preparedness and support. All 16 participants responded to the question “Do you feel adequately equipped to deal with bullying in your role?” Fourteen respondents answered this question affirmatively, with two (Kim, Mickey) responding “Definitely.” Cory

said s/he felt “somewhat” equipped and “would like more information on relational bullying”. Sam simply responded “No.” Morgan added that his/her feeling of preparedness was directly related to the support s/he felt from coworkers,

So even though I might no have extensive training in it [bullying prevention]... because of this team approach that we use I certainly feel like I’m going to work with the school and if I feel like the school isn’t taking appropriate steps then I have the support to find out what the next steps available are and will be backed up in taking whatever steps I need to take.

When asked if they felt supported by their agency in working against bullying, 11 respondents answered affirmatively, with Kris stipulating, “Yes, at the building level I do.” Kelley responded “somewhat” and Syd answered “not really”. The last three respondents all answered “no”, with Max adding, “often feel the adults themselves model bullying towards students and each other.”

Bullying & Success

Improving positive outcomes. Participants were asked what they though most impacted the outcome of a bullying situation. Three respondents mentioned “empathy” explicitly, though two (Kim, Shawn) recommended using empathy with the students, while the third (Sam) thought the children should be taught how to have empathy. In the same vein, three participants (including Sam, as well as Mickey and Max) thought that counseling or therapy could be helpful. Max specifically mentioned mental health services provided “to student who is bullying”.

Many of the participants believed involvement from adults to be important. Five respondents (Billie, Cam, Dev, Kelley, Sam) all mentioned getting parents involved as helpful. Kelley only found parent involvement helpful “sometimes”, and Billie limited parent

involvement as helpful with those parents who “are level headed and have good parenting skills.” Six respondents (Cam, Sam, Jamie, Jo, Alex, Morgan) found involvement by teachers or other school workers helpful. Sam mentioned teacher involvement as helpful in the teaching of empathy to the students. Morgan wanted “supports in the community and outside of her home, and especially in school” for his/her client. Two respondents simply mentioned “adult” involvement as helpful. Kim found adults helpful when they were trusted by both parties, and could “find common ground to start the conversation about what is going on separately in each student’s life,” while Syd found adults helpful in providing a “calm demeanor” and “modeling respectful behaviors.” Three participants added that school policies could be helpful in having a positive outcome in a bullying situation. Morgan thought the school “setting strict policies and following through with them” would be helpful to his/her client. Jamie mentioned “effective consequences” as helpful, and Kris “direct consequences.” Only Cam found that rewards could be helpful. Sam said that s/he never found punishment or reward helpful. Mickey also said not to punish.

Seven participants mentioned working with the students in some way. Four respondents (Cory, Alex, Kris, Shawn) specifically mentioned working with “bystanders”, which Shawn defined as those “who let it happen but don’t directly participate.” In addition to working with bystanders, Cory also thought mediation should be used. Kelley, similarly, thought that “bringing both parties together helps”, while Max called for a more general “integration of students across grades or classes, combining students into goal focused activities with others.” Finally, Jamie called for “more input from the victim.”

Preventing and reversing bullying’s negative effects. All 16 respondents had varied ideas for what is most helpful in reversing or preventing the many long-term negative affects

bullying can have on both victims and perpetrators. Many participants mentioned more than one approach. Two participants (Cam, Dev) mentioned “prevention”, without further explanation, as part of their approach. Five participants talked about psycho-education, or other more direct educational approaches. Kelley found “explaining the long-term results of bullying and real life examples of tragic consequences (i.e., suicide by the victim)” helpful. Dev found both “parent awareness” and “internet awareness” useful, though it is unclear whether the latter statement is directed at providing education to the children, parents or others. Jamie said that “strategies given to victims” is helpful. Cam mentioned providing “social skills training”, while Jo called for providing similar “socio-developmental tools.”

Three different participants, Cam, Jamie and Sam, mentioned therapy. Sam thought both “individual counseling” and CBT were effective, and Cam also mentioned “individual cognitive therapy.” Jamie cited general “direct counseling support” as helpful. Two respondents specifically mentioned “empathy”. Shawn did not explain how one could provide “empathy and compassion building,” but Kim said s/he builds empathy among the students through trauma groups. Kim found these groups helpful for allowing “students to express pain and be supported by one another.” Five other respondents found on-going dialogue a useful tool, whether through “following up” with all parties after an incident (Alex), “discussing the topic frequently” (Jo), having process and support groups like those in the CBITS (Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools) program (Max) or having “classroom presentation with videos and dialog” (Billie). Billie further added that classroom discussion “allows students and staff to recognize problems and address them... sometimes it’s really about recognizing and acknowledging the student’s [sic] who hurt.” The fifth person to talk about communication was Mickey, who said “Kids need the language to understand what they need and communicate

what’s going on with them.” Mickey provided this statement in the context of having adult mentors as part of the healing process for children who have bullied or been bullied – “someone who has gone through those issues and has come out on the other end.” Morgan likewise found a mentor model helpful, though among peers:

I think there’s this aspect of belonging and not belonging and the bullying magnified that in many way...finding those core relationships, especially in the community, that can hopefully have a positive influence and kind of change the cycle of how the young person interacts with those around them and how they feel about themselves in relation to those around them.

Morgan added that a peer connection could also be made by helping the bullied student become involved in “an activity in the community or a supportive group in the community.” Cory also mentioned, “helping the student find a supportive peer group”, but made no mention of whether these groups would function in a mentorship capacity.

The final cross-section of participants all mentioned working on the victim’s sense of self, in ways similar to Morgan. Cory, for example, found “involvement in activities where they excel” helpful to the healing of victims. Similarly, Max mentioned “helping students get engaged in goal focused activities” as helpful, though it’s unclear if this suggestion was intended to improve a student’s self-esteem, relationships with peers or both. Sam, Shawn and Jo all mentioned building self-esteem in general, and Syd said to “help victim become self-advocating and empowered,” without further explanation or example. Finally, Kris advocated for working on “self-resiliency and assertiveness skills....We have to teach students to assert themselves, find their own inner strength and coping strategies to get through life.”

Examples of success stories. When asked, twelve respondents provided examples of success stories where a bullying situation was resolved to the satisfaction of the victim. Two participants (Jo, Kim) mentioned mediation alone as helpful in resolution, while a third (Sam) talked about using “group intervention” in one interaction with 4th and 5th-grade girls to help “reduce conflict” among them. Two more participants (Mickey, Cam) mentioned mediation in combination with other techniques. For Cam, involving parents was key to resolving a problem with girls between the ages of 12 and 14. Mickey, however, already had a relationship with a group of 5th grade girls who “were always falling out with each other” and then “just turned on one of the friends who befriended another girl.” In this situation, Mickey began with “private sessions with every single girl”, noticed the trends in what they were saying, and then brought them all together for mediation. Mickey admits this technique would have been difficult in a situation where there were not relationships with the students to build on. While Shawn did not mention mediation, s/he did talk about using a “solution team from No Bully about verbal slurs,” as a way of helping students solve the bullying issue on their own, though Shawn did not specify what solutions the students came up with. Shawn added, “The victim felt much safer and more comfortable in class after.” Kelley provided a similar example of using group work, in the form of a “peace circle” to help youth “understand where the other individual was coming from and sign a contract to resolve the problem.” Dev simply mentioned that several students attended the “Saturdays for Success program.”

Three participants gave examples of building up the victim’s skills as a way of resolving a bullying situation. For Billie, working with the victim’s parents was “instrumental to helping him build his self-esteem to resolve the issues.” Billie added that s/he also contacted the “bullier’s parents,” but made no mention of what was said. Kris similarly mentioned teaching

“assertiveness skills” to a victim “as well as some of the bystanders,” in a situation where a girl was being excluded and gossiped about. Syd provided an example of high school students “subjected to racial slurs” who “got involved in a Latino culture club and learned how to dispel racial stereotypes, gain self-confidence, learned advocacy, and leadership skills.” Max was the only participant to provide an example of intervening only with the student doing the bullying, in this case, with middle school students – “asked them if they needed help, [they] stated they had family issues and worked through them, bullying stopped per student report.”

Summary

The 16 participants provided information useful for painting a picture of their responses in a typical bullying situation, from types of bullying experienced by their clients, to how referrals are received, to what interventions they have found most helpful. In the next section, the participants’ responses will be compared to what has been found in previous literature on the subject. It is hoped that the comparison will prove useful in discovering what areas of bullying intervention are often left uncovered, on either the part of researchers, counselors or school administrators.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Introduction

The goal of this study was to investigate the techniques and opinions of counseling professionals who work with victims of school bullying to uncover what they have found effective and ineffective in preventing and/or intervening in bullying. Through interviews and surveys, it was hoped to answer the question: how do the stories and experiences of counseling professionals who have worked with victims of school-age bullying add to the discourse on bullying and its interventions? It is hoped the answers found here may provide new directions of investigation for future quantitative and qualitative research on bullying and its prevention and interventions. Many of the observations made by participants had been referred to in previous literature.

Findings are discussed in the following order: 1) key findings, describing the relationship between the study results and previous literature; 2) implications for social work practice, discussing the use and import of the findings to social workers and the field of social work, including a review of why an ecological lens may be helpful to planning future interventions; and 3) limitations and recommendations for future bullying intervention and prevention research.

Key Findings: Comparison with the Previous Literature

The overall tenor of responses from participants was that schools and counselors continue to struggle to find effective ways of preventing, managing and responding to bullying incidents

and the overall culture that induces bullying. The majority of respondents felt their schools' policies and/or actions were not effective or not effective enough. This finding reflects the finding of the meta-analyses by Merrell, et al (2008) and Smith, et al (2004) where 90% of interventions used in the United States had little to no effect. Though most of the respondents did not work in schools that used a specific intervention curriculum, it is understandable that individuals would struggle with finding solutions to a problem that has flummoxed many teams of researchers and experts.

Overall, participants who worked in schools that used a curriculum perceived greater effectiveness than those participants who worked in schools that only had a policy about bullying. There was no significant difference in perceived effectiveness between those respondents whose schools paid for a curriculum and those who used a free or self-created curriculum. It should be noted that none of the curricula used in participants' schools had been included in any of the three meta-analyses (Merrell, Gueldner & Ross, 2008; Smith, Schneider & Ananiadou, 2004; Ttofi, Farrington & Baldry, 2011) discussed above. However, the same not-for-profit company (Committee for Children) that created the "Second Step" curriculum mentioned by two participants also created "Steps to Respect" – a curriculum that *was* evaluated in the meta-analysis by Ttofi, et al (2011) and found to have no significant effect.

Generally, respondents' views of paid curricula reflected the findings of two of these meta-analyses (Merrell, Gueldner & Ross, 2008; Smith, Schneider & Ananiadou, 2004), in that they are all too often inadequate to match all the nuances of bullying facing schools. The statement made by one participant whose school used a commercial curriculum – referring to such curricula as "canned" and wishing for a program tailored to the school – highlights a dilemma with all such programs – is it possible create a single tool useful for all schools? Is it

possible for any single tool to account for the variety of bullying behavior to be encountered in any social environment?

Although there were groupings of similar ideas for improving positive outcomes in bullying situations, such as mental health services for bullies and/or victims, increasing parent involvement or encouraging student bystanders to intervene, the counselors typically found different interventions helpful. It is unclear whether the variety of ideas stems from the different theoretical backgrounds of the counselors or the different environments in which they work. Another possibility is that many school-based professionals have found certain actions helpful, but have not yet found what will be *most* helpful to intervening in bullying. It is interesting that four participants found peer (or “bystander”) education and intervention helpful, when the meta-analytic findings of Ttofi, et al (2012) supported previous findings that peer support measures, including “peer mediation, peer mentoring, or engagement of bystanders in bullying situations”, had no or an amplifying effect on bullying and victimization.

Another participant referred to the administrative focus typically being on what s/he feels are often more pressing concerns for schools – poverty, community violence, academics and test scores were given as examples. This comment highlights the other ecological factors that appear too often forgotten in bullying curricula and echoes Smith’s (2011) encouragement that we “need to consider the wider societal context in which [antibullying] programs take place” (p. 420). Perhaps the time has come to look beyond the microsystem of the school to the mesosystem, to examine “the interrelations among the major settings containing the learner” (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, p. 5).

There were several items of concern that emerged in the narrative data. The first has to do with the finding that one-third of participants work with schools that are using zero tolerance

policies, despite the APA noting that strict zero tolerance policies often create more harm than good (APA, 2008). Similarly concerning was the finding that about half of the participants had received no formal training about bullying. The majority of those who had received training had been trained through their place of employment. That only one participant specifically mentioned seeking out literature on bullying suggests there may be a lack of self-study by school-based counselors. Surprisingly, a lack of training did not seem to affect participants' perception of their own preparedness to handle bullying issues as they came up. This self-confidence about preparedness differs somewhat from the findings of Merrell, et al (2008) that teachers, at least, felt more competent to handle bullying issues after receiving training.

Also concerning was the variance in ratio among respondents for girls' to boys' victimization. On average, girls made up 68% of the bullying victims for respondents, with some respondents stating that girls made up 95% of their bullying-related caseload. This finding conflicts with previous findings that boys experience bullying on similar levels to girls (Wang et al, 2010). It is possible that many male victims are slipping through the cracks and not getting the help they need with bullying?

When asked about bullying patterns they have noticed at their schools, one participant's response of, "Mostly girls but boys are becoming more open to telling an adult," is telling. Another respondent noticed, "I would say that it's just as common with the boys but because of the culture among my boys in schools it was less likely to come to the attention of an adult until it got really bad." This same respondent later pointed out that, because of the strict zero tolerance policy, "Kids are almost afraid now to report bullying because they don't want to be labeled as a snitch..." None of these findings are surprising, given the research of Dukes et al (2010) that linked bullying to depressions and lower self-esteem. What is surprising is the

paucity of respondents mentioning possible underreporting of bullying by any groups or subgroups. It has been this researcher's experience in community mental health with schoolchildren that many prefer to not report bullying for fear of worsening their school life. For one client, this included insisting on not informing her mother of the bullying, either. This client worried that her mother, upon finding out about the bullying, would go to the school and "make a scene" that all of the girls' peers would find out about. Apparently, this very thing had happened to the girl before and the bullying had, indeed, worsened as a result. Meanwhile, the girl's mother, who was accessing services elsewhere in the agency, was perplexed about and worried for her daughter's deteriorating mood, grades and conduct with adults at school. Perhaps, many of the respondents were not aware of similar storylines because they were employed by schools and, as such, were not deemed "safe" to tell by their young clients as I had been.

As stated earlier, the majority of participants felt that not enough was being done to handle bullying in the schools where they worked. Most of the participants, however, had suggestions or ideas for steps that could be taken to decrease bullying and improve the quality of life for children in their schools. Mirroring bullying research to-date, there was no consensus among participants on what actions would be most effective in reducing or preventing bullying. Further, it is encouraging that most of the respondents could provide stories of successfully resolving a bullying dynamic, and describe which techniques they found helpful. These findings seem to imply a sense of hope, as that stated by Smith, et al (2004):

...despite the limited empirical support for the effectiveness of antibullying programs, there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that such programs should be abandoned...the

overarching message is that intervention can succeed, but not enough is known to indicate exactly how and when. (p. 558)

Until more research and analysis has been done on which methods of preventing and intervening in bullying are most effective in the most diverse range of environments, perhaps the most that can be hoped for is academic professionals – counselors, teachers and administrators; key players in a child’s educational micro and meso systems – experimenting to find what works for them and their schools and using it.

Implications for Social Work

Since bullying is so prevalent among youth, these findings might be helpful to most professionals working with children. Educators, therapists, school administrators and staff at juvenile detention centers and group homes are a few examples of the professions who may also benefit from this additional information on bullying and the responses of professionals to bullying.

The findings of this study support previous research that there are yet no best practices or clear answers for preventing or intervening in bullying. What this means for professionals is that it is important to stay up-to-date with new research in the field, as more studies are continually released and may provide a better picture of how best to intervene. Also of import for those involved in clinical work with children is understanding the difficulty of fully resolving a bullying situation. Given a school’s ecology, the difficulty (or reluctance) of administrators to enforce antibullying measures, and the dearth of successful antibullying interventions, many children may be unwilling to report bullying for further action. Such unwillingness can put a counselor in a delicate place. While bullying is not yet an event that mandates reporting, it is

concerning, especially in the wake of cases like Phoebe Prince, Tyler Clementi, and Adam Lanza to know the damage and future damage bullying can inflict.

The findings of this study also revealed that boys' bullying victimization might be more invisible than some researchers (Besag, 2006) believe. From participants' accounts it appears that most school counselors are often dependent on the reports and referrals of other school personnel (namely teachers) to intervene in bullying situations. It may be important, then, for school social workers to encourage their colleagues to watch for boys' victimization.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Though there may not be transferability of findings to every school and all counselors working with bullied youth, this study's data might be useful to future researchers, especially those looking for ideas for new interventions.

It is this researcher's regret that explicit questions were not asked about suspected and unreported bullying. Further research directions may include studying children's barriers to reporting bullying, especially boys'. Also worth further investigation is Ttofi et al's findings (2011) that peer-related interventions tend to increase or have no effect on bullying. This would be an especially interesting avenue to pursue in light of the fact that many of the professionals questioned for this study found peer-based interventions helpful and hoped to increase use of them in the future.

Another question researchers following a similar path may want to consider is asking counseling professionals how important an issue they believe bullying to be, both for them, in their work, and for the children they are counseling. Many questions in the questionnaires and interviews were predicated on the idea that children's counselors would find bullying to be a very significant issue – in their work and in their clients' lives. This may not be the case,

however, and would be worth further investigation. It is possible that many of the issues with the success of bullying interventions has to do with adults who are significant in the lives of children, feeling the bullying is a natural and/or minor part of childhood. Indeed, this researcher experienced great difficulty finding counseling professionals willing to discuss issues of bullying.

Summary

The small size of the sample interviewed means that many of the findings here may not be transferrable to the larger scale of bullying nationwide. It is hoped the information in this study will be useful to future researchers, who might find helpful the gaps in research investigated here. Similarly, a bullying researcher might find helpful some of the patterns of responses by school clinicians that are investigated here. Perhaps clinicians might, too, find useful the information on strengths and weakness of current intervention components.

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Appendix A

Advertisement in E-newsletter of School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA)



Research Assistance Needed: Study on Relational Bullying

Please participate in a qualitative study on relational bullying among middle school and high school girls! What is most helpful to girls who have been victims of relational bullying? What interventions are schools using? Respond by phone or internet questionnaire. The criteria for the study: I have at least 2 years experience working directly with several bullied girls (middle school and/or high school age) in a mental health/counseling capacity, I have a state certification or state license in counseling, social work, school or clinical psychology, and I am able to speak and understand English fluently. If you fit this criteria, please visit the questionnaire at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BullyingAmongGirls> or contact Mary Gutierrez at mgutierr@smith.edu or (XXX) XXX-XXXX for more information. All participants will be entered in a drawing for \$75. This research will be used for my MSW thesis at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA.

Appendix B
On-line Questionnaire

Note. Per the online survey software, question number “1” was the Consent Form.

2. What was your most recent agency of employment counseling bullied youth?
 - School
 - Non-Profit
 - Private Practice
 - Other (please specify)

3. Please describe the school where you work(ed) most recently.
 - Is the school public or private?
 - What grade levels are taught?
 - Co-ed or all girls?
 - Approximately how many students attend?

4. Please tell me about your most recent relevant job.
 - Job Title:
 - Is this your current job?
 - If yes, how long have you worked at this job?
 - If no, what approximate years did you work at this job? (ex: 1990-1995)

5. Please list any other jobs counseling bullied youth and the years (ex: 1990-1995) that you worked there.

6. Approximately how many years have you worked in a counseling capacity with youth with bullying problems?

7. During these years, about what percentage of your time was spent working with bullied youth?

8. About how many bullied youth have you worked with in your career?

9. Describe the bullied youth you've worked with.
 - Female %:
 - Male %:
 - Transgender %:
 - Average age:

10. What different types of bullying have your clients experienced? (direct: physical/verbal slurs vs. indirect: excluding/gossiping about, etc.)

11. What types of bullying seem to occur most often to your clients?

12. Have you noticed any demographic patterns among your clients who were bullied?

13. Does your organization have a policy and/or curriculum for bullying?

Yes

No

14. Tell me about the policy/curriculum for bullying for your organization... (If you've worked for more than one organization with a policy/curriculum, please describe the organization with which you've had the most experience.)

Please briefly describe the curriculum/policy.

Curriculum/policy focused on intervention, prevention or both?

Was there a cost for this curriculum? (If so, please provide name of curriculum.)

How was this policy determined or curriculum chosen?

How effective have you found this policy/curriculum?

What is your opinion of this policy/curriculum?

Is there anything you would change about your organization's planned response to bullying?

15. Have you received formal training about bullying?

16. How did you acquire your training on bullying? (ex: During Master's program, Provided by employer, etc.)

17. Do you feel adequately equipped to deal with bullying in your role?

18. Do you feel supported by your agency in working against bullying?

19. How do you typically become directly involved in a specific bullying problem? (check all that apply)

Teacher referral

Administrator referral

Call from parents

First-hand report from youth

Other (please specify)/Additional comments

20. If applicable, please tell me about a success story where a bullying situation was resolved to the satisfaction of the victim. (Please include: type of bullying, ages & genders of children, what/who contributed to successful outcome.)

21. What do you think most impacts the outcome of a bullying situation? (ex: Parent involvement, teacher involvement, punishment, reward, etc...)

22. There are many long-term negative affects of bullying on its victims: What have you found to be effective in preventing and/or reversing the negative affects of bullying that has already occurred?

23. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C

Phone Interview Questions

Bullied client gender identity breakdown (%): ___% male ___% female ___% transgender Avg. Client Age:	
Job Title : Current job? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no If no, approx. date range employed at this job: _____ - _____ (years only, e.g. 1990-1995)	Agency of Employment <input type="checkbox"/> School <input type="checkbox"/> Non-profit <input type="checkbox"/> Private practice If school, descript. of school: (i.e. public, private, senior high, junior high, co-ed, etc.) _____

- 1) In what ways have you been professionally involved in helping youth with bullying problems?
- 2) Approximately how many years did you work/have you been working (in a mental health capacity) with youth with bullying problems?
 - a) Approximately what percentage of your time (during these years) was spent working with bullied youth?
- 3) As a mental health professional working with bullied youth, what different types of bullying did you/do you see?
 - a) Of these, which types of bullying do you most often see?
 - b) Did you notice any patterns of youth who were bullied?
- 4) Have you worked in more than one mental health setting with victims of bullying?
 - a) **If YES: repeat Question 5 (below) for each setting.**
- 5) What was/is your organization's policy/curriculum for intervening on bullying?

(Prompt for:

 - philosophy (e.g. Power/Control, Peer mediation, One-strike/Zero Tolerance, etc.)
 - Intervention or Prevention focused? Or mix?

- Focus on Primary v. Secondary v. Tertiary intervention?
 - Is it a commercial intervention? (i.e. Was there a cost attached?)
- a) How was this policy determined or curriculum chosen?
 - b) How effective have you found this policy/curriculum?
 - c) What is your opinion of this policy/curriculum?
 - d) Is there anything you would like to change about your organization's planned response to bullying?
- 6) What training have you received in dealing with bullying?
 - a) How did you acquire this training? (e.g. As a counseling student, as part of bullying curriculum, as employee of agency, etc.)
 - b) Do you feel adequately equipped to deal with bullying?
 - c) Do you feel supported by your agency?
 - 7) How do you typically become involved in a specific bullying problem? (e.g. Teacher referral, administrator referral, call from parents, first-hand report from youth, etc.)
 - 8) What are your frustrations about working with the different players? (i.e. Admin, Teachers, Parents, Kids, etc.)
 - 9) Could you tell me about any success stories you've witnessed/been a part of, where a bullying situation was resolved to the satisfaction of the victim? (prompt for: type of bullying, ages & genders of victims and bullies, what/who contributed to successful outcome.)
 - 10) What do you think most impacts the outcome of a bullying situation? (parent-involvement, teacher-involvement, punishment, reinforcement, etc...)

- 11) There are many long-term negative affects of bullying on its victims - What have you found to be effective in preventing and/or reversing the negative affects of bullying that has already occurred?
- 12) Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix D

Consent Form – On-line Questionnaires

Thank you for considering being a part of this research study. My name is Mary Gutiérrez and I am a master's of social work (MSW) student at Smith College in Northampton, MA. This study is part of a research project to understand girls' and women's experiences of non-physical bullying. The findings of this study will be used in my MSW thesis and in future publications and presentations. I hope the information that emerges will help improve bullying interventions.

I am looking for certified or licensed mental health professionals who have at least a master's degree and at least two years experience working with victims of school bullying. You must be able to speak and read English fluently. Participants may choose to provide information via phone interview or on-line questionnaire in place of completing this survey. Everyone who participates in the research will be entered in a drawing for \$75 if you enter your email address at the end of the survey. The drawing will take place March 1, 2013. Entry is optional.

The on-line questionnaire is estimated to take approximately 20 minutes. Because of the data collection method, no names or other identifying information will be collected and therefore cannot be connected with data. For this reason, on-line questionnaires CANNOT be withdrawn once they have been submitted. The data from on-line questionnaires will be exported to an Excel file and downloaded to a jump drive mechanism that will be locked and encrypted and stored in a safe, secure place for three (3) years as required by Federal regulations. After that time, data will be destroyed or continue to be kept and secured for as long as needed.

Within the thesis, only general information may be mentioned of individual participants (type of agency, years of experience, etc.). You will be referred to in thesis by an invented name. The only other person with access to your data will be my research advisor, who is also bound to confidentiality and will only see the data after identifying information is taken out. As a mental health professional, it is your duty to keep confidential your clients' information. At no time during the questionnaire will you be required to divulge protected information about your clients.

Participating in this study is on a volunteer basis. If you have questions or would prefer to participate via phone interview you may contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by email at mgutierr@smith.edu. If you have concerns about your rights or this study, you may contact me or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.

CHOOSING "I ACCEPT" INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Mary Gutierrez
(XXX) XXX-XXXX
mgutierr@smith.edu

I accept [to continue on to study]

I decline [to exit out of study]

Appendix E

Consent Form – Phone Participants

Dear Participant,

Thank you for considering being a part of this research study. My name is Mary Gutiérrez and I am a master's of social work (MSW) student at Smith College in Northampton, MA. This study is part of a research project to understand girls' and women's experiences of non-physical bullying. The research will be used in my MSW thesis, and will be submitted for publication and presentation. I hope the information I find will help improve bullying interventions.

I am looking for mental health professionals who have at least two years experience working with victims of school bullying. You must be able to speak and read English fluently. Interviews will be scheduled and conducted between the months of July and August, and will last approximately 30-60 minutes. You will be interviewed only once. The interview will be digitally recorded (audio only), and I will then transcribe (type) the interview. Both the digital and typed versions of the interview will be kept in locked and encrypted files.

You may stop participating in the research at any time, even mid-interview. Everyone who participates in the research, even if they decide to not be interviewed or if they stop mid-interview, will be entered in a drawing for \$75.

In the transcripts, names will be changed and locations will be disguised. Within the thesis, only general information will be mentioned (type of agency, years of experience, etc.). You will be referred to in transcripts and thesis by an invented name. Consent forms will be kept in a secure, locked location, separate from interview recordings and transcripts at all times. As under federal research rules, all data will be kept securely for three years, at which time all data will be destroyed. The only other person who might have access to interview recordings and transcripts will be my research advisor, who is also bound to confidentiality.

Participating in this study is on a volunteer basis. You may choose to not answer any question during the interview. You may choose to stop the interview at any time. You may withdraw from the study **prior to September 1, 2012** by telling me you wish to stop. In such a situation, all data from or about you will be destroyed. If you have questions or wish to withdraw you may contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by email at mgutierr@smith.edu. If you have concerns about your rights or this study, you may contact me or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Participant Signature _____ Date: _____

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Mary Gutierrez

(XXX) XXX-XXXX

mgutierr@smith.edu

Appendix F



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

February 25, 2012

Mary K. Gutierrez

Dear Mary,

You did a very nice job on your revisions and your project is now approved.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David L. Burton'.

David L. Burton, M.S.W., Ph.D.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Jean LaTerz, Research Advisor

