

Chapter 2

Correlates of School Violence

Bullying

Olweus (1993) defined bullying as aggressive behavior that is repeated, intentional, and typically involves a disparity in power between the bully and the victim. Daniels et al. (2007) suggested that school violence, including bullying, could have harmful effects on the individual, school environment, and the surrounding community. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance report (2012) found that 20.1% of the students had been bullied on school property in the 12 months preceding their involvement in the survey—an alarming prevalence rate indicating the importance of this topic in our American school systems today.

Negative Effects The negative consequences associated with bullying are numerous and well established. Not only are there negative repercussions for the victims, but the bullies themselves are also negatively impacted. Both bullies and victims can suffer from emotional and behavioral problems, poor academic achievement, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships (Franks et al. 2013).

Research has found that youth who experienced frequent victimization have presented higher levels of depression and delinquency (Sapouna and Wolke 2013). In addition to depression, symptoms of anxiety have also been found in those who experienced bullying. Marini et al. (2006) suggested that social anxiety may be more prevalent in indirectly victimized (e.g., name calling, rumor spreading, exclusion) adolescents compared to directly victimized (e.g., pushing, punching, kicking) adolescents. The authors proposed that the reason for this is because indirect aggression may have a more potent effect on an individual's social status. Students who are bullied by means of social exclusion and rumor spreading, may experience anxiety stemming from their perceptions of negative peer evaluations.

Siyahhan et al. (2012) found that bullying and victimization when analyzed independently did not have a significant effect on adolescents' hopelessness. However, when taken in conjunction, these two constructs did have a significant effect on hopelessness. This finding provides further evidence for the negative outcomes for bully-victims (i.e., youth who both bully and are bullied). Overall, the authors

suggested that bully–victims may be at the highest risk of feeling hopelessness when compared to victims or bullies.

Marini et al. (2006) found that increases in internalizing problems, and difficulties in peer relationships were significantly related to the increased chances of encountering indirect victimization; furthermore, they found that social anxiety was the only internalizing problem found in their female sample. The authors suggested that anxiety stemming from perceived social threats could prompt individuals to engage in indirect bullying in order to increase social status.

Bullying can have harmful implications for the perpetrator as well. Wang et al. (2012) reported that bullies who participated in physical, verbal, social exclusion, spreading rumors, and cyber bullying (i.e., All Types Bullies) and bullies who participated in social and verbal bullying (i.e., Verbal/Social Bullies) were more likely to report using substances and carrying weapons within the past 30 days of taking their assessment measure. The authors found differences in the three latent classes in regards to substance use and weapon carrying. Specifically, they found that adolescent males who reported engaging in all bullying subtypes were particularly at risk for substance abuse. Given the negative outcome stemming from bullying behavior, the authors further suggested that school counselors, as well as teachers, should be prepared to deal with these various disruptive behaviors from students who may participate in these types of behaviors.

Bradshaw et al. (2013) proposed that youth who experience multiple forms of victimization (e.g., physical and verbal bullying) are at the greatest risk for social and emotional problems. In addition, there may be important differences in adolescents' adjustment depending on the specific pattern of victimization experienced.

Bullies Burton et al. (2013) suggested that bullying events consist of various participants that include the bully, victim, bully-victim, and those who are uninvolved. The central component of the act of bullying is an aggressor, or the bully, who intends on inflicting harm on a victim. Burton et al. (2013) and Perren et al. (2012) found that adolescent bullies demonstrated the highest levels of morally disengaged reasoning.

In a study conducted by Wang et al. (2012), the researchers divided adolescents into five different bullying behavior categories using latent class models. These categories included physical bullying, verbal bullying, social exclusion, rumor spreading, and cyberbullying. Youth who fit all these categories were found to be the most aggressive group, victimizing others using any means possible. These youth were classified as “All-Types Bullies”, and constituted a small portion of the sample—approximately 4.0% of girls and 10.5% of boys.

Wang et al. (2012) found that those who were in the verbal/social bullying group were likely to participate in verbal bullying and had a moderate probability of social bullying and even lower to moderate probabilities of participating in other types of bullying. The authors described this group as “moderately aggressive” and this group comprised of 29.4% girls and 29.3% boys. The largest group consisted of adolescents classified as “noninvolved”—those who had the lowest likelihood of engaging in bullying behaviors. This group constituted the majority of the sample

with 66.6% for females and 60.2% for males. The authors concluded that there is a relationship between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. Also, the authors suggested that youth who cyberbully are also likely to be aggressive. The authors impressed that those who work with and monitor youth (e.g., parents, teachers, psychologists) should pay close attention to adolescents' cyberbullying because it could mean that the child is involved in other types of bullying.

Goldweber et al. (2013) found similar results to Wang et al. (2012) using the person-centered latent class analysis (LCA) approach, a method in which the researchers were able to group the participants of the study into discrete classes determined by their patterned response to ten dichotomous types of bullying behaviors. The types of bullying included the following:

- Threatening to hurt or hit
- Pushing or shoving
- Hitting, slapping, or kicking
- Making sexual comments
- Stealing
- Spreading rumors
- Ignoring
- Cyberbullying
- Calling names
- Teasing/making fun of

Goldweber et al. (2013) found an additional group, out of their middle school sample, that they called High Physical/High Verbal, which the Wang et al. (2012) study did not find. This group displayed high physical bullying behaviors, but reported low instances of cyberbullying, rumor spreading, ignoring, stealing, and making sexual comments. The authors suggested that this could be due to the ten types of bullying included in the LCA that may have detected more subgroups of bullying.

In their research Goldweber et al. (2013) found that less bullying occurred in high school than in middle school. Students in middle and high school with high bullying involvement reported the highest levels of victimization and internalizing issues. They also felt less safe and less accepted. This group reported that adults failed to properly prevent bullying, by effectively intervening or reacting to bullying situations. This pattern was inversely proportional to what the low involvement bullying group reported. Therefore, the authors concluded that students who bullied felt that bullying was a problem and were concerned about their own safety. Those in the high involvement bullying classes reported experiencing the most victimization.

The authors (Goldweber et al. 2013) suggested an overlap between those who engaged in verbal bullying and those who engaged in relational bullying, further suggesting that bullying behaviors such as name calling, teasing, cyberbullying, ignoring, and spreading rumors can be categorized as relational bullying/aggression as well as verbal bullying/aggression. In addition, the authors suggested that students may underreport relational bullying because youth may not see this form of bullying as harmful as physical bullying.

Goldweber et al. (2013) also found that middle school students who reported more involvement in bullying felt less belonging versus those in the low involvement group. Results were different for high school students, however, as the authors found that verbal bullies felt similar levels of belonging to those in the low involvement group. One potential explanation for this is that verbal bullies may use aggression more skillfully in high school.

Shetgiri et al. (2012) found that children presenting emotional, developmental, or behavioral challenges had double the likelihood of bullying others. Marini et al. (2006) found that victims and bully–victims reported greater issues with peers, as well as internalizing problems compared to those of bullies and uninvolved adolescents. Bullies and bully–victims held greater biases that normalized antisocial behaviors versus victims and uninvolved adolescents.

Marini et al. (2006) suggested that bully–victims may have an increased risk of psychosocial issues compared to bullies or victims, because of their dual role as both victim and perpetrator. The authors suggested that bully–victims comprised one third (33%) of the youth who reported having high involvement in bullying or victimization. In addition, they suggested that bully–victims involved in indirect victimization and bullying displayed psychosocial risks that may indicate a need for interventions that are capable of addressing their complex and varying difficulties.

Burton et al. (2013) found that students uninvolved in bullying had a greater sense of peer attachment compared to traditional bullies, victims, and bully–victims. The researchers suggested that youth who were uninvolved in traditional bullying may be more protected in their social circles, as indicated by their higher peer attachment. It can also be implied that youth who remain uninvolved are able to attain or maintain better quality relationships with their peers. The authors concluded that peer attachment could decrease the probability of one becoming involved in a bullying scenario. In addition, it may be that bully–victims may perceive more social distance within their own peer attachments compared to others.

Previous research suggests that bully–victims have increased chances of displaying criminal behaviors compared to bullies or victims (Haynie et al. 2001; Ragatz et al. 2011; Stein et al. 2007). Ragatz et al. (2011) sought to examine the psychological attributes and past criminal behavior of individuals who retrospectively identified as being uninvolved, victims, bullies, or bully–victims while in their last 2 years of high school. They found that bully–victims and bullies displayed higher aggression levels as well as psychopathy and criminal thinking when compared to victims and controls. They also endorsed more proactive aggression and reported participating in more serious criminal violations. The researchers additionally found differences between bullies and bully–victims. Bully–victims reported more proactive and reactive aggression, criminal thinking, and secondary psychopathy than bullies. Bully–victims may display criminal thinking errors, and therefore, intervention programs emphasizing cognitive restructuring in order to modify these criminal thinking errors may be necessary.

Ragatz et al. (2011) found that bully–victims attained higher scores on primary and secondary psychopathy measures than did victims and controls. Bully–victims scored higher on both reactive and proactive aggression as well as primary and

secondary psychopathy than did bullies, victims, and controls. This may suggest that bully–victims can be more impulsive when provoked and have the tendency to plan out how they will retaliate.

Middle and high school students who experienced relational, physical, and verbal victimization had the greatest likelihood for internalizing symptoms. These students also tended to endorse the use of aggressive behaviors which suggests this group may belong to the subcategory of aggressive victims or bully–victims (Bradshaw et al. 2013).

Cyberbullying The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance report (2012) found that 16.2% of students in grades 9–12 experienced cyberbullying through various means including texting, chat rooms, instant messaging, e-mail, and websites within a period of a year before the survey was taken. Wang et al. (2012) stated that researchers have been attempting to examine the relationship between traditional bullying and cyberbullying.

Burton et al. (2013) suggested that victims or bullies in one setting are likely to be involved in other settings. They found that cyberbullies and cyberbully–victims displayed increased rates of traditional bullying compared to cybervictims and individuals uninvolved in cyberbullying. The authors suggested that these results support the notion that cyberbullies also engage in traditional bullying. In addition, their results suggested that cybervictims may have an increased likelihood of becoming traditional victims. Moreover, traditional bully–victims and traditional victims were more likely to experience cyber-victimization compared to uninvolved and traditional bullies.

Burton (2013) found that cyberbullies and traditional bullies had similar beliefs regarding peer attachment and aggression. The authors proposed that uninvolved youth and victims maintained lower normative beliefs about aggression compared to bully–victims and bullies. It was suggested that these youth may perceive aggression as a more common or appropriate behavior. The authors also found that bully–victims and bullies involved in cyberbullying held more normative beliefs regarding aggression compared to uninvolved students and victims. They proposed that those who participated in cyberbullying may prefer utilizing aggressive behaviors or perceive such behaviors as normative. Burton (2013) also found that individuals uninvolved in cyberbullying had greater peer attachment than cyberbully victims. They suggested that cyberbully victims had lower peer attachment due to the negative effects that cyberbullying could have on social relationships.

Antisocial Behavior/Psychopathy

Burton (2013) proposed that individuals' outlooks or beliefs about aggression in social situations can affect bullying behaviors. They suggested attitudes toward aggression are related to bullying behaviors, and that preventative methods and intervention programs should seek to evaluate and modify these attitudes related to aggression.

Marini et al. (2006) found that adolescents might perceive victimization and bullying scenarios in different ways as compared to younger children. Experiencing such social situations may affect their social development by fostering social-cognitive biases which could further shape their ability to cope with related situations and their perceptions about antisocial behavior. The authors found that youth who held more normative beliefs about antisocial behaviors were more likely to be involved in bullying situations, as either bullies or bully-victims. Marini et al. (2006) also found that the adolescents in their study who participated in indirect bullying as either bullies or bully-victims believed antisocial behavior was more legitimate compared to victims or uninvolved adolescents. The authors proposed, that youth involved in such indirect bullying may see these behaviors as a more acceptable method for dealing with social issues.

Fanti and Kimonis (2013) conducted a longitudinal study that aimed to determine whether or not certain adolescent traits would predict future bullying and victimization. The traits the authors examined included: callous-unemotionality (CU), narcissism, and impulsivity. The authors suggested that CU and impulsivity were factors of psychopathy that may be significant in understanding bullying and victimization in youth populations. In addition, they proposed that narcissism was a factor in juvenile psychopathy that required more emphasis when examining bullying behavior. The researchers concluded that adolescents' tendency to utilize interpersonal manipulation could be a major factor contributing to bullying behavior and they found relationships between CU, narcissism, impulsivity, and bullying.

Fanti and Kimonis (2013) found that impulsivity and narcissism predicted increased bullying behavior and impulsivity predicted increases in victimization. These increases were apparent even after accounting for conduct problems (CP), CU, demographics, and baseline levels of victimization and bullying. The authors found that bullies had higher narcissism scores as compared to bully-victims. The two groups did not significantly differ on impulsivity, CP, or CU traits. Bully-victims scored higher on CP and various dimensions of psychopathy than victims. Impulsivity was the only factor that distinguished the victims from the uninvolved group. In addition, the authors found that CP and the three dimensions of juvenile psychopathy independently predicted bullying involvement. The authors proposed that these factors can have the greatest impact when they are all combined. Adolescents who scored high on CU traits, narcissism, and impulsivity had higher chances of bullying involvement regardless of their CP levels.

Fanti and Kimonis (2013) found that youth inclined toward impulsivity have an increased chance of making hurried decisions and engaging in risky behaviors. Youth at most risk are those who bully and are victimized as well. The authors proposed that youth who demonstrate impulsivity as well as deficits in social skills may rouse the negative attention of bullies and provoke victimization. Bullying may also be provoked by these youth due to narcissistic behaviors. The act of bullying can serve as a reinforcer for those who display narcissistic traits, as it feeds their desire for power.

Gender

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance report (2012) found that the prevalence of experiencing victimization on school grounds was higher for females (22.0%) than males (18.2%) in grades 9–12. Fanti and Kimonis (2013) found that boys had a higher propensity to bully and be victimized compared to girls. According to Bevans et al. (2013), boys had a greater likelihood of experiencing physical or direct victimization, whereas girls were more likely to experience relational or indirect victimization. Goldweber et al. (2013) found that boys were more likely to use all forms of bullying whereas girls were less likely to use the more physical forms of bullying.

Marini et al. (2006) found in their research that females who were indirect bully–victims had more severe problems related to peer relationships and social anxiety compared to females who were bullies or uninvolved (non-victimized females). The authors suggested that these issues may result from being victimized or these factors could make these youth more susceptible to becoming victimized. The authors also discovered that social anxiety stemming from perceived negative peer evaluations, differentiated female bully–victims and victims from uninvolved students and bullies. The authors also found that direct bully–victims and bullies were differentiated from uninvolved students and victims by their temperament, more specifically, their activity levels; the authors proposed that this may be related to previous research correlating aggression and poor self-regulation.

Siyahhan et al. (2012) found that girls were more likely to be indirect victims and bullies compared to boys. Boys were found to have higher rates of both physical and verbal bullying than girls. The authors suggested that boys also had higher levels of hopelessness compared to girls. However, there were no differences between non-victims and indirect bullying victims in regards to level of hopelessness. The authors proposed that boys may be more susceptible to depression than girls when experiencing bullying.

Wang et al. (2012) found that there were a greater number of boys than girls in their All-Types Bullies group. They also discovered certain grade differences; students in grades six through eight had a greater likelihood to be All-Types Bullies and Verbal/Social Bullies compared to students in the ninth and tenth grades. Middle school boys were more likely to be Verbal/Social Bullies than students in the sixth grade. The authors suggested that their results call for the need to emphasize intervention efforts during middle school.

Sapouna and Wolke (2013) found gender differences in resilience when encountering bullying. They found that some adolescents demonstrated resilience as seen by their lower than expected levels of delinquency and depression. Males, frequently bullied, who reported low levels of depression usually felt less socially isolated, had higher self-esteem, reported less parental conflict and victimization by a sibling than those who had higher levels of depression. Youth less likely to be delinquent even though experiencing frequent bullying tended to be female, had fewer friends, less parental conflict, higher self-esteem, and were not victimized by a sibling

compared to those with higher levels of delinquency. The authors concluded that males demonstrating resilience in the face of frequent bullying were less likely to be depressed, whereas females were less likely to be delinquent.

Bradshaw et al. (2013) found that cyberbullying and sexual comments/gestures were more common among high school students than among middle school students. All other forms of victimization were more common in middle school. Middle school girls were more likely to be victims of relational bullying. The authors also found that middle school victims of verbal and relational bullying had similar levels of internalizing symptoms and patterns of victimization as the victims of verbal and physical bullying, possibly demonstrating that physical victimization for boys and relational victimization for girls are equally harmful.

Ethnicity

Wang et al. (2012) found that Black males and females, in addition to Hispanic girls, had a greater likelihood to be All-Types Bullies compared to Caucasian youth. The authors suggested that Caucasian males fit in the Verbal/Social Bullies category more than Hispanic and other males. African American females had a greater propensity to fall within the Verbal/Social Bullies group. The researchers suggested that there are racial/ethnic differences; however, these differences only apply to specific gender groups and patterns of bullying involvement. The authors recommended studying racial/ethnic differences in regards to gender and types of bullying on a separate basis.

Shetgiri et al. (2012) found that children who lived in homes where English was not the primary language were less likely to engage in bullying. The authors suggested that acculturation may have a different effect on bullying perpetration than it does on victimization given that research has demonstrated these youth tend to be victimized more than they perpetrate bullying behaviors (Yu et al. 2003). These authors also found that children living in poverty and being African American or Latino/a had increased chances of being bullies.

Parenting and Family

Franks et al. (2013) suggested that adults may hold the belief that bullying is part of growing up and can help a child learn to cope or deal with difficult people. Unfortunately, this can result in the adult failing to intervene in a bullying situation in a school or community setting.

Marini et al. (2006) found a relationship between youth who were indirect bully-victims and parents' knowledge of their social activities. This group displayed issues related to parental attachment as well as parental monitoring. Youth who were indirect bully-victims reported more isolation from their mothers than any other

group studied. Boys who were victimized felt more alienated from their mothers than did youth who were not victimized. Those youth who participated in direct bullying reported that parental monitoring was not more lenient for them as compared to non-bullies. Fanti and Kimonis (2013) found that youth from single parent households had a greater likelihood of being victimized.

Siyahhan et al. (2012) found that students who did not communicate their experiences of victimization to their parents or teachers reported higher levels of hopelessness than other students. Sapouna and Wolke (2013) proposed that adolescents who reported lower levels of parental conflict had a greater likelihood to report lower levels of delinquency and depression despite experiencing frequent victimization. Therefore, healthy parent–child relationships may mitigate the negative effects of experiencing bullying.

The results from a study by Bowes et al. (2010) indicated that maternal warmth, sibling warmth, and a positive home environment had stronger effects for bullied children than nonbullied youth, thus suggesting the importance of these qualities on adjustment difficulties in the context of victimization. Positive family relationships were associated with higher levels of resilience in response to victimization. The authors suggested that positive relationships with parents could provide opportunities for parents to increase children’s coping skills in dealing with bullying. Positive sibling relationships may have important implications for children who are bullied and that these siblings can serve as an extra source of support to help prevent the negative effects of victimization. Bowes et al. (2010) posited that calm and well-structured home environments serve as a buffer between children’s victimization and their experiences of stress. The authors found that these effects may be more important for boys than for girls.

Shetgiri et al. (2012) found that parents who reported feelings of annoyance/anger and the perception that their child is more difficult to control than other children had increased likelihood that their child would bully others. Mothers with mental health concerns also increased these chances. Parents who showed increased levels of involvement and communication tended to have children who engaged in fewer bullying behaviors. Children who completed their homework also had a decrease in the likelihood of participating in bullying.

Resilience

Sapouna and Wolke (2013) found that resilient adolescents (i.e., those who had lower levels of delinquency and depression despite experiencing frequent bullying), reported less alcohol use, drug use, and truancy. The authors suggested that internal resources (e.g., self-esteem) are important factors in mitigating the negative effects of bullying and promoting healthier adjustment, despite frequent victimization. In addition, the study found that negative emotionality led to a higher risk of depression and lower emotional resilience.

Summary

In this chapter, we reviewed some of the research dealing with possible causes or correlates of school violence. While not an exhaustive list of possible contributors (see O'Toole 2000; Vossekuil et al. 2004), our intention was to bring to light some of the breadth of factors that have been implicated. Our review centered on bullying and many of the contributing factors and negative effects of these behaviors. We also included a discussion of more severe characteristics of violent youth, namely antisocial traits and psychopathy.

Bullying is one factor that has received considerable research attention over the past 15 years or so. In this time many forms of bullying have been identified, including physical, social, relational, and cyberbullying. Different types of bullies have also been identified, including bullies and bully–victims. We have reviewed many studies that examined these types, and correlates to bullying behavior. Although the research attention this has received is positive, it is equally important to realize that bullying is only one of many variables that seem to relate to lethal school violence (Daniels 2011). Future research must address these other variables in order to gain a deeper understanding of how to prevent additional acts of lethal school violence. In the next chapter, we turn our attention to research on averted school violence, and focus specifically potential ways to prevent such tragedies.



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