

Students' Perspectives on Bullying

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The last two decades have seen an overwhelming call to “do something” about bullying. All 50 US states have anti-bullying laws that clearly prohibit bullying and assert its detrimental effect on school environments (<http://bullypolice.org>, 2015). Hundreds of anti-bullying programs have been developed by researchers and practitioners in response. However, many of the efforts have shown less than ideal results. In fact, some efforts have produced iatrogenic effects, with incidents of bullying increasing after the bullying prevention program was implemented (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008).

There are several potential reasons for the troubling findings of bullying prevention research including (a) teaching students how to recognize, and arguably how to perpetrate aggressive behavior, (b) blaming bullies

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and excluding them from the social context, and (c) forcing victims to interact with perpetrators who may be further reinforced by the interaction (Merrell et al., 2008). However, in this chapter we will focus on perhaps the biggest reason bullying prevention efforts have failed to result in improved outcomes for students: a lack of focus on involving bystanders, a critical yet too often overlooked component of the bullying dynamic.

Although prevalence rates vary depending on the measurement tool and other variables, around 30% of students report being involved in bullying as either a perpetrator or a victim (Swearer & Espelage, 2004). However, studies indicate that far more students (60–90%) witness bullying on a regular basis (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazier, 1992; National Crime Prevention Council, 2003). These students fall into the category of “bystander”, which includes every student other than the bully and victim present during an incident. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the role that these bystanders play in bullying in an effort to inform future prevention and intervention. We will start by considering a functional view of bullying and the antecedents and consequences that fuel it. Once this foundation is established, we will consider the spectrum of roles that bystanders play in bullying incidents, followed by specific strategies that families and schools can employ to change the behavior of everyone involved.

A FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON BULLYING

An important concept underlying a functional view of bullying is the idea that all behavior serves a specific purpose. The theory of Applied Behavior Analysis contends that organisms engage in behavior to access reinforcement or avoid punishment (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). Behaviors that result in reinforcement are more likely to occur in the future under similar circumstances, whereas behaviors that are not reinforced or that result in punishment are less likely to occur in the future under similar circumstances. For example, a student may give a correct answer to a question during math class and receive praise from the teacher. If adult praise functions as a reinforcer for that student, she is more likely to answer questions in the future. Conversely, a student may give an incorrect answer and be teased for not knowing the correct answer. Teasing may serve as a punisher for future responding, making it less likely that the student will answer questions in the future. This principle applies to all behavior and can be conceptualized in a three-step, Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) contingency, where the antecedent represents a trigger for a given behavior and the consequence represents the result of the behavior (Cooper et al., 2007; see two examples of the ABC contingency in Tables 2.1 and 2.2).

Table 2.1 Antecedent, behavior, consequence contingency example: punishment

<i>(A)ntecedent</i>	<i>(B)ehavior</i>	<i>(C)onsequence</i>
Student is asked to do a math problem in front of the class	Student tries to do the problem at the board, but struggles	Peers laugh at student and one says aloud, "that one is so easy"

Table 2.2 Antecedent, behavior, consequence contingency example: reinforcement

<i>(A)ntecedent</i>	<i>(B)ehavior</i>	<i>(C)onsequence</i>
An unpopular peer sits down at a table in the cafeteria next to her more popular peers	One of the popular students teases the unpopular peer, making fun of her appearance	Other popular peers at the table laugh or otherwise join in on the insults

In the academic example above, teasing (C) serves as a punishment for doing a math problem at the board, as long as it decreases the likelihood that the student will be willing to do a math problem at the board in the future. Conversely, in the example below, sitting at the popular kids' table serves as a trigger for bullying behavior that is immediately reinforced by the laughter of bystanders, increasing the likelihood that bullying behavior will continue and happen again in the future.

The ABC contingency allows for the identification of contextual variables that parents, educators, and professionals can control. Such variables occur outside of the individual and include the events that reliably precede and follow behavior. In bullying, each incident starts with an antecedent or trigger, indicating the availability of reinforcement. In some situations, victims exhibit awkward or unusual behavior that can trigger bullying behavior. In other situations, transitions to unstructured, unsupervised environments are enough to trigger bullying. Once the trigger occurs, perpetrators exhibit some form of physical, verbal, relational, or cyber aggression in order to access peer attention from victims and bystanders. Even when bystanders watch the behavior passively, their mere presence may provide reinforcement through peer interest and passive acknowledgment (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Similarly, crying and fighting back as the victim or on behalf of the victim may draw additional peer attention that is reinforcing to the perpetrator and thus may unintentionally increase the likelihood of bullying.

Research indicates that incidents of bullying are fundamentally and overwhelmingly reinforced by peer attention. Craig, Pepler, and Atlas (2000) conducted a study in which elementary school students were video- and audio-taped for episodes of bullying and harassment throughout the school. They found that students other than the bully and victim (i.e., bystanders) were present in 79% of incidents that took place on the playground and 85% of those that took place in the classroom. In addition, O'Connell et al. (1999) coded 185 individual instances of bullying behavior with 120 elementary school students and found that 53.5% ($n = 99$) of segments involved at least two bystander peers. In a study by Ross and Horner (2009), both victim and bystander responses to bullying incidents were measured. Prior to intervention, victim attention (e.g., crying, whining, or fighting back) followed 53% of bullying incidents, and bystander reinforcement (e.g., verbal encouragement and affirmation) followed 57% of incidents (victim and bystander responses were not exclusive). Finally, in O'Connell et al. (1999) study, the number of peers present was positively related to the duration of bullying episodes. The more peers around, the longer the incident lasted. Having more peers present provides more peer attention, resulting in more potent reinforcement.

IMPLICATIONS OF PEER ATTENTION FOR PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS

Perpetrators. In each incident of bullying, the perpetrator must first determine if aggression (physical, verbal, relational, cyber) is likely to result in peer reinforcement. The perpetrator may see another student in proximity but not directly involved with a group of peers, which may indicate access to both a target for bullying and peers who could potentially provide reinforcement. Additionally, certain characteristics of the victim such as physical weakness, a lack of social skills, or unpopularity may increase the likelihood that peers will join in, and decrease the likelihood that the perpetrator will face physical or social backlash (i.e., punishment; Blake, Lund, Zhou, & Benz, 2012, Craig et al., 2000; Fox & Boulton, 2011). Thus, certain students may become victims because they represent a high probability of reinforcement and a low probability of punishment.

Once the perpetrator engages in bullying behavior, other peers may choose to join in or cheer the perpetrator on. Such peer responses reinforce the bullying behavior and increase the likelihood of future incidents given a similar context (Cooper et al., 2007). Even without bystander

active involvement, the perpetrator may be reinforced simply through bystander passive observation (O'Connell et al., 1999). Finally, bullying behavior may also be reinforced by the victims who cry, whine, or fight back. While the reinforcing events may vary, they all provide some form of peer attention and reinforcement of the perpetrator's behavior.

Victims. While social reinforcement fuels the behavior of perpetrators, it also has implications for victims. In each incident of bullying, a victim's behavior can be reinforced or punished by the behavior of perpetrators and bystanders. Physical, verbal, relational, and cyber aggression are often harmful and punishing to the victim, resulting in the victim avoiding the perpetrator, the environment, or school altogether (Merrell et al., 2008). However, bullying incidents may also provide a form of peer attention to the victim. Some victims of bullying are unpopular and have few friends. The peer attention provided by incidents of bullying, despite being negative and hurtful, may still reinforce the triggering behavior of victims (Cooper et al., 2007). If the reinforcing effects of the peer attention from perpetrators and bystanders outweigh the punishing effects of the aggression, the victim may learn that being victimized is an effective means of gaining peer attention. In the future that individual may seek out similar interactions, even when those interactions result in some harm. They may also learn to instigate bullying (i.e., bully/victims) if they have poor social skills or are unable to access peer attention more appropriately. Unfortunately, this is commonly the case for students with disabilities, especially those with emotional disturbance, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, autism spectrum disorder, or orthopedic impairments (Blake et al., 2012).

IMPLICATIONS OF PEER ATTENTION FOR BYSTANDERS

As with perpetrators and victims, the behavior of bystanders is a function of the social consequences (i.e., reinforcement or punishment). Bystanders may play a variety of roles in incidents depending on the environment and their relationship with the perpetrator and the victim (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). In each incident of bullying, reinforcement from perpetrators, reinforcement from victims and adults, and punishment from perpetrators or victims are in competition with each other. Each bystander's response can be determined by the sum of those consequences. For example, if the acknowledgment, friendship, or fear of the bully outweighs the desire to help, the access to adult recognition, or the positive attention of the victim, the bystander is likely

to join in or otherwise support the perpetrator. On the other hand, if the bystander is not highly reinforced by the perpetrator's attention, feels a lot of empathy for the victim, or really wants to impress adults, they are more likely to support the victim. In the end, the actions of the bystander occur along a spectrum, depending on the contingencies in the environment. These actions can range from helping the perpetrator to defending the victim, with various levels of involvement in between. Olweus' early research (Olweus, 1997; Olweus et al., 2007) as well as the research of Salmivalli et al. (1996), illustrates this spectrum of bystander roles (Fig. 2.1).

The students that bully and the students that are victimized are at opposite ends of the spectrum. The "bully" typically instigates the aggressive behavior in its various forms and takes an active part. The "victim" is the target of the bullying but may be simultaneously reinforced and punished by the incident. However, as indicated above, many researchers have argued that the most important roles in the environment are not the victim and perpetrator, but instead the bystanders around the incident that reinforce and discourage it (e.g., Craig et al., 2000; Farrington & Ttof, 2009; O'Connell et al., 1999; Olweus, 1997; Stueve et al., 2006). In addition, research suggests that even bystanders are negatively affected by bullying, depending on the role they play in it (Stueve et al., 2006).

Next to the "bullies" on the spectrum are bullying followers or henchmen, who take an active part in bullying but do not initiate it (Olweus, 1997; Olweus et al., 2007; Salmivalli et al., 1996). They are often friends of the initiator, and their behavior may be reinforced by the positive peer attention of the initiator and other bystanders or the negative peer attention of the victim. These students will often join in with the initiator once the bullying situation is underway, engaging in teasing, exclusion, or even physical aggression started by the "bully". In a study by Whitney and Smith (1993), 18% of middle and high school students said that they would fulfill this role and join in if their friends were bullying someone.

Next in line after the followers/henchmen are the active supporters of bullying (Olweus, 1997; Olweus et al., 2007; Salmivalli et al., 1996). These students cheer it on but do not take an active part. In an



Fig. 2.1 The spectrum of bystander roles

online environment, they may provide “likes” to the incident but will not go as far as joining in. In a school environment, they may laugh at someone being teased or cheer during a fight. Active supporters of bullying may not engage in the actual bullying because they are fearful of getting in trouble or because they do not want to be grouped with the bully. However, active supporters often end up engaging in the bullying because of peer pressure, or because they see all the peer attention available. Like the henchmen/followers, active support of bullying is often reinforced by the positive attention of the perpetrator, positive attention from other bystanders, and the crying, whining, and fighting back of the victim(s).

Although followers and active supporters are prevalent, the most common bystanders fall into the categories of passive supporters, disengaged onlookers, passive defenders, and active defenders. In a study by Boulton and Underwood (1992), when asked “What do you do when you see a child of your age being bullied?” middle school students responded in the following manner: 49% said they tried to help in some way, 29% said they did nothing but thought that they should try to help, and 22% said they would not help because it was none of their business.

Passive supporters of bullying are unlike active supporters in that they approve of the bullying but do not display open support for it (Olweus, 1997; Olweus et al., 2007; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Students that engage in this behavior do not want to be seen as encouraging bullying so they do not openly cheer or laugh. The fear of getting in trouble may be strong for these students, or they may even be friends with the victim. Even so, they continue to support the behavior through passive observation and involvement. Disengaged onlookers, on the other hand, are those that watch what happens but are not swayed one way or the other. They believe that bullying is none of their business. Unfortunately, they rarely realize that their attention is fueling the behavior despite their disinterest, and that it is increasing the likelihood and intensity of future bullying.

At the helping end of the spectrum are the passive defenders and active defenders (Olweus, 1997; Olweus et al., 2007; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Passive defenders are those in the bullying environment that clearly disapprove of the bullying and think that someone should stand up to it but fail to do so themselves. These students may want to support the victim but may not know how to or may be afraid of associating with the victim for fear of lowering their own status, retribution from the bully, or becoming a victim themselves. They may also fear reporting incidents to adults

because they do not want to be a “tattletale” or “snitch”. Passive defenders often experience feelings of guilt after bullying incidents because they failed to stand up to the bullying on behalf of the victim.

Finally, active defenders are those students that know how to stand up to bullying, are not strongly reinforced by those supporting it, and are either strongly reinforced by adult approval, strongly reinforced by victim attention, or strongly reinforced by an empathic repertoire and the feeling they get from helping others (Olweus, 1997; Olweus et al., 2007; Salmivalli et al., 1996). If these bystanders intervene the right way, they can effectively remove the reinforcement fueling it. However, if they intervene the wrong way, as is the case with certain victim responses, they can actually provide additional peer attention to the situation, increasing the likelihood of future problem behavior and potentially getting themselves targeted in the process. One common example of this is when a victim and their friend(s) fight back against a student that initiates bullying behavior. They may get angry at the perpetrator, argue with them, start rumors, or even get physically aggressive (e.g., start a fight). In some cases this aggression can serve as punishment to the bully and reduces the likelihood of future behavior. However, if the perpetrator *perceives* the interaction as providing peer attention rather than punishment, the behavior may increase in frequency and intensity in the future. Unfortunately, this is commonly the case in incidents of bullying where the perpetrator has more power or is more popular, bigger, or stronger than the victim and their friends. For this reason, it is critical for educators to not only move young people to the right on the bullying spectrum—away from the bullies and toward the active defenders of victims—but it is also critical to teach those bystanders clear, simple, and non-confrontational strategies that do not result in the perception of peer attention but instead result in the extinction of future problem behavior.

BYSTANDER-DRIVEN INTERVENTIONS

Why does the function of bullying behavior matter? The answer is relatively simple: when we understand the contingencies driving problem behavior, we get a much clearer indication of the strategies that can be implemented to improve it. In the examples above, we considered antecedent, behavior, and consequence variables that are prominent in bullying situations. Knowing these variables allows us to contemplate antecedent, behavior,

and consequence interventions that can be used to address the problem. Consider again the example provided in Table 2.2. In that scenario, an unpopular peer sits down at a lunch table with popular peers (antecedent). She is teased by the popular peers (behavior), resulting in peer attention in the form of laughter (consequence) from the others. Because we understand these contextual variables, we can develop strategies to address each (see Table 2.3 for a description of intervention types).

Antecedent interventions. First, antecedent interventions are those designed to reduce the likelihood of the antecedent occurring, or prompt more appropriate behaviors when the antecedent does occur (Cooper et al., 2007). For example, reorganizing the lunch room so that the popular kids cannot sit together, or implementing a buddy system where all students sit with a partner, would be considered antecedent interventions that reduce the likelihood of the antecedent: the victim sitting down alone at a table filled with popular peers. Antecedent interventions can also include those strategies that prompt alternative, more appropriate responses to the antecedent. Reminding all students at the beginning of lunch that respectful behavior means including everyone is an example of an antecedent intervention that prompts a more appropriate behavior (including everyone) when the antecedent occurs (unpopular peer sitting down at the table).

Behavior interventions. Behavior interventions are categorized as interventions that teach more desired, alternative behaviors that still achieve the desired consequence, in this case, peer attention (Cooper et al., 2007). This often involves teaching desired behaviors such as social skills that access peer reinforcement in the environment. For example, schools can implement social skills training that teach students how to make friends and interact with each other appropriately. Using these skills increases access to naturally occurring peer attention. However, if we want

Table 2.3 Antecedent, behavior, consequence strategies

<i>(A)ntecedent interventions</i>	<i>(B)ehavior interventions</i>	<i>(C)onsequence interventions</i>
Interventions that prevent the antecedent from occurring or prompt a more appropriate alternative behavior	Interventions that teach more appropriate and more efficient behavior that access the desired reinforcement	Interventions that reduce access to the desired consequence following problem behavior and increase access following appropriate behavior

students to actually use the new, more appropriate skills for making friends and accessing peer attention, the new skills must be more effective and more efficient at accessing peer attention than the old, less appropriate behavior. In other words, the desired behavior must be better at accessing peer attention than the bullying behavior. For this reason, simply teaching desired behaviors is rarely enough.

Consequence interventions. To result in real behavior change, schools should consider consequence strategies that either increase access to peer attention following appropriate, desired behavior or decrease access to peer attention following inappropriate, bullying behavior (Cooper et al., 2007). To increase access to peer attention following positive behavior, schools can implement strategies that reward students with peer attention for being respectful to others. Students can earn activities for their entire class, activities with a friend, or recognition delivered by their peers. Such strategies can be extremely powerful at increasing the positive behavior of students highly reinforced by peer attention. Conversely, to decrease access to peer attention following bullying behavior, schools can teach all students (including bystanders) specific strategies for responding to disrespectful behavior. These strategies should be simple and non-confrontational and should ensure reduced access to peer attention. For example, in one of the interventions described in the school interventions section below, all students in the school learn a simple, non-confrontational stop response, which is used whenever someone is disrespectful toward you or anyone else (Ross & Horner, 2009, 2013). The response is designed to be easy for students to implement and maintain positive relationships with those they use the stop response with while at the same time significantly reducing access to peer attention following disrespectful behavior.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL BULLYING INTERVENTIONS

The most common school response to bullying is to do nothing until a major incident occurs, followed by increasingly intense punishment and exclusion of the student(s) caught bullying. Unfortunately, not only has this strategy been ineffective in reducing bullying (APA, 2008), it may contribute to increased aggression, vandalism, truancy, and dropout (Hemphill, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl, McMorris, & Catalano, 2006; March & Horner, 2002; Mayer, 1995; Mayer & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1991; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). From a functional perspective, adult-driven punishment strategies do little to

reduce access to peer attention. In addition, they often decrease student feelings of connectedness to school, a major risk factor for dropout (Blum & Libbey, 2004). Rather, to effectively combat bullying in schools, three strategies appear to be the most promising. First, schools can shift their culture so that students feel safe and empowered to stand up for each other. Second, schools can teach specific strategies for peer recognition and the peer-based reinforcement of positive, stand-up behavior. Third, in addition to creating peer-based recognition, all students (perpetrators, victims, and bystanders) can learn simple strategies for standing up to bullying that effectively remove peer attention rather than providing more of it. The following paragraphs will discuss these strategies and their potential effects.

BULLYING PREVENTION CULTURE

The first step a school can take in combating bullying is the creation of a positive school culture where all students feel safe, happy, and empowered to support each other. Research indicates specific social factors that contribute to a “culture of bullying” in some schools, which include shared beliefs and attitudes that support bullying (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan, 2009; Unnever & Cornell, 2008). Aggression and peer victimization become the norm in these schools, and students perceive them as less safe and less supportive. These schools also have increased aggression, retaliation, resistance to reporting bullying incidents, and poor academic performance (Bradshaw et al., 2009).

To shift and improve their culture, schools can implement universal strategies that improve the social environment and broader social climate. Research documents the importance of school-wide prevention efforts that establish and reinforce a common set of behavioral expectations in all contexts and involve all school personnel in prevention activities (Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2009; Ross & Horner, 2009). A major example of this work can be seen in School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS). While not a pre-packaged program, more than 20 years of research has demonstrated the ability of SW-PBIS to reduce problem behavior and improve school climate (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005). Recent findings have also indicated significant impacts of SW-PBIS on teacher reports of bullying and rejection (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2011).

To create a more positive school climate, SW-PBIS (a) uses empirically tested instructional principles to teach expected, positive behavior to all students (Colvin & Kame'enui, 1993), (b) creates a system of reinforcement for expected behaviors and a continuum of consequences for inappropriate behavior, (c) provides training/feedback to staff regarding their implementation of systems (Crone & Horner, 2010), and (d) employs explicit problem solving around reinforcement and discipline data (Sprague & Horner, 2006). The implementation of these strategies has resulted in demonstrated effectiveness when implemented by state, district, and school educators without the substantial support of researchers (Barrett et al., 2008; Horner et al., 2009), as well as over time (Luiselli, Putnam, & Sunderland, 2002; Taylor-Green & Kartub, 2000).

INCREASING PEER ATTENTION FOR STAND-UP BEHAVIOR

Effective SW-PBIS implementation creates a school environment where all students feel safe and are more likely to act according to expectations. It also provides the data and systems necessary to support sustainability, effective modifications, and interventions for students needing additional supports. However, even with effective SW-PBIS strategies in place, it is not uncommon for a proportion of students to continue exhibiting bullying-like behavior. This is likely due to a lack of emphasis on peer-driven, bystander intervention. In SW-PBIS, adults teach school-wide expectations, reinforce those expectations, and problem solve accordingly. However, SW-PBIS does not include specific strategies for increasing peer attention for stand-up behavior, nor specific strategies for removing the peer attention driving bullying behavior (Ross & Horner, 2009, 2013). To address the first problem, educators should consider adding strategies that increase peer reinforcement for appropriate, positive alternative behaviors that can replace bullying behaviors.

One of the biggest challenges when changing student behavior in response to bullying is the acquisition of student buy-in (Biernesser & Sun, 2009; Nese, Horner, Dickey, Stiller, & Tomlanovich, 2014). When adults tell students how they are supposed to address bullying, students often feel the strategies are too childlike and “uncool”. In order for students (especially older ones) to take bullying interventions seriously, they must play a major role in their development, implementation, and evaluation (Biernesser & Sun, 2009; Nese et al., 2014). This process should begin with the creation of a student leadership team that is involved at

a very early stage, typically the semester before any strategies are implemented in the school. Previously created teams such as fifth grade classes in elementary schools and student officers or clubs in secondary schools can be used for this purpose; however, the adults that lead the team need to ensure that its members are representative of the school. Sometimes already existent leadership teams in schools are not perceived by other students as representative of them. For the team to be effective in recognizing the positive behavior of others, all students must find their recognition reinforcing. One option is to add to already existing teams through a nomination process where all students nominate those *they feel the most comfortable talking to when they are being treated disrespectfully or having a difficult time*. The students nominated do not need to be the most popular, or the most academically successful. They are simply the students whose recognition other students find reinforcing. In addition, there is no specific limit to the number of students that can be on the leadership team, with some schools having over 100 students involved. The number should only be limited by the number of staff available to supervise them and the venues available to meet with them on at least a monthly basis.

Once the student leadership team is created, they are given four major duties. First, they are put in charge of reviewing dis-identified data about bullying in their school. To do this well, schools should implement surveys that can be aggregated and shared with the student leadership teams. Hundreds of bullying surveys have been created, varying greatly in detail, cost, and time for completion. However, all surveys should provide the student leadership teams with the opportunity to consider the forms of aggression most common, where those behaviors occur, when those behaviors occur, how students (victims and bystanders) typically respond to incidents, and how adults typically respond to incidents.

Once the data has been reviewed, the student leadership team's work can be broken into two major components: intervention and marketing. The intervention component involves the development of specific intervention strategies that provide positive peer attention for stand-up behavior and addresses specific problems in the school as indicated by the data review. One common and promising approach to the provision of positive peer attention is through stand-up behavior nomination boxes placed throughout the school. These boxes provide an opportunity for any student or adult in the school to nominate others for stand-up behavior: "If you experienced someone standing up for you or others, either online or in person, we want you to briefly write down and describe what they did,

and put a nomination in the box”. Then, once a month, after the supervising adult has ensured only “real” nominations are included, the student leadership team goes out and provides small, school-based reinforcement to those nominated. In addition, a website called Stand for Courage (www.standforcourage.org) was created in 2010 to provide a place where nominations could be uploaded, which could then be recognized further by celebrities on a quarterly basis.

In addition to the development of specific intervention strategies in the school, the student leadership team is also put in charge of creating marketing to increase student, staff, and community buy-in. This often includes the creation of posters, t-shirts, and social media marketing strategies. It can also include announcements to the school, faculty, parents, and community using social media, newsletters, or school newspapers.

Finally, the student leadership team is put in charge of reporting the results of their efforts. This requires another survey be completed after the intervention strategies have been implemented. The team presents the success of their efforts to the students, staff, community, district office, and above. They also continuously problem solve, modify previous efforts, and create new intervention strategies for the upcoming year.

STRATEGIES THAT REMOVE PEER ATTENTION

In addition to creating a more positive school culture and implementing specific strategies for recognizing positive stand-up behavior, it is also important to develop strategies that can effectively remove the peer attention that typically drives bullying behavior. Most popular bullying prevention strategies have an impact on victim and bystander peer attention in one form or another; however, some strategies have proven more effective than others. First, many schools implement zero-tolerance policies, which mandate suspensions and expulsions for children caught bullying. While these strategies may remove the peer attention from the immediate environment and ensure the safety of the victim, they may also result in under-reporting of bullying incidents due to the punitive culture they create. In addition, there is limited evidence that such strategies reduce bullying behavior (APA, 2008), and some evidence suggests they contribute to future antisocial behavior (Hemphill et al., 2006; Mayer, 1995) and increase school dropout (Skiba et al., 1997).

A second popular bullying prevention strategy involves brief assemblies or one-day awareness raising events. These programs are easy for schools

to implement and are often powerful, emotional experiences for everyone involved. They primarily focus on increasing awareness and empowering students to stand up to bullying. However, while these programs sometimes teach specific strategies for responding to bullying and effectively removing the peer attention reinforcing it, little evidence suggests that they are sufficient for changing the school climate or producing sustainable effects (HRSA, *n.d.*).

Farrington and Ttofi (2009) indicate that some of the most effective bullying prevention efforts include increased playground supervision, parent and community involvement, the use of consistent disciplinary methods, and classroom behavior management strategies. Although each of these strategies are adult driven, they can potentially reduce bullying behavior by getting adults involved early before peers can provide attention as well as by providing clear expectations about consequences. However, when it comes to bystander-based bullying prevention efforts, the most common, most researched, and most promising strategies may involve teaching students social-emotional and bullying prevention skills through regular classroom instruction and practice (Merrell et al., 2008). If done right, the result of such instruction can be an increase in bystander awareness, an increase in bystander empowerment, an increase in effective responses to bullying incidents, and a reduction in peer attention following incidents.

The most extensively researched program employing bystander instructional strategies is the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; Olweus et al., 2007). The OBPP is clearly one of the important early influences and standards of well-conceived, solidly researched school-wide approaches to preventing bullying behavior in schools. The OBPP is a comprehensive program with multiple components but also includes bullying prevention class meetings with all students conducted throughout the year. These lessons cover several categories of social-emotional skills including: building a positive classroom climate, identifying feelings, identifying bullying hot spots in the school, developing peer relationships, respecting differences, and serving the community. While teaching these lessons can be time and resource intensive for teachers, an increasing number of validation replications and enhancements have been conducted in Norway and in the United States (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1997, 2005; Solberg & Olweus, 2003), demonstrating the program's effectiveness. However, some research on OBPP has revealed that additional program development and research

is still needed. For example, Limber, Nation, Tracy, Melton, and Flerx (2004) reported some initial reductions in self-report measures of peer victimization in boys after implementation of OBPP. However, two years later, differences from the baseline level of peer victimization were insignificant. Additionally, an analysis of results obtained in a study conducted in Rogaland, Norway, indicated an actual increase in bullying behavior three years after the implementation of the Olweus program (Roland, 1993). These types of findings reinforce the need for further enhancements and extensions of bystander-driven bullying prevention instruction and intervention.

A second bullying prevention program designed to improve school culture and teach students how to respond to bullying is Steps to Respect (Frey, Kirschstein, & Snell, 2005). Like the OBPP, Steps to Respect is a comprehensive program that includes classroom-focused lessons to teach all students strategies for supporting each other. The Steps to Respect program has a dual focus on bullying and friendship, training students to make and keep friends, as well as recognize, resist, and report bullying. Like the OBPP, Steps to Respect lessons teach an extensive list of student skills, including social-emotional competence, emotional intelligence, self-management, and social skills. Again, this instruction may be time-consuming for some teachers and schools; however, two studies have demonstrated the program's efficacy. Those trials demonstrated significant impacts on bullying-related attitudes and observations of bullying; however, neither study demonstrated significant improvements on student self-reports of bullying (Brown, Low, Smith, & Haggerty, 2011; Frey et al., 2005).

Finally, in 2008, Ross, Horner, and Stiller developed Bullying Prevention in Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS), which was designed to fit within the SW-PBIS framework and add simple, bystander-specific, peer attention-related instruction to further reduce bullying behavior. Rather than teach an extensive list of friendship, social-emotional, and bullying prevention skills, the BP-PBS intervention focuses on teaching, practicing, and reinforcing a small set of explicit skills that effectively remove peer attention from bullying environments. First, BP-PBS teaches all students to use a simple, school-wide verbal command and hand signal when they witness or are the target of disrespectful behavior. If this stop signal fails to resolve the problem, students are instructed to walk away or help others walk away from social aggression. Only if walking away fails or if the behavior places people at serious risk of harm are

they instructed to tell an adult. This strategy minimizes potential social reinforcement and gives all students a simple, common, and predictable response. In addition, the BP-PBS intervention includes practice and pre-correction for the stop response prior to entering activities likely to include problematic behavior, teaches an appropriate student response when they encounter the stop sequence, and trains all school staff on a universal strategy for responding when students report continued incidents of socially aggressive behavior.

Ross and Horner (2009) found that when BP-PBS strategies were added to the SW-PBIS framework, results indicated a 72% decrease in the frequency of physical and verbal peer aggression perpetrated by at-risk students. Furthermore, they found that following implementation, victims were 19% less likely to cry or fight back, and bystanders were 22% less likely to laugh, cheer, or otherwise join in during incidents (both forms of peer attention). In addition, follow-up studies of BP-PBS have shown significant reductions in self-reported bullying (Ross & Horner, 2013) and bullying-related office discipline referrals and suspensions (Good, McIntosh, & Gietz, 2011). Although these results are promising, none of the studies on BP-PBS were randomized control trials, and more research is needed to validate the effectiveness of the BP-PBS intervention on larger samples of students.

Bystander-focused intervention may be the most promising approach to addressing bullying in schools; however, it is also important to note that some bystander-based efforts can be ineffective or even potentially harmful to students. For example, some peer mediation, conflict resolution, and mentoring strategies have actually resulted in increases in victimization (Farrington & Tofi, 2009). From a functional perspective, when peers get involved in mediating conflicts, they may inadvertently be providing additional peer attention to the context, increasing the future likelihood of bullying behavior. Additionally, in some cases peer mediators may be viewed by other students as “snitches” and may become victims themselves. Finally, studies on youth violence and delinquency (Dodge, Dishion, & Lansford, 2006) suggest that grouping together students who bully to “teach” them better behavior may actually reinforce their aggressive behavior and result in higher rates of bullying. In these environments, a peer-deviance training occurs, whereby the initiators of bullying learn from each other and are reinforced for their aggressive behavior.

THE ROLE OF FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY IN BULLYING PREVENTION

Families are the first line of defense in teaching children how to treat others with respect. Not only can they play a large role in the school interventions described above, they also play an integral role in empowering stand-up behavior, modeling appropriate strategies, and reinforcing implementation of those strategies.

Engaging with schools to prevent bullying. Despite the consistent findings that family and community engagement has a powerful effect on student success (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003, 2005), schools often fail to place family engagement as a high priority (Epstein, 2011). Therefore, one of the first steps that parents can take is to engage actively and positively with their schools. Connect for Respect (www.PTA.org/c4R, 2015) is one example of using the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to create increased opportunities for parent and community engagement in the improvement of school climate and the reduction of bullying. The Connect for Respect (C4R) process involves five steps. First, the PTA builds a C4R team, which can include students, teachers, community members, and parents with an aim to work collaboratively and improve school climate. Next, the C4R team is involved in the assessment of school climate through student, family, and school surveys. They can utilize already existing tools and resources such as the student report surveys employed by the student leadership team. Third, they engage the community in forums where students, families, school staff, and community members can voice concerns about bullying and school climate, as well as brainstorm solutions. Fourth, the C4R team develops an action plan to educate and empower family members and students, create more supportive school environments, and implement specific bullying prevention strategies. Finally, the C4R team can implement marketing and other empowerment strategies that encourage students, family, and the community to be involved in bullying prevention efforts.

Empower stand-up behavior. In addition to working with the school, community, and PTA to develop effective, collaborative bullying prevention and school climate strategies, families can also empower their own children to stand up for others and to not be silent, reinforcing (Epstein, 2011). First, it is important to talk with children and teach them that they play a role in bullying, even if they do not act as an instigator, active supporter, or passive supporter. One effective analogy for this is a candle

and flame. Disrespectful, bullying behavior is like a flame that is hurtful to those around it. However, in order for a flame to burn, it needs the oxygen for fuel. This is similar to bullying, which needs peer attention to keep burning. Consequently, if you take a glass cup and cover the flame, removing the oxygen fueling it, the flame goes out. This is what happens when bystanders use a stop response, help victims walk away, or otherwise remove peer attention from bullying situations. Like a burning candle, the bullying flame does not go out right away, but over time as students learn their inappropriate behavior will not achieve the peer attention they desire.

In addition to teaching children about peer attention and the role bystanders play in bullying, parents can also work to encourage volunteerism and connections to the school and community. Instilling a sense of connectedness through extracurricular and volunteer activities can result in better relationships with adults and other students (Epstein, 2011; Jaynes, 2005). This will not only make the child a better person but also more comfortable engaging with adults and other students.

Teach appropriate strategies. Once students are motivated to engage with the school and stand up for themselves and others, it is important to teach them the right way to do so. Many parents make the mistake of teaching their children to fight back and “stand their ground”. While it is important for children to learn to stand up for themselves and others, doing so using physical, verbal, social, or cyber aggression is likely to result in (a) getting hurt and (b) increasing the frequency and intensity of future problem behavior (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Fox & Boulton, 2011; Hoover et al., 1992). Instead, parents should teach their children simple, clear, and non-confrontational strategies for standing up for themselves and others and removing the peer attention from the environment. It would be ideal if the school was already teaching a response strategy that parents can reinforce and practice at home. However, if this is not the case, parents can still discuss specific strategies their children can use when they witness bullying to take a clear stance against it. For example, if the child knows the instigator, they may be able to diffuse the situation by diverting attention to something else or non-confrontationally encouraging the bullying to stop. If they know the victim, they can take efforts to include them, support them, and offer a way out of situations, such as telling them a teacher is looking for them.

Reinforce appropriate strategies. Finally, not only is it important for families to empower and teach, it is also important for them to

recognize and reinforce the positive behavior of their children. If parents catch their children doing good deeds and treating others with respect, praising their efforts will increase the likelihood of future positive behavior (Cooper et al., 2007; Epstein, 2011). Parents should ask their children about their days, the interactions they had with adults and other students, and reinforce the behaviors they want to see more of in the future.

SUMMARY

From a functional perspective, peer attention reinforces bullying behavior, which is triggered by antecedents like awkward victim behavior, the availability of reinforcing peers, or a lack of adult supervision such as during transitions from class to class or class to recess. Peer attention typically comes in the form of positive peer attention from bystanders that support the bullying, negative peer attention from the victims and bystanders that fight back, and neutral peer attention from bystanders that observe the behavior and do nothing about it. For this reason, the specific role that bystanders play can be considered along a spectrum, from henchmen and followers that join in on the bullying, to the active defenders that stand up to it. However, even when bystanders stand up to bullying, if they do so inappropriately, they may inadvertently increase the likelihood and severity of bullying in the future. Therefore, it is critical that students not only be empowered to stand up to bullying but also that they learn to do so in the most effective and efficient manner possible, eliminating the peer attention fueling the behavior while avoiding escalation, revenge, and retaliation.

The past two decades have seen an onslaught of school bullying prevention efforts (Merrell et al., 2008). While some of these efforts have had effects, many results have been mixed, and in some cases, programs have resulted in increased bullying. The most promising strategies are comprehensive ones that (a) create a more positive school culture where students feel safe and feel empowered to stand up for one another, (b) implement peer-driven strategies that provide peer attention for positive stand-up behavior, and (c) teach all students specific skills for removing the peer attention that reinforces bullying.

In addition to school interventions that target bystanders, families and communities also play a major role in shifting the behavior of bystanders. PTAs can create C4R teams that help in assessment, discussion forums,

bullying prevention action plans, and marketing to increase buy-in. Parents and families can also work to empower their children to stand up to bullying, teach their children how to respond to incidents appropriately, and praise their children for stand-up efforts.

Bullying remains a major problem in schools and will continue to be a major problem until everyone recognizes the role they play in reinforcing it (O'Connell et al., 1999). Similarly, crying and fighting back as the victim or on behalf of the victim may draw additional peer attention that is reinforcing to the perpetrator and, thus, could unintentionally increase the likelihood of bullying. Research indicates that incidents of bullying are fundamentally and overwhelmingly reinforced by peer attention. (Craig et al., 2000). Bystanders must not only be empowered to stand up to bullying, they must be taught effective and non-confrontational ways of doing so. Schools play a major role in this effort, but family and community involvement is also critical. In the end, only through school, family, and community collaboration can we really impact the perpetrators, victims, and bystanders of bullying, resulting in a more safe and positive environment for everyone.

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