2016

You Say Bully, I Say Bullied: School Culture and Definitions of Bullying in Two Elementary Schools

Brent D. Harger
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/socfac

Part of the Educational Sociology Commons

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

You Say Bully, I Say Bullied: School Culture and Definitions of Bullying in Two Elementary Schools

Abstract
Purpose

This chapter examines the definitions of bullying used by students and adults in elementary schools and the effects that these definitions had within the broader school culture.

Design/methodology/approach

I combine interviews with 53 students and 10 adults and over 430 hours of participant observation with fifth grade students at two rural elementary schools.

Findings

Definitions of bullying held by those in these schools typically differed from those used by researchers. Even when individuals held definitions that were in line with those used by researchers, however, a focus on identifying bullies rather than on behaviors that fit definitions of bullying contributed to a school culture in which negative interactions were normalized and student reports of these behaviors were discouraged.

Research limitations/implications

This study is limited to two elementary schools in the rural Midwest and cannot be seen as representative of all schools. Support for my findings from other research combined with similar definitions and school cultures in both schools, however, suggest that these definitions and practices are part of a broader cultural context of bullying in the United States.

Practical implications

These findings suggest that schools might be better served by focusing less on labels like "bully" and more on particular behaviors that are to be taken seriously by students, teachers, staff members, and principals.

Originality/value

Although other researchers have studied definitions of bullying, none have combined these definitions with observational data on the broader school contexts in which those definitions are created and used.

Keywords
children and youth, education, ethnography, school culture

You say Bully, I say Bullied: School Culture and Definitions of Bullying in Two Elementary Schools*

Brent Harger
Gettysburg College

Word Count: 11,129

Abstract

Purpose: This paper examines the definitions of bullying used by students and adults in elementary schools and the effects that these definitions had within the broader school culture.

Design/Methodology/Approach: I combine interviews with 53 students and 10 adults and over 430 hours of participant observation with fifth grade students at two rural elementary schools.

Findings: Definitions of bullying held by those in these schools typically differed from those used by researchers. Even when individuals held definitions that were in line with those used by researchers, however, a focus on identifying *bullies* rather than on behaviors that fit definitions of *bullying* contributed to a school culture in which negative interactions were normalized and student reports of these behaviors were discouraged.

Research Limitations/Implications: This study is limited to two elementary schools in the rural Midwest and cannot be seen as representative of all schools. Support for my findings from other research combined with similar definitions and school cultures in both schools, however, suggest that these definitions and practices are part of a broader cultural context of bullying in the United States.

Practical Implications: These findings suggest that schools might be better served by focusing less on labels like "bully" and more on particular behaviors that are to be taken seriously by students, teachers, staff members, and principals.

Originality/Value: Although other researchers have studied definitions of bullying, none have combined these definitions with observational data on the broader school contexts in which those definitions are created and used.

Keywords: Bullying, School Culture, Education, Children and Youth, Ethnography

Introduction

High-profile school shootings and teen suicides since the late 1990s have led to frequent explorations of bullying by researchers and the national media. Definitions of bullying in the research literature are frequently based on the work of Dan Olweus (1993), who cites repetition and a power imbalance as keys to bullying and notes that bullying can take the form of physical, verbal, or indirect behaviors. This definition of bullying is widely used but researchers have also recognized significant drawbacks to its application. As Finkelhor, Turner, and Hamby (2012) note, the Olweus definition excludes peer aggression that occurs only once or between equals and power imbalance is difficult to define and varies from situation to situation.

Although thousands of studies have been published on the causes and consequences of bullying, these studies overwhelmingly rely on definitions of bullying from researchers like Olweus and only a handful of researchers have compared these definitions to the meanings used by those in schools to make sense of their social worlds. These studies reveal that bullying is defined differently by those in schools than by researchers, highlighting the importance of understanding the social contexts in which bullying takes place (Allen, 2015). Despite the importance of social context for understanding bullying, to date no study has combined participants' definitions of bullying with observational data on the school contexts in which those definitions are used.

The present study addresses this gap by combining interviews and participant observation to examine the definitions of bullying used by students and adults in two elementary schools and the effects that these definitions had within the broader school culture. Like previous researchers, my interview data show that the definitions of bullying used by those in schools often differed from those used by researchers. My observational data, however, show that regardless of their

definitions many participants focused on identifying *bullies* rather than on behaviors that fit their definitions of *bullying*. These person-centered views contributed to school cultures in which negative interactions were normalized and student reports of these behaviors were discouraged. These findings are an important first step toward an understanding of the meanings of these behaviors and their relationship to the school cultures in which they take place. They also have implications for the effectiveness of anti-bullying policies and legislation.

Understandings of Bullying in Schools

Definitions of bullying in the research literature are frequently based on the pioneering work of Dan Olweus (1993), who defined bullying as being "exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. Also implied in bullying is an imbalance in strength (an asymmetric power relationship): the student who is exposed to the negative actions has difficulty defending him/herself and is somewhat helpless against the student or students who harass" (p. 54). In the development of this definition, researchers have argued that these actions can take the form of verbal abuse, physical abuse (or attempted physical abuse), or indirect abuse through hand gestures, facial expressions, or systematically ignoring, excluding, or isolating an individual (Olweus, 1993; Ambert, 1995; Sullivan, Cleary, & Sullivan, 2004).

This definition of bullying has been widely used but researchers have also recognized its limitations. Finkelhor et al. (2012) note that the Olweus definition excludes peer aggression that occurs only once or between equals and that power imbalance is difficult to define and varies by context. For these reasons, sociologists studying interactions related to bullying often avoid the use of this term. Merten (1997), for example, explores "meanness," Faris and Felmlee (2011; 2014) focus on "aggression," Garpelin (2004) examines "victimization," and Shepherd and

Paluck (2015) discuss "drama." Finkelhor et al. (2012) argue that researchers should broaden their focus to emphasize peer victimization and aggression, including bullying as well as one-time interactions, sexual assault, dating violence, and gang violence. Rather than changing terminology to adjust to Olweus's definition, Pascoe (2013) calls for the development of a sociology of bullying that focuses on social contexts, aggressive interactions, and their meanings. As noted by Finkelhor et al. (2012), approaches that broaden the definition of bullying have been resisted by Olweus out of concern that minor interactions such as teasing between friends will be perceived as more serious than they really are (Olweus, 2007).

Missing in many of these debates are the ways that those in schools actually define and interpret bullying. Although thousands of studies have been published on the causes and consequences of bullying, these studies overwhelmingly rely on definitions similar to that of Olweus and only a handful of researchers have compared these definitions to the meanings used by those in schools to make sense of their social worlds. Findings from this body of work indicate that students and teachers typically have definitions of bullying that do not match those used by researchers. Most likely to be excluded in student definitions were repetition, intention, and power imbalance (Guerin & Hennessy, 2002; Vaillancourt et al., 2008; Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2012), though young children were also less likely to include indirect bullying in their definitions (Smith & Levan, 1995). Adult definitions of bullying were also likely to exclude repetition (Miglaccio, 2015) and to stress overt forms of bullying (Craig, Bell, & Leschied, 2011). Together, these studies reveal the ways that those in schools than define bullying differently than researchers.

Bullying and the School Context

Differing definitions are not surprising when one considers the range of potentially negative peer interactions in schools. These include teasing and insults (e.g., Fine, 1987; Eder, 1991, 1995) as well as exclusion from higher status groups (e.g., Eder, 1995; Adler & Adler, 1998) and sexual harassment (e.g., Eder, 1995; Renold, 2002). Not all conflict has negative repercussions (Rizzo, 1989; Voss, 1997) though, and teasing can be used among children to harm others but also to create and maintain relationships (Evaldsson, 1993) and as a form of social control (Thorne, 1993). Even insults can be used to "transform a potentially dangerous contest or conflict into a bout of wit" (Goodwin, 2006, p. 96).

Although some of these interactions fit the definition of bullying commonly used by researchers, those in the setting do not always define them in that way. For example, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in preadolescent cliques identified by Adler and Adler (1995, 1998) fit this definition, as do other instances of teasing lower status group members in order to increase one's status in the eyes of others (Fine, 1987; Milner, 2004; Faris & Felmlee, 2011). Among high school students, Allen (2013) argues that "drama" is perceived to have a greater influence on daily life. Allen (2015) also notes that although traditional definitions of bullying are not applied in these contexts, "conflict, aggression, and 'drama' may overlap or lead to forms of bullying that are social, indirect, and relational in nature" (p. 170).

Because these interactions are so varied, school contexts are key to understanding the construction and maintenance of definitions of bullying. Allen (2015), for example, states that bullying "is embedded in context and needs to be studied in context in order to capture its complexity" (p. 178). Among the handful of studies examining student and teacher definitions of bullying, then, it is surprising that none have combined participants' definitions of bullying with observational data on the school contexts in which those definitions are used. Although Mishna

et al. (2008) state that their interview study "privileges the 'lived experience' of study

participants" (p. 549) there are important differences between one's experiences and one's

statements about those experiences (Jerolmack & Khan, 2014). This lack of information about

the social contexts in which these behaviors occur has also been cause for criticism of bullying

research more broadly (Barboza et al., 2009; Faris & Felmlee, 2011; Viala, 2015). Researchers

have also neglected the roles that teachers and other adults play in contributing to these social

contexts (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Garpelin, 2004).

The present study addresses these concerns by combining interviews and participant

observation to examine both the definitions of bullying used by students and adults in two

elementary schools and the effects that these definitions had within the broader school culture. I

find that the definitions of both students and adults typically differ from those used by

researchers, but that even when individuals have definitions that are in line with those used by

researchers, the presence of person-centered views in which participants focused on identifying

bullies rather than on behaviors that fit their definitions of *bullying* contributed to a school

culture in which negative interactions were normalized and student reports of these behaviors

were discouraged. Although Olweus (2007) cautions against viewing "minor" things as serious,

when examining the interactions within these schools I find that the prevalence of minor things

contributes to a school culture in which bullying is overlooked. This research contributes to our

understanding of definitions of bullying within school contexts, providing a much-needed

sociological perspective on these issues (Pascoe 2013).

Setting and Methods

The data in this paper are drawn from a study of peer interaction among fifth grade

students (10-11 years old) in two elementary schools in the same school district. Located in a

rural Midwestern city of roughly 15,000 people, Hillside[1] and Greenfield Elementary each

provide education for about 240 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Students at both

schools are largely white and from middle- or working-class families. All teachers and staff

members were also white at the time of my study. During this time there were 45 fifth grade

students in two classrooms at Hillside and 37 fifth grade students in two classrooms at

Greenfield. The fifth graders in both schools were in their last year of elementary school and

many had attended school together since kindergarten.

During the 2007-2008 school year I conducted over 430 hours of participant observation

at the two schools combined. Given the racial composition of the schools, my own status as a

white male in my late twenties at the time of this research likely helped the students and teachers

feel comfortable around me. The roles that I took on in the schools were similar to those of

Thorne (1993), who conducted research with fourth and fifth graders. In her observations,

Thorne entered students' interactions to varying degrees based on the situation. In the classroom

I, like Thorne, spent most of my time sitting in the back of the room and observing, while I was

more involved at lunch and recess and during classes like music, physical education, and art.

During recess at the schools I twirled jump ropes, played basketball, four square, football, and

tag, used the swings and the slides, and just walked around.

I modeled my interactions with students on Corsaro's (1985) atypical adult and Eder's

(1995) quiet friend roles. I did this by setting myself apart from other adults – students and

teachers alike were surprised when I went to classes like music with the students rather than

spending this time in the teachers' lounge – and by typically remaining quiet and participating

only to the degree necessary for acceptance as part of the group. The students demonstrated their

acceptance of me in a number of ways, such as ensuring that the teachers included me in

---

[1] Pseudonyms are used for all names and places.

classroom games and activities, asking me to protect objects for them, and teasing me. Students also repeatedly demonstrated that they did not view me as an authority figure by participating in behavior that could get them in trouble, such as swearing or hitting each other, in my presence but stopping these behaviors when other adults came near. In interviews, several adults also commended me on my ability to be accepted by their students.

In addition to participant observation I interviewed 53 of the 82 fifth grade students, the four fifth grade teachers, both principals, and four school staff members who were frequently present during lunch and recess. Following Eder and Fingerson (2002), the participant observation portion of my data collection preceded interviewing and was used to ground interview questions and observe communicative norms and patterns while developing a general understanding of the school culture. Student interviews typically lasted for 25-30 minutes and took place during periods of free time approved by the teacher in empty classrooms. Adult interviews typically lasted between 50 and 60 minutes.

Data from field notes and interview transcripts were analyzed using ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis program. Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014) I identified patterns in the data and searched for negative cases. I looked particularly closely at interactions such as teasing, pushing, and exclusion that could be perceived as negative but I was also careful to examine the school cultures as a whole and the ways that the actions of adults and students affected norms within the schools. Because I conducted my observations and interviews in two schools, I compared my findings from each, looking for similarities and differences. I developed and tested hypotheses by writing theoretical memos based on my data, checking these theories against my data, and refining them.

These methods allow me to combine the insights gained by previous researchers regarding the definitions of bullying used by those in schools with a much-needed examination of the social contexts in which these definitions are developed and used (Pellegrini, 2002; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Faris & Felmlee, 2011). Combining participant observation with interviews also allows me to understand interactions from the perspectives of both students and adults. The result is an in-depth look at the ways that both students and adults in these schools defined bullying and the effects of these definitions on the broader school culture.

Student Definitions of Bullying

When asked in interviews what bullying means to them, a number of students pointed to media depictions of bullying, such as taking somebody's lunch money. For example, Phil defined bullying as "taking other people's lunch money and hitting people for no reason, stuffing people in lockers," sandwiching the more locally-oriented "hitting people for no reason" between two popular media depictions. The influence of media depictions on Phil's statement is obvious, as neither Hillside nor Greenfield Elementary had lockers. Other students were more careful about denoting the source of their images. As Josh noted, "In *movies* it's usually pulling a kid by their shirt, pushing them into the wall, beating them up for their lunch money." Similarly, Marshall argued that when bullies are seen on TV "they like throw them in a trash can or something." When media depictions such as these were cited, some students were careful to differentiate between these stereotypes and the realities that they faced in their own school. Marcy defined bullying as "Picking on them, but not like on TV shows, where you see, like, stealing their lunch money and stuff. It's not like that."

Although the types of bullying students have observed in the media center on physical actions such as taking lunch money and placing people in lockers and trash cans, students

described the reality of bullying by citing a wide range of behaviors. Over half of the students named emotional forms of bullying including threatening, teasing, insulting, exclusion, and spreading rumors about others. In addition to these emotional attacks, three quarters of students described bullying using a broad range of physical actions, including pushing, fighting, kicking, punching, ganging up on individuals, and using physical advantages against smaller, weaker opponents. These definitions differed little between male and female students and between the two schools, with most differences consisting of only a few students that do not likely reveal more general trends. Broadly defined, these actions are in line with aspects of the researcher-formulated definitions used in the literature. Important differences arose, however, when students expanded on the difference between bullies and non-bullies. In doing so, students highlighted a wide array of qualifications, which correspond to their ideas of social justice and reveal interesting justifications for their own behaviors.

Intentions Matter

The issue of intentionality was at the center of these qualifications. Students were careful to point out in their definitions of bullying that the actions of a bully are not accidental. Jim, for example, noted that a bully is "Someone who picks on people for fun and, like, physical contact and likes to make people sad or mad. Like, someone who likes to be mean to other kids." In Jim's view, then, a bully is somebody who enjoys hurting others. Leann's view of bullying was slightly different, arguing that bullies are "People being mean to other people that are, like, innocent and you just don't like 'em [the innocent people] so you try to hurt 'em." This definition adds an important layer to the definition of bullying that many students share – the idea that the victim of a bully did not do anything to deserve the bully's attack. One in five students argued that the term bullying is only appropriate when a behavior is unprovoked. As

such, it involves "being mean to other people that weren't doing anything," as Sean noted, or

"Hurting people for no reason," as Joel stated.

Coinciding with the assertion that the victims of bullies must be innocent, some students

were careful to separate self-defense and retaliation from their definitions of bullying. After

stating that beating another person up or giving somebody a wedgie makes somebody a bully, I

asked Randy whether everybody who does those sorts of things is a bully. He responded, "Yeah,

unless they're being- unless somebody's picking on them first. They're not really being a *bully*,

they're defending themselves." Luke shared this view, stating, "They might just be defending

themselves, so yeah, they might not be a bully but they might just be, like, a nerd being picked

on by a bully." Even though the actions could be the same, then, it is clear that, for these

students, definitions of bullying did not include retaliation. Further, Chad discussed degrees of

retaliation: "I wouldn't say that making fun is really bullying. Well, if it's like, fair, you know?

... If it's being mean back and a little bit more I'd say it's fair."

Normalizing Power Differentials

Just as students argued that negative behaviors are warranted if they are retaliatory or in

self-defense, some pointed to other interactions that they felt should not be considered bullying.

This was most often seen when students discussed their siblings and younger students. As

Maggie notes, "There are some people who bully and nobody ever thinks they're a bully

because, like the smaller kids- the older kids kinda pick on them on the bus and nobody ever

thinks of that older kid as a bully because *everyone* picks on the little kids." Maggie's statement

demonstrates the high degree to which older students have normalized this behavior. Jill, for

example, does not consider herself a bully for being mean to her younger brother, stating, "Oh,

no, I think of myself as a normal big sister." Kathy expresses an opinion similar to Jill's after

stating that she sometimes bites her younger sister but that she is not a bully "'Cause its sibling

rivalry," admitting that her sister disagrees.

At Greenfield Elementary there were several times that I witnessed Kyle take basketballs

from younger students and kick them away when they came to retrieve them. Although Kyle was

not big in comparison to the other fifth graders, he was taller and stronger than most of the

younger students. Thus, the imbalance of power that Olweus (1993) cites as a key aspect of his

definition of bullying is dismissed by students as normal in the context of relationships with

younger students or siblings. Some students also commented on using this advantage while they

could, since they were the biggest students in elementary school but would be smallest when

they entered middle school the following year. As Maggie noted, in middle school "We'll be the

youngest and everybody will wanna pick on you. Because you're the target, you're the smallest."

It's Not Bullying if You're Joking

Like taking advantage of power differentials, joking was also a normalized behavior that

could be interpreted differently by those in different positions. Leann argued that being mean is

not bullying "If they're just joking around and the other person is okay with it and think its kinda

fun or something." When asked what the difference is between somebody who is pushing

another student and *is* a bully and somebody who is pushing another student but is not, Tim

replied, "The person who pushes somebody around that is not a bully could be like a friend that's

joking around and a person who is pushing someone around that is a bully is probably somebody

that's really, really serious and doesn't care if he gets in trouble or anything." Chelsie notes how

the grey area of joking can be used to get out of potential trouble, stating "Well if they're joking

around, like, say they're sorry or like if they steal money or something they can be like, 'I'm just

kidding, you can have your money back.'"

While roughly a quarter of students do not consider jokes to be bullying, it can be hard to tell when somebody is using joking as a cover, as Chelsie suggests, and whether the target really is "okay with it," as Leann notes is important. This difficulty is evident in the following excerpt from Marcy's interview, which began after I asked her if there are any bullies in the fifth grade at Greenfield Elementary:

M: Maybe one, but not really a bully, bully. Just kind of, like, occasionally can be a little annoying. Like, bother you and make you feel uncomfortable occasionally but if you go out of control, like, "I can't hold it in any more" and you just immediately just yell *"Stop it!"* they'll be like, "I was just playing." But, then you know they weren't just playing, they were just kinda being mean occasionally and stuff, so-

I: So do you think that maybe their definition of playing is different than other people's?

M: Yeah.

I: Like when they think they're just playing other people are taking it a different way?

M: Yeah, they're taking it a different way. They're like, this isn't just playing. It might be playing for you but it's not playing for us.

Marcy highlights the way that one student's "joking" can be interpreted differently by the target of this behavior. Combining this with Chelsie's statement above that a student may claim to be "just kidding" when stealing from a classmate, one can see the ways that students attempt to manipulate others' interpretations of their intentions to fit within the context of normalized behaviors. As Marcy demonstrates, this manipulation is sometimes successful (these behaviors are only "occasionally" annoying) and sometimes not.

Marcy's discussion of the potentially differing interpretations of "just playing" begin to highlight the importance of context in student definitions of bullying. The way that "just

playing" can transition into "being mean" is evident in the way that events surrounding the

following fieldnote unfold:

> From across the gym I saw Ryan lying on his back holding his stomach with the
> two supervisors and a small group of students gathered around him. I walked over
> and asked Steven, who was sitting on the bleachers, what had happened. He said
> that some people were playing dodgeball and Ryan got hit in the stomach (I later
> learned that Will kicked Ryan in the chest after Ryan, Ted, and Brian had been
> throwing balls at Will's head) and couldn't breathe. … A few minutes later Brian
> and Ted approached me. Ted was holding a kickball and asked to trade me for the
> basketball that I was holding. I said no and then asked why, resting the basketball
> in my hand. Brian took the basketball and said that they wanted to throw it at Will
> but I took it back and said that I couldn't let them have it for that. They walked
> away (Fieldnote, 3/11/08).

At Hillside elementary, Ryan, Ted, Brian, and Marshall are friends and Will is a common target

for them. Below is an excerpt from Ted's interview, which took place after the incident

described above:

> I: What does bullying mean to you?
>
> T: Yeah, we do it sometimes.
>
> I: You think so? So what kinds of things would make somebody a bully?
>
> T: Doing what we did to Will.
>
> I: So can somebody do things like that and not be a bully?
>
> T: Yeah, 'cause Will at first he was telling us to throw balls at him because he
>   said he could dodge them, so we threw them at his face, he can't dodge the
>   ones that were coming at his face.
>
> I: Are there any bullies in the fifth grade here?
>
> T: There's a lot of 'em. … Knowing, like, the fun bullies that have fun with it,
>   like egg it on, probably me, Ryan, Brian, Marshall, Ben, Jared- yeah. We
>   pick on the nerds and everything.

Ted states that Will was encouraging their actions bit also accepts that his actions can be seen as

bullying. He is careful to note, though, that they are "the fun bullies" because they have fun with

picking on the nerds. Like the students who normalize negative behaviors against younger

students or siblings, Ted's redefinition of his group of friends as "fun bullies" can be seen as an

attempt to rationalize picking on those who are seen as "nerds."

Although there are some similarities, Marshall's view of whether or not they are bullies

differs substantially from Ted's, as seen in the following interview excerpt:

> M: We don't, well, we're probably not bullies but, um, we usually, like, pick on kids, but it's not like we're walking up to someone and giving 'em a wedgie or something. We sometimes just like play around. We're usually not very mad at all.

> I: So you think if you were, like, just kind of playing around picking on somebody, do you think that they know that you're playing around or do they take it more seriously?

> M: Well, it's sometimes the kids in our class like Joey and Mario and, like, the other kids that are kinda like nerds, they'll probably think that we're not playing around with them and stuff. They might go tell just to get us in trouble.

> I: So you think they kinda take things more seriously than other people might?

> M: Yeah. Well, Joey does….

> I: So what kinds of things would you say make someone a bully?

> M: Probably just, like, punching kids and everything, not caring what they're doing. Like Steven, he's not really a bully but he doesn't really care what he does. …

> I: So can somebody do those things and not be a bully?

> M: Probably. Maybe. Like, usually bullies don't get straight As or anything, 'cause they're just too dumb. If they're a bully they're probably just going to pick on kids and everything, not do work, but me, Ted, Ryan, Brian, we're probably not bullies 'cause we usually get As and Bs mostly….

> I: So do you think that there are any bullies in the fifth grade here?

> M: Probably not. I don't really think so, 'cause there's nobody that goes around punching everybody or doing something to everyone… Like me, I was in basketball *and* Math Bowl and Spell Bowl, so that's like two different things,

> so I'm like in the middle [between the nerds and those who don't get good grades].

I: So there's a lot of middle ground?

M: Yeah, like Ryan and Ted and Brian, they're all in choir…

Both Ted and Marshall agree that they do these things for fun rather than in an attempt to retaliate or hurt the feelings of others. As Marshall points out, they're "usually not very mad at all." In contrast to Ted's label of "the fun bullies," however, Marshall defines bullying more narrowly. Although he recognizes that the actions of his group of friends are on the border of bullying, Marshall uses other factors such as grades and extracurricular activities to justify his belief that they are "probably not bullies," a notion that I will return to in my discussion of person-centered perspectives below.

Adult Definitions of Bullying

Like their students, the adults in both schools defined bullying in ways that were related to definitions used by researchers but typically excluded important elements. Nearly all adults mentioned both physical and verbal forms of bullying and over half included indirect forms of bullying in their definitions or examples. However, only one third cited repetition of attacks. The only major difference between the three adult men and seven adult women that I interviewed involved discussions of an imbalance of power. Only one man mentioned this but five women did so. Combined, only two adults (Hillside's principal and a Greenfield recess supervisor) included all five elements from typical researcher definitions of bullying in their descriptions. Four, however, noted that their definitions of bullying had expanded in recent years. As Mr. Erickson at Hillside notes,

> I guess I was kind of like a lot of people. I thought at first it was more physical, you know, kids pushing me or knock me down on purpose or those type of things. I think that's our first thought of bullying. Big kid on the playground type thing.

> Of course through the training that we've had, it's kind of giving me a new feeling on that. It could be a verbal bullying, you know, it could be something they say or don't say, the way they look at you. I really see know that it is more of a broader aspect, broader range of things.

At Greenfield Elementary, Mrs. Lane also noted broadening her definition of bullying, explaining, "To me if, if they're doin' things like that I would call that a bully. Now used to I wouldn't, but I've seen so many girls, you know, gangin' up on, you know, it's, to me that's bullying." In line with this statement, Mr. White discussed encouraging students to associate their actions with bullying, stating "I point out to them that, you know, bullying isn't just physical. If you say unkind things and make a person feel bad, you know, that hurts just as much as, you know, a physical punch or a kick."

Echoing this expanded view, Mrs. Hunter at Greenfield noted, "I don't think it has to involve fighting or anything like that but if they would go and pick on a child, put him down because of his clothes or make remarks to him or about that or the way he, he looked or the way he talked or whatever. To me that's bullying." Mrs. Adrian took this statement one step farther, arguing that "words are harder, sometimes, than physical harm." Mr. Hanson at Hillside, who reported being bullied in high school himself, agreed with this assertion but was one of the three adults who recognized the importance of repetition in their descriptions of bullying, stating that "a bully I guess would be someone who continues to do something that would bother a student, it's not just a one-time thing, but they continue to do it, like day after day or week after week… I don't term bullying as something that somebody just gets mad, flies off the handle, pushes somebody and that's that." Mrs. Knight supported Mr. Hanson's argument that the frequency of these behaviors matters in categorizing them, adding "I think if you've got a pain in your stomach because you're fearful, that's a bully."

Regarding student motives for inflicting physical or emotional harm, adults at both schools drew connections to the potential power that bullies wield over their victims. This is a noted contrast to student definitions that normalized power differentials due to age. As Mrs. Hunter noted, "that's kind of the way brothers and sisters are at home. I don't think it should carry over to school. I don't think the fifth graders should be mean to a first grader or a kindergarten kid just because somebody in fifth grade was mean to him. I don't think that should go on at all." Mrs. Scott reflected:

> You know, they've always said, big bully. That's always been a statement just because you're trying to overpower somebody else. I think that there are people that we may call it, manipulating people. That's the softer word for bully. I think bully is more, they think bully is more of a guy word and manipulating is a female word for bullying. Bullying almost sounds meaner, like they're going to do something. Manipulating may be more with the mind, bullying is more physical.

Distinguishing Bullying from Non-Bullying

Mrs. Scott's differentiation between manipulation and bullying shows that, like their students, the adults in both schools added caveats to their definitions of bullying. Also like their students, adults noted the importance of intentions. As Mr. Erickson argued, a bully "picking on kids just for no reason" is distinct from "buddies getting into a shoving match or pushing each other during a basketball game." In this vein, Mrs. Wheeler stated that she did not consider actions between friends that were defined "in a fun way" to be bullying. This sentiment was shared by Mrs. Hunter, who believed that "mild teasing" does not constitute bullying. Expanding on this thought, she stated, "They do it all the time. They'll make just general remarks to 'em and if the other kid kinda laughs and goes along with 'em and everything I don't think you could call that bullying."

Obviously, a situation in which one student teases another student can result in a variety of outcomes depending on the relationship between the students involved. Thus, teachers were

aware that not all teasing is created equal. Teachers were also aware that students might try to pass off hurtful behavior as "joking" or "just playing." While paying attention to intentions, then, for most teachers the focus was placed squarely on the outcomes of student behavior. As Mr. Hanson stated, "Just playing doesn't get it with me because if you're bothering something to the point where they're crying or they're visibly upset, uh, it doesn't matter what you call it, just playing or whatever. It's, it should not be allowed." This position is in line with George Herbert Mead's (1934) assertion that "The response of one organism to the gesture of another in any given social act is the meaning of that gesture" (p. 78). If a student does go too far, Mr. Hanson argued, the punishment should be no different than for a student who intends to do harm. Mr. White, Greenfield's principal, shared a similar view, stating that "if playing around created somebody getting injured that should have not taken place."

Adult and Student Comparisons

Taken as a whole, the definitions of both students and adults indicate some familiarity with the definition of bullying used by researchers, with some important variations. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of students and adults included physical and verbal components in their definitions of bullying, though students were less likely to consistently include these than their adult counterparts. Very few students, however, described indirect behaviors like exclusion, repeated behaviors, or a power imbalance between bullies and victims. Adults were more likely to mention indirect behaviors and a power imbalance, but only three of them mentioned repetitive behavior in describing bullying.

These differences in definitions of bullying also manifested in an uncertainty among adults about the behaviors of students in their schools. In response to an interview question asking whether there were any bullies in fifth grade in their school, the majority of students

Figure 1. Percentage of Participants Providing Various Elements of Researchers' Bullying Definition
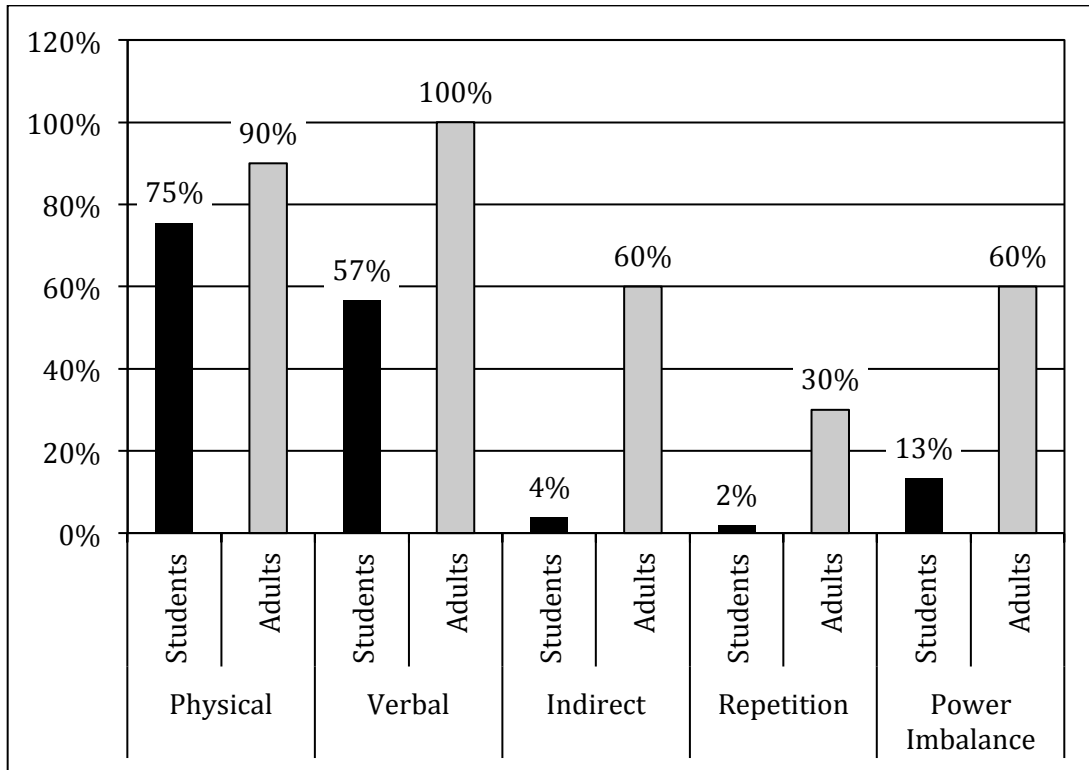
stated that there were, with about a third stating that there were not. Like their definitions of

bullying, these statements were consistent between males and females and the two schools. In

contrast to students, only three adults were sure that bullying occurred among fifth graders, with

three stating that there were only minor issues with bullying in their school as a whole. Notably,

some adults stated that they thought bullying was worse in some grades than others, but they

disagreed as to *where* it was worse. Mr. White and Mrs. Lane at Greenfield stated that bullying

was more overt among fifth graders. Also at Greenfield, Mrs. Hunter stated that she thought it

was worse in lower grades while Mrs. Adrian thought bullying was more prevalent in higher

grades. That four adults in the same school would have such different perceptions of bullying is

likely connected to the different definition applied by each.

Teachers at Hillside Elementary were more consistent in their answers, stating that they

largely did not know how prevalent bullying was. Mr. Erickson and Mr. Hanson, Hillside's fifth

grade teachers, noted that students are adept at hiding information from their teachers, with Mr.

Hanson stating that a teacher is often "the last person to know." Mrs. Knight, Hillside's

principal, noted that it was difficult to determine due to the differing perceptions between

students, with more sensitive students perceiving higher levels of bullying than others. She

stated, "I would love to believe that it's not even a percent. It's probably 90. These kids probably

feel bullied." Like Mrs. Hunter at Greenfield, Mrs. Wheeler at Hillside stated that she thought

bullying was more prevalent among younger students. Their positions as recess supervisors may

have provided them with a broader perspective than the teachers but their perceptions may also

have been shaped by increased sophistication among fifth graders that made bullying harder to

identify. Mrs. Wheeler noted that one particular fifth grade student was difficult to classify:

> They might have their little things in fifth, but I don't know if it's actually bullying, 'cause the Kathy thing you just kinda gotta take out, 'cause I don't know what all that is, and the things people will do back to her, I mean they're not, I don't know, you just gotta remove all that because I don't know what all that is. … Second grade, there's flat out two little bullies, I mean just always. They started up the other morning, because I do breakfast duty as well, 7:40 in the morning ... after each other. "Well he said this about my mom," you know and they're just *bullyin'* each other.

From Mrs. Wheeler's perspective, the clear-cut behaviors of these two second graders were

easier to define as bullying than the behaviors of Kathy, a fifth grade student who did not fit the

stereotypical image of a bully or a victim. The prevalence of these stereotypical images is

discussed below.

Person-Centered Definitions of Bullying

The fact that the definitions of students and adults in these schools shared elements with

that of Olweus did not mean that these definitions were applied evenly in the context of actual

school interactions. Rather, the lack of a common definition of bullying allowed problematic

conceptions of bullying to take hold. The stereotype of an older, larger student making life

difficult for younger students is a part of the cultural milieu in the United States and both

students and adults used stereotypes such as these to create a person-centered view of bullies. In

this view, bullying was seen as a dichotomy; either an individual *was* or *was not* a bully.

Student Views

Through this false dichotomy, students ignored the continuum of behaviors that ranges

from bullying to non-bullying and the fact that a student might participate in bullying in one

instance (e.g. pushing another student in the hallway, insulting someone) and non-bullying in

another (e.g. doing well on a math test, joking with friends). The students' use of this false

dichotomy was perhaps most evident in the case of Kathy, the Hillside Elementary student

mentioned by Mrs. Wheeler above. Kathy is an interesting example because she was not easy to

categorize compared to the other students at Hillside. While she often did things with the popular

group of girls, including playing on the school's basketball team, she was not friends with the

popular boys. Compared to the other girls, Kathy was average height, but heavier. At recess,

Kathy frequently played sports with the popular girls and those who said that they do not like

her.

Based on her behavior at school, one could label Kathy a bully. For example, she

frequently kicked students sitting across from her at the lunch table, despite them telling her to

stop. In the classroom, she did things with the apparent intention of bothering others, including

the popular girls, as the following field note indicates:

> While lining up for lunch in the classroom Kathy reached out and snapped
> Brittney's bra. Brittney moved forward in line to a place where Kathy couldn't
> reach her. Kathy slapped David, who was now in front of her, on the back in the
> same area (Fieldnote, 3/11/08).

Additionally, Kathy frequently pushed and argued with other students at recess. This typically

occurred when playing sports such as basketball, but Chelsie indicated in the following interview

excerpt that Kathy was physical with students at other times as well:

> C: We were playing tag, and she pushed me down and um, her fist, um- she just
> came over and punched my chin.
>
> I: So did she mean to do it or was she…
>
> C: I think she did it on purpose 'cause she went, *yeah*. She said something and
> went over to me, knocked me down and punched me.

While Kathy's actions toward other students caused some to see her as a bully, others

saw her as a victim based on the behavior of others toward her. In the classroom, Kathy was

frequently told to "shut up" and "sit down" by the other students, especially the popular group of

boys. When the class was discussing the upcoming presidential election with their teacher, one

student asked whether they would be putting on a program like the fifth graders did for the 2004

election, in which students acted as the candidates. Kathy immediately said that she wanted to be

Hillary Clinton and Ben said, "you can't, you're too fat." Mr. Erickson, their teacher, didn't

respond to this but did say that the fifth graders would be gone by the time November came and

that they probably do something in middle school. When Chad, who was not in Kathy's class,

stated in his interview that he had seen a student being mean to another student the previous day

and I asked him what happened, he responded:

> C: Oh, they were just making fun of this really fat, ugly girl and I did too.
>
> I: Was it like a younger girl or?
>
> C: Kathy
>
> I: Oh you were making fun of Kathy. So what- who was making fun of her?
> What was going on?

C: The whole other class, pretty much.

I: Was it like lunch time or when was it?

C: Lunch time and recess.

I: What were people saying?

C: Just, like, saying that she's fat and throwing balls at her.

Based on her interactions with others, students tended to see Kathy either as a bully or a victim, as students argue in the following field note:

> At lunch the students were talking about bullies and Abigail turned around and pointed to Kathy, who was sitting behind her, and said that Kathy is a bully. Kathy leaned around the end of the seat and made a face when she heard Abigail talking about her and Abigail acted surprised to see her, though she did not back down from her statement. Kaci said, "No, Kathy is *bullied*" (Fieldnote, 2/21/08).

By focusing their attention on Kathy rather than her interactions, students supported a false dichotomy that students were either bullies or they were not, and that a student's designation was based not on a single interaction but on the whole of his or her behaviors. Just as Marshall argued above that he and his friends were not bullies because of their grades and extracurricular activities, students tried to decide whether Kathy was a bully or victim based on their knowledge of her interactions with others. Moving past this dichotomy allows us to see that Kathy was both a bully *and* bullied, depending on the situation, just as Ted and Marshall sometimes bullied others and other times participated in Math Bowl or choir. For example:

> While playing basketball at recess Jerry was dribbling the ball and Kathy was heading toward him. Jerry got on his knees with the ball on his lap and put his arms around it, bending over the ball to protect it. Kathy put her arms around him to try to take the ball despite the fact that Jerry was nearly covering it. Jared kicked Kathy's shoulder. Ben came from behind her and kicked Kathy on the bottom of her shoe. The supervisor blew her whistle and told Kathy to stop and to come over to her. Kathy said that Jared didn't have to kick her in the shoulder. The supervisor called Jared over, too, and talked to them for a few minutes (Fieldnote, 3/4/08).

In the above example, Kathy acted aggressively toward Jerry but her actions did not warrant the

kicks she received from Jared and Ben. Students considering Kathy's behavior through the lens

of this false dichotomy, however, attempted to place her in a clearly defined category, viewing

"bully" and "victim" as mutually exclusive.

Adult Reinforcement

This false dichotomy was shared by adults at both schools. When asked what bullying

meant to her, Mrs. Wheeler, a Hillside recess supervisor, responded:

> When I think of bullying I think of Tyson Picken. Um, uh, we have a fourth
> grader here named Tyson Picken. You've probably seen- the biggest boy there is
> in four. But I think he, um, in regards to bullying you know, just, he actually you
> say pushes his weight around, you know? Just says stuff to somebody, uh, has
> nothing, uh, no reason. Just walks up and says something about 'em or out at
> recess they'd be playing basketball and a thing, you know, the basketball bounces
> past them, he just walks right up and either kicks it or takes it and throws it as far
> as he can throw it. Or picks on 'em in the lunch line, just, or picks their food up
> and squeezes their orange. I mean, for no reason. … I mean he's just flat out a
> bully.

In all, four adults (Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. Knight at Hillside Elementary and Mrs. Scott

and Mrs. Hunter at Greenfield Elementary) expressed person-centered views of bullying.

Expanding on this person-centered view, Mrs. Knight, Hillside's principal, stated that a student

who was currently in high school that she considered a bully was "mean by nature" and was

"born that way." She noted that students such as this are rare and have typically been labeled

emotionally disabled. At the time of our interview, Mrs. Knight proclaimed that there was only

one student at Hillside that she considered to be a bully, explaining:

> He bullies the teacher; he bullies all the other kids. No one else can get a word in
> edgewise. He argues with his teacher. When she's talking he talks over her. He's
> at his desk, but then when he sees her pick up the telephone he goes back to
> interrupt. He sees another girl back there so he comes back there and starts
> talking, knocks her out of the way. I have one bully in my school right now, that I
> know of. Um, and I really, even as a teacher and being here 19 years, I really
> can't think of 5 kids that I thought were bullies.

In many ways, these descriptions are reflective of the sort of bullies that are present on TV and in movies. When asked if there are any students that she would label bullies in the fifth grade, Mrs. Wheeler stated that in addition to Tyson there were "two little bullies" in the second grade but that grade had nothing to do with it, "just individuals." Similarly, when asked how prevalent bullying was at Greenfield, Mrs. Hunter stated that she did not currently see anything that she would label bullying but that in her time at the school there had been "different students" every three or four years that she would label bullies.

While those with person-centered views of bullying tended to reserve this label for students who fit media stereotypes, those who held action-centered views of bullying were more liberal in their usage of the term. Like many students, Mrs. Lane used media depictions to draw contrasts between outside perceptions and the reality of student life, stating "I don't see the old-fashioned bullying like what you'd see on *Leave it to Beaver*, you know, where he gets the black eye… it's more verbal, and it's subtle." This is in line with Mr. Erickson's earlier statement that he had broadened his definition of bullying to include mental and verbal forms of abuse. Rather than attempting to identify patterns of behavior, those with action-centered definitions stated that bullying could take the form of small actions, even between friends. These examples demonstrate that one's definition of bullying can be in line with those of researchers, as Mrs. Knight's is, without the application of this definition following suit.

Bullying Definitions in the Broader School Culture

The difficulty that both students and adults had in labeling Kathy's behavior demonstrates just one way that these definitions of bullying affected the broader culture in both schools. Elsewhere, I discuss the normalization of what I call "potentially negative interactions," or interactions in which students engage in behavior like insults, pushing, and exclusion,

recognizing that these behaviors are *potentially* negative whether or not a participant or observer defines them as negative (Harger, 2014). In total, I observed 830 such interactions during my fieldwork. Many of these interactions met Olweus's (1993) definition of bullying by taking place repeatedly between students in which there was an imbalance of power but were not defined as bullying by adults or students in the setting. Student and adult definitions of bullying, including person-centered views, were key to making this normalization possible. This normalization, in turn, made it more difficult to detect and punish students for bullying.

By overlooking transgressions that did not fit their definitions of bullying and encouraging students to do the same, adults allowed potentially negative interactions to be used among friends as well as enemies. The sheer number of these interactions likely made it more difficult for adults to determine which should be addressed and which should not. For example, upon observing one student chasing a friend and pulling him to the ground, Mrs. Wheeler at Hillside exclaimed, "You better be playing!" Although physical interactions, whether or not students were punished for them, were easier for adults to detect, verbal interactions were less likely to be detected or punished by adults. The number of both physical and verbal interactions and the fact that adults were unlikely to observe most behavior on the playground and in the classroom also prevented adults from dealing with all of the interactions that were reported to them. When adults did respond to student reports, they typically had to act as detectives, gathering information from a variety of witnesses before determining whether punishment was appropriate. Because of the time and effort involved in pursuing discipline, I observed several adults discouraging student reports, contributing to the stigmatization of reporting behaviors that were perceived as minor but effectively discouraging students from reporting *any* behavior to adults.

In this context, and in line with person-centered views of behavior, students who were well-behaved were perceived as being more trustworthy than others and had a greater influence on the disciplinary decisions of adults. Students who were often in trouble, on the other hand, sometimes found themselves accused of, and even punished for, things that they had not done. A reputation as a tattletale could also reduce the likelihood that a student's reports would be taken seriously by adults. Furthermore, it is possible that some of the students who were known as tattletales were more sensitive to the behaviors that other students accepted as the norm, as Mrs. Knight noted above.

Because they affected the broader school culture, person-centered definitions of bullying affected students whether or not they personally held these definitions. Many of the students who reported the presence of bullies during interviews did not define bullying in this way but relied on those who did (including recess supervisors and Hillside's principal) when reporting negative interactions. Although Olweus (2007) cautions against defining bullying more broadly, the normalization of these behaviors in both schools and the belief by students that their behaviors did not constitute bullying because they did not fit their person-centered definitions provided a backdrop against which more serious forms of bullying were difficult to define, detect, and punish.

Conclusion

These findings lend support to those by previous researchers while contributing an understanding of the effects of these definitions of bullying in specific school contexts. While bullying researchers typically focus on behaviors, adults were likely to exclude repetition (Miglaccio, 2015) and to stress overt forms of bullying (Craig et al., 2011), which affected perceptions of whether an incident was serious (Mishna et al., 2005). By focusing their attention

on particular students and conflating troublesome students with bullies, some adults also had a tendency to "pathologize" bullies (Miglaccio, 2015, p. 92). Some students also focused on person-centered definitions while drawing on media depictions and placing a great deal of importance on the perceived intentions behind a behavior, both as a way to protect themselves from being labeled bullies and to determine how to interpret the behavior of others (Gordillo, 2011). Student definitions also normalized behaviors that would be labeled as bullying by researchers by viewing them as "fun," "joking," or the product of age differences.

Person-centered definitions used by some students and adults are similar to the way that bullies are portrayed in the media and, as a result, these depictions may contribute to their presence in schools. Although a full examination of these similarities is beyond the scope of this study, stereotypical bullies such as Nelson in early episodes of *The Simpsons* or Scut Farkus in *A Christmas Story* are only portrayed in situations where they are making the lives of other characters difficult. That they are always the aggressors and are not shown in other circumstances likely contributed to the difficulty that students had labeling somebody like Kathy who was an aggressor in some circumstances and a victim in others. These portrayals likely also contributed to the opinions of students like Marshall who believed they were not bullies because they cared about school and participated in extracurricular activities.

Beyond media depictions, the differences in definitions between researchers and those in schools may be related to the avoidance of stigmatized identities. Similar to Allen's (2013) work with high school students, there is a benefit to not seeing oneself as a bully, especially as media coverage of bullying has grown. There is also a benefit to not seeing oneself as a victim of bullying. Additionally, Thornberg (2010, 2015) has found that bystanders protect their identities by placing the blame on victims. Removing the label of "bullying" and normalizing these

interactions protects all involved from one form of stigmatized identity even as it increases the

likelihood that students will experience these interactions as part of their daily lives at school.

Person-centered views and the normalization of behaviors that researchers would label

bullying also protects the identities of adults. In her interview, Mrs. Knight, Hillside's principal,

reported that she believed there was only one bully in the school and that in her 19 years there

she could think of less than five. As Migliaccio (2015) finds, adults in elementary schools can

remove themselves from blame by arguing that bullying is not an issue in their schools or that

there is nothing they can do to stop it due to the nature of the bullies. By focusing her attention

on bullies who she considered "mean by nature" and "born that way," Mrs. Knight downplayed

the significance of the interactions that occurred every day in her school, even though many of

those interactions fit the definition of bullying that researchers have adopted and may have had

long-term negative consequences for the students involved.

Not everybody accepted the normalization of these behaviors, but there were no clear

patterns to indicate why this was the case. Some students with supportive peer groups similar to

the middle friendship groups discussed by Adler and Adler (1998) may not have felt that their

identities were threatened by the presence of bullying. Some with relatively low status who

perceived themselves to be bullied may have found that doing so helped to protect their identities

by placing the blame on the bully rather than their own characteristics. Other students and adults

in the schools may have been exposed to more information about bullying than others. Future

research should delve more deeply into the reasons that those in similar positions can view

bullying in such different ways.

The definitions of bullying used by those in schools also have important implications for

anti-bullying legislation. Although Federal guidelines are limited to those in categories protected

by civil rights legislation and Title IX, by the summer of 2015 lawmakers in all 50 states had

passed anti-bullying legislation. Like those in schools, states often depart from researcher

definitions, with most focusing on the intent to harm and the severity of impact and few

including an imbalance of power or repetitive actions (Cornell & Limber, 2015). As is also the

case in schools, however, these definitions blur the lines between bullying and other forms of

aggression and harassment and lead to a variety of perspectives on what is, and is not, bullying,

weakening their protection (Cornell & Limber, 2015). As Cascardi et al. (2014) note, "when the

definition of bullying is so broad that it includes every possible form of aggression or

harassment, schools and parents are bound to disagree as to whether student misconduct needs to

be handled as bullying" (p. 268).

Rather than looking to legislative solutions, then, this research suggests the importance of

developing common understandings within schools of what bullying is. These results cannot

definitively answer the question of how to prevent bullying in schools but the lack of a shared

definition highlights one obstacle that must be overcome in order to do so. The education and

shared definitions provided by whole-school approaches to the problem of bullying, in which the

goal is a change in school culture, may be one reason that they are reported to be successful

(Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

Due to the prevalence of media narratives surrounding bullying and the stigma associated

with this term, however, these findings suggest that schools might be better served by focusing

less on labels like "bully" and more on particular behaviors that are to be taken seriously by

students, teachers, staff members, and principals. For example, rather than defining insults as a

form of bullying and then overlooking their use by students who are not defined as bullies, adults

in schools could make clear to students which forms of insults will not be tolerated and follow

through by treating reports of those actions just as seriously as they would reports of physical aggression. In this way, schools would prevent students from considering their behavior to be less serious because they are "not bullies."

The proliferation of person-centered definitions of bullying combined with the variation both within and between students and adults in their definitions of bullying show that not only do individuals in these schools not share definitions of bullying with researchers, they often do not share definitions of bullying with each other. When these individuals hear anti-bullying messages in school or in the media, then, they likely filter these messages through their own definitions. A student who "picks on the nerds" but also gets good grades may ignore these messages because she does not see them as relevant to her interactions while one who perceives himself as a nerd who is picked on may wonder why the national dialog surrounding bullying has not resulted in more significant changes. Laws prohibiting bullying in many states are also unlikely to lead to meaningful change when each individual defines and interprets bullying differently.

References

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1995). Dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in preadolescent cliques. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 58*(3), 145-162.

Adler, P. A., & Adler P. (1998). *Peer power: Preadolescent culture and identity*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Allen, K. P. (2013). Understanding bullying in an affluent, academically rigorous U.S. high school: A grounded theory analysis. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 23*(4), 413-436.

Allen, K. P. (2015). 'We don't have bullying, but we have drama': Understandings of bullying and related constructs within the social milieu of a U.S. high school. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 25*(3), 159-181.

Ambert, A. (1995). Toward a theory of peer abuse. *Sociological Studies of Children, 7*, 177-205.

Barboza, G. E., Schiamberg, L. B., Oehmke, J., Korzeniewski, S. J., Post, L. A., & Heraux, C. G. (2009). Individual characteristics and the multiple contexts of adolescent bullying: An ecological perspective. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38*, 101-121.

Cascardi, M., Brown, C., Ivannarone, M., & Cardona, N. (2014). The problem with overly broad definitions of bullying: Implications for the schoolhouse, the statehouse, and the ivory tower. *Journal of School Violence, 13*(3), 253-276.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage.

Cornell, D., & Limber, S. P. (2015). Law and policy on the concept of bullying at school. *American Psychologist, 70*(4), 333-343.

Corsaro, W. A. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Craig, K., Bell, D., & Leschied, A. (2011). Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge and Attitudes Regarding School-Based Bullying. *Canadian Journal of Education, 34*(2), 21-33.

Cuadrado-Gordillo, I. (2012). Repetition, Power Imbalance, and Intentionality: Do These Criteria Conform to Teenagers' Perception of Bullying? A Role-Based Analysis. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27*(10), 1889-1910.

Eder, D. (1991). The role of teasing in adolescent peer group culture. *Sociological Studies of Child Development, 4*, 181-197.

Eder, D., with Evans, C. C., & Parker, S. (1995). *School talk: Gender and adolescent culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Eder, D., & Fingerson, L. (2002). Interviewing children and adolescents. In J. F. Gubrium and J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (181-201). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (2003). Research on school bullying and victimization: What have we learned and where do we go from here? *School Psychology Review, 32*(3), 365-383.

Evaldsson, A. (1993). *Play disputes and social order: Everyday life in two Swedish after-school centers*. Linkoping: TEMA.

Faris, R. & Felmlee, D. (2011). Status struggles: Network centrality and gender segregation in same- and cross-gender aggression. *American Sociological Review, 76*(1), 48-73.

Faris, R. & Felmlee, D. (2014). Casualties of social combat: School networks of peer victimization and their consequences. *American Sociological Review, 79*(2), 228-257.

Fine, G. A. (1987). *With the boys: Little league baseball and preadolescent culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Finkelhor, D., Turner, H. A., & Hamby, S. (2012). Let's prevent peer victimization, not just

      bullying. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 36*(4), 271-274.

Garpelin, A. (2004). Accepted or rejected in school. *European Educational Research Journal,*

      3(4), 729-742.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* New York, NY: Aldine de

      Gruyter.

Goodwin, M. H. (2006). *The hidden life of girls: Games of stance, status, and exclusion.* Oxford:

      Blackwell Publishing.

Gordillo, I. C. (2011). Divergence in Aggressors' and Victims' Perceptions of Bullying: A

      Decisive Factor for Differential Psychosocial Intervention. *Children and Youth Services*

      Review, 33, 1608-1615.

Guerin, S., & Hennessy, E. (2002). Pupils' Definitions of Bullying. *European Journal of*

      Psychology of Education, 17(3), 249-261.

Harger, B. (2014, February). *To tell or not to tell: School culture and students' willingness to*

      report negative behaviors. Paper presented at the meeting of the Eastern Sociological

      Society, Baltimore, MD.

Jerolmack, C., & Khan, S. (2014). Talk is cheap: Ethnography and the attitudinal fallacy.

      Sociological Methods & Research, 43(2), 178-209.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Merten, D. E. (1997). The meaning of meanness: Popularity, competition, and conflict among

      junior high school girls. *Sociology of Education, 70*(3), 175-191.

Migliaccio, T. (2015). Teacher engagement with bullying: Managing an identity within a school.

      Sociological Spectrum, 35(1), 84-108.

Milner, M. (2004). *Freaks, geeks, and cool kids: American teenagers, schools, and the culture of consumption*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Mishna, F., Scarcello, I., Pepler, D., & Wiener, J. (2005). Teachers' understanding of bullying. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne De l'Éducation, 28*(4), 718-738.

Mishna, F., Wiener, J., & Pepler, D. (2008). Some of My Best Friends—Experiences of Bullying Within Friendships. *School Psychology International, 29*(5), 549-573.

Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Olweus, D. (2007). *The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire.* Center City, MN: Hazelden.

Pascoe, C. J. (2013). Notes on a sociology of bullying: Young men's homophobia as gender socialization. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking, 1*(1), 87-104.

Pellegrini, A. D. (2002). Bullying and victimization in middle school: A dominance relations perspective. *Educational Psychologist, 37*, 151-163.

Renold, E. (2002). Presumed innocence: (Hetero)sexual, heterosexist and homophobic harassment among primary school girls and boys. *Childhood, 9*, 415-434.

Rizzo, T. (1989). *Friendship development among children in school.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Shepherd, H., & Paluck, E. L. (2015). Stopping the drama: Gendered influence in a networked field experiment. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 78*(2), 173-193.

Smith, P. K., & Levan, S. (1995). Perceptions and experiences of bullying in younger pupils. *The British Journal of Educational Psychology, 65*(4), 489-500.

Sullivan, K., Cleary, M., & Sullivan, G. (2004). *Bullying in secondary schools: What it looks like and how to manage it.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thornberg. R. (2010). Schoolchildren's social representations on bullying causes. *Psychology in the Schools, 47*, 311-327.

Thornberg, R. (2015). School bullying as a collective action: Stigma processes and identity struggling. *Children & Society, 29*(4), 310-320.

Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2011). Effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying: A systematic and meta-analytic review. *Journal of Experimental Criminology, 7*(1), 27-56.

Vaillancourt, T., McDougall, P., Hymel, S., Krygsman, A., Miller, J., Stiver, K., & Davis, C. (2008). Bullying: Are researchers and children/youth talking about the same thing? *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 32*(6), 486-495.

Viala, E. S. (2015). The fighter, the punk and the clown: How to overcome the position of victim of bullying? *Childhood, 22*(2), 217-230.

Voss, L. S. (1997). Teasing, disputing, and playing: Cross-gender interactions and space utilization among first and third graders. *Gender & Society, 11*, 238-256.