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Passive Victims of Peer Bullying and Teaching Staff's Response to Them

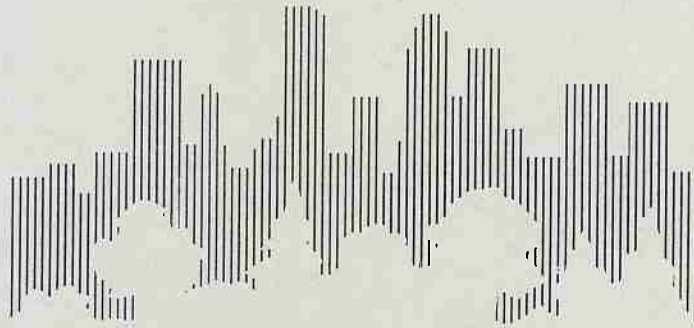Kenneth E. Maher
Augsburg College

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MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK THESIS

Kenneth E. Maher
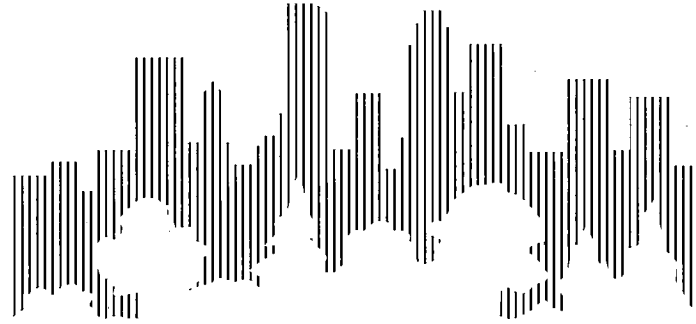
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Kenneth E. Maher

Passive Victims of Peer Bullying and Teaching Staff's Response to Them

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Passive Victims of Peer Bullying and

Teaching Staff's Responses to Them

By

Kenneth E. Maher

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Master of Social Work Degree

Department of Social Work

in the Graduate School

Augsburg College

Minneapolis, Minnesota

May, 8 1996

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

AUGSBURG COLLEGE

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of:

<u>Kenneth E. Maher</u>

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirements for

the Master of Social Work Degree.

Date of Oral Presentation: <u>May, 8 1996</u>

Thesis Committee: _____

<div align="center">Thesis Advisor</div>

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<div align="center">Thesis Reader</div>

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<div align="center">Thesis Reader</div>

DEDICATION

The author of this thesis owes many thanks to family and friends for their support and encouragement during this long thesis process. I wish to dedicate this thesis to my family and friends who teamed up with me to bring to fruition this goal of mine.

First, I want to thank Jesus Christ without whom I would not have had the desire and opportunity to reach my goal of completing this thesis.

Second, I want to thank my wife (Kristine Maher) for her love, unselfishness and support in my completing this thesis. Kristine, more than anyone else, knows what I went through to reach this moment and I couldn't have done this without her. This is just as much her thesis as it is mine.

Third, I want to thank my mother (Carol Barron) for always believing in me and encouraging me to pursue my highest goals.

Fourth, I want to thank my thesis advisor (Rosemary Link) and my thesis readers (Vicki Olson and Leo Bulger) for their advice and endurance in leading me through the thesis process.

Lastly, I want to thank my close family and friends for their love and concern for me these last three years. Thank you Todd Maher, Danielle Maher, Michelle Maher, Mr. C., Leora Nichols, Brooks Larson, Shelly Larson, Dick Barron, Gwen Larson and Bob Larson. Your smiles and laughter have helped me through some of the toughest days.

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

**Passive Victims of Peer Bullying and
Teaching Staff's Responses to Them**

Study Focus: Research

This study explored teaching staff's ability to identify passive victims of peer bullying, the strategies they use to build up a victim's self-esteem, the strategies they use to teach passive victims assertiveness skills and their views and opinions concerning bullying. Research indicated that passive victims of peer bullying tend to have lower self-esteem and don't have the skills needed to protect themselves when bullied. Since a majority of bullying happens at school, teaching staff have the best opportunity to intervene when bullying occurs.

A self-administered questionnaire was completed by 45 teachers, educational assistants and specialist/support staff at a particular elementary school in Minneapolis. Results of the questionnaire indicated that teaching staff who completed this questionnaire have excellent knowledge in how to identify passive victims and excellent knowledge in the encouragement of self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. Although, the researcher did have a question as to the consistency of procedures followed by all teaching staff concerning the handling of aggressive incidents at this particular school. The researcher also questioned what seemed to be minimization, by the respondents, of the overall incidence of bullying that may be occuring at this school.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Bullying among schoolchildren is an age old phenomenon that most people can relate to as either a bully or the victim of a bully. Although bullying is an act of aggression involving two individuals, the bully and the victim, research has focused its understanding towards the aggressive behavior of the bully (Perry, et. al., 1988). Research for this paper will focus on passive victims of peer bullying in a school setting and teaching staffs' responses to them.

This topic is significant because passive victims of peer bullying "are likely to perceive school as an unhappy setting" (Hoover & Hazler,1991, p 214). This unhappy perception of school plus the constant bullying passive victims endure can lead to truancy, poor grades, school phobia and at its worst, suicide (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Studies show that bullying is a problem in most schools - much research has been conducted with boys in countries outside the United States such as Scandinavia, Japan, Australia and Norway (Olweus, 1994; O'Moore,1988) . Since the mid-1980's however, more research has been conducted with girls and in the United States. Anywhere from 5% of school children from a study in the United Kingdom (Lowenstein, 1978) to 22% of parents of schoolchildren in a study conducted in an Inner London Education Authority survey (O'Moore, 1988) report that bullying is a problem. Very little is known about passive victims of peer bullying. Information gathered from the literature review and results from the survey instrument will be used to discuss the characteristics of passive victims, how teaching staff recognize passive victims, the family background passive victims tend to come from, the percentages of victims represented in the schools and teaching staffs' responses to victims of peer bullying.

Research Questions

This research explored the perceptions of teaching staff toward passive victims of peer bullying and gathered their views and opinions concerning bullying. Information gathered was used to increase the knowledge base concerning passive victims, to help in the identification of passive victims and to identify the strategies used by teaching staff to increase the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. The two research questions studied are:

1) How do teaching staff recognize a passive victim of peer bullying?

2) Can strategies be identified whereby teaching staff can improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills of passive victims?

This project is concerned with two groups of people: 1) elementary school teaching staff who instruct passive victims of peer bullying, and 2) children who are passive victims of peer bullying (age range 6 - 16 years). The focus of the research is teaching staffs' responses towards passive victims of peer bullying. As reported by Batsche and Knoff (1994) "response of school personnel to bullying is at best disappointing" (Batsche & Knoff, p 170, 1994). More than 60% of victims report that school personnel respond poorly to bullying at school (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Reasons behind school staff's poor response rate to bullying will be discussed in the review of literature.

Research shows that victims of peer bullying suffer from lower self-esteem and lack the assertiveness skills to defend themselves in bullying situations (Hoover & Hazler, 1991; Perry, et. al., 1988; Boulton & Smith, 1994). Research also shows that the school setting (classrooms, hallways and playgrounds) is where most bullying incidents occur (Batsche, et. al., 1994; & Sharp, & Smith, 1991). It is the researcher's belief that since teaching staff spend most of their working day with children in the school, they would be the individuals who would have the best opportunity to mediate bullying incidents. Therefore it is important

to learn what teaching staff know about passive victims of peer bullying and how they go about encouraging and helping these children.

It is the desire of the researcher to encourage teaching staff in what they are already doing in regards to helping passive victims of peer bullying. The researcher wishes to also offer information that may be new to teaching staff and social workers concerning the encouragement of passive victims of peer bullying.

Reasons For The Study

There are many reasons for studying passive victims of peer bullying and teaching staffs' responses to them. Five of these are:

1) Teaching staff are likely to be the first individuals to respond to bullying situations at school because they spend a majority of their day in direct contact with children.

2) Passive victims of peer bullying may tend to be overlooked by teaching staff. Teaching staff tend to focus their attention and energy towards aggressive children since they cause the most classroom and playground disturbance (Perry, et. al.,1988).

3) Children who are bullied by their peers in grade school tend to be bullied into junior high school (Perry, et. al., 1988). This long-term bullying can and does lead to a negative school experience.

4) School should be perceived as a positive experience for children, a passive victim of peer bullying is not likely to view school in this way. This negative school experience could lead to future truancy and school phobia problems for passive victims (Hoover & Hazler, 1991).

5) Limited research has been conducted in the United States concerning passive victims of peer bullying and teaching staff's responses to them (Hoover & Hazler, 1991). Most research has been done in Scandinavian

countries and "work carried out in Scandinavia by Olweus (1987) suggests that data from one country cannot be freely generalized to another" (Boulton & Smith,1994, p 316).

Results from this study will be used to inform teaching staff of the characteristics of passive victims of peer bullying and of the ways they can build the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims.

Use of this information may result in: 1) teaching staff who are able to recognize passive victims of peer bullying early on in the school year, 2) teaching staff who have the knowledge to build up the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims and 3) children who do not get labeled as a victim by their peers and then get bullied from year-to-year. Overall results could be a more positive classroom environment and school atmosphere for children.

Terminology

The definition of *bullying* that will be used was first defined by Dan Olweus. "A student is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students" (Olweus, p 1173, 1994). A negative action is when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another. Negative actions can be carried out by physical contact, by words, or in other ways, such as making faces or obscene jestures, and intentional exclusion from a group. In order to use the term bullying, there should also be an imbalance of strength; this means that the victim is physically weaker than the bully (Olweus, 1994).

There are two types of victims recognized in the research, the *passive victim* (defined above) and the *provocative victim*.

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A passive victim is a child that does not defend him/herself when bullied. He or she does not have the physical strength or verbal abilities to stick up for him/herself.

A provocative victim is a child that instigates confrontations with other children and does things that irritate them (Olweus, 1994).

A *victim* of peer bullying is a boy or girl who is being bullied repeatedly and over time by one or more peers.

A *bully* is a boy or girl who inflicts negative actions, repeatedly and over time, towards a victim.

Teaching staff are all the adults who instruct children in the school. Teaching staff include classroom teachers, educational assistants, special education teachers, chapter 1 teachers, and special subject teachers (physical education, art, foreign languages, science, music, media and English as a second language).

Assertiveness skills means the resources a victim has to protect (stand up for) him/herself when being bullied.

Summary

The focus of this research is to gather information concerning teaching staff's responses to passive victims of peer bullying in a particular elementary school and to identify techniques or strategies teaching staff can use to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims.

The paper will continue with a review of literature, a description of the research methodology, a review of the research and findings, a discussion of the research results and a concluding section discussing implications for teaching staff, implications for mental health professionals and avenues for future research. The appendix includes the institutional review board approval letters, principal letter, cover letter and survey instrument.

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Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This next section of the paper will report on the previous research that addressed the topic of bullying and in particular victims of peer bullying. Specific areas reported on are the characteristics and attributes of bullied children, the influence of family on bullied children, the incidence of bullying in schools, the responses of teachers to bullying and bullied children and the integration of the theoretical/conceptual framework of resiliency and self-concept.

Previous research conducted with victims of peer bullying did not separate passive victims and provocative victims. Therefore, the information gathered in this review of literature will report on both provocative and passive victims of peer bullying.

Characteristics and Attributes

Most research tends to agree on the characteristics of victims of peer bullying. These characteristics seem to apply to both boys and girls but it needs to be said that far more research has been done concerning boys.

In general bullied children (ages 6 - 16 years) tend to be more anxious, insecure, cautious, sensitive and quiet than other students (Olweus, 1994). When bullied by other students, victims commonly react by crying and withdrawal. Victims also suffer from low self-esteem and tend to have a negative view of themselves and their situation. These characteristics may be inherent in victims or they may be brought on by the length of time victims are bullied (Olweus, 1977, 1978). Victims tend to be bullied over several years. Research conducted by Olweus (1994) studied some of the long-term effects of bullying on victims. Results from the Olweus study showed that victims do not think of themselves as attractive, see themselves as stupid and as failures. They tend to

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feel lonely and abandoned and remark that they do not even have one friend at school. Victims are not aggressive or teasing in thier behavior, and if they are boys, are likely to be physically weaker than other boys (Olweus, 1994; Lagerspetz et. al., 1982; Perry, et. al., 1988).

One of the characteristics of bullied children not well studied in the literature is the factor of race or ethnic background. Studies that have tested for the factor of racism in bullying have mostly been done outside the United States. Studies show that bullied children being called racist names or being picked on because of their race is significant but much less frequent than being called nasty names in other ways, physically hurt, threatened or having rumors spread about them (Whitney & Smith,1993).

In a study conducted by Siann (1993), eight of 20 teachers interviewed mentioned racism or ethnic group as a factor or cause of bullying. Whitney & Smith (1993) surveyed 6000 students and reported that 14.8% of junior/middle school students and 9.4% of secondary students commented on being called "nasty names about my colour or race". Research conducted by Moran (1993) stated that 18% of the Asian children studied reported disliking other children because they called them racist names, no White children made this comment. Tizard (1988) surveyed Inner London Schools and discovered that around a third of students surveyed reported being teased because of their colour (Moran, et al., 1993).

Studies tended to disagree about physical attributes that victims have and if they contribute to bullying. Olweus' (1978, 1993) and Roland's (1983) studies showed that physical characteristics (external deviations) in victims of peer bullying did not contribute to bullying. Although, studies by Bjorkquist (1982) have shown that obesity and handicaps were more common among Finnish victims of peer bullying. It is important to note that the Olweus and Roland

studies were conducted in Sweden while the Bjorkquist study was conducted in Finland. Differences may be due to the fact that the studies were done in different countries. It is important to not generalize findings from one country to another because of the different cultural lifestyles and influences represented by the subjects tested.

Family Influence

Researchers tended to agree about the "typical" family of victims of peer bullying. "In terms of cohesion or emotional closeness, victims' families seem overly involved or enmeshed" (Oliver, et. al., p200, 1994). This overprotection by parents can lead to an inability of victims to develop coping skills on their own (Batsche & Moore, 1994). It is reasonable to assume that such tendencies toward overprotection by parents are both a cause and a consequence of the bullying (Olweus, 1978, 1993).

It is interesting to note that even though the parents of victims seem to be overprotective, research has shown that these parents seem unaware of what was happening to their child at school. Studies done with parents of victims reported that parents are largely ignorant of, or chose to ignore, what was happening to their child at school. Approximately 55% of parents of victims in the junior school as compared with 35% in the senior classes had shown interest in what was happening to their children at school (O'Moore, 1988). A reason for the large percentage of parents who either chose to ignore or are ignorant of what was happening to their child at school could be because of the relationship they have with their child's school teachers. The relationship could be strained, therefore leading to a lack of communication and indifference to the bullying that happens at school.

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Incidence of Bullying

Research shows that bullying is a concern and a considerable problem in many countries. Some of the countries that have conducted surveys to assess bullying problems are: Finland, England, United States, Norway, Canada, Netherlands, Japan, Ireland, Spain and Australia. Data from these countries have been collected by administering the Bully/Victim Questionnaire developed by Olweus (1978) and by interviewing both students and teachers in schools. The Bully/Victim Questionnaire is given to students and determines the extent to which children in a school feel they are bullied and the extent to which children bully others. Interviews are conducted by the researchers and inquire about the amount and kind of bullying happening at a particular school.

Studies tended to focus on bullying in boys, although, in the mid 1980's bullying in girls became a topic of study. Ages of children studied ranged from seven to sixteen years old. Overall statistics from Norway show that bullying tends to be higher in younger children: 17.5% for boys and 16% for girls in grade two (7-8 years old). As children get older the percentage of bullying decreases: 14.5% for boys and 12.2% for girls in grade 3, 13% for boys and 11.5% for girls in grade 4, 10.6% for boys and 8.9% for girls in grade 5, 8.4% for boys and 5.5% for girls in grade 6, 8% for boys and 3.35% for girls in grade 7, 7.7% for boys and 3.5% for girls in grade 8 and 6.4% for boys and 3% for girls in grade 9 (Olweus, 1994). The N for boys = 42,390 and the N for girls = 40,940. The decrease in bullying as children get older could be due to victims changing schools or growing physically and socially more mature. Changing schools can be a new and better start for some victims and the development of assertiveness skills can be learned as the victims become older.

Research done in the United States by Perry, et. al. (1988) studied 165 children (male and female) ages 8 -12. A questionnaire (Peer Nomination

Inventory) administered to the children required them to name classmates who fit certain victimization descriptors. Results showed that about 10% of the sample may be characterized as "extreme victims". To be extremely victimized (bullied) would mean that a child was bullied 2- 3 times a week (Perry, et. al., 1988).

Studies from the United Kingdom and Ireland show varying degrees of bullying. The relationship to truancy and bullying in schools was studied by Ken Reid (1984). Reid learned from his research in South Wales that no fewer than 15% and 19% of his sample said that they first missed school and later continued to miss school for reasons associated with bullying (O'Moore, 1988).

Some United Kingdom estimates by Lowenstein (1978) found an incidence of 5% bullying among boys aged 11 - 16 years old. This study contrasted with an inner London Education Authority survey which found 22% of the parents of 11-year-olds stated bullying as a problem for their children (O'Moore,1988). In contrast to bullying in the Scandinavian schools, bullying in the Irish schools seemed to be more varied (O'Moore, 1988).

As was said at the beginning of this chapter, much research concerning bullied children has been conducted with boys. The same can be said with research conducted with bullies. The earliest studies focused their research on boys who bullied their peers. It was not until the mid 1980's that studies concerning bullying was conducted with girls. The research conducted with girls, when compared to boys, showed differences in how girls and boys bully other children. The next few paragraphs discuss some of those differences between boys and girls.

Studies by Olweus (1994) showed that boys who bully other children tend to use more direct means to bully and intimidate other children while girls tend to use more indirect means to bully other children. Direct means of bullying would include hitting, kicking, taking things from the victim and threatening with

physical harm. Indirect means of bullying would include social isolation, intentional exclusion from the peer group, slandering, spreading rumors and manipulation of friendship relationships.

Research conducted in the Bergen study reported that a larger percentage of boys participate in bullying than girls (Olweus, 1994). Research showed that a great majority of boys, more than 80%, were bullied by other boys and that boys also carried out a large percentage of the bullying (60%) that girls were subjected too. Boulton and Underwood studied victims of peer bullying and found that "65% of bullying is perpetrated by boys, 15% by girls, and 19% by boys and girls" (Batsche & Knoff, 1994, p168). A study conducted by Olweus reported similiar results in that "more than 60% of girls bullied in grades 5-7 were bullied by boys only and an additional 15 to 20% were bullied by both boys and girls" (Batsche & Knoff, 1994, p168).

The above results show that girls don't bully other students as much as boys do and that girls tend to use more indirect means of bullying, this does not mean that bullying by girls is less important. The effects of bullying on the victim are still the same and needs to be dealt with as they are with boys who bully.

Another point to mention is whether there is a greater incidence of bullying in one type of school than another. In other words does class size, school size (structural factors), frustration or failures in school or location of a school in an urban or rural area affect the incidence of bullying? Olweus (1994) found little to support the view that bullying emerged as a result of structural factors in the school or classroom or as a result of frustration or failures in the school. In contrast, Roland (1983) as well as Stephenson and Smith (1987), believed that schools (structural factors) do make a difference. The findings indicated that the larger the class and the larger the school, the greater the problem of bullying tends to be.

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Schools that have lower incidences of bullying have made a conscious effort to combat the bullying behavior of children. Special programs are established to help children who are bullies and those who are bullied (Floyd, 1985; Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Specific steps are taken to deal with bullying that include parental/guardian involvement and consequences for the bully. Most importantly though is that the school staff and students have an overall understanding, made explicit in the school policies, that bullying is inappropriate and will be dealt with accordingly (Olweus, 1994).

Responses of Teachers

Little research has been conducted concerning teacher's responses to bullying. As reported by Batsche and Knoff (1994) "response of school personnel to bullying is, at best, disappointing" (p 170). Results of research show that more than 60% of victims report that school faculty respond only "sometimes or never", or try to put a stop to bullying "only once in a while or almost never" (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Hoover, Oliver & Hazler, 1992; Olweus, 1991). These results have been collected at different times and in different countries. A study done with bullies confirmed that teachers only intervened to a modest extent. Seventy percent of bullies in the junior grades and 90% of bullies in the senior grades stated that their class teachers had never approached them about their bullying behavior (O'Moore, 1988).

Some reasons why teaching personnel may not respond to bullying are: First, 25% of teachers feel that it is sometimes helpful to ignore the problem (Stephenson and Smith, 1988). Since bullying often occurs in the form of verbal intimidation, isolation and exclusion, teachers may view these behaviors as less serious than physical assults. Second, the social (passive) skills of the victims may be such that teachers are less motivated to intervene (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Victims tend to be shy and quiet, therefore making it difficult for a teacher

to find out who bullied the victim. Teachers are preoccupied with classroom and educational tasks and may not have the length of time or take the time to find out from the victim what happened. Third, interviews with victims show that children who do not tell of being bullied do so out of fear of reprisal. It seems that a portion of victims think that school personnel will either not be sympathetic to their problem or will not be able to protect them (Boulton & Underwood, 1992).

Overall, studies show that in order for bullying to be reduced significantly, schools must send a strong and clear message to students and families that bullying is inappropriate and will not be tolerated in school (Batsche & Knoff 1994). The implementation of a comprehensive plan designed to teach skills that promote positive relationships between students, limit aggressive behavior and teach prosocial behavior will be needed to send this message about the negative affects of bullying. More importantly however, is the realization by the school staff that bullying is a pervasive problem and that the only way to combat this problem is to support the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan against bullying.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Two central theories have contributed to the framework of this study. The theories of resiliency and identity (ie. self-concept) were alluded to in the literature but never studied in depth. This is one of the weaknesses of the literature gathered so far; minimal integration of theoretical background. In this section of the paper resiliency theory and self-concept will be explained and integrated into the phenomenon of bullied children. By integrating the theories of resiliency and identity (ie. self-concept), the researcher offers a theoretical foundation to the subject of victims of peer bullying.

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Resiliency Theory

There are many definitions of resiliency. Osborn (1990) defined resiliency as "children who are vulnerable to an adverse outcome yet achieve competence" (p23). Mastin (1990) defined resiliency as "a process, capacity or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenges or threatening circumstances" (p426). "Rutter (1985) viewed resiliency similarly but emphasized more of the individuals sense of self: "firstly, a sense of self-esteem and self-confidence; secondly, a belief in one's own self-efficacy and ability to deal with change and adaptation; thirdly, a repertoire of social problem-solving approaches" (Radke-Yarrow, p582, 1993). Overall, a person is resilient when he/she successfully adapts to his/her environment despite risk. Resiliency has been studied for a number of years and researchers have identified characteristics in resilient children that enable them to become competent and successful in surviving the stressful situations in their lives.

Many of the characteristics resilient children display can be encouraged and taught to children who are vulnerable. Some resilient characteristics and factors are:

> (1) an active, evocative outlook to solving life's problems, (2) an inclination to perceive their experiences constructively, even if they caused pain and suffering, (3) the ability to gain other people's attention, (4) a strong desire to use faith in order to maintain a positive vision of a meaningful life, (5) having positive expectations, (6) having an interest in hobbies and other activities and (7) having a caring adult take an interest in a child's life. (Werner,1984; Wyman, et. al., 1993).

All of the above characteristics would help to build up a child's self-esteem and assist in giving them the resources needed to deal positively with stressful situations.

Victims of peer bullying have many of the characteristics of vulnerable children. Victims tend to already have lower self-esteem and lack the assertiveness skills to protect themselves. Other risk factors in the lives of victims like poverty, death, abuse, physical disabilities and parents who parent inappropriately (Tarwater, 1993) would compound the vulnerability of the victim and decrease the chances of his/her achieving resiliency.

Teachers work with children during the school day and are in a position to observe bullying behavior since most bullying occurs at school. It is the researcher's opinion that teachers have the best opportunity to identify bullied children and provide experiences for bullied children to become resilient.

"Given the incredible stresses the family system is now experiencing, school has become a vital refuge for a growing number of children, serving as a protective shield to help children withstand the multiple vicissitudes that they can expect of a stressful world" (Benard, p45, 1993). Werner (1990) in her research found that among the most frequently encountered positive role model in the lives of the children in Kauai, outside the family circle, was a favorite teacher. For the resilient youngster a special teacher was not just an instructor for academic skills, but also a confidant and positive model for personal identification. Sarah Moskovitz's (1983) 30-to-40 year follow up study of childhood survivors of the Nazi Holocaust found similiar results. Moskovitz found that the one person to be the most influential in the lives of the childhood survivors was the nursery school teacher who provided caring and warmth and taught them compassion. Similarly, Garmezy (1991) talks about a kindly concerned teacher as being a protective factor and external support for children who are vulnerable to stressful circumstances.

Self-Concept

Identity theory is the second central theory integrated into the theoretical/conceptual framework of this paper. When integrating identity theory into this paper, a child's whole identity will not be looked at but just one part of a child's identity, the child's self-concept.

When studying self-concept it is important to understand and take into account all the different dimensions it has in persons identity. Self-concept "is defined as the way we describe ourselves based on the roles we play and personal attributes" (Tredinnick, p23-24, 1993). Research conducted studying self-concept in people has listed its different parts as:

> "behavior self: the individual's perception of his or her own behavior, physical self: the individual's perception of their body, state of health, physical appearance, skills and sexuality, moral-ethical self: describes the self from a moral-ethical frame of reference - moral worth, relationship to God, etc., personal self: the individual's sense of personal worth, feeling of adequacy as a person and the evaluation of his or her personality apart from the body or the relationship to others, family self: reflects one's feelings of adequacy, worth and value as a family member, intellectual self: the individual's perception of his or her ability to learn new ideas and concepts and social self: reflects the person's sense of adequacy and worth in social interactions with other people in general" (Comer, et. al., p324, 1987).

These different areas are not representative of all the dimensions of a person's self-concept, but they do give a good idea of the depth of its meaning.

Research has shown that peer bullying does negatively affect the self-concept of bullied children (Callaghan, 1995; Neary & Joseph, 1994; Bjorkqvist, et. al., 1982; Boulton & Smith, 1994). Callaghan (1995) used the Peer

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Victimization Scale with bullied and non-bullied children and found that bullied children have lower self-concept and higher depressive symptomatology. This was true for both boys and girls studied. Overall, self-identified bullied children rated themselves lower in areas of scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance and behavior conduct (Callaghan, 1995).

Neary and Joseph (1994) conducted a similiar study to the Callaghan research. Neary and Joseph administered the Self Perception Profile for Children with 60 schoolgirls aged 10 - 12. Results showed that the bullied schoolgirls rated themselves lower in the areas of scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance and behavior conduct (Neary & Joseph, 1994).

One of the main factors that contribute to resiliency in vulnerable children is a significant adult in their life. This fact was documented in the previous section of this paper and in many instances a teacher was that significant adult. Similiar to enhancing resiliency, building up the self-concept in children requires the feedback of significant others (Comer, et. al., 1987; Warger & Kleman, 1986; Ziller & Stewart-Dowdell, 1991).

Researchers believe that children internalize the messages that they hear from those people who are important to them. Soon after hearing those messages from important people, children perceive themselves according to the messages they receive. "Psychologists have indicated that parents and teachers significantly influence developing children's self-concept" (Comer, et. al., p325, 1987). Involving children in positive experiences in which they can hear encouraging messages from significant adults is another way in which the self-concept in children can be enhanced (Warger & Kleman, 1986). The school

classroom would be the ideal situation for children to be successful and hear those positive messages from significant others.

Research by Metcalfe (1981) showed that "schools are second only to home environments in the determination of children's self-concept and attitudes of self-acceptance or self-rejection" (Tredinnick, p22, 1993). Interventions done in the school are ideal because of the outreach possibilities, availability of individuals and the natural potential for group formation. For teachers to reach children and teach them academics, they must take into consideration the socio/emotional development in the children they are instructing. This is a holistic, preventative approach that works toward the development of optimum human functioning (Tredinnick, 1993). Students needs have changed and for teachers to be effective they need to use this holistic approach and work at meeting not only their student's academic needs but also their emotional needs.

Summary

The research from this review of literature showed that bullying is a problem in various parts of the world and that definitions have universal features. Characteristics and attributes of bullied children have been identified as well as the responses teachers have towards bullied children. Even though teachers have the best opportunity to deal with bullying incidents at school, they either choose not to acknowledge them or they do not see bullying as a problem. Many of the characteristics that bullied children have make them vulnerable to the stresses of not only school life but also everyday life.

Teachers have the opportunity to identify bullied children, foster resilience in them and enhance their self-concept with positive messages. The research shows that teachers can be and are significant influences in the lives of vulnerable children (Werner, 1990). Teachers will justifiably see academics as their major focal point but for teachers to be effective in teaching, they must take

into account the child's social and emotional needs. With resilient characteristics and factors being encouraged in bullied children and their self-concept being enhanced, not only will they be more likely to handle bullying in school, but they will be better able to handle the stressful situations in life.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Questions Restated

The two research questions studied have been listed in the first chapter and will be reviewed again in order to introduce the research methodology.

1) How do teaching staff recognize a passive victim of peer bullying?

2) Can strategies be identified whereby teaching staff can improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims of peer bullying?

Subject Selection

In this project, the study population (units of analysis) were the teaching staff of a Minneapolis Elementary School. Teaching staff consisted of all the adults who instruct children in the school including classroom teachers, educational assistants, special education teachers, chapter I teachers and special subject teachers (physical education, art, foreign languages, science, music, media and English as a second language). There were 40 female subjects, five male subjects and all were European American except for one African American staff. The ages of subjects who were administered questionnaires ranged from approximately 25 - 63 years.

The researcher obtained a list of all the employees who worked at the school, looked for the names and occupations of the people who fit the definition of teaching staff and placed the questionnaire in the mailboxes of the persons who fit the definition of teaching staff.

This particular school has grades High 5 through third grade with a student enrollment of approximately 500. One reason why these subjects were chosen for the study was because of the amount of time they spend working with children each day. Teaching staff spend their whole working day with students and have the most knowledge of the students at this particular school. The

second reason why these subjects were chosen was because most bullying happens at school and teaching staff would have the best opportunity to observe and mediate bullying problems.

Research Design

This study is research based and incorporates quantitative and qualitative questions in its design. The data collection tool used was a self-administered questionnaire developed by the researcher. Questions on the survey were geared towards finding out teaching staff's knowledge concerning passive victims of peer bullying, their awareness of bullying at this particular school and the techniques or strategies they used to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions (N=3), yes/no questions (N=3), Likert-type questions (N=1), demographic questions (N=2), multiple choice questions (N=4) and opinion questions (N=3) -- for a total of 16 questions. Questions were informational in nature and held little risk of being intrusive to the respondents.

The questionnaire was reviewed with 17 fellow Augsburg College Master in Social Work (MSW) students and one Augsburg College professor. MSW students came from various vocational backgrounds and were able to give objective feedback concerning the survey questions. Feedback from MSW colleagues was used to refine and clarify questions on the survey. The feedback given by MSW colleagues helped to establish the content validity of the questions used on the survey. Responses given to the researcher and the answers written on the questionnaire attested that the composition of the questions were related to the study focus and research questions (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). The study questionnaire can be found in the appendix section of this paper.

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Operational Definition of Terms/Concepts

Important terms and concepts for this study were operationalized/measured through the research questionnaire given to the teaching staff of a particular Minneapolis elementary school.

The first research question pursued teaching staff's knowledge about how they recognize a passive victim of peer bullying. Specific multiple choice questions in the survey were used to gather the quantitative information needed to determine the knowledge teaching staff have concerning the characteristics of passive victims.

The second research question inquired about the strategies and techniques teaching staff used to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims of peer bullying. Open-ended questions in the survey asked respondents to write down the strategies and techniques they used to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. The answers to the open-ended questions provided the qualitative feedback needed to encourage the respondents in what they are already doing to help passive victims. These answers also provided new information on techniques and strategies other teaching staff used to help passive victims of peer bullying.

Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed in the subject's school mailboxes February 5, 1996. Subjects were informed in the cover letter to please fill out the questionnaire by February 9, 1996 and place it in a drop box situated by the school mailboxes. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Seventeen questionnaires were returned by February 9. A memo was sent to the teaching staff February 13, 1996 reminding subjects to complete the questionnaire. Subjects were informed in the memo that if they still had interest in completing a survey, they could still do so and place it in the drop box by

February 16, 1996. Two more questionnaires were returned for a total of 19. This is a response rate of 42%.

Protection of Participants

This study began with the approval of the research proposal by the Augsburg College Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Minneapolis Public Schools Research, Evaluation and Assessment Board. Both boards needed full applications filled out describing the research proposal, the design of the study, subject selection, protection of subjects, measuring instruments, data collection procedures and benefits of the study. Approval to conduct the study was granted from the Minneapolis Public Schools on 1/4/96 and from the Augsburg IRB on 1/22/96. Approval letters found in the appendix section of this paper.

The principal of the school was approached and informed of the researcher's desire to use school staff as research participants. Copies of the questionnaire and cover letter were given to the principal as well as information on the nature of the study. Permission from the school principal was given to conduct the study at that time. The researcher asked the principal to sign a letter that would be given to the teaching staff informing them of the study's purpose, the benefits of the study, the principal's permission to conduct the study at the school and the voluntary nature and anonymity of the study. This letter was given to the teaching staff the Thursday before the questionnaire was administered and was considered the first contact with the participants. The principal's letter is found in the appendix section of this paper.

The cover letter of the questionnaire described the research study and informed the subjects of the anonymity of the research. Return of the questionnaire was considered consent to participate in the study and was explained in the cover letter (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). Subjects were also told that they could skip any questions they desired and that they could withdraw

from the study at anytime. Lastly, subjects were told that their participation would not affect their standing with the school they work in, the Minneapolis Public Schools, Augsburg College or the researcher. Cover letter found in appendix section of paper.

Method for Analysis of Data

Descriptive data analysis was used to examine the information gathered from the questionnaires. Since only one variable was observed at a time, univariate analysis will be used with the distribution of answers (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). Frequency distributions, measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) and percentages were used to present the information gathered in a manageable form.

Study Limitations

Limitations for this study can be summed up in the following ways:

1. The study was completed by the teaching staff in one school. This resulted in a small sample size which effected the generalizability of the findings. The findings may not be reflective of the entire profession or other schools.

2. Reliability was limited to the fact that the respondents may not have comprehended all of the questions and issues asked about in the questionnaire.

3. The questionnaire was not generalizable to other types of victims of peer bullying. For example: provocative victims of peer bullying. The questions specifically asked teaching staff about passive victims of peer bullying.

4. Subjects were not randomly chosen. Subjects were chosen if they met certain criteria. This limited the external validity of the questionnaire.

5. Nineteen out of 45 surveys were returned, giving a response rate of 42%. This response rate was not considered high enough to be representative of the sample of subjects (Rubin & Babbie, 1993).

This list of study limitations is not exhaustive but it does record some of the main boundaries in which the study needs to be reviewed.

Summary

This section of the paper explained the method in which the researcher used to conduct the study of teaching staff's responses to passive victims of peer bullying. The next section of this paper will present the findings of the survey instrument administered to teaching staff at a particular elementary school.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Findings

In this chapter the researcher will present findings gathered from the questionnaire administered to teaching staff at a particluar Minneapolis elementary school. The questionnaire sought to gain insight into how teaching staff recognize a passive victim of peer bullying, the techniques and strategies teaching staff use to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in a passive victim and the views and opinions teaching staff have concerning bullying.

Multiple-choice, yes/no and open-ended questions were used to gather data on how teaching staff recognize a passive victim and the actions taken when a bullying incident occurs. Open-ended questions were used to gather statements on the techniques and strategies teaching staff use to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. Two fill-in-the-blank questions were used to gather demographic information about teaching staff. Respondents were reminded to refer only to their experiences with passive victims of peer bullying when answering the survey questions.

This chapter will use the questionnaire format as a guide. Questions 15 and 16 will be discussed first since they provided demographic information about the respondents. After the demographic section is discussed, the rest of the chapter will flow in sequential order.

Demographics

Survey instruments were administered to 45 teaching staff in a Minneapolis elementary school. Nineteen surveys were returned, which is a return rate of 42%. Nine of the respondents were classroom teachers, eight were specialist and support staff and two were educational assistants. The number of years teaching staff had been working with children ranged from 6 to 31 years. The

average number of years (mean) teaching staff had been working with children was 20 years, with the median being 21 years. One respondent decided not to answer the question for number of years he/she had been working with children.

Identification of Passive Victims

Table 1. How do you find out that certain children are being bullied in your classroom?

N=19

How teaching staff discover children are being bullied.	Responses	%'s
You observe a child being bullied.	19	100%
You hear about a child being bullied.	13	68%
You hear from a complaint of the parents of the victim.	9	47%
The victim tells you he/she is being bullied.	16	84%
Other.	1	5%

Note. Respondents were encouraged to mark all choices that apply.

Question 1 instructed teaching staff to list the different ways they discover children are being bullied in their classroom. Responses are visually represented in Table 1.

It's interesting to note that all 19 respondents (100%) reported that they had *observed a child being bullied.* Another high response rate was 16 of the 19 teaching staff (84%) reported that *the victim tells them that he/she is being bullied.* One respondent checked *other* for their response. The subject who checked *other* reported that "another teacher, bus driver, etc. tells" them of a child being bullied.

Teaching Staff's Response to Bullying

Table 2. If a bullying incident happens in your class, list in order of importance what you would do to resolve the incident.   N=19

	Rank Order		
Action taken by teacher	1st	2nd	3rd
Talk with the class about the rules on fighting.	0	4	9
Talk with the victim and bully individually.	12	0	1
Talk with the victim and bully together.	4	8	1
Encourage the victim to stick up for themselves.	0	3	2
Report incident to the parents of the bully and victim.	0	0	2
Report incident to school social worker.	1	3	1
Send bully to principal.	1	0	0
Other.	0	0	1
No Response	0	0	1

Note. Respondents were instructed to rank order their responses from 1 to 3. The number one being the most important.

Respondents answering question 2 were asked to list in order of importance what they would do if a bullying incident happened in their class. Teaching staff's responses are represented in Table 2.

It's interesting to note that the responses- *talk with class about the rules on fighting, talk with the victim and bully individually and talk with the victim and bully together-* each received a total of 13 rankings by respondents as their 1st, 2nd or 3rd choice. One respondent marked *other* and commented that he/she would "talk to class on how we treat each other as individuals and respect each other". A second respondent chose their first and second ranking but not their third. The researcher used this respondents data. A third subject did not rank order their responses, he/she put check marks beside two of the responses. The

researcher did not count this last respondent in these results because he/she did not answer the question properly.

Views of Bullying as a Form of Play Between Children

Question number 3 asked subjects if they thought that bullying was a form of play between children. Answers to this question could be either *yes* or *no* and subjects were asked to comment on their answers. The word *play* was never defined for the respondents. Therefore, teaching staff defined the word *play* in their own terms. By the researcher not defining *play* in the question, the respondents gave information about their views on what appropriate play is among children.

Two respondents (11%) answered *yes* to question 3. One respondent commented that children "play first and then start fighting" and the other respondent inserted the words "social interaction" in place of the word "play" in question 3.

Fifteen subjects (79%) answered *no* to question 3. The general themes for comments concerning question 3 revolved around bullying not being pleasant for the victim, that bullying is aggression and bullying is about power and control of another person. Quotes like - "bullying is not play", "bullying is always aggression", "bullying is an attempt to overcome and overpower another, perhaps weaker student", "making anyone feel uncomfortable is never a form of play" and "I believe that the bully knows and gains power from his or her own actions" - were common among the responses given by these 15 subjects.

One respondent (5%) placed an x between *yes* and *no*. This respondent wrote "what we call bullying some children would call teasing". Another respondent (5%) placed checks in both the *yes* and *no* spaces. He/she wrote, "yes - they think it's funny - don't realize they can hurt others", "no - sometimes it's a habit or learned behavior - copying older siblings, they want to be cool".

Characteristics of Passive Victims

Table 3. What types of characteristics do victims have that encourage bullies to pick on them?   N=19

Characteristics	Responses	%'s
Dirty clothes	13	68%
Over weight	18	95%
Glasses	5	26%
Physical handicaps	7	37%
Seems anxious	8	42%
Shy	12	63%
Race	7	37%
Gender	7	37%
Not applicable	0	0%
Other	8	42%

Note. Respondents were encouraged to check all characteristics that apply.

Question 4 asked teaching staff about the characteristics they see in passive victims of peer bullying that encourage bullies to pick on them. There was no limit to the amount of responses a subject could check for this question. Teaching staff's responses are represented in Table 3.

The characteristic marked by most respondents was *over weight*, 18 responses (95%). The characteristic *dirty clothes* accumulated 13 responses (68%) and the characteristic *shy* was marked 12 times (63%).

The eight respondents (42%) who checked *other* as one of their choices listed these characteristics of bullied children: "learning disabilities, low self-esteem, wets pants, not sure of self when speaking in front of others, different morals/values, anything that makes you different, things they say and how they

say them, semantical choices for words, anything unusual to the bully and academic ability".

Behavior of Passive Victims

Teaching staff were asked in question 5 to list how bullied children act in their classroom. Eleven of the respondents (58%) listed characteristics of bullied children that were passive in nature. Comments like "quiet, submissive, play alone, more withdrawn students, they often tell or tattle, isolated, sad, non-assertive, they cry and don't stand up for themselves, follow rules, subdued, scared, maybe low self-esteem, tentative and uncomfortable" represented the responses made by these eleven respondents.

Two of the subjects (11%) listed actions of bullied children that were surprising to the researcher. These two subjects listed the actions "sullen, angry outwardly, mostly angry inwardly and angry".

One respondent (5%) commented that if they knew about bullying behavior, it doesn't continue, so the victims don't act any differently. Another respondent (5%) wrote "I can't remember ever having a victim of peer bullying in my classroom". Four of the teaching staff (21%) did not answer the question.

Problem of Bullying at this School

Question 6 asked teaching staff if they thought this particluar school has a problem with bullying. Responses to this question could be either *yes* or *no* and subjects were asked to comment on the choice they made.

Eight respondents (42%) marked *yes* as their response to question 6. Comments from those who marked *yes* were "we may have had this problem a long time ago, but nobody really paid attention", "not a great one", "even if their are only a few incidents, it's a problem for the victims" and "I think that the problem is very manageable, it varies from different classes". Not all of the eight respondents who answered *yes* made comments.

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Nine respondents (47%) marked *no* for their response to question 6. Comments from those who marked *no* were "not in my grade, don't know about whole school", "not the whole school" and "not this year in my room". Not all of the nine respondents who answered *no* made comments.

Two respondents (11%) did not check *yes* or *no* but made the comments- "not a huge problem but some- I think most schools have some type of problem" and "I'm pretty isolated from what goes on in the other grades but I'm sure that we are not without incident".

Number of Passive Victims in Class or Worked With

Respondents were instructed in questions 7, 8 and 9 to write down the number of children they work with during the day that are bullied by their peers. Classroom teachers were instructed to answer question seven, educational assistants answered question eight and specialists and support staff were asked to answer question nine. Choices to these questions were:

Children Worked With During The Day

a. *0 - 2*

b. *3 - 5*

c. *6 - 8*

d. *9 - 11*

e. *12 or more*

f. *not a problem*

Subjects were asked to circle their response and then write down how many children they work with during the day.

Nine classroom teachers (47%) answered question seven. Eight of the subjects marked the response *a. 0 - 2* and one subject marked *f. not a problem.* First, second and third grade teachers represented eight of the responses and taught anywhere from 17 - 23 students. One respondent taught kindergarten

and worked with two separate groups of children during the school day, 20 students during the AM class and then 20 new students during the PM class. Kindergarten children attend school for half a day.

Two educational assistants (11%) responded to question eight. Both of the subjects marked *a. 0 - 2* for this question. One respondent worked with two students during their day. The other respondent marked *e. 12 or more* for their answer. Meaning that he/she worked with 12 or more students during their day. This last respondent did not answer the question properly, therefore, the researcher could not use this respondent's data.

Eight specialist and support staff (42%) answered question nine. Four of the eight respondents marked the answer *b. 3 - 5*. One of the four subjects worked with 30 students, 1 worked with 35-40 students and the other 2 respondents worked with 120 students individually. Two of the eight subjects circled the response *c. 6 - 8*. One of these two subjects worked with 80 students and the other worked with 90 students. The last two of the eight respondents each marked *f. not a problem* for their answer. One respondent worked with 240 students and the other worked with 200 - 240 students.

The percentage of bullied children that classroom teachers worked with was anywhere from 0% to 10%. The percentage of bullied children that specialists or support staff worked with was anywhere from 4% to 9%. The responses gathered from the educational assistants could not be counted because one respondent only worked with two students and the other respondent answered the question improperly.

School Policies Concerning Aggression Between Peers

Respondents were asked in question 10 if they thought that this particular school had consistent policies in dealing with aggressive incidents that

happened between peers. Subjects were asked to answer *yes* or *no* and comment if they chose the response *no*.

Twelve respondents (63%) answered *yes* to this question and seven respondents (37%) answered *no*. Subjects who answered *no* were asked to make recommendations on what this school could do differently. Six of the seven respondents who answered *no* made recommendations which focused on bringing in curriculum that dealt with bullying and how best to resolve it and developing all school standards that teaching staff would follow when mediating bullying incidents. Two respondents commented that teaching staff at this school handled bullying incidents in their own way. One respondent who answered *no* did not comment on what he/she would recommend this school do differently.

Improving the Self-Esteem in Passive Victims

The skills or techniques teaching staff use to improve the self-esteem in passive victims of peer bullying was the subject of question 11. Sixteen respondents (84%) aswered this open-ended question, leaving three respondents (16%) who did not answer the question. To improve the self-esteem in passive victims eight out of the 16 respondents who answered question 11 said that they would praise and give personal attention to passive victims. General responses were "I will talk with them daily on a more personal level", "I give them responsibilities and position of power in the class", "praise child for real accomplishments", "encourage them in participating in the lesson" and "work on positive - make feel comfortable". Four of the sixteen respondents wrote that they would "role play bullying situations and teach students how to deal with these situations", "coach and prompt passive victim when a situation arises" or the respondent would encourage the passive victim to "confront the bully". Two respondents wrote that they would move the passive victim to a

safer part of the room or have them sit near nicer children. One of the respondents focused on the child's appearance and would have extra clothes for the child to change into if their clothes were dirty or if the child wet themselves.

Improving Assertiveness Skills in Passive Victims

What skills or techniques do teaching staff use to improve the assertiveness skills in passive victims of peer bullying was asked in question 12. Fifteen respondents (79%) answered this open-ended question and four respondents (21%) did not answer this question.

Some of the major themes coming from 11 of the 15 respondents who answered question 12 dealt with "role playing" and/or "coaching", "modeling or teaching victims things to say so that they could be more assertive". General comments from these eleven respondents were: "tell them to walk away", "have them tell bully to stop doing what they are doing and that you don't like it", "teach them what to say that is assertive but not threatening", "coach them if they are not comfortable telling bullies to leave them alone", "modeling", "providing vocabulary", and "teach students to use 'I' statements". Another common theme made by six respondents was that of teacher intervention in the bullying situation - "talking with the victim individually", "listening carefully" and telling the victim to "always make sure that they get help and that they have a right to be safe" were common statements made by respondents. Lastly, two subjects commented that it would be helpful for victims to "ignore" the bully.

Bullying Leads to Poor School Performance and Truancy

Rank	Responses	%'s
Table 4. Bullying of children by their peers can lead to poor school performance and truancy. N=19		
Strongly agree	7	37%
Agree	9	47%
Disagree	1	5%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Don't know	2	11%

Question 13 instructed teaching staff to give a likert type scale response to whether or not they thought that bullying of children by their peers could lead to poor school performance and truancy. Subjects responses are visually represented in Table 4. Rankings for question 13 were:

strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and don't know. Subjects were asked to comment on their responses.

Comments of respondents who chose the rank *strongly agree* were "if you are afraid it is hard to accomplish school work and concentrate on learning", "it would me", "all are linked together by self-esteem", "one of the basic requirements for a child to learn is for the child to feel secure" and "children who don't enjoy school or find it a safe place to be have no incentive to try or to attend". Comments made by subjects who marked *agree* were "if you were a constant victim of bullying, school would not feel like a safe place to be" and "I work with young children, but I think it's true the older they get". One respondent marked *disagree* for their rank, no respondents marked *strongly disagree* and two respondents marked *don't know.* Those who marked *disagree* or *don't know* did not make any comments as to why they chose that rank.

Views on Where Most Bullying Incidents Occur

Table 5. Most bullying incidents happen at ...

Place	Responses	%'s	N=19
Neighborhood	3	16%	
Playground	15	79%	
Bus	18	95%	
Lunchroom	1	5%	
Hallway	1	5%	
Classroom	0	0%	

Note. Respondents were asked to make two choices.

Question 14 asked teaching staff where they think most bullying incidents happen. Six responses were given for the subjects to chose from and they were asked to make two choices. Responses given by teaching staff are visually represented in Table 5.

The response chosen the most by teaching staff was the *bus* with 18 responses (95%), the *playground* was chosen next with 15 responses (79%). No subjects chose the *classroom*.

To summarize, the findings from the self-administered questionnaire, completed by teaching staff at a particular elementary school, were presented in this chapter. The next chapter of this paper will discuss the findings gathered from the self-administered questionnaire.

Chapter 5

Discussion of the Findings

In this chapter the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the self-administered questionnaire will be discussed and related to the research questions listed in the first chapter of this paper. The two research questions listed in chapter one inquired about teaching staff's knowledge in recognizing a passive victim of peer bullying and the strategies and techniques teaching staff use to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. The views and opinions teaching staff have concerning bullying will also be discussed in this section of the paper.

The discussion begins by referring to survey questions 1, 4 and 5. These questions obtained information from teaching staff as to how they recognize a passive victim of peer bullying. The following section discussed survey questions 2, 11 and 12. These questions gathered information from teaching staff as to the strategies and techniques they use to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills of passive victims. The last section of this chapter discussed survey questions 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 14. These survey questions obtained information concerning teaching staff's opinions and views pertaining to bullying. Survey questions 15 and 16 asked teaching staff demographic information that was discussed in chapter 4.

Teaching Staff's Responses to and Recognition of Passive Victims

It is the researcher's belief that teaching staff in schools are the most appropriate people to identify passive victims of peer bullying. School personnel work with children in the school all day and have the opportunity to observe and mediate bullying incidences. Three questions from the survey asked teaching staff at this particular school how they recognize passive victims. The results of these three questions will be discussed in this next section of the paper.

When teaching staff were asked how they discovered that certain children are being bullied, all 19 respondents (100%) remarked that they *observed a child being bullied*. No research reviewed in the literature studied teaching staff's discovery of bullied children but the survey's finding supported the researcher's assumption that since most bullying happens at school, (Batsche, et. al, 1994; Sharpe & Smith, 1991) teaching staff would be the most appropriate people to mediate bullying situations. School personnel are in the school setting all day and have the opportunity to see bullying behavior happen or be there soon after it happens and then work with the bullies and victims in the most effective ways.

A finding from this research that differed from findings in the literature is that 16 of the 19 respondents (84%) marked that *a victim tells them that he/she is being bullied*. Research by Boulton & Underwood (1992) discovered that only a portion of the victims tell school personnel that they are being bullied because they think that they will either not be sympathetic to their problem or not be able to protect them. Teaching staff at this school may be more sensitive to bullying issues and take the necessary action needed to follow through with responses to bullying instances. Students may feel that they can tell school personnel about being bullied and that they will be helped.

The characteristics that victims of peer bullying present have been extensively studied in the literature and this research demonstrated a number of connections and some new insights. Reponses gathered from the researcher's self-administered questionnaire concerning the physical characteristics of passive victims of peer bullying supported previous studies conducted with victims of peer bullying (Bjorquist, 1982). Physical characteristics of passive victims are for example:

being *over weight* and wearing *dirty clothes* had high response rates (95% and 68% respectively) by teaching staff. Other physical characteristics like *wearing glasses*, *having a physical handicap*, *gender and race* (26%, 37%, 37% and 37% respectively) had lower but still significant responses by teaching staff.

It seems that the teaching staff who completed this survey did notice consistent characteristics in passive victims which supported information found in the literature concerning characteristics of bullied children.

The characteristic of *race* being a factor in bullying was responded to by teaching staff seven times (37%) which is not as significant as the other characteristics listed in Table 3 (see page 29). This finding supports the research conducted by Whitney and Smith (1993) which reported that being called racist names or being picked on because of a child's race is significant but much less frequent than other forms of bullying.

Emotional characteristics of bullied children like being *shy* and *anxious* (63% and 42% respectively) were marked by teaching staff but not to the extent that physical characteristics were marked. Studies conducted by Olweus (1994) talk at length about the emotional characteristics of bullied children, characteristics like being anxious, insecure, cautious, sensitive and quiet represent the findings gathered from his studies. Teaching staff who completed this survey did not list the emotional characteristics of passive victims as much as their physical characteristics. There is no information in the review of literature that comments on this particular discrepancy between physical and emotional characteristics of bullied children. One reason for the discrepancy between teaching staff recognizing more physical characteristics than emotional characteristics in passive victims could be because physical characteristics can be seen while emotional characteristics are not as easily seen. Emotional characteristics of

passive victims like feeling insecure, sensitive and cautious are not as easily recognized unless someone takes the time to investigate.

The last question concerning characteristics of passive victims asked teaching staff how these children act in their classroom. Eleven of the fifteen respondents who answered this question (73%) listed characteristics or actions of bullied children that were passive in nature. Comments by respondents included "quiet, submissive, play alone, more withdrawn students, they often tell or tattle, sad, non-assertive, they cry and don't stand up for themselves, follow rules, subdued, scared, maybe low self-esteem, tentative, and uncomfortable". Data gathered from the questionnaire supported studies conducted by Olweus (1977, 1978, 1994).

Two of the fifteen respondents listed actions that were not substantiated in the literature completed by Olweus (1977, 1978,1994). These two respondents listed the characteristics of "angry outwardly and angry inwardly" as actions of bullied children that they have observed in the school. A reason for this finding could be that the respondents were including the actions of provocative victims in their answer. Provocative victims tend to be more aggressive and instigate confrontations with other children (Olweus, 1994). The aggressive actions of provocative victims could be seen as angry and lead to the respondents answering with the responses "angry outwardly and angry inwardly". Respondents were instructed in the questionnaire to refer only to passive victims of peer bullying but comments by these two respondents seem to be directed towards provocative victims of peer bullying.

In summary, teaching staff at this particluar school seem to have a good knowledge of the characteristics, attributes and actions of passive victims. Teaching staff who responded to this survey listed in detail the physical and emotional characteristics of passive victims as well as how passive victims act in

their classroom. The subjects responses are supported by the review of literature concerning bullied children.

Strategies and Techniques
Used with Passive Victims

The above results from the researcher's survey show that teaching staff have adequate knowledge in how to identify passive victims of peer bullying. The next important finding to gather data on would be the strategies and techniques teaching staff use to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. As reported in the first chapter of this paper, victims of peer bullying suffer from lower self-esteem and lack the assertiveness skills to defend themselves in bullying situations (Hoover & Hazler, 1991; Perry, et. al., 1988; Boulton & Smith, 1994). This next section of the paper will identify the techniques and strategies teaching staff use to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims as well as gather information on how teaching staff resolve a bullying incident that happens in their class.

Teaching staffs' responses to the question of what action they would take to resolve a bullying incident that happened in their classroom congregated around three actions. The actions *talk with the class about the rules on fighting, talk with the victim and bully individually and talk with the victim and bully together* each received 13 responses by teaching staff. No research in the review of literature studied actions taken by school personnel to resolve a bullying incident. Therefore, the implications made by the researcher are not supported by any previous studies.

The response of *talking with the class about the rules on fighting* would be helpful because the teacher could use this opportunity to let the class know that bullying is inappropriate, that bullying hurts others and that there will be consequences for those who bully their peers. Talking with the class would also

be an opportune time to empower the victim and let the class know that victims will be listened to and helped. The teacher could use this time to role play bullying situations with his/her students, teaching them appropriate responses to being bullied. The teacher must be aware though that too much attention to bullying may build up the bully's notarity in the class. A better approach might be for the teacher to mediate bullying incidents on a smaller level at first (with just the bully and victim) but if the bullying incidents persisted with many students from one class, then a whole class discussion may be in order.

The action of *talking with the victim and bully individually* could be helpful but it would not be as effective as talking with the class. As said earlier, a teacher talking with his/her class about bullying could use the bullying incident as a learning time to teach the class about the negative effects of bullying.

The action *talking with the victim and bully together* could be very helpful as long as the teacher knew how to empower the victim and encourage him/her to confront the bully. It would be important for a teacher to have knowledge in conflict mediation so that the victim would not be re-victimized by the bully. The techniques of coaching students through a conflict situation and teaching the use of "I" statements could be helpful for the passive victim.

In many schools policies are implemented that give teaching staff guidelines in mediating aggressive incidents that happen between peers. Conflict mediation and sexual harassment guidelines are two examples of these policies. However, guidelines concerning conflict mediation and sexual harassment differ in their approach to handling aggressive incidents. This may cause some confusion and even some tension for teaching personnel. The procedure for mediating conflicts between peers has the two participants working through the issue together. The procedure for dealing with sexual harassment between peers requires that the teacher meet with the two participants individually. The

confusion and tension for teachers can come into play when a bully acts aggressively towards another peer in a sexual way. Does this circumstance call for conflict mediation or follow the guidelines for sexual harassment? To avoid some of this confusion and tension consistent and clear guidelines need to be implemented that would clarify aggressive incidents that overlap in their behavior.

The responses from the questionnaire *encourage victims to stick up for themselves* and *report the incident to the parents of the bully and victim* were each responded to five and two times respectively by teaching staff. The researcher thought that the low responses to these actions were significant. Research shows that bullied children lack the assertiveness skills and self-esteem to stick up for themselves (Hoover & Hazler, 1991; Perry et. al., 1988) and that many parents of victims and bullies are not aware of the problems their child may be having at school (O'Moore, 1988). Passive victims need encouragement and teaching by school staff on how to stick up for themselves so that they will be able to protect themselves and get the help they need in future bullying instances. Parents of the bully and victim need to be informed of what is happening to their child at school so that they can support their child and the school in what is being done concerning bullying. Research conducted by Floyd (1985) and Olweus (1994) reported that for bullying to be reduced there needs to be consistent school policies concerning bullying, workshops for school personnel teaching them about bullying and collaboration between the school and the parents of the bully and victim. With all the various parties working together to reduce bullying, the school experience for the bully and victim will most likely improve.

Resiliency theory and self-concept made up the theoretical/conceptual base of this paper. The strategies and techniques teaching staff used to improve the

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self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims of peer bullying are supported by the studies conducted with building up the resiliency and self-concept in vulnerable children. The researcher considers passive victims to be vulnerable since they have many of the characteristics of vulnerable children (Tarwater, 1993). In this next section of the paper the researcher will combine the two questions asked of teaching staff concerning the improvement of self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. The open-ended responses given by teaching staff overlapped in many ways and will be discussed in this next section.

Teaching staff showed common agreement concerning the best techniques and strategies used to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. Comments given by teaching staff were: "to praise them, give them personal attention, role play bullying situations, provide vocabulary and coach them through bullying situations". These techniques used by teaching staff would help a passive victim by giving him/her the extra attention they need, by encouraging them through a bullying situation and by teaching them how to handle future bullying circumstances.

Research conducted with resilient children and studying self-concept in children show that having a caring adult take an interest in a vulnerable child's life is key to children becoming resilient (Werner, 1984; Wyman, 1993) and improving a child's self-concept (Comer, et. al., 1987; Ziller & Stewart-Dowdell, 1991). Teaching staff who responded to this survey commented that they would "give personal attention to a passive victim" and "work on teaching passive victims how to stick up for themselves during a bullying situation". School personnel spending more personal time with passive victims and teaching victims how to stick up for themselves are key strategies. These key strategies used by teaching staff would: 1. teach children how to best deal with bullying, 2.

be positive massages for the passive victim to hear and internalize and 3. build a relationship with a significant adult. The role playing and coaching given by teachers would also be a positive experience for the passive victim which would enhance his/her self-concept (Warger & Kleman, 1986).

In summary, teaching staff who completed the survey showed knowledge in the various techniques and strategies used to improve a passive victim's self-esteem and assertiveness skills. The question still remains though as to how often and how consistent teaching staff are at using these techniques to help passive victims. Questions from the survey asked teaching staff what strategies and techniques they used to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. Two other questions that were not asked but could have added more information are: 1. How often do teaching staff use strategies and techniques to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in a passive victim? and 2. Do teaching staff have time to use proper techniques to mediate bullying situations? These other two questions would have given more relevant information concerning the frequency and opportunity teaching staff have to properly use techniques and strategies that would improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims.

Teaching Staff's Views and Opinions Concerning Bullying

In this section of the paper the discussion will revolve around five questions from the survey that asked teaching staff their opinion on various aspects of bullying. Survey questions 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 asked teaching staff about bullying in relation to this particular school and will be discussed first. Survey questions 3, 13 and 14 inquired about the knowledge teaching staff have concerning bullying and will be discussed last.

Teaching staff were asked to respond *yes* or *no* to the opinion question of whether or not they thought that this particular school has a problem with

bullying. Answers to the question of whether or not this school has a problem with bullying were almost equally divided with 42% of the respondents marking *yes* and 47% of the respondents marking *no*.

Comments from teaching staff who marked *yes* revolved around respondents thinking that this school has somewhat of a bullying problem but that it is not a great one and that it is manageable. From the researcher's point of view it seems that teaching staff think that there is bullying going on at this school but that it is under control and no more of a problem than what can be expected from grade school children.

Comments from respondents who answered *no* agreed with the comments made by those respondents who answered *yes*.

Two respondents who completed the survey did not answer *yes* or *no* to question three but made comments. The comments made from these respondents coincided with the comments made by the other respondents, that bullying does happen at this school but it is not a big problem.

The researcher found it difficult to know if teaching staff were minimizing the bullying problem at this particular school. One of the ways to support or reject the researcher's assumption would be to study the extent that children feel they are bullied. Surveying or interviewing the students at this school would provide additional information that would either be conflicting or supportive of the results gathered from teaching staff.

As shown in chapter one of this paper, studies by Lowenstein (1978) and O'Moore (1988) reported that anywhere from 5% to 22% of schoolchildren are bullied. Teaching staff were asked to write down the number of bullied children that they worked with during the school day. The percentages gathered from the respondents who answered this question showed that the incidence of bullying at this particular school is anywhere from 0% to 10%. The 0% gathered

from the incidence of bullying question is lower than the average gathered from the literature but the 10% is within the range of bullying gathered from the literature. Although, the incidence of total bullying (including passive and provocative victims) at this particular school is likely to be greater than the data gathered from the questionnaire. Teaching staff were instructed to answer questions in reference to passive victims only, which means that provocative victims were not counted in the results. This means that the incidence of bullying at this particular school could be higher than the average gathered from the literature.

Research conducted with schools that have lower incidences of bullying report that one of the most effective means for combatting bullying behavior is to implement explicit school policies that explain how bullying will be responded too (Olweus, 1994). Question 10 of the survey asked teaching staff if they thought that this school had consistent policies in dealing with aggressive incidences that happen between peers. Twelve respondents (63%) marked *yes* for their response and seven respondents (37%) marked *no.*

It seems that a majority of the teaching staff at this school think that the policies concerning aggression between peers are consistent. Of the seven respondents who marked *no* for their answer, their comments revolved around individual teachers handling aggressive incidents in their own way. It seems that teaching staff at this school have the freedom to work with bullying and other aggressive incidents individually. With teaching staff confronting aggressive behaviors individually there is the chance that policies dealing with aggressive behaviors are not consistent. This in turn may cause confusion between school staff and the students concerning the exact procedures in mediating aggressive incidents.

Research reported by Stephenson & Smith (1988) showed that a portion of the teachers studied thought that bullying was a natural part of childhood and that if ignored it would eventually work its way out. The research by Stephenson & Smith led the researcher to ask the question of whether teaching staff thought that bullying was a form of play between children. Fifteen respondents (79%) answered *no* to the question of whether or not bullying is a form of play between children. Comments from these respondents centered on bullying being a form of power and control for the bully and that it is never right to bully or hurt someone. Comments from the respondents concerning bullying being about power and control support research conducted by Batsche & Knoff (1994) and Olweus (1978).

Those respondents who marked *yes* for their answer to the above question made comments that explained how bullying can be a form of play but did not try to justify it or make bullying behavior sound appropriate.

Therefore, the data gathered by this researcher concerning teaching staff's view of bullying being a form of play between children differed from the research gathered by Stephenson & Smith.

Batsche & Knoff (1994) researched the effects of bullying and found that constant bullying leads to poor school performance and truancy in bullied children. In this survey teaching staff were asked ,using a likert type question, if bullying leads to poor school performance and truancy. Eighty-four percent of the respondents answered this question *strongly agree* (37%) or *agree* (47%) with 11% of the respondents answering *don't know*. Comments from the respondents revolved around the need for students to feel safe to be able to learn and that if safety is not there then it would be very difficult for a child to be at school. The responses to this question support the research done concerning teaching staff's knowledge to the effects of bullying on passive victims.

Research conducted by Sharp & Smith (1991) reported that most bullying happens in parts of the school where there is the least amount of supervision by adults. Teaching staff who completed the questionnaire supported the research done by Sharp and Smith by reporting that the *playground* (79%) and the *bus* (95%) are the places where the most bullying occurs. Results from this survey lead the researcher to believe that it is important to have adequate supervision in less structured areas so that bullying will be responded to quickly and effectively.

Summary

To summarize, teaching staff seem to think that the problem of bullying at this particular school is manageable and the data gathered concerning the incidence of bullying at this school supports their opinion. However, it is a concern of the researcher that a portion of the teaching staff handle aggressive incidents individually. It is also a concern that some teaching staff think that there needs to be put in place consistent procedures concerning aggressive incidents. As was stated earlier, consistent procedures concerning aggressive incidents is key to lowering the incidence of bullying problems. Lastly, teaching staff have good knowledge concerning bullying. Data gathered from the survey showed that teaching staff know some of the effects of bullying, do not think that bullying is a form of play between children and that unsupervised areas of the school are the most common places of bullying.

Overall results from the survey indicate that the teaching staff at this particular school have significant knowledge in: 1. the recognition of passive victims of peer bullying, 2. the effects of bullying on children and 3. how to improve the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims of peer bullyiing. The concern from the researcher's point of view is that the respondents to this survey may be minimizing the bullying problem at this

school. Comments from this section of the survey revolved around "yes, bullying does happen at this school but no more than what can be expected from grade school children or no more than at any other school". This concern of the researcher will be discussed more in the conclusion section of this paper.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

In this next section of the paper the implications for teaching staff, implications for social work practice and the recommendations for future research will be discussed in light of the results of the questionnaire administered to teaching staff at a particular elementary school.

Implications for Teaching Staff

Since the phenomenon of bullying is becoming more of an understood issue in schools today, it will be important for teaching staff to have an understanding of bullying behavior and the effect it has on the bully, the victim and the school atmosphere. This research paper surveyed teaching staff's responses to passive victims of peer bullying and in this next section the researcher will provide some implications for teaching staff concerning this topic.

<u>Consistent Policies</u>

1. A portion of the teaching staff surveyed commented that teachers at this school dealt with aggressive incidents individually and that there needs to be consistent policies concerning the handling of aggressive incidents. As was said before, implementing consistent policies and procedures concerning bullying behavior is one of the key ingredients to lowering the incidence of bullying in a school (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Example: A consistent procedure concerning bullying behavior could be that for the first bullying instance the teacher will mediate the situation between the bully and victim. Then the teacher will call the parents of the bully and victim, explain the situation and how it was handled.

<u>Supervision</u>

2. Teaching staff at this school remarked that the bus and playground are the places where most bullying incidents occur. These two areas are

largely unstructured and the data shows that these places need to have adequate supervion by staff (Sharp & Smith, 1991). With adequate supervision bullying incidents can be minimized and then when they do occur, they can be dealt with quickly and properly.

Promotion of Assertiveness Skills

3. Some of the teaching staff who responded to this survey commented that they would encourage a passive victim of peer bullying to stick up for themselves. Encouraging the passive victim to be assertive and protect themselves is important in stopping the bullying from continuing. The researcher is not suggesting that the victim use physical means to protect themselves but there are many other ways for a victim to be assertive in bullying instances (example: Saying loudly "stop! I don't like what you are doing!" and Asking for help from a teacher). The results of this research showed that teaching staff have the opportunity to teach assertiveness skills to passive victims and this in turn will encourage the development of self-esteem and the discontinuance of future bullying for the victim.

Involvement of Parents

4. A majority of teaching staff said that they would not involve the parents of the bully and victim to resolve a bullying incident. Informing the parents as to the behavior of their children at school is not only a parent's right but is a way to build a link between the school and the home. Parents of the bully and victim can then reinforce the rules and procedures followed at school and teach their children the proper ways to deal with bullying.

Macro View

5. As was said throughout this paper, policies and programs that would reduce the bullying that may be happening in schools would need to be put in place at the local, state and national levels. This is a macro view of the reduction of peer bullying in a school. The implementation of bully proofing policies and procedures would give the individual school personnel guidelines to follow in reducing bullying behavior in their school.

Micro View

6. Individual teaching staff have an important role in the effective intervention of peer bullying. Teaching staff have the opportunity to observe bullying incidents and mediate bullying situations on a individual (micro) level. Research from this study showed that teaching staff have the skills needed to improve the assertiveness skills and self-esteem in passive victims of peer bullying. This one-to-one attention passive victims and bullies receive from teaching staff is the first intervention in the reduction of peer bullying in a school. The bully proofing policies and guidelines implemented on the macro level need to have the understanding and support of individual school personnel for the interventions to be effective.

Response Rate

7. The response rate for teaching staff who completed this survey was 42%. Readers need to be aware that because of the lower response rate, results of the survey are not representative of the teaching staff at this school and cannot be generalized to other schools (Rubin & Babbie, 1993).

The implications for teaching staff listed above are not exhaustive but they do list some of the primary suggestions the researcher has discovered from this study.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The role of social workers and other mental health staff have not been discussed in this paper. Even though the roles of mental health staff have not been discussed, there are still implications for these professionals in regards to supporting teaching staff and passive victims of peer bullying.

<u>Outside Resourses</u>

1. Mental health staff could be looked upon as outside resources for teaching staff. If teaching staff recognize that there are a group of children who continually get bullied, the mental health professionals could facilitate a self-esteem or assertiveness skills group for bullied children.

<u>Teaching in Classrooms</u>

2. Mental health staff could also be looked upon as professionals who come into individual classrooms and teach students appropriate ways to deal with bullying instances.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher's purpose for studying teaching staff's responses to passive victims of peer bullying was to: 1. add to the knowledge base concerning passive victims of peer bullying, 2. encourage teaching staff in what they are already doing in regards to encouraging passive victims and 3. gather information on how teaching staff work with passive victims.

Passive victims of peer bullying are children who generally don't draw attention to themselves but are significantly affected by the aggression they receive by their peers. For a school to significantly reduce the bullying that may be occuring, the researcher suggests the following recommendations:

Further Studies

1. Studies need to be carried out to increase teacher awareness and to find the exact number of children being bullied at a particular school. Interviews can be conducted or a questionnaire can be administered to both staff and students. The Peer Nomination Inventory, developed by Dan Olweus, would be an appropriate resource for gathering information from students.

Implementation of Training Programs

2. A training program can then be presented to school personnel that would educate them on the most effective strategies used to work with bullies and victims. One resource is called, Bully-Proofing Your School: A Comprehensive Approach For Elementary Schools (Brody, J. E., 1996).

Establishing Procedures, Interventions and Resources

3. Procedures, interventions and resources would need to be established in the school that would effectively deal with bullying incidents. These procedures and interventions would need to have the full support of school personnel to be effective in reducing bullying behavior at this school.

Effectiveness of Bullying Programs

4. After procedures, interventions and resources are put in place, studies would need to be conducted to test the effectiveness of the bullying programs.

Gender Differences

5. Gender differences in bullying behavior was touched on in the review of literature. It would be important for future researchers to study the differences in bullying behavior between boys and girls. There is also the possibility that the victim behavior between boys and girls may be

different. To the researcher's knowledge, gender differences in victim behavior has not been studied.
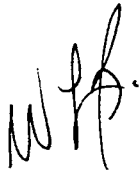
Follow-up Study

6. Future researchers who would find the topic of this paper interesting and would like to do more research would be wise to conduct a qualitative study. As was said in the review of literature, little research has been conducted concerning teaching staff's responses to passive victims of peer bullying. Because of this fact, qualitative research (example. personal interviews) would present results that would give a deeper understanding of the topic of this paper and more appropriate data for an exploratory study.

Many of the recommendations listed in the sections above have a prevention focus. Young children attending school are still forming some of the basic attitudes, values and behaviors that they will be carrying with them for the rest of their lives . Research shows that bullying can be reduced with the implementation of bullying programs. A key factor in the reduction of bullying in schools is the support of the school staff. It has been shown in this paper that teaching staff who completed the researcher's survey have the opportunity to impact the lives of passive victims of peer bullying. Passive victims are vulnerable children and the school environment can facilitate the opportunity for teaching staff to build the self-esteem and assertiveness skills in passive victims. With school personnel encouraging passive victims daily, supporting them in their school work and also their peer relationships resilient characteristics and a positive self-concept will be developed in these children. Passive victims of peer bullying who develop resilient characteristics and a positive self-concept have not only a better chance of enjoying school but have a better chance of becoming successful individuals.

Minneapolis Public Schools
Research, Evaluation and Assessment
Memorandum

To: Kenneth Maher
Kenny Elementary School

From: William L. Brown, Ph.D.

Date: 01/04/96

Subject: Status of Research Request

The following is the status of your research request for *"Victims of Peer Bullying and Teaching Staff's Responses to Them."*

☒ Request is complete; permission is granted
Please send us a copy of your results. Thank you!

☐ Research [☐ may ☐ may not] proceed, please remit:
    ☐   Completed Research Request Form (see attached)
    ☐   Copies of all research instruments
    ☐   Approval from your school's "Human Subjects" Committee
    ☐   Other: _____
    ☐   Other: _____

☐   Request is denied (see attached)

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*NOTICE: The Board of Education **has not** granted blanket authority for the release of directory information to researchers. Directory information is defined by U. S. C. Title 20 Section 1232g, to include "the student's name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student." Requests for such information must be made to me or to Dennis Lander of the MPS Student Accounting Office, 807 NE Broadway, Minneapolis, MN 55413. We will take the steps required to obtain approval from the Minneapolis Public Schools Board of Education to release to you information needed to carry out your research.*

CC: Executive Director, PASS
      File

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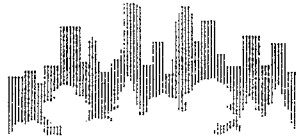
1/22/96

C • O • L • L • E • G • E

TO: Kenneth E. Maher
      4321 Portland Avenue South
      Minneapolis MN 55407

FROM: Rita Weisbrod, Ph.D.
      Chair
      Institutional Review Board

RE: Your IRB application: "Victims of Peer Bullying and Teaching Staff's Responses to Them"

Professor Michael Schock has sent on to me your approval letter from the Minneapolis Public Schools. Having fulfilled this condition, your application is now approved.

Your approval number is

95 - 30 -3.   This number should appear on your cover letter and survey instrument.

If there are substantive changes to your project which change your procedures regarding the use of human subjects, you should report them to me by phone (612) 330-1227 or in writing so that they may be reviewed for possible increased risk.

I wish you well in your project!

Copy: Rosemary Link, Thesis Adviser

To: Kenny School Teaching Staff
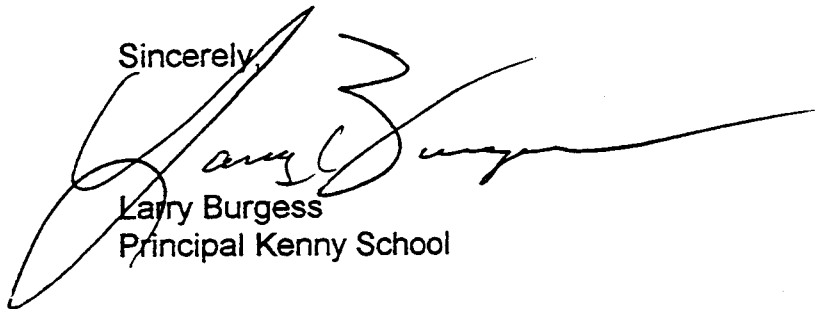From: Larry Burgess
Re: Survey
Date: 2/1/96

I am writing to inform you of a survey that you will be receiving in your school mailboxes Monday February 5, 1996. This survey concerns teaching staff's responses to passive victims of peer bullying and will be conducted by Ken Maher, School Social Work Intern at Kenny School.

Ken has made known to me his intentions and reason for choosing Kenny School for this study. He has asked permission of myself to conduct this survey at Kenny School and I have given it to him.

I would encourage all of you to take a few minutes from your day and complete this survey. I believe that the results from this survey will add to the knowledge base concerning passive victims of peer bullying and how the teaching staff at various school can better meet the needs of these children.

This is a voluntary survey. Be assured that there will be no way that I or anybody else will be able to find out who completed a survey. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Larry Burgess
Principal Kenny School

Dear Kenny School Teaching Staff,

You are invited to be in a research survey of Teaching Staff at Kenny School. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have the most knowledge of students and the most contact with students during a school day. If you agree to participate, the attached questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please take a few minutes to read this cover letter and consider being a part of this survey. This research project is being conducted by Ken Maher, and is a partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Augsburg College Masters in Social Work Program.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about teaching staff's responses to victims of peer bullying and what techniques teaching staff use to improve a victim's self-esteem and assertiveness skills. Your participation in this survey will contribute to the knowledge base already accumulated in this area and inform decisions on how teaching staff can better support victims of peer bullying.
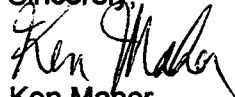
Completion of the questionnaire is considered to be your consent to participate. When you have completed the questionnaire, please put it in the drop box by the mailboxes in the main office. Besides my deep gratitude, I will provide a written report of the findings to the Kenny teaching staff by Friday, June 7 1996. I will also present the findings of this project to the Kenny Staff if there is interest. This will not be a mandatory meeting, it will be for those interested in hearing the results of this project.

Anonymity will be maintained, neither administrators nor the researcher can identify who returned any given questionnaire. Any published research report will not include any information that will make it possible to identify participants. Research records will be kept in the home of the researcher, where only the researcher will have access to them. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your standing with Kenny School, the Minneapolis Public Schools, Augsburg College or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip any question(s) on the questionnaire.

Please return the questionnaire by Friday, February 9 1996. If you have any questions, you may contact me at (612) 822-0321. My thesis advisor is Rosemary Link (Augsburg College, Department of Social Work) and she can be contacted at (612) 330-1147. Thank You.

Your help and support is much appreciated!

Sincerely,

Ken Maher
Graduate Student

Institutional Review Board Approval # 95 - 30 - 3.

Survey of Teaching Staff's Responses to

Children who are Passive Victims of Peer Bullying

To help you focus your thinking for this questionnaire, the following definition of "victim of peer bullying" will be used: A student is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. A negative action is when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another. Negative actions can be carried out by physical contact (hitting, kicking, etc.), by words, or in other ways, such as making faces or obscene jestures, and intentional exclusion from a group. A victim may be physically weaker than the bully. A victim does not defend him/herself after being bullied. You may have seen two types of victims in your class: a passive victim (defined above) and a provocative victim. A provocative victim is a child that instigates confrontations with other children and does things that irritate them. **In order to answer these questions, refer only to your experience with passive victims.** Institutional Review Board Approval # 95 - 30 - 3.

1. How do you find out that certain children are being bullied by peers in your classroom?

(Check all spaces that apply.)

( ) You observe a child being bullied.

( ) You hear about a child being bullied from other students.

( ) You hear from a complaint of the parents of the victim.

( ) The victim tells you he/she is being bullied.

( ) Other. Please write down other ways you have found out.

2. If a bullying incident happens in your class, list in order of importance (only up to 3) what you would do to resolve the incident. (1 being the most important)

_____ Talk with the class about the rules on fighting. (Physically or verbally fighting)

_____ Talk with the victim and bully individually.

_____ Talk with the victim and bully together.

_____ Encourage the victim to stick up for themselves.

_____ Report incident to the parents of the bully and victim.

_____ Report incident to school social worker.

_____ Send the bully to the principal.

_____ Other. (Please specify below.)

3. Do you think that bullying is a form of play between children?

(Place an X in the space provided.)   ( ) yes   ( ) no

Please explain in one sentence or two why you chose your answer.

4. What types of characteristics do <u>victims</u> have that encourage bullies to pick on them?

(Check all that apply.)

( ) Dirty clothes   ( ) Race

( ) Over weight   ( ) Gender

( ) Glasses

( ) Physical handicaps

( ) Seems anxious

( ) Shy

( ) Not applicable

( ) Other (Please list)

5. How do <u>victims</u> of peer bullying act in your classroom? (Please write in the space below.)

6. Do you think that Kenny School has a problem with bullying? _____ yes _____ no

7. **For classroom teachers**. In your opinion, what number of children in your classroom are <u>bullied</u> by their peers? (Circle your answer.)

a. 0 - 2   b. 3 - 5   c. 6 - 8   d. 9 - 11   e. 12 or more   f. Not a problem.

How many children are in your classroom? _____

8. **For educational assistants.** In your opinion, what number of children you work with during the day, are bullied? (Circle your answer.)

    a. 0 - 2   b. 3 - 5   c. 6 - 8   d. 9 - 11   e. 12 or more   f. Not a problem

    How many children do you work with during an average day? _____

9. **For specialists/support staff.** In your opinion, what number of children you work with during the day, are bullied? (Circle your answer.)

    a. 0 - 2   b. 3 - 5   c. 6 - 8   d. 9 - 11   e. 12 or more   f. Not a problem

    How many children do you work with during an average day? _____

10. Do you think that Kenny School has consistent policies in dealing with aggressive incidents that happen between peers? (Place an X in the space provided.)   yes ( )   no ( )
If "no" what would you recommend Kenny School do differently?

11. What skills or techniques do you use to improve the self-esteem in passive victims of peer bullying? (Please write in the space provided.)

12. What skills or techniques do you use to improve the assertiveness skills (teaching a student to stand-up for him/herself) in passive victims of peer bullying? (Please write in the space provided.)

13. Bullying of children by their peers can lead to poor school performance and truancy.

(Place an X in the space provided.)

strongly agree ( )   agree ( )   disagree ( )   strongly disagree ( )   don't know ( )

(Please comment in the space below.)

14. Most bullying incidents happen at ... (Please mark your first two choices.)

classroom ( )   neighborhood ( )   playground ( )   bus ( )   lunchroom ( )   hallway ( )

15. Your teaching position in the school is: Classroom teacher_____ Specialist_____

Educational Assistant_____ Support staff _____

16. How many years have you been working with children, including this school year? _____

Thank you for your participation in this project!

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