Bullying: An Adult Perspective from Educators Who Work Predominately with African American Students

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Cover Page Footnote

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Abstract

A survey of 31 teachers and counselors who work predominantly with African American students about bullying revealed these findings: Analyses by individual questions indicated that participants (a) disagreed that bullies and victims were of any particular ethnic group, (b) were unsure about whether gender impacted bullying and whether bullying had decreased (c) agreed that pairing loners with other students was a good intervention and that victims tended to be students with special needs, and (d) strongly agreed that bullies have feelings of power and control. Analyses by categories and demographic characteristics indicated no statistically significant differences for gender and job position. There were statistically significant differences found for frequency and intensity of bullying for (a) age, with younger respondents perceiving fewer rates, (b) ethnicity, with Hispanic participants perceiving higher rates, and (c) years of experience, with those with fewer years of working experience perceiving fewer rates.

In order to prevent bullying and victimization in schools will require adult intervention. Unfortunately, adults in schools are not well informed about how to identify bullies and what interventions to use (Boulton, 1997; Leff, Kupersmidt, Patterson, & Power, 1999; Stockdale, Hangadumanbo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002). It becomes important that educators are not only aware of the many dimensions of bullying but knowledgeable about how to intervene. Recognizing bullying behavior is a serious societal problem because it has been estimated that 49 to 50% of all students will expe-rience some form of bullying during their educational experience (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995).

The problem of bullying is likely to become more complex as the minority student populations become the majority in many of our schools (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000) and thus, the racial composition of schools also needs to be considered (Peskin, Tortolero, & Markham, 2006). Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to survey the knowledge of educators who work with predominately African American students (> 50%). Specifically, the following bullying and victimization behaviors were assessed as they related to African American students: (a) location, (b) frequency and intensity, (c) interventions used, (d) perceived severity of physical vs. verbal, (d) victim characteristics, (e) ethnic differences, and (f) physical, gender, and Socioeconomic Status (SES) characteristics. For the purpose of this study, bullying was defined as "…a student is being bullied or victimized when he is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (Olweus, 1993, p.9).

Left unaddressed, bullying can have short as well as long-term negative outcomes (Boivin, Hymel, & Hodges, 2001; Coie & Dodge, 1998; Moffitt, 1993). For example, aggressive youth often experience higher levels of externalizing behavior such as peer rejection, delinquency behavior, psychosocial maladjustment, and lower levels of academic performance than youth who are not engaged in bullying. Engaged youth can also have increased levels of internalizing behaviors such as depression (Angold, Erkanli, Loeber, & Costello, 1996). Similarly, victims of aggressive behavior can have negative feelings towards school fairness which can ultimately lead to a disconnection between students and everything related to schools (Ma, 2004).

Psychosocial and Educational Characteristics of Bullying - Teachers, Counselors, and Principals as Raters

Bullying is a major problem, yet only limited research has addressed teachers' roles in bullying dynamics. Extant studies have reported that teachers are likely to: (a) report lower prevalence rates of bullying

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than do students (Stockdale et al., 2002), (b) not always correctly identify bullies (Leff et al., 1999), and (c) not feel confident in their abilities to deal with bullying (Boulton, 1997). In the identification of bullying behavior, Leff et al., found that teachers could more accurately identify bullies and victims in elementary schools than they could middle school students. Key aspects of the bullying phenomenon may go unrecognized because of the sophisticated cognitions of the bully. Further, teachers and counselors may not easily recognize the employment of exclusionary methods of bullying in which peers are engaged in excluding certain students and the strategies used to mobilize anxious bully cohorts as comrades (Sutton, 2001).

Teachers and counselors may not recognize the surprising similarities between bullies and victims due to their proximity to the bullying incident (Robles-Piña, Nichter, & Campbell- Bishop, 2004) . This study found that teachers are more likely to view the immediate bullying situation, whereas counselors are likely to discuss the situation with the students after the actual bullying takes place. Thus, these two groups have different perspectives about how to identify and intervene in bullying situations.

The blurred lines between roles and attitudes of bullies and victims make it difficult for teachers and counselors to identify them with accuracy. For example, bullies and victims are more likely to have more pro-bully and more negative pro-victim attitudes and are more likely to actively or passively reinforce bullies when confronted with a bully situation (Marsh, Parada, Yeung, & Healey, 2001) . Therefore, the simplistic classification historically of either a bully or a victim belies the growing research revealing that the two are positively correlated (Marsh et al.). They are both likely to use avoidance coping strategies, tend to be more depressed, have difficulty controlling their anger (with bullies exhibiting more externalizing behaviors and victims, more internalizing behaviors), have lower levels of self-concept, and report high levels of life stress (Marsh et al., 2001).

In terms of physical versus verbal acts of violence, Eslea's (1998) study revealed that teachers perceived physical acts of bullying as more distressing to the victim. When considering teachers' perceptions on those who bully whom, they were more likely to perceive girl on boy acts of bullying, as more serious than boy on girl acts. Moreover, they were more likely to take some sort of action, such as punishment, when bullying included a physical act. If teachers recognize the severity of bullying and encourage children to report them, then subsequently reduces these acts (Eslea). Bullock (2002) suggests that they can intercept the bully by declaring that this behavior is unacceptable, discuss acceptable behavior, and consequences for actions. Therefore, it becomes very important for the bully and victim to know that rules about bullying are observed by everyone at the school and that a safe environment is a com-mon goal (Bullock).

Several studies have been conducted regarding administrator/principals' perceptions about bullying. In 2002, Sprague, Smith, and Stieber examined principals' perceptions in Oregon and found that while they believed that schools were relatively safe from acts that are considered violent, acts such as bullying, harass-ment, and cruel teasing remained grave concerns. A study of Texas principals' knowledge of bullying found that while principals' level of knowledge was high, they were not aware of the level of bullying on their campus and were not aware of locations where bullying occurred (Hathorn, 2004). Like teachers, principals underestimated the amount of bullying that occurred and were reluctant to get involved (Viadero, 1997). A most recent national randomized study (Dake, 2004) surveying principals' perceptions indicated that no school-based bullying prevention activities were being conducted in one out of five schools.

Academic Performance and Individual Characteristics

Bullying and victimization can occur in a variety of locations and the research in this area is mixed. Stockdale et al., (2002) found in their study that bullying is prevalent in rural and urban elementary schools alike. A study comparing three rural schools (Dulmus, Theriot, Sowers, & Blackburn, 2004), however, has indicated that the prevalence of bullying is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. In relation to specific locations within schools, bullying is most likely to occur in unstructured school settings, such as the playground or lunchroom (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Leff, Power, Costigan, & Manz, 2003). Interestingly, the second most common location is not the hallways and bath-rooms as one would think, but the classroom (Frost, 1991; Smith & Shu, 2000; Whitney & Smith, 1993; Wolke, Woods, Stanford, Sehultz, 2001).

The research on school performance characteristics such as academic achievement of students who are victims of bullying has provided inconsistent findings. In some studies correlations were found between low academic achievement and students who are victims and/or students who are bully/victim. A study in Britain found a significant inverse relationship of -0.41 between a student's report of victimization and academic achievement, as well as a significant weak negative relationship (-0.27) between bullying and academic achievement (Mynard & Joseph, 1997). A similar study involving a sample of children in the U. S. also found that both victims and bullies experienced lower academic performance (Mynard & Joseph). Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, and Bates' study (2000) also found that both bullies and victims reported lower academic achievement while Juvonen, Nishina and Graham (2000) found similar findings when investigating aca-demic achievement in a sample of middle school stu-dents who had been victimized. Conversely, Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan,

Simons-Morton and Scbeidt (2001) found no significant relationship between academic achievement and status as a victim or bully/victim, but did find a significant relationship for bullies who were found to be more likely to have academic problems.

Physical Characteristics

The literature regarding physical characteristics of victims, bullies, and victim/bully, has been examined and found to be conflicting. Most of the studies were conducted in the late '70s and current studies are needed. Physical characteristics found to be related to being victimized in these studies included the size of the students, who were typically smaller and weaker in comparison to their peers (Olweus, 1978). Other researchers have found no significant differences between students who had been victimized and those who had not been victim-ized when size was considered. However, Lowenstein did find that victims were less attractive, had odd mannerisms, and/or physical disabilities (Lowenstein, 1978). Most recent research indicates that victims are disabled, overweight, or physically unattractive (Sweet-ing and West, 2001).

Characteristics of Gender and Race

When gender has been studied in relation to bully-ing in children and adolescents, the literature has been categorized as direct versus indirect bullying behaviors. Boys have been found to be involved in more direct bul-lying, such as physical aggression, than girls (Baldry & Farrington, 1999; Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Natvig, Atbrektsen, Qvarnstrom, 2001; Olweus, 1994; Siann, Callahan, Glissov, Loekhart, & Rawson, 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Some studies indicate that both boys and girls are likely to engage in direct verbal bullying (Baldry & Farrington, 1999; Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995). The literature describes indirect bullying as social exclusion and subject of rumors, and few gender differences exist (Baldry & Farrington, 1999; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1994; Peterson & Rigby, 1999; Siann et al., 1994). The research indicates that several gender differences did exist in regard to who bullies whom. Typically, boys are bullied by boys, but not by girls, and girls are bullied by both sexes (Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Research studies investigating racial or ethnic groups in regards to bullying and victimization are var-ied and conflicting. Earlier studies in the United King-dom (Siann et al., 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993) found no significant differences for racial or ethnic groups. A caveat with the Siann et al., study is that while there was no empirical evidence for differences between ethnic groups, there were statistically significant differences between the beliefs of ethnic and non-ethnic children. The ethnic children believed themselves to be more vul-nerable to bullying than non-ethnic children.

A most recent study from England and Germany (Wolke et al., 2001), however, did find a significant relationship between ethnicity and bullying, with minor-ities more likely to be the victims of bullying. In the U.S., three studies have produced differing results. A national study (Nansel et. al., 2001) and a state study (Hanish & Guerra, 2000) investigating bullying and vic-timization behaviors between American, Hispanic, and White children found no significant differences. How-ever, in a study in California, where White students were in the minority, there was a greater likelihood that White students were victimized and African American students more likely to be the bullies (Graham & Juvonen, 2002).

Most recent studies that examined ethnic differ-ences in bullying continue to produce mixed results. For example, a study of 454 students, ages 12-17, found no ethnic differences in bullying and victimization (Seals & Young, 2003). Conversely, Peskin et al., (2006) examined bullying and victimization in 1,492 low socio-economic, Black and Hispanic students in Texas schools. They found that Blacks were more likely to participate in bullying and victimization and these behaviors peaked in 9th grade. A recent qualitative study including 25 African-American, 9th and 10th graders, was conducted in Chicago (Axelman, 2006). Findings from interviews suggest that discipline policies in schools are in direct conflict with (a) students' age-appropriate strivings for autonomy and (b) cultur-ally rooted forms of self-expression, which in turn can lead to disenfranchisement. In other studies when stu-dents were asked why they bullied, they indicated that the victims were "different" in various ways, such as behavior, appearance, or nationality (Terasahjo & Salm-ivalli, 2003).

Social and Psychological Characteristics

The role of socioeconomic status in relation to vic-timization and bullying has been studied and has also yielded different results. Sourander, Helstela, Helenius, and Piha, (2000) found in their study that socioeco-nomic status, parental level of education, and whether a child came from an intact, divorced, or remarried family were not significantly related to bullying or victimiza-tion. Conversely, in another study, a significant relation-ship between socioeconomic status and bullying and victimization behavior was found (Wolke et al., 2001). In this study, children from lower SES were more likely to bully others and to be the victims of bullying.

The research investigating whether or not "loners" were more likely to be bullied is related to whether the study was one of causation or relationship. Some research indicates that there is a positive relationship between loneliness and victimization (Forero, McLel-lan, Rissel, & Bauman, 1999; Juvonen et al., 2000; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Nansel et al., 2001) and negatively related to self-esteem (Juvonen et al.). Those studies that have reported causation have described peer victimization as a cause of children's loneliness

(Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996) and lower self-esteem (Forero et al., 1999). The interaction of victimization, loneliness and self-esteem was reported as due to a "poor self-concept that may play a central role in a vicious cycle that perpetuates and solidifies a child's sta-tus as a victim of peer abuse" (Egan & Perry, 1998, p. 299).

Effectiveness of Interventions

In response to problems with bullying in schools, most schools are lacking in measuring the effectiveness of interventions (Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003) . Of the existing programs, very little is known about their effectiveness (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). The existing interventions can be categorized as: (a) prepackaged programs, (b) zero tolerance policy, (c) conflict resolution to all stu-dents and classroom management to teachers, and (d) modification of the school climate (Orpinas et al.). Examples of prepackaged programs include: First Steps to Success (Walker, Kavanagh, Stiller, Golly, Severson, & Feil (1998); Bully Busters: A Teacher's Manual for Helping Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders (Newman, Horne, & Bartolomucci, 2002); Bully-Proofing Your School: A Comprehensive Approach for Elementary Schools (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilli, 1997). Interestingly, Mytton, DiGuiseppi, Gough, Tay-lor, and Logan (2002) found that, overall these pro-grams have had only modest outcomes.

Strategies to reduce aggression by teaching conflict resolution have had some moderate success. For exam-ple, an evaluation of the Resolving Conflicts Creatively Program (Aber, Jones, Brown, Chaudry, & Samples, 1998) indicated that this program did manage to decrease the amount of aggression in classes where implemented, especially in classes where the lessons were taught on a frequent basis. Currently, the zero tol-erance policy, a strategy designed to reduce and elimi-nate school violence by severely punishing offenses, indicated that there was no evidence that the program improves school safety (Skiba, 2000).

Orpinas et al., (2003) indicated that the best inter-ventions are based not on specific interventions or a consultative model, but on a collaborative model. This type of model should include school personnel, univer-sity consultants, modification of the school environ-ment, education of students, and training of teachers. Additionally, there is a need to survey the school cli-mate, address character education, and introduce bully-ing prevention in programs, as well.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the findings from adults who are reporting on bullying and victim behaviors of African American students, these researchers will use the frame-work of descriptive psychology (Ossorio, 1979, 1995). This theory posits that explanations for human behavior can be answered by asking questions such as (a) why do people do what they do, (b) what are differences among people? and (c) how do people develop? In the case of understanding bullies and victims, it is necessary to understand what their intentions and their actions are intended to achieve.

By using this theoretical framework, the approach to understanding bullying behavior is to approach it from an actor, observer, and critic role (Holmes & Holmes-Lonergan, 2004) . As actors we are spontane-ous, creative, and value giving. As observers we are aware of what we are doing, what is happening, under-standing the case, and not how things are. As critics, we need to give feedback to the actor in the best interest of the actor. If things are going well, we make that known to the actor. However, if things are not going well, then it is our job as critics to figure out what has gone wrong and prescribe ways to make things better for the actor. Thus, it is important not only to observe the behavior, but the intention of the bullying behavior.

The following research question emerged from the literature reviewed on this topic: (1) What are the per-ceptions of counselors and teachers who work with African American students regarding the following aspects of bullying: (a) location, frequency, and inten-sity; (b) physical versus verbal; (c) victim characteris-tics; and (d) relationship between physical characteristics, gender, socioeconomic, ethnicity vari-ables and bullying?

Method

Participants

The teachers and counselors (N = 31) surveyed were from a large metropolitan area who work over 50% of the time with African American students ages 12-18. The majority of the participants (N = 25) worked predominately in a suburban school district and the remainder of participants (N = 6) worked predominately in a residential home. However, all stated that they had or were currently working in both type of settings. Table 1 provides the demographics of the participants. In sum-mary, the following observations were made: In regards to professional position, there were more teachers than counselors surveyed and only two administrators. Regarding gender and age, there were more females than males, and the majority was in the 40-49 age range. The ethnic composition was close with Whites (48%) and African Americans (39%). The majority had 21-25 years of experience and worked predominantly in sec-ondary schools.

Table 1.
Professional/Bullying Experience/Demographic Characteristics Of Counselors and Teachers (N = 31)

Characteristics	N	%
Current Position		
Teacher	23	(74%)
Counselor	6	(19%)
Administrator	2	(07%)
Gender		
Male	11	(36%)
Female	19	(61%)
Age		
20-30 years	3	(10%)
31-39 years	6	(19%)
40-49 years	11	(36%)
50-59 years	9	(29%)
60+ years	2	(07%)
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	3	(10%)
African American	12	(39%)
White	15	(48%)
Other	1	(03%)
Experience		
1-5 years	2	(07%)
6-10 years	3	(10%)
11-15 years	4	(13%)
16-20 years	7	(23%)
21-25 years	10	(32%)
25+ years	5	(16%)
Population		
Elementary	2	(07%)
Secondary	19	(61%)
Both	7	(23%)
Other	3	(10%)

Procedures

Participants were recruited by the second author who teaches at a predominately African American uni-versity and were enrolled in a master's degree course while employed in schools and a residential area. They were informed of their rights to participate or decline participation without retribution. Moreover, they were advised that the data collected would be handled confi-dentially and that only aggregate data would be used in order to minimize identification of particular individuals

or schools. Since all of the participants were adults, return of the survey indicated consent. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board.

Instrument

The Bullying Survey (Robles-Piña et al., 2004) was used to collect the data. The following demographic information was requested: current position, gender, age, ethnicity, years of school experience, and popula-tions served. Forty questions were developed and responses were requested on a Likert-scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Unsure, 4 = Dis-agree, to 5 = Strongly Disagree.

Evidence of reliability and validity were provided. Content validity was established in the following three ways: (a) linking questions to empirical studies in the literature review, (b) submitting the instrument to three experts in the field of bullying and, (c) conducting a pilot study. A pilot test of the instrument was conducted by submitting the survey to six master's level students in a graduate program who were employed as school coun-selors and teachers. Their suggestions were incorporated into the final survey used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .78 was used for support of internal consistency reli-ability.

Results

The analysis consisted of several steps. In the first step, frequencies for all demographic variables were conducted (see Table 1) and described in the participants section. The second step consisted of rank ordering the means for each of the 40 questions from a 5 (strongly disagree) to a 1 (strongly agree) (see Table 2). The third step consisted of conducting t-test of independent means and ANOVAs to determine mean group differences for categories by demographic variables. There were no responses which corresponded to a 5 (strongly disagree) on the survey. There were 4 responses which corre-sponded to a 4 (disagree) on the survey. Educators dis-agreed that (a) bullies are African American or Asian, (b) victims are White students, and (c) bullying had become more passive.

There were 6 responses which corresponded to a 3 (unsure) on the survey. Educators were unsure about whether (a) boys were targets of verbal bullying behav-iors, (b) girls were targets of physical bullying behav-iors, (c) most bullies are White or Hispanic students, (d) victims were smart, and (e) bullying had decreased over the years.

There were 11 responses which corresponded to a 2 (agree) on the survey. The four highest statements of agreement in this category were related to (a) having a plan for dealing with bullying, (b) pairing "loners" with other students, (c) an increase in bullying behaviors, and (d) victims beings students with special needs.

Table 2.
Ranking of Bullying - (N=31) Analysis of Questions

Question	M	SD
27. Most bullies are Asian students.	4.55	0.51
38. Most bullies are African American students.	4.45	0.51
37. Bullying behaviors have become more passive.	4.19	0.40
40. Victims of bullying are usually White students.	4.03	0.80
28. Girls are more likely to be the target of physical bullying behavior.	3.90	0.54
16. Most bullies are Hispanic students.	3.74	1.21
33. Boys are more likely to be the target of verbal bullying behavior.	3.55	0.89
7. Bullying behaviors have decreased over the years.	3.23	1.50
22. Victims are usually very smart.	3.23	0.99
8. Most bullies are White students.	3.03	1.11
24. Boys are more likely to be the target of physical bullying behavior.	2.77	0.99
26. Bullies usually come from a low socioeconomic background.	2.65	1.05
21. I use anti-bullying materials (i.e., web sites, books, videos).	2.48	1.03
12. Our school would benefit from a plan for dealing with bullying behavior.	2.48	0.96
23. Reading stories about bullying is a prevention strategy that I use.	2.45	0.85
25. I use mediation as a prevention strategy for bullying.	2.19	0.60
36. I encourage students to talk with each other as a means of preventing bullying.	2.16	0.78
32. Victims are usually students with special needs.	2.20	0.70
9. Bullying behaviors have increased over the years.	2.03	0.18
19. I try to pair "loners" with other students.	2.00	0.00
13. I have my own plan for dealing with bullying behavior.	2.00	0.63
29. Victims are physically weak and are loners.	1.97	0.18
20. Bullies target physically weak students.	1.94	0.25
14. I teach skills to students as a means of preventing bullying.	1.94	0.51
35. Observers of bullying are negatively affected.	1.90	0.30
34. Bullying behavior continues throughout the lifespan.	1.90	0.30
17. I have observed that "loners" are more likely to be bullied.	1.90	0.30
5. I witness bullying behaviors during sports activities.	1.87	0.72
31. Bullies have been victims of past bullying behavior.	1.84	1.21
10. Bullying behaviors have become more aggressive.	1.84	0.37
3. I witness bullying behaviors on the playground.	1.81	0.48
4. I witness bullying behaviors in the lunchroom.	1.74	0.44
2. I witness bullying behaviors in halls.	1.74	0.44
1. I witness bullying behaviors in classrooms.	1.74	0.44
11. Our school has a plan for dealing with bullying behavior.	1.68	0.65
6. I witness bullying behaviors during bus duty.	1.68	0.91
18. Administrators pay more attention to physical abuse than to verbal abuse.	1.29	0.46
15. Physical abuse (i.e., slapping) is taken more seriously than verbal abuse	1.26	0.63
30. Bullies want a feeling of power and control.	1.16	0.58

1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Unsure, 4= Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree

There were 18 responses which corresponded to a 1 (strongly agree) on the survey. The four highest statements of agreement in this category were related to (a) bullies wanting feelings of power and control, (b) physical abuse taken more seriously than verbal abuse, (d) administrators paying more attention to physical abuse than verbal abuse, and (e) witnessing bullying behaviors on bus duty.

Inferential statistics were conducted to determine group mean differences for demographic variables (gender, position, age, ethnicity, years of experience, and work place) by placing the 40 questions into categories arrived at during a content analysis of the literature. Following are the questions comprising the categories:
(a) location of bullying behaviors (questions, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6); (b) frequency and intensity of bullying behaviors (questions 7, 9, 10, 34, 37); (c) interventions used by school/individual (questions 11, 12, 13, 14, 21, 23, 25, 36); (d) physical versus verbal bullying behaviors (questions 15, 18, 30, 37); (e) victim characteristics (questions 22, 31, 35); (f) ethnicity x victims x bullying (questions 8, 16, 19, 20, 27, 38, 29); and (g) physical aspects, gender, socioeconomic status, and bullying (questions 17, 24, 26, 28, 32, 33, 39).

There were no differences found for gender for any of the bullying questions by category: (a) location ($t(28)$ = -.368, p > .05); (b) frequency & intensity ($t(28)$ = -1.77, p > .05); (c) interventions ($t(28)$ = -.940, p > .05); (d) physical vs. verbal ($t(28)$ = -.318, p > .05); (e) victim characteristics ($t(28)$ = 1.807, p > .05); (f) ethnicity ($t(28)$ = 1.80, p > .05); and (g) gender and SES ($t(28)$ = .927, p > .05).

Differences about bullying categories were analyzed by position (counselor, teacher, and administrator). Due to low number of respondents for persons in the administrator (N = 2) category, administrators were analyzed with counselors). Further, due to low number of respondents from the residential homes, no analyses were conducted to note differences between those who worked in school and the residential setting. No statistically significant differences were found for position and bullying questions by the following categories: (a) location ($t(29)$ = 1.39, p > .05); (b) frequency & intensity ($t(29)$ = 1.39, p > .05); (c) interventions ($t(29)$ = -1.37, p > .05); (d) physical vs. verbal ($t(29)$ = -1.35, p > .05); (e) victim characteristics ($t(29)$ = -.72, p > .05); (f) ethnicity ($t(28)$ = 1.80, p > .05); and (g) gender and SES ($t(29)$ = -.72, p > .05).

Differences about bullying categories were analyzed by age of respondents. Due to low number of respondents in some age groups, categories were collapsed to form two groups, respondents ages 20-30 and respondents 31 -60. Statistically significant differences were found for age by the frequency and intensity category ($t(29)$ = -2.84, p = .00) with younger (20-30) perceiving less frequency and intensity of bullying (M = 2.40, SD = .37) than those older respondents (31-60) (M

= 2.73, SD = .26). There were no significant differences found for the following categories: (a) location ($t(29)$ = -.20, p > .05); (b) interventions ($t(29)$ = .07 p > .05); (d) physical vs. verbal ($t(28)$ = .49, p > .05); (e) victim characteristics ($t(29)$ = .49, p > .05); (f) ethnicity ($t(28)$ = .42, p > .05); and (g) gender and SES ($t(29)$ = .41, p > .05).

ANOVA analyses were conducted for ethnicity by bullying categories and only one statistically significant difference was found and that was for frequency and intensity of bullying behaviors ($F(2, 28)$ = 5.33, p = .01). Post hoc analyses determined that Hispanics viewed the frequency and intensity of bullying higher (M = 2.90, SD = .16) than African Americans (M = 2.43, SD = .28), and Whites (M = 2.73, SD = .33). There were no statistically significant differences found in other categories by ethnicity: (a) location ($F(2, 28)$ = .76, p > .05); (b) interventions ($F(2, 28)$ = .46, p > .05); (c) physical vs. verbal; ($F(2, 28)$ = 2.53, p > .05); (d) victim characteristics ($F(2, 28)$ = .17, p > .05); (e) ethnicity ($F(2, 28)$ = .18, p > .05); and (f) gender and SES ($F(2, 28)$ = .11, p > .05).

Regarding years of experience while considering statistical significance at less than .01 with a Bonferroni adjustment for conducting multiple tests (.05/4 = .01), statistical significance was found only for the category of frequency and intensity ($F(3, 27)$ = 7.74, p > .00). A post hoc analysis revealed that respondents with 6-10 years of experience perceived lower rates of frequency and intensity of bullying (M = 2.36, SD = .32) than respondents with 1-5 years (M = 2.68, SD = .17), 11-15 (M = 2.90, SD = .17) and 16-20 (M = 2.68, SD = .31) years of experience. Inferential statistics were not calcu-lated for the demographic work place due to the fact that the majority of the respondents (84%) worked with sec-ondary populations or both (secondary and elementary).

A summary of the survey of 31 teachers and counselors who work predominantly with African American students about bullying revealed these findings. Analyses by individual questions indicated that participants (a) disagreed that bullies and victims were of any partic-ular ethnic group, (b) were unsure about whether gender impacted bullying and whether bullying had decreased (c) agreed that pairing loners with other students was a good intervention and that victims tended to be students with special needs, and (d) bullies have feelings of power and control.

Analyses by categories and demographic characteristics indicated no statistically significant differences for gender and job position. There were statistically signifi-cant differences found for frequency and intensity of bullying for (a) age with younger respondents perceiv-ing fewer rates than other age groups, (b) ethnicity, with Hispanic participants perceiving higher rates than other ethnic groups, and (c) years of experience with those with fewer years of experience perceiving fewer rates than those with more years of experience.

Discussion

The present study extends prior research on bully and victim behavior as it relates to teachers' and counse-lors' observations while working with African American adolescents predominately in secondary school settings. Several limitations were noted in this study. First, was the small sample size? However, we feel we have begun an investigation of examining the bullying question from the perspective of educators who work with Afri-can American students which heretofore had been non-existent. Second, the information provided on the survey was self-report and there could have been a cer-tain degree of social desirability in the responses.

We feel that these types of responses, however, pro-vided information on the great deal of ambiguity about issues concerning bullying and victimization when eth-nicity is considered. Noteworthy, is that this study pro-vides evidence that more studies like this one need to be conducted. Third, we realize that data collected on bul-lying from multiple perspectives (staff, observations, discipline records, and interviews) would have increased the validity of this study. However, this study is one of an exploratory nature that begins to address an issue from a perspective that has been largely ignored by the literature. Clearly, further research needs to be conducted.

The statements to which the educators more strongly agreed were regarding bullies wanting more power and control, that physical abuse is taken more seriously than verbal abuse, and that administrators pay more attention to bullying concerning physical abuse. Not surprisingly, the statement with which educators felt about more strongly was the one of bullies wanting power and control. Our finding is substantiated by the following empirical studies that have examined how bullies gain power and control in specific areas: location and frequency (Leff, et al., 2003; Stockdale, et al., 2002); academic achievement (Nansel, et al., 2001), physical characteristics (Lowenstein, 1978; Olweus, 1978), gender (Natvig et al., 2001; Baldry & Farrington,

1999), and ethnicity (Axelman, 2006; Graham & Juvonen, 2002; Peskin et al., 2006; Siann et al.,1994).

Power imbalance occurs between the bully and vic-tim and the victim's inability to defend themselves (Olweus, 1997). The imbalance can be caused by physi-cal superiority, group membership, such as a group of a diverse racial or ethnic composition different to the vic-tim, and intellectual superiority. Use of the theoretical framework to guide us in working with African Ameri-can students can use the actor, observer, and critic (Holmes & Holmes-Lonergan, 2004) paradigm to ana-lyze role in addressing bullying behavior. It is important to analyze the power difference not only between stu-dents but to analyze the distance to the problem that the educator has. Admittedly, distance to the problem can have an impact on not only the perception of the prob - lem but on how to intervene (Robles-Piña et al., 2004).

The following are observations regarding power and control made from the third author who has worked directly with African American adolescents for more than 25 years.

> African American males are often stereotyped as predatory, menacing, and physically aggressive. The source of some those stereotypes stem from historical events such as slavery and media portrayals of black men as brutes and black women as emasculating. As with most stereotypes, those have been easy to apply but difficult to eliminate. In my work with African American students, I learned several salient points that are relevant to the understanding of bullying. The term bullying is not a part of the popular vernacular of students in this population. The term "punking" is used instead. "Punking" is similar but different than bullying, in that "punking" does not necessarily result in violence. Rather, a challenge is issued by one student to another to "square-off", i.e., stand face-to-face, until someone intervenes and brings a halt to the incident. This is akin to "playing the dozens", in which individuals engage in verbally abusive remarks about one another's parents. To the outside observer, such an event might seem odd and as a precursor to a physically violent confrontation. To the culturally savvy observer, such an event is very unlikely to result in violence.

From a theoretical perspective, understanding why students are bullying is paramount to solving the prob-lem and the reasons will probably vary by the type of students. Thus, as observers, educators need to docu-ment and address all bullying incidents and as critics they must follow up with talking with those involved about their motivations for bullying. Interventions can then be individualized for the bully or victim depending on the circumstances. Existing research has provided evidence that policies such as zero tolerance are not suc-cessful (Skiba, 2000) and we believe it is because most consequences do not go beyond the surface of meting out canned discipline responses for the actions. Pro-grams that are school-wide and have clear and consis-tent policies are needed (Orpinas, et al., 2003).

Physical bullying receiving more attention than ver-bal bullying were the next two statements that elicited educators to strongly agree. These findings suggest that educators are not aware of how to detect the subtleties of bullying before they escalate to physical bullying. This is consistent with the literature that indicates that administrator/principals under-estimate bullying inci-dents (Viadero, 1997) and teachers are not very confi-dent with their ability to intervene (Stockdale et al., 2002; Leff et al., 1999; Boulton, 1997) . Due to a lack of skills, educators respond to physical acts of violence (Eslea, 1998) because they believe these actions to be more hurtful to the victim.

A practitioner's perspective of physical versus ver-bal bullying from is the following:

> Often, the behavior and manner of speaking by African Americans, males in particular, are misinterpreted as aggressive. What to some might seem like a verbal altercation are merely two individuals displaying a dimension of their culture that recognizes this type of behavior as normal and relatively harmless. African

American girls tend to engage in bullying or "punking" behavior more than boys. In addition, girls' behavior is typically manifested in a hierarchical format in which a dominant individual who dislikes and wants to target a particular girl will entice her friends to verbally or physically assault that individual. It mimics a gang hierarchy in which the gang leader instructs others to carry out the leader's wishes. However, "punking" is less pervasive and dangerous than typical gang activities.

Theoretically, a lack of knowledge and action would indicate that educators need to develop their "observer" skills to be able to detect aggressive behavior in their non-verbal and verbal states before the behavior escalates to the physical stage which is the one tradition-ally noticed. Further, it is the one for which there are discipline measures in place, but which are not effective because the rates of bullying are only increasing (Charach et al., 1995; Farrington, 1993).

There were only four questions to which educators disagreed and those were primarily related to whether African Americans and Asians were considered as bul-lies and whether bullying behavior had become more passive. The degree to which the educators would iden-tify any particular ethnic group as bullies or victims may be indicative of several things. Educators may want to be politically correct and not want to address topics that are of such a sensitive nature such as the role of ethnic-ity in bullying and victimization. In truth, the role of ethnicity in bullying has had mixed results and so the degree of uncertainty that these educators expressed is consistent with other research (Whitney & Smith, 1993; Wolke et al., 2001; Graham & Juvonen, 2002, Peskin et al., 2006). It may also be that bullies are employing bul-lying tactics for which educators have a hard time decid-ing on whether they border on regular student behavior or the precursors to bullying. Further, the methodologies used in bully studies may not be sensitive enough to pick up on precursors to bullying behaviors. The actor, observer, critic model (Holmes & Holmes-Lonergan, 2004) would suggest that educators need to assess their role in contributing to bullying behaviors by taking a stance on those who bully, regardless of ethnic identity.

When questions were analyzed by categories by demographic variables, no differences were found for gender and job position indicating that males, females, teachers, counselors, and administrators in this study did not differ on location, victim characteristics, or inter-ventions. There are no studies that have analyzed the effects of gender. There is one study that has noted the differences in job position with counselors viewing bul-lying situations and interventions differently than teach-ers (Robles-Piña et al., 2004).

The category of frequency and intensity of bullying by categories was the only category for which differ-ences were noted. Findings indicate that younger partic-ipants and those with less experience are less likely to observe an increase in intensity and frequency of bully-ing. There is no literature to support this finding. Another finding indicated that Hispanic educators felt

that there was more of an increase in frequency and intensity in bullying than other educators. Again, there is no literature to support this finding. An implication on this finding is that differences in perceptions might elicit different interventions.

The following is an account from a practitioner about how bullying interventions can be used with Afri-can American students.

> Intervention strategies to address issues that place African American males at risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of violence should come early rather than later. For most African American boys, particularly those from single parent households in which the custodial parent is the mother, the fourth grade is the pivotal period for intervention. If positive intervention does not take place by that time, the child is likely to engage in acting out behaviors that might suggest to the unenlightened observer that the child has emotional problems. The acting out behavior is a normal reaction to the absence of positive African American male role models in his life. Thus, the intervention has to be in the form of African American men engaging the young man in positive activities that result in a shift in his value and belief system. Since values drive behavior, it is critically important that intervention strategies address the underlying beliefs and values associated with the behavior. This strategy has successfully been used by me with African American males in three school districts.

The implications of these findings on research and public policy are a couple. For research in particular, this study needs to be replicated because no studies have been conducted to investigate how educators view bul-lying in African American populations. There are two studies that have specifically addressed bullying by sur-veying children and those have produced mixed results (Peskin et al., 2006; Seals and Young, 2003). Evident from these studies is the lack of educational policies regarding implementation of bullying programs and how the programs need to be culturally adapted. Fur-ther, these findings suggest that policies for staff devel-opment in schools to train educators on how to use culturally appropriate bullying programs are very neces-sary.

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