

TEACHER RESPONSES TO BULLYING 1

Teacher responses to bullying in relation to moral orientation and seriousness of bullying

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Abstract

Background:

Little research has focused on factors influencing teachers' decisions about whether and how to intervene in bullying incidents. Such factors have the potential to influence the role of teachers as agents in counteracting bullying.

Aims:

To examine a) whether moral orientation predicts teachers' responses to bullying, b) the role of perceived seriousness of an incident in moderating responses to bullying and c) factors that are important to teachers when deciding whether to intervene.

Sample:

Primary, middle and high school teachers (N=127) were recruited during staff meetings at 5 schools.

Methods:

Moral orientation was measured using a modified version of Caputo's (2000) Sanctioning Voice Index (SVI); other questionnaires were specifically designed for this study.

Correlational and hierarchical multiple regression analyses examining how moral orientation and seriousness predict teachers' responses to bullying were performed.

Results:

As anticipated, care moral orientation predicted a problem solving response, while justice orientation predicted a rules-sanctions response. Care and justice orientations also interacted to predict rules-sanctions, but not problem-solving, responses. However, seriousness of an incident accounted for the majority of variance (46% for rules-sanctions

and 40% for problem solving responses). Seriousness did not moderate the relationship between moral orientation and responses to bullying.

Conclusions:

While teachers' moral orientation does impact upon the kinds of responses to bullying they choose, seriousness of the incident is more important. However, seriousness as perceived by teachers may not be consistent with impact on students. Implications for teacher education and policy are discussed.

Teacher responses to bullying in relation to their moral orientation
and seriousness of bullying

Since Olweus' (1978) groundbreaking research into the prevalence of bullying and peer victimization in Sweden, there has been a steady increase in recognition of the pervasiveness of this problem in schools in many countries such as Australia (Forero, McLellan, Rissel & Bauman, 1999), the UK (Boulton & Smith, 1994), the U.S.A (Pellegrini, Bartini & Brooks, 1999) and Canada (Pepler, Craig, Ziegler & Charach, 1994). Similarly, a large body of research records negative psychological and educational outcomes for victims and bullies. Recently, however, there has been a trend towards assessing how schools are endeavouring to address this problem. In particular, recent researchers have focused on specific interventions and their efficacy (see, for example, Rigby, 2002; Wilson, Lipsey & Derzon, 2003). More recently, researchers in the U.S.A. have begun to gather information about individual teacher perceptions regarding classroom bullying prevention activities (Dake, Price, Telljohann & Funk, 2003). Factors considered include teacher perceptions of level of bullying and importance of teachers as agents in counteracting bullying, along with school factors which may predict adherence to a prevention programme (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003) and the predictive value of teacher efficacy, empathy and perceptions of seriousness (Yoon, 2004).

Rigby and colleagues (Rigby, 2002; Rigby, Smith & Pepler, 2004) argue that there are two general types of anti-bullying policy, loosely differentiated by whether they adopt a rules-sanctions approach or a problem solving approach. The former type focuses on setting clear rules against bullying behaviour, with consequences for students who infringe the rules. These kinds of school policy typically adopt a punitive approach, and

set sanctions, such as detention, withdrawal of privileges, or suspension from school for extreme bullying (Rigby, 2002; Rigby, et al., 2004). Conversely, other schools focus on what Rigby and colleagues term a problem-solving approach, whereby incidents of bullying are responded to in a non-punitive manner. In this type of intervention, a school is more likely to involve bullies, victims and bystanders in mediation or counselling, with the emphasis less on blaming and shaming and more on seeking to elicit the bully's empathy for the victim, along with reparation of harm for the bully and victim. The Method of Shared Concern (Pikas, 1989) and the No Blame approach (Maines & Robinson, 1992) fit within the overall problem solving approach (Rigby, 2002; Rigby et al., 2004).

The extent to which teachers support their school's anti-bullying policy and are committed to implementing it is crucial to its success in reducing bullying (Rigby, 2002). Vernberg and Gamm (2003) argue that implementation of school-based strategies needs to be sustained in order to be effective. Teachers may fail to intervene in bullying incidents for a number of reasons: because they simply are not informed by students and do not perceive it (Dawkins, 1995; Newman, Murray & Lussier, 2001; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996); because they are afraid to become involved; or because they believe it is not their responsibility, particularly in extreme situations involving violence (Astor, Meyer & Behre, 1999; Ting, Sanders & Smith, 2002).

At a fundamental level, the problem of bullying and violence in schools may be seen as a moral issue (Astor, 1998; Meyer, Astor & Behre, 2002). Ortega and Lera (2000) assert that bullying is a "moral disease" (p. 122), while Rigby, Smith and Pepler (2004)

assert that there is a “clear moral imperative on teachers and schools to act to reduce bullying in schools” (p. 01). It can be argued that moral reasoning is necessarily applied whenever a teacher is confronted with a choice of whether and how to respond to a bullying incident. If a school policy is antithetical to a teacher’s moral stance, then adherence to that policy is likely to be reduced. Kohlberg (1984; Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969) argued that moral reasoning develops in stages, and that at higher stages a person is concerned with notions of fairness and rules, with an emphasis on fulfilment of duties and reciprocal obligations. This type of moral reasoning is said to be a justice orientation. Gilligan (1982) argued for an alternative, equally valid, moral orientation, namely a care orientation. People who are more care oriented tend to focus on understanding relationships and the needs of others when making moral decisions (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Lyons, 1988). These two moral orientations appear to parallel the two types of approaches to school bullying described by Rigby (2002). A primary aim of the present research is therefore to assess whether a higher care orientation in teachers is associated with preference for responding to a bullying incident using a problem solving response, whilst justice orientation is associated with preference for a rules-sanctions response.

Seriousness of a bullying incident may impact upon the type of response a teacher might take. For example, Rigby (2002) suggests that some schools might adopt a more punitive approach where bullying behaviour is perceived to be more serious, while Yoon (2004) found that teachers’ perceptions of seriousness were significantly positively correlated with both reported likelihood of intervention and empathy toward victims. Yoon and Kerber (2003) report that teachers are both less likely to intervene in situations

they perceive to be less serious, and when they do intervene, they use more lenient strategies in situations that are perceived to be less serious. The notion of elevated punitive response for more serious incidents is consistent with the court system, where sentencing guidelines assume that more serious crimes deserve a more stringent punishment (Ruback & Wroblewski, 2001). Historically, schools have perceived bullying to be a justice consideration, removed from the educative function of schools (Vernberg & Gamm, 2003). Further, Rigby and Barrington (2003) report that some school personnel believe that sanctions should be applied in situations where problem-solving approaches have been unsuccessful. It seems, then, that the use of sanctions and punishments (a rules-sanctions approach) might be more likely to be endorsed in situations that are perceived to be more serious. Therefore, a further aim of this research is to investigate whether perception of seriousness moderates the relationship between justice moral orientation and rules sanctions response, and care moral orientation and problem solving response respectively. Finally, teacher reasons for intervening or not in bullying situations will be explored, in order to shed light on this hitherto unstudied area, and to gather information that may inform and direct further research. Given the exploratory nature of this portion of the research, no specific hypotheses were made.

The specific aims of this research therefore are to a) examine whether moral orientation predicts teachers' responses to bullying, b) examine the role of perceived seriousness of an incident in moderating responses to bullying and c) identify factors that are important to teachers when deciding whether to intervene.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and ten questionnaires were distributed, at staff meetings, to teachers from five schools in Adelaide, South Australia. One hundred and twenty-seven teachers completed questionnaires, including 57 males (44.9 %) and 67 females (52.8%) (three did not provide gender information). The overall response rate was 60.48%. Teachers' ages ranged from 23 to 60 years old ($M= 41.31$, $SD=10.34$); thirty-three respondents (26%) did not provide age information.

Years of teaching experience ranged from 6 months to thirty-seven years ($M=16.59$, $SD=10.21$). A range of year levels was taught, such that primary, middle and high school teachers were represented.

Design

The study used a within-participants design. Criterion variables were a) rules-sanctions response to bullying situations, and b) problem solving response to bullying situations. The predictor variables were a) justice moral orientation, and b) care moral orientation. Seriousness of a bullying incident was assessed as a moderator variable. This variable was manipulated by having participants respond to questions about three bullying incidents that were previously established (in a pilot study) to be mildly, moderately and highly serious.

Materials

Measure of moral orientation.

Moral orientation was assessed using a 20 item version of the Sanctioning Voice Index (SVI) (Caputo, 2000). Caputo (2000) reports an equal length Spearman-Brown

coefficient of .82 for the care index and .86 for the justice index, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .82 (care) and .87 (justice). Construct validity of the measure was established by coding interview answers using a theoretical approach to establish that the measure retains a full range of care and justice concerns identified in the literature (Caputo, 2000).

Each form of the SVI contains two moral dilemmas, one based on the case of Emil, who acts selfishly by stealing for his own gain, and the case of Heinz, who acts compassionately, stealing to save his wife's life. Caputo's (2000) original SVI was designed to elucidate "simple, nominal measures of voice" (p. 7), based on modal response for care, justice, combined or neither categories of response. In order to provide a finer discrimination between people who use a combination of justice and care reasoning, and to avoid an artificial categorisation based on modal response, the original questions were reworded for this study to reflect discrete, continuous measures of each orientation.

The amended SVI consisted of the original two moral dilemmas, each of which was followed by 20 statements. Ten statements reflected a care orientation and ten a justice orientation. Participants were asked to rate each statement in importance from 1=not at all important to 7=extremely important. (e.g., "When you think about choosing a sanction for Emil, how important is making sure Emil's wife will not suffer?" which reflects a care orientation, and "When you think about choosing a sanction for Emil, how important is reinforcing the rules of our society?" which reflects a justice orientation). The range of possible scores for each orientation is 20-140. Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for this study was $\alpha = .89$ for the care subscale and $\alpha = .94$ for the

justice subscale.

Measure of response to bullying situations

The measure of response to bullying situations was designed for this study specifically to assess teachers' perceptions of how likely they would be to use aspects of a problem solving response and rules-sanctions response to three situations involving a student bullying another. The scale was designed to discriminate between a rules-sanctions approach and a problem solving approach, as described by Rigby and colleagues (2002; Rigby, Smith & Pepler, 2004). Scenarios were gender non-specific to avoid the possibility that the gender of victim/bully may impact on teacher/bystander response (Meyer, Astor & Behre, 2002).

To ensure that the questionnaire had ecological and face validity, as well as appropriate and clear wording, and to ensure that it adequately canvassed a range of seriousness of bullying incidents, a pilot study was conducted. Eight scenarios, involving physical, verbal or relational bullying incidents were presented to currently practising teachers (n=5), and third and fourth year Bachelor of Education students (n=12). Teachers completed the full version of the questionnaire, while Bachelor of Education students simply responded to a single question for each scenario; "Keeping in mind the full spectrum of bullying behaviour, how serious do you perceive this particular behaviour to be?" on a scale of 1=not at all serious, to 9=extremely serious. Following the pilot study, three scenarios were selected, on the basis of their being rated by the respondents in the pilot study as highly serious (physical bullying, spitting at someone, $M=8.77$, $SD=.44$) moderately serious (verbal bullying, name calling, $M=6.82$, $SD=1.51$),

or mildly serious (relational or social bullying, dirty looks, $M=5.41$, $SD=1.84$). Results of t-tests conducted on the pilot data determined that the highly serious scenario was rated as significantly more serious than the moderately serious scenario, which was in turn rated as significantly more serious than the mildly serious incident, $t(16)=-5.13$, $p<.001$, $t(16)=-3.23$, $p<.001$ respectively.

Final version of the measure of response to bullying incidents.

The three scenarios of differing seriousness levels were presented to teachers (in random order). Accompanying each scenario there were 10 items. As a manipulation check, one item asked teachers to rate their subjective perception of seriousness. Another asked teachers how likely they would be to ignore the incident, and to tick factors they believed to be important when deciding whether to ignore or intervene in an incident, for example; “It’s best to let them sort it out for themselves” and “Stopping the behaviour”. The remaining eight questions accompanying each scenario comprised two subscales of four questions each. One subscale was designed to assess teachers’ perceptions of the likelihood with which they would respond using a rules-sanctions based approach, whilst the other assessed likelihood of responding using a problem solving approach. For example “How likely would you be to ensure that the culprit was disciplined appropriately?” and “How likely would you be to set a suitable consequence?” (rules-sanctions responses); and “How likely would you be to encourage the bully to make amends?” and “How likely would you be to discuss the victim’s feelings with the bully in order to elicit empathy?” (problem solving responses). Responses were made on nine point semantic differential scales (1= I would be extremely unlikely to do this, 9= I would almost certainly do this).

Scores from each of the subscales (the four questions reflecting a problem solving approach, and the four questions reflecting a rules/sanctions approach) were summed to yield two single variables: problem solving response, and rules-sanctions response. Each of these variables has a possible range of scores from 4-36, where a higher score reflects a teacher's belief that they would be more likely to use this type of behaviour when responding to a bullying situation

The internal consistency alphas for the subscales specifically developed for this study ranged from $\alpha=.82$ for a rules-sanctions response to the highly serious incident, to $\alpha=.61$ for a problem solving response to the moderately serious incident. Rules-sanctions responses for all scenarios had a higher alpha level than respective problem solving responses, which suggests that the rules-sanctions response is a more discrete and discriminatory construct than the problem solving construct.

Demographics

Years of teaching experience, age, gender, usual year level/s taught, highest educational level, and full time equivalent status were asked at the end of the questionnaire, and space provided for teachers to contribute comments.

Results

Data screening and preliminary analyses

Alpha levels were set at .05 unless otherwise stated. Potential outliers' scores were rescored to one unit above or below the next most extreme score (as appropriate), and examination of residuals and DFBeta scores in subsequent regression analyses suggested that results were unaffected by inclusion of these participants (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Further, no participants scored lower than the midpoint on both care and

justice orientation which, had it occurred, might have suggested a lack of moral orientation. Scores on the independent variables, care orientation and justice orientation, were centred in accord with the recommendation of Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), by subtracting the mean score of each from the individual participants' scores to facilitate interpretation of the regression coefficient B. Seriousness of an incident, having three levels, was dummy coded.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Descriptive statistics and within sample differences

Means (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), minimum (*Min*) and maximum (*Max*) obtained scores for each variable are presented in Table 1. Inspection of Table 1 reveals that, on the whole, the sample was higher on care than justice orientation. Further, visual inspection of means suggests that the level of each type of response increases as seriousness increases. Whether this apparent change is significant will be explored later.

Results of paired samples t-tests confirmed that the mean of care moral orientation ($M=105.48$, $SD=14.45$) was significantly higher than that of justice moral orientation ($M=84.10$, $SD=17.54$), $t(126)=9.44$, $p<.001$. This suggests that, overall, individuals used care considerations to a greater extent than justice considerations.

Gender differences: moral orientation

T-tests to examine possible gender differences in moral orientation revealed a significant difference in justice orientation between males and females, with males being significantly higher on justice orientation than females ($M=88.18$, $SD=17.88$; $M=80.75$, $SD=17.03$ respectively), $t(122)=2.37$, $p<.05$. However, there were no significant gender differences in care orientation.

In addition, there was a significant positive correlation between care orientation and age for male participants, $r = .393$, $p < .01$, and a negative correlation between justice orientation and age for female participants, $r = -.411$, $p < .01$. Thus, in this sample, as age increases, care orientation in males increases and justice orientation in females decreases.

Gender differences: Rating of seriousness and likelihood to ignore an incident

T-tests to examine gender differences in perception of seriousness, and likelihood of ignoring an incident, for each scenario, revealed no significant differences between male and female teachers' rating of seriousness of either the highly serious or mildly serious incident. Nor were there significant differences between male and female teachers in self reported likelihood of ignoring either the highly serious or the moderately serious incident.

However, the moderately serious incident was rated as significantly more serious by the females ($M = 6.97$, $SD = 1.33$) compared to the males ($M = 6.37$, $SD = 1.67$) $t(122) = -2.25$, $p < .05$, and females ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.96$) were significantly less likely to ignore the mildly serious incident than males ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 2.17$), $t(122) = 2.89$, $p < .01$.

Manipulation check; seriousness manipulation

Paired samples t-tests were conducted to confirm that this sample of teachers considered the three bullying scenarios to be different from each other in terms of perceived seriousness, thus confirming that the manipulation of seriousness in this study was adequate. The 'spitting' scenario ($M = 8.11$, $SD = 1.05$) was perceived to be significantly more serious than the 'name calling' scenario ($M = 6.66$, $SD = 1.57$), which was in turn perceived to be more serious than the 'dirty looks' scenario ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.56$), $t(126) = 11.204$, $p < .001$, and $t(126) = -11.306$, $p < .001$ respectively. Hence, these

scenarios were confirmed to be highly, moderately and mildly serious respectively in this study.

Hypothesis testing

Relationship between moral orientation and response to a bullying incident

Table 2 shows the correlations between care orientation and justice orientation along with the mean rules-sanctions and problem solving responses to the three bullying incidents.

[Insert Table 2 here]

Table 2 reveals a small to moderate positive correlation between justice orientation and rules-sanctions response to a bullying incident, as hypothesised. Further, care orientation is significantly positively correlated with a problem solving response, as hypothesised. Table 2 also reveals that there is no relationship between justice orientation and a problem solving response, nor between care orientation and a rules-sanctions response. Thus participants higher on justice orientation are more likely to respond to a bullying situation using a rules-sanctions response, but are not more *or* less likely to use a problem solving response. Conversely, participants higher on care orientation are more likely to respond to a bullying incident using a problem solving approach, but are not more *or* less likely to use a rules-sanctions response.

Contribution of care and justice orientations and seriousness of bullying incident in predicting a rules-sanctions response

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was undertaken to examine the relative contributions of care and justice moral orientations and perception of seriousness in predicting a rules-sanctions response. Between-participants factors were examined in an

initial hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Care orientation and justice orientation were entered at step one, while their cross product was entered at step two. This had the effect of controlling for the main effect of each of care and justice orientation on rules-sanctions response and identifying any interaction between them. Results of this analysis are in Table 3, Regression 1. The results in Table 3 indicate that there was a significant main effect of justice, but not care, orientation on rules-sanctions response. Care and justice orientation together contributed 8.4% of the variance in rules-sanctions response. In addition, there was an unexpected significant interaction between care and justice orientations on rules-sanctions response. This interaction contributed a further 4.3% of the variance in rules-sanctions response.

[Insert Table 3 here]

In order to explore the exact nature of the care orientation by justice orientation interaction in predicting rules-sanctions response revealed in step one, regression equations were generated and plotted. Figure 1 shows the plot of these regression lines. As can be seen in Figure 1, when care orientation is low (defined as one standard deviation below the mean) the level of rules-sanctions response is relatively stable, even as justice orientation increases. However, when care orientation is high (defined as one standard deviation above the mean), but justice orientation is low, rules-sanctions response is relatively low; and as justice orientation increases so does rules-sanctions response. Thus, a higher care orientation acts to increase the rules-sanctions response as justice orientation increases, while a low care orientation seems to have no effect.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

The within-participants factor, the impact of seriousness of a bullying incident on

rules-sanctions response, was also assessed using hierarchical multiple regression (Table 3, Regression 2). At step 1, care orientation and justice orientation and their cross product were entered, to control for the between-participants variance (already established in Regression 1).

At step 2, Regression 2, dummy coded variables D1 and D2, representing seriousness of a bullying incident, were entered. At step 3 of Regression 2, tests of two-way interactions between care orientation and seriousness, and justice orientation and seriousness, were entered. Finally, step 4 tested for three way interactions between each moral orientation and seriousness of a bullying incident. Examination of Table 3, Regression 2, reveals that seriousness of a bullying incident has a significant main effect on rules-sanctions response, and contributes a further 46.67% of the variance in rules-sanctions response, beyond the 12.7% contribution of care and justice orientation, and their interaction, identified at step 1. In addition, the contribution of seriousness of the incident is significant at each level of seriousness, evidenced by the significant t values reported in Table 3, Regression 2, step 2. Table 3 also reveals that there were no significant interactions between seriousness and either care or justice orientation in predicting a rules-sanctions response.

Interaction of care and justice orientations and seriousness of a bullying incident in predicting a problem solving response

Table 4 summarises two regression analyses which were undertaken to assess the effect of between-participants (Regression 1, Table 4) and within-participants (Regression 2, Table 4) factors on a problem solving response to a bullying incident. Variables were entered exactly as described above for the rules-sanctions response;

however, in these analyses, the criterion variable was problem solving response.

Inspection of Table 4 reveals that care and justice orientations contributed a significant 6.1% of the variance in problem solving response.

Comparison of significance levels of each B coefficient reveals that care orientation contributed a significant portion of the total variance in problem solving at this step, while the contribution of justice orientation was not significant. Unlike the findings for rules-sanctions response, there was no interaction between care and justice orientations in predicting a problem solving response. Seriousness of a bullying incident was entered in Step 2 Regression 2, and Table 4 reveals that seriousness of a bullying incident contributed a significant 40.7% of the variance in problem solving response. Similar to the regression analysing rules-sanctions response, there were no significant two-way or three-way interactions between both care and justice orientations and seriousness of a bullying incident in predicting a problem solving response.

[Insert Table 4 here]

Exploratory analyses

Participants were asked to tick boxes in response to the question “In deciding whether to ignore or to intervene, which of the following considerations do you believe is important to your decision?” The endorsed boxes were summed to provide the overall frequency with which each option was endorsed for each scenario. Table 5 shows the level of these responses for each scenario. Stopping the behaviour and getting the students back on track appear to be the main considerations. Rescuing the victim and punishing the bully are noteworthy in that they decrease in frequency as seriousness decreases, while concerns for making it worse for the victim, and letting them sort it out

for themselves are higher for the mildly serious incident. Considerations about whether teachers have time to sort it out, and considerations about how minor the incident is, also increase for less serious scenarios. Only a small minority of teachers considered the incidents to be someone else's responsibility, or that they are too busy to deal with incidents. Nine participants acknowledged that they did not feel confident of their skills in dealing with a highly serious incident, 7 each ticked that response for the moderately and mildly serious incidents, while three indicated that they are afraid of the bully.

[Insert Table 5 here]

Discussion

Research hypotheses relating to the relationship between a justice moral orientation and rules-sanctions response to a bullying situation, and care orientation and problem-solving response were supported. Thus a higher justice orientation predicts a higher level of rules-sanctions response and a higher care orientation predicts a higher level of problem solving response. Interestingly, though, the strongest correlation was between endorsements of the two types of responses. In other words, some teachers seem to be more interventionist than others – those who are more likely to use rules-sanctions approaches are also more likely to use more problem-solving. Seriousness of a bullying incident has a large main effect on both problem solving and rules-sanctions responses to a bullying incident, such that increased perception of seriousness elicited a higher level of both types of response.

Importantly, seriousness in this study was measured in terms of teacher perceptions. Rigby (2002) pointed out that seriousness may be judged in various ways, including degree of victim distress, level of parental concern, and duration of the

bullying. In the criminology literature, it has been concluded that offence seriousness “is solely a variable of the amount of harm caused” (Bagaric, 2000). This research has highlighted that, both in the pilot and in the main study, the physical bullying (spitting on someone) was rated as significantly more serious than the verbal bullying (name-calling), which was in turn rated as significantly more serious than social bullying (dirty looks). Further, exploratory data suggest that perception of seriousness of a bullying incident may impact upon which factors teachers consider to be pertinent when deciding whether or not to intervene in a bullying incident. Thus, for the incident which teachers rated as least serious (dirty looks), compared with the incidents which were rated as more serious (name calling) and highly serious (spitting), relatively high numbers of teachers believe it best to let students sort it out for themselves, see it as too minor to bother with and are more influenced by whether they have time to deal with it. Gender differences in perception of seriousness were also evident: male teachers were more likely to ignore dirty looks, and rated name calling as less serious than did female teachers. These findings are consistent with previous research, which identified that teachers may not take reports of dirty looks very seriously (Shute, Owens & Slee, 2002) and that teachers are up to 5 times more likely to intervene in verbal and physical bullying than social exclusion (Yoon & Kerber, 2003), yet there is increasing evidence that social bullying may be especially adverse in its psychological impact. In particular, Mynard, Joseph & Alexander (2000) found that teacher ratings of seriousness are not consistent with objective measures of impact of bullying on students. Since concern for the victims is a strong force behind efforts to address school bullying, these apparent discrepancies between teacher perceptions of seriousness and actual impact on victims warrants further

consideration.

Teachers may benefit from specific training which elaborates the importance of seriousness considerations and lack of concordance between teacher reports of seriousness and the effect of bullying on students. Furthermore, considering that perceptions of seriousness predicted teacher involvement in bullying incidents, the potentially serious effects on victims of such subtle behaviours as 'dirty looks' needs to be conveyed to teachers. In addition, previous findings that empathy for victims and perception of seriousness, along with likelihood of intervention are lower for social exclusion (Yoon & Kerber, 2003) there is a clear need for teachers to be informed in this area. As long as teachers consider relational or social bullying to be less serious, they are in turn less likely to intervene to stop it. This is especially true for male teachers, who may have less appreciation of the damaging effects of this more typically female behaviour (Shute, Owens and Slee, 2002). It is important that information about the detrimental effects of all types of bullying is disseminated to teachers and policy makers, so that harm to students may be minimized by an appropriate and timely intervention in all types of bullying. Further, the response needs to be consistent. Researchers have argued that a 'whole school approach' is necessary to address the bullying problem in schools. Whilst 'whole school' generally is interpreted to mean all personnel, students and families, it also arguably encompasses all bullying incidents. Currently, a noteworthy minority (approximately 14%) of teachers report that they do not have serious talks with bullies and victims when a situation arises, while only one third set aside regular classroom time to discuss bullying (Dake, Price, Telljohann & Funk, 2003). There is also inconsistency between student and teacher reports of level of teacher intervention, with

89% of teachers reporting that they have talked to bullies about their behaviour, while only 50% of confessed bullies report that teachers have talked to them about their bullying (Pepler, Craig, Ziegler & Charach , 1994). This discrepancy suggests that teachers simply may not identify many of the bullies. Further, this discrepancy may, in part, reflect the inconsistency between teacher recognition of bullying and the harm evident in students (Mynard, Joseph & Alexander, 2000).

This research has also highlighted the fact that individual differences in teacher moral orientation can predict a preference for a style of responding to bullying incidents. This information is important in that it investigates potential mechanisms for why teachers may be more or less inclined to adhere to anti-bullying policy within their school. This evidence may assist education departments, schools and researchers by allowing a more theoretically driven, educated, specific, and fine-tuned approach to anti-bullying policies. If policies were closely aligned with teachers' personal preferences, in terms of moral orientation, then teachers may be more inclined to support them, which, researchers suggest, is an important factor in their effectiveness (Rigby, 2002; Vernberg and Gamm, 2003). Whether this is in fact the case would require empirical examination. A necessary endeavour in this regard is to establish whether one or other type of anti-bullying policy is more efficacious in eradicating bullying so that, along with considering teacher preferences, policy and planning efforts may be devoted to devising interventions that have the best likelihood of success.

This study has established some support for the notion of two distinct types of response to bullying, mirroring the two types of anti-bullying policy identified by Rigby (2002). Further psychometric development of the measures devised for this study would

be valuable, particularly with regard to the reliability of problem-solving response to the moderately serious incident. Further, measures of response to a bullying incident in this study used self-reported likelihood of responding. Teachers may in fact respond differently in real life situations. Future research comparing a number of measures of response would help overcome this limitation. In addition, a more comprehensive study of determinants of teacher responses would include variables not covered in the present study, such as teacher empathy and self-efficacy for intervening (Yoon, 2004).

Overall this study has shown that the degree to which a teacher employs rules-sanctions or problem-solving approaches to bullying incidents is somewhat influenced by their moral orientation; however, a much more important influence is the perceived seriousness of the incident, with teachers increasingly likely to endorse a range of problem-solving and rules-sanctions responses as seriousness increases. This research has also highlighted that social bullying continues to be treated less seriously by teachers than verbal and physical bullying, despite evidence of the harm it inflicts upon students.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Minimum and Maximum scores for all variables. N=127

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>
Moral Orientation				
Justice orientation	84.10	17.54	42.00	118.00
Care orientation	105.48	14.45	70.00	137.00
Response to a highly serious bullying incident				
Rules- sanctions response	30.67	5.24	17.33	36.00
Problem solving response	27.15	5.88	10.00	36.00
Response to a moderately serious bullying incident				
Rules- sanctions response	27.54	6.10	10.67	36.00
Problem solving response	26.04	5.59	10.67	36.00
Response to a mildly serious bullying incident				
Rules-sanctions response	22.30	7.77	4.00	36.00
Problem solving response	20.89	6.79	4.00	36.00

Table 2.

Intercorrelations between Care and Justice Moral Orientations, and mean Rules-Sanctions and Problem Solving Responses.

Measure	1	2	3	4
1. Justice Orientation	-	-.27**	.26**	.07
2. Care Orientation		-	.06	.21*
3. Rules-Sanctions Response (Mean)			-	.64**
4. Problem Solving Response (Mean)				-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 3.

Summary of between-participants and within-participants regression analyses for the effects of Care and Justice orientations and Seriousness of an incident on Rules-Sanctions Response.

Variable	B	SE _B	t	R ²	R ² _{change}	F _{change}
Regression 1. Between-participants factors.						
Step 1.				.084	.084	5.72**
Care Orientation (Centred)	.050	.033	1.52			
Justice Orientation (Centred)	.089	.027	3.32**			
Step 2.					.043	6.03*
Care Orientation (CO) x Justice Orientation (JO)	.005	.002	-2.46*			
Regression 2. Within-participants factors.						
Step 2.					.467	107.63***
Seriousness, D1 & D2						
D1	8.370	.778	14.62***			
D2	5.240	.778	9.16***			
Step 3.					.000	
Care orientation x seriousness interaction						
CO X D1	-.009	.057	-0.22			
CO X D2	-.016	.056	-0.38			

Justice orientation x seriousness interaction

JO x D1	.006 .046	0.16
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JO x D2	.008 .046	0.24
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Step 4.			.000
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Care x Justice x seriousness three-way interactions

CO x JO x D1	.000 .003	-0.03
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CO x JO x D2	.000 .003	0.12
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Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4.

Summary of between-participants and within-participants regression analyses for the effects of Care and Justice Orientations and Seriousness of an incident on Problem Solving Response.

Variable	B	SE _B	t	R ²	R ² _{change}	F _{change}
Regression 1. Between-participants factors.						
Step 1.				.061	.061	4.03*
Care Orientation (Centred)	.088	.032	2.73**			
Justice Orientation (Centred)	.039	.026	1.510			
Step 2.					.001	.099
Care Orientation (CO) x	.001	.002	-.3140			
Justice Orientation (JO)						
Regression 2. Within-participants factors.						
Step 2.					.407	85.23***
Seriousness, D1 & D2						
D1	6.260	.51	12.33***			
D2	5.155	.51	10.14***			
Step 3.					.000	
Care Orientation x Seriousness interaction						
CO X D1	-.018	.04	-0.51			

CO X D2	-0.023	.04	-0.64		
Justice Orientation x Seriousness interaction					
JO x D1	-0.005	.03	-0.15		
JO x D2	-0.004	.03	-0.13		
Step 4.				.005	1.02
Care x Justice x Seriousness three-way interactions					
CO x JO x D1	-0.002	.003	-0.70		
CO x JO x D2	-0.003	.003	-1.35		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5.

Number of responses to options; "When deciding to intervene....".

Option	Highly serious incident		Moderately serious incident		Mildly serious incident	
	Responses	%	Responses	%	Responses	%
	Stopping the behaviour	110	86.61	106	83.46	91
Getting the students back on track	85	66.93	93	73.23	79	62.20
Ensuring the bully gets punished appropriately	76	59.84	47	37.01	17	13.39
The victim needs rescuing	79	62.20	61	48.03	39	30.71
It's best to let them sort it out for themselves	1	0.79	15	11.81	23	18.11
I would be afraid of making it worse for the victim	10	7.87	17	13.39	18	14.17
It is someone else's responsibility	4	3.15	1	0.79	2	1.57
It's too minor to bother with	2	1.57	2	1.57	24	18.90
I am too busy to get involved	2	1.57	2	1.57	6	4.72
Whether I have time to intervene	6	4.72	10	7.87	18	14.17

I am afraid of the bully	1	0.79	2	1.57	0	0.00
I am not confident of my skills in dealing with this	9	7.09	7	5.51	7	5.51

Figure 1.

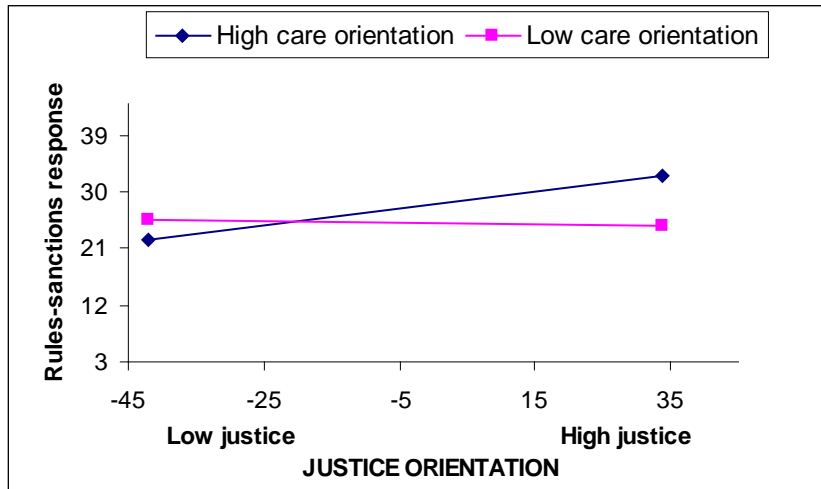


Figure 1 Caption:

Significant Interaction between Care Orientation and Justice Orientation for Rules-Sanctions Response.